

★ The Prumont Method

Trevor J. Houser

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Trevor J. Houser's inventive literary novel *The Prumont Method* crisscrosses a country scarred by constant mass shootings, bringing black humor to bear on the present-day dystopia of rampant gun violence.

Former health care marketer and math hobbyist Roger Prumont comes up with a formula for predicting the time and place of the next mass shooting. After his career and marriage implode, he travels the country with his daughter to see if his method works and could save lives. In the process, he questions whether mass murders have become so commonplace that his prognostications are pure luck.

The novel is an excoriating critique of contemporary society. It hums thanks to Roger's animated voice; down and out, this depressed divorcee bounces from motel to motel, obsessing over mathematical theoreticians and mass killers. His narration mixes antic hyperbole with memorable turns of phrase: he laments copy that he slapped together ("your weight-loss program will see you now") as it turns up on billboards, prompting him to "want to be lowered into a bear cage slathered in elk blood." He thinks about lighting himself aflame in a conference room, imagining his melting flesh dripping onto the AV equipment while he scrawls "our prognosis: convenience matters" on the whiteboard.

But the prose is also stylish, with short sentences and unorthodox word choices. And it's interspersed with recipes for the obscure cocktails that Roger swills as he goes to dark places, despairing over whether it's all random and pointless, or wondering whether math can impose order over the mounting death tolls. Its final confrontation is well foreshadowed; still, it attains heartwrenching poignancy, even in its inevitability.

A novel filled with gallows humor that's representative of great creativity, *The Prumont Method* examines the phenomenon of gun massacres with pathos and profundity.

JOSEPH S. PETE (July / August 2023)

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