

## The Music Box Murders

**Larry Karp**

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The innocent world of music boxes is turned upside down in Larry Karp's mystery *The Music Box Murders*. The story is an engaging romp through Dr. Thomas Purdue's vacation as he buys a rigid notation music box, loses it, and becomes involved in a five person murdering spree in the underbelly of the collecting world.

When the world's preeminent collector of music boxes is murdered, Purdue—a music box collector and amateur restorer—decides to solve the mystery himself. After all, his best friend is implicated in the murder and at the center of the mystery is the music box that Purdue has just innocently bought and become very attached to. In a way any collector is sure to understand, Purdue risks his life to solve the mystery and keep the music box from becoming police evidence.

The mystery plot itself is overly intricate, containing many threads and motives that are easy to lose track of. Karp weaves the world of pornography into the mystery, though it's ultimately irrelevant to the murders and the music box that the crimes revolve around. The revelation scene at the end is cumbersome because so many layers and loose ends need to be explained. Karp's style, however, is breezy and, at times, very funny; especially seen in Purdue's irreverent way of looking at the world. As when, for example, Purdue refers to a harangue from his ex-wife that is partly justified as a broken clock that is right twice a day.

While *The Music Box Murders* is ideal for the antique collector who loves mysteries or for the mystery buff who dabbles in antique collecting, Karp does not alienate his non-collecting readers.

NAVA HALL (March / April 1999)

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