FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

She Died For Her Sins: A Bomber Hanson Mystery
David Champion
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The opening pages of this novel are reminiscent of both Rex Stout's *Nero Wolfe* series and Lawrence Sanders's *McNally* series. Tod, the narrator and son of Bomber Hanson, seems to combine the errand-boy status of Wolfe's *Archie Goodwin* with the sensitivity and intelligence of Archy McNally, as he tries to help his lawyer father prove the innocence of Inocencio Espinal, an avid Communist immigrant, in the murder of a wealthy heiress. If Inocencio is indeed innocent, then Tod must discover who wanted to kill the seventy-two-year-old heiress while she sat watching the fireworks that July 4th during her first visit to her California mansion in thirty-two years.

The characters have interesting names and personalities, as drawn through Tod's humorous descriptions. He travels to Chicago where the heiress lived and interviews an aged actress, Stella Mars, who runs a theater company supported by the murdered heiress. "Finally, after allowing me to read all the tributes on the wall twice, she appeared in a white Shantung floor-length dress with a diaphanous covering that astonishingly led to a train. The ensemble matched the furniture, so she was at one with the environment."

The really intriguing character, though, is Tod himself. Personal quirks like a stuttering problem that only occurs in the presence of his father, his passion for writing classical music, and his new and growing romance with a young violinist, who helps him crack the case, make him very different from the overconfident ladies' men of Stout's and Sanders' mysteries. The reader naturally cheers for him when the district attorney forces him to step in for his father in court, assuming that Tod will fall on his face. Instead, he conquers his fear and his stuttering to do a job that makes his father believe Tod would make a great trial lawyer.

The book is a fast read, and while there is a verdict, there is no clean wrap-up at the end. In a twenty-first-century reality, final answers are not always forthcoming.

> *"'Bomber—do you believe your scenario of the case'*
> *'With time, believing in anything gets more difficult. I certainly*

believe it more than I believe that beleaguered kid murdered that old woman.'
'Will we ever know the truth?'
'Do we ever?' he asked. 'Truth is the most elusive thing in the world.'"

Looking for the truth in *She Died For Her Sins*, however, couldn't be more entertaining.

Paula Scardamalia