

Unknown Book

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Blending fiction and history, the author offers readers an interesting tale rooted in the early development of the atom bomb. Set in Chicago in 1942, the mystery revolves around the murder of a professor at the University of Chicago. Steven “Snap” Malek, reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, covers the initial story and gets caught up in the mystery of what is happening inside the locked buildings on campus and why someone wanted the professor dead.

The book is written in first person and Snap is a likable character with a pleasant voice: “It was a typical morning in the Headquarters press room—coffee, cigarettes, and spirited badinage, all suggestive of work avoidance. We each had reached the stage where we were essentially putting in our time, although as the best writer by far in this crew, I still had aspirations.”

Snap shares the pressroom with reporters from competing newspapers, and the banter between them rings true for the era, although some readers may find it goes on for too long in places. There is also a bit of a problem with dialogue attributions. It is almost as if the author searched for how many ways he could avoid the simple “said.” That style was popular when Rex Stout wrote the early Nero Wolfe novels, and perhaps that’s what influenced Goldsborough. He was an avid fan of the pulp novels and decided to write one after Stout died and give it to his mother as a Christmas present. *Murder in E Minor* was written in 1978. Several years later he received permission from the Stout family to publish the book and has gone on to write six more in the series.

Like his central character, Goldsborough lives in Chicago and has worked as a writer and editor for the *Chicago Tribune* for forty-five years, bringing that journalistic touch to the accuracy of the historical elements in this book. In 1942 a Metallurgy Laboratory was established at the University of Chicago for research, and two noted Swiss physicists headed up the team that created the first controlled nuclear chain reaction that led to the development of the atom bomb. This was done under the highest level of security, and Snap discovers that the professor may have been killed because he talked too much at the local watering hole.

Readers who enjoy a light, breezy read and aren’t looking for significant substance will enjoy this little book. They will also pick up some interesting history trivia.

MARYANN MILLER (October 5, 2006)

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