

KIRKUS REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

KILLER CALORIES

Nancy Good

Rogue Phoenix Press (235 pp.)

\$9.99 paperback

ISBN: 978-1-62420-445-6; October 1, 2019

BOOK REVIEW

The inaugural adventure of a perky, plucky aspiring screenwriter and secret sleuth.

In this first installment in a planned mystery series, Manhattan author Good (*How to Love a Difficult Man*, 1987) introduces 30-something Melanie Deming, an “overly zealous health nut” and writer who also occasionally solves crimes in her Upper West Side neighborhood. She looks into the murder of the local playground caretaker—former pro-boxer Ralph Duvet—after she discovers him, apparently bludgeoned to death, in the clubhouse. In between counting her daily steps and tending to her relationships with her food-writer husband, Daniel, and her 9-year-old daughter, Chloe, she looks for clues. Her search leads her to a homeless encampment, a man named Shorty, and Ralph’s shady ex-wife, Nadine Duvet. She also meets a handsome local journalist named Devon McIntire. The plot thickens when a second victim turns up, and it’s revealed that Ralph consumed a cyanide- and arsenic-laced cupcake before he was beaten. As a result, commercial baker Nadine emerges as a prime suspect, and further developments, including a robbery, blackmail, and the involvement of a brutal boxer named Andreas Martines, bring the amateur sleuth deeper into the mystery—much to the ire of annoyed New York City police detectives Brown and Levano. Plenty of colorful, well-drawn peripheral characters make appearances, such as Melanie’s best friend Rebecca, who’s going through marital woes, and a gaggle of bickering private school mothers with names such as “Buffy, Bia, and Fawn.” Good has a knack for spinning humor into her characterizations, and her experience as a “dedicated student of herbs and supplements” shines through in Melanie’s excessive health-food awareness. Melanie is also never shy about providing descriptions and sharp opinions. The mystery’s resolution is smoothly handled, with a few highly effective plot twists along the way. Overall, the novel offers just the right balance of mystery, familial warmth, and clever banter, and it’s smooth, lighthearted fun for those who enjoy a little sarcasm in their whodunits. However, it also touches on themes of class and social status and on the unmet desires of urban housewives.

A thoroughly entertaining, character-driven mystery starring a relatable, no-nonsense New Yorker.

EXCERPTING POLICIES

Please review Kirkus Media’s excerpting policies before publishing any portion of this review online or in print for any use. To learn about proper attribution and to ensure your use is in compliance with our guidelines, we invite you to visit <http://www.kirkusreviews.com/indieexcerpts>.