

The Savage Professor

Robert Roper

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This dark thriller has an intelligent side, and pleases on several levels as the bodies pile up everywhere this professor goes.

The Savage Professor, by Robert Roper, is a complex, scientifically minded whodunit. The professor is Anthony Landau, a formerly prominent epidemiologist settling into obscurity in the hills of Berkeley, California. He has enjoyed escapades and conquests over the years, both professional and in the bedroom. When a series of murdered women starts turning up awfully close to home, he is challenged in new ways.

It begins when Landau discovers in his own bed the body of a colleague, a former lover with whom he'd had a massive public falling out. Landau is himself an esteemed scientist, but socially he is not entirely of the "in" club. His reputation will carry him only so far when the bodies pile up further—under his house, in the backseat of his car, and so on. Obviously, he is a suspect. Landau roves Berkeley and the Bay Area, doing his own amateur investigating and meeting with a police detective, spurning his dismayed lawyers' advice at every turn. Will he finish this saga with any relationships intact? Or, with his freedom?

The Savage Professor is a fresh twist on the arguably overabundant murder mystery. Landau's academic career, peopled by ambitions and betrayals, the nature of his work in mathematics, and the problem of "modeling the models that modeled models" add a layer of interest and texture to the story, although the science is not handled in great depth and therefore remains accessible, or acceptably vague. Only Landau himself is fully developed as a character with interior dialogue and self-doubt; others are rendered with just enough nuance to intrigue. The dialogue between these captivating men and women is playful and realistic, with just a suggestion of drama.

A titillating novel of investigations and betrayals with sex and smarts, packaged in finely wrought, meditative prose, *The Savage Professor* promises to satisfy fans of the traditional murder mystery looking for a little more meat on the bone.

JULIA JENKINS (Summer 2015)

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