



The Boom Room: A Detective Pratt Mystery

Rick Blechta

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The Boom Room, by Rick Blechta, is a fast-paced murder mystery that follows Detective Mervin Pratt, first introduced in Blechta's *Orchestrated Murder*.

There's been a murder in a nightclub, the Boom Room. While Pratt's rival officer, Gordon, sees a simple case that will get both officers expeditiously to their weekend plans, Pratt sees beneath the surface—there is something about the key suspect just doesn't fit. Blechta sums the conflict succinctly: “[Pratt] sometimes wished he could take the easy way out—like Gordon.” A typical rough-and-tough type of cop, he is determined to get to the bottom of things—and the waters get murkier the deeper he dives.

Along the way, there's a colorful, many-motived supporting cast that adds flavor and just the right amount of complexity to the narrative. The terse police dialogue is fun to read, and the pacing is superb for this length of book: the action picks up right away and there's never a lull—except for the crucial just-before-the-commercial-break suspenseful moments. A classic cop murder mystery, *The Boom Room* predictably follows the conventions of the genre, but it doesn't cling so doggedly to those norms that it feels formulaic.

The book is part of the Rapid Reads series, and true to that form, it's a simple read in terms of vocabulary, pace of the narrative, and length (twenty-three chapters in fewer than 150 pages). But the simplicity doesn't mean readers are shortchanged. Blechta tackles the challenge of simplicity in novel writing with skill by offering engaging characters as well as ample action and suspense.

The Boom Room is perfect for lunch-hour readers who want to supplement their workaday job with a bit of police drama.

MELISSA WUSKE (Summer 2014)

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