

The Bequest: a Nicole Graves mystery

Nancy Boyarsky

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Nicole Graves is a charming and straight-shooting heroine who reads like a grown-up Nancy Drew.

Readers who were first introduced to Nicole Graves in *The Swap* will be delighted to catch up with her again in Nancy Boyarsky's *The Bequest*, the second in a mystery series.

Nicole is an office administrator at one of the major law firms in Los Angeles. For her, it is a job, not a career. To liven things up, she begins helping Robert Blair, one of the firm's investigators, on some of his cases.

When Robert goes missing, the firm sends Nicole to his home, where she makes a gruesome discovery: Robert has been shot in the forehead, assassin-style. After Nicole reports the crime, she becomes a media target, with paparazzi trailing her every move.

Things become even more complicated, and puzzling, when Nicole learns that Robert, with whom she had a very casual relationship, bequeathed his entire estate to her. Someone wants her dead, and she also has to convince the police and public of her innocence.

Though the book opens with a murder, it is a light read as far as mysteries go. It is character-driven, with Nicole standing as a refreshing protagonist. A charming straight shooter, she reads like a grown-up Nancy Drew, who finds herself innocently embroiled in situations and forced to solve a mystery. She deals with gossipy coworkers and the media like a pro.

Nicole's relationship with her sister, as well as her "off the pages" relationship with her mystery boyfriend, add dimensionality. That love interest is a welcome addition within the mystery, shining a light on another aspect of Nicole.

The mystery proceeds at a quick pace and leads to a surprising resolution. The ending runs long, but satisfies.

A charismatic heroine, suspenseful scenes, and a budding romance make this easygoing mystery light enough to take to the beach and engaging enough to keep the reader on their toes, generating excitement for the next installment.

HILARY DANINHIRSCH (July/August 2017)

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