ForeWord Reviews

The Case of the Missing Links: A Golf Mystery
Lee Tyler
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Famed golf course architect Sheldon R Moore III is a boss from hell, and a pretty lousy husband for that matter. That he would end up dead, bashed in the brain with a sand wedge seconds after committing his vilest act of all, is perhaps the least surprising aspect of this entertaining, if somewhat predictable, mystery novel.

June Jacobs and Harry "Win" Winslow, lovers and private detectives, are summoned by the irascible Moore to Pebble Beach, California. Their mission: recover the blueprint for Skylark, his latest golf course design—"my masterpiece," he boasts. "It will be the envy of the entire world." But only if it is found. The sketch has disappeared from Moore's office a few days before his client, a Malaysian strongman who has paid five million dollars in advance, is due to arrive for his first look.

There is no shortage of suspects, beginning with Moore's five staffers, each deeply resentful of the boss. Doug, the assistant designer, tells June and Win that he is the creative genius behind Moore but gets none of the credit. Chip, the agronomist, and Andy, the computer guru, consider themselves underappreciated. So does business manager Barbara, who bristles at being described as Moore's secretary. (She was his lover, until Moore returned from the South Pacific with a new "personal assistant" in tow.) Then there is his long-suffering wife, seemingly resigned to Moore's infidelities and putdowns. And her rich uncle, who allows the couple to share his opulent estate despite his and Moore's mutual contempt. Throw in the uncle's loyal butler, a rival designer and a foe of golf course construction who is equal parts environmentalist and gun-toting militiaman, and all the ingredients of an intriguing whodunit are complete.

Tyler is a veteran golf journalist; she penned a column for The Los Angeles Times and now writes for an online newsletter. Not surprisingly, her mastery of the sport greatly strengthens the tale, providing context, vivid scenery and even some well-chosen puns for an amusing romantic encounter. Tyler's character and plot development are a bit uneven, but this is not a work of great intellectual depth. Above all, it is pure fun —ideal reading for a fan of mystery fiction, preferably one who enjoys golfing. It will definitely put you in the mood to hit the links.

John Flesher