



The Big Drugstore

Patrick Irelan

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Brisk pacing, sarcasm, and the threat of brawls and bullets all contribute to a satisfying whodunit with a slight film-noir feel.

Mike Scofield, private detective and security for hire, feels personally insulted when a murder takes place at the same time he's dealing with the petty theft of toothpaste from the drugstore he's paid to protect. With the begrudging approval of his boss, he takes on the case in *The Big Drugstore*, a thoroughly enjoyable whodunit by Patrick Irelan.

With the help of Carlos Lorca, a troubled youth cleaning up his act, Mike sets off on the trail of Kathy Dove, petty thief and only lead. She proves to be difficult to follow, even with Carlos's infatuation with her. Unfortunately, she has her own security, and Mike gets the full brunt of his fists. Kathy insists she was as unaware of the murder as anyone else and puts Mike on the lead of another. Filled with intrigue into the dealings of the Morco drugstore, real estate fraud, and the threat of brawls and bullets, Mike's adventure is as engrossing as it is dangerous.

Set in the first person, the descriptions of the city and the people in it are all put through the filter of the protagonist. This proves quite amusing due to the sarcasm and dry wit so perfectly expressed by Irelan: "He had on a blue pinstripe suit, which authorized him to conduct business anywhere between Boston and Reno. Special rules applied in California." In addition to the humorous narrative, the story moves along at a nice clip; there are minimal lags as the story lines gain in information and perspective. Further details of the history of the places Mike visits and of his own past are aptly revealed within this framework and provide necessary facts without bogging down the flow.

The Big Drugstore is an easy read with a slight feel of film noir—short sentences and one-liner witticisms. Patrick Irelan delivers an entertaining hit that will leave you guessing until the very end.

SHANNAN SPITZ (Fall 2015)

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