



Snake in the Grass: A Fina Mendoza Mystery

Kitty Felde

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A Latina girl sleuths on Capitol Hill to help her congressman friend in Kitty Felde's entertaining, civic-minded mystery novel *Snake in the Grass*.

Fina is a California congressman's daughter who is used to meeting her father's colleagues. She even keeps a hideout in a Capitol building storage room. When Democratic Congressman Hobbs is bitten by a garter snake found in his gym bag, Fina aims to discover whether the creature was there by happenstance or was placed to send a message about his bipartisan activity.

Facts about how Congress and district elections work and about the Capitol's murals and fascinating interior are shared from Fina's curious insider's perspective. She also delivers impressions of the powerful people she meets. Her home life with her grandmother and teenage sister is busy: They all support the congressman, adapting to the challenges of their political lives. They are an affectionate family, which helps to even out their conflicts.

Fina is a plucky heroine who's at ease conversing with adults. Despite her fear of snakes, she learns about them in the course of her investigation. She also walks dogs for Capitol Hill lawmakers, overhearing staffer conversations and attending media conferences in the process. The mystery itself is light, sans real malice beyond some bumbling pranksters. More pressing is the senselessness of adults who can't seem to work across party lines, hinting at ongoing political rifts. Fina's fun visits to an arboretum to view cherry trees and other observations of the city setting are a refreshing counterbalance to these concerns.

Pairing the allure of Washington, DC, with an animal misadventure, *Snake in the Grass* is a robust series mystery novel.

KAREN RIGBY (March / April 2025)

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