

Book Review: Murder Your Employer: The McMasters Guide to Homicide
By Rupert Holmes

Okay, by a show of hands, how many of you have *never, ever*, even for a split second, throughout the course of your working life, entertained the thought of ‘offing’ your employer?

If your hand is up, you’re either a liar, or a member of a very small community of workers who have never had a beef with their boss. Because the reality is, most people have considered the aforementioned option at least once, if not multiple times.

That’s the premise behind Rupert Holmes’ quirky but very well crafted novel “Murder Your Employer: The McMasters Guide to Homicide.” It’s one of the more uniquely structured murder mysteries I’ve ever read. But labeling this book a ‘murder mystery’ is probably a misnomer. In your standard who-done-it, the whole point is figuring out who-done-it. What makes “Murder Your Employer” a one-off is that we know from the start who-done-it. That doesn’t matter. What *does* matter is, did you get away with it?

Holmes (if his name sounds familiar, think “Escape,” otherwise known as the Pina Colada song from back in 1979) has created a marvelous campus of murder and mayhem called The McMasters Conservatory for the Applied Arts, named after its founder, Guy McMaster. Think Hogwarts for the homicidal arts. But not anyone can go there. To be accepted as a student you must be recommended, or have an extremely kind benefactor, as well as have an ethical reason for ‘deleting’ (they don’t refer to ‘killing’) someone. And you have to adequately address four key questions:

1. Is this murder necessary?

2. Have you given your target every last chance at redemption?
3. What innocent person might suffer by your actions?
4. Will this deletion improve the life of others?

The story, which takes place in the 1950s, focuses on three students as we follow them through their training – courses ranging from the use of disguises and various weapons to conceiving the perfect alibi – and, hopefully, successful thesis – i.e., deletion without being caught. The characters are easy to connect with, as their frustrations with their respective employers are uncomfortably familiar. And while the specifics of their exploits do become a tad bit wordy at times, Holmes balances that with lots of dark humor that keeps the storyline fresh and interesting.

There are several twists and turns along the way that I can almost guarantee you will not see coming. And what's nice is that Holmes doesn't leave the reader hanging at the end. You will know whether or not our three apprentices of assassination succeed, as well as what becomes of their intended deletions.

“Murder Your Employer” is a true page-turner, but not in typical who-done-it fashion where you can't wait to find out who the killer is. In this case, we know, so what keeps us plowing through the pages is not just anticipating their success or failure, but actually rooting for the former.

I thoroughly enjoyed this very unique novel, and can't help but wonder – hope? – if Holmes has a sequel planned. He certainly has set the stage for at least one, if not more in a series.

I give “Murder Your Employer” a 4.5 out of 5 stars, and welcome hearing your thoughts if you check it out.