

The Outsmarting of Criminals

Steven Rigolosi

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Conventions of old-fashioned mystery novel bring humor and coziness to this story featuring a female outsmarter of criminals.

Collecting the best qualities from female cozy sleuths, Steven Rigolosi pens the story of Miss Felicity Prim, an “outsmarker of criminals” who leaves the isle of Manhattan for the wilds of Connecticut. Rigolosi aims to combine a variety of the cozy-mystery genre’s machinations in one super-cozy featuring his proper Miss Prim. Each chapter title highlights a particular plot device that will be employed—for example, “The Secret Passage,” “The Body in the Basement,” and “A Locked-Room Mystery.” Each chapter gives the reader the comfort of the tried-and-true devices that make cozies what they are: comfortable, predictable reads.

Miss Prim encounters eccentric characters, such as the nosy real-estate agent and the friendly village handyman. It doesn’t take long for a body to appear (in the basement, no less).

The characterization of Miss Prim is stock, but the premise of the book calls for that. It is occasionally difficult to discern the era in which the book is set because the characters and their actions seem timeless. In the same paragraph, Miss Prim discusses mint juleps and the Laser Taser 3000, old world and new world colliding in one place. This convention works because it supports the theme of the book, the old-fashioned mystery, but in a modern setting.

Occasionally, the author breaks the fourth wall, so to speak, helping readers along in their understanding of the conventions being used. This example is taken from the first time Miss Prim meets a neighbor, Lorraine: “As she regained her sang froid, it struck her that Lorraine Koslowski might fall into yet a third category of neighbor: the wise, somewhat older woman who serves as both sidekick and foil.”

This book is recommended for lovers of traditional mysteries. Readers who like their cozies cozily British will also be pleased with Miss Prim and her friends, finding comfort in Rigolosi’s predictable plot and characters.

LYNN EVARTS (Spring 2014)

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