

***The Adagio: A Mystery***

Alan K. Austin

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Reviewed by Olivera Baumgartner-Jackson for Reader Views (1/08)

Alan K. Austin's "The Adagio" has everything a mystery lover could desire. The writing is incredibly smooth and the story draws you in with surprising intensity. The characters are believable and oh-so-human in all their strengths and weaknesses. The plot is unusual enough that it keeps you guessing and speculating. And the resolution is quirky enough to make this a very satisfying read.

Jack Duncan, an amateur actor, gets entangled in a brief affair with his co-star, Louise Thompson. Her husband, Robert, catches them and reacts very strangely – inviting Jack to dinner and playing a bunch of records, among which a haunting recording of Barber's Adagio. He also loans that particular record to Jack, who hears a terrifying scream towards the end of it when he listens to it at home. Jack tries to solve the mystery of the scream, but then gets deeply enmeshed in his own mystery, being accused of murdering Louise and Robert.

Jack's flight from the law enforcement as well as his stint in jail, time spent among the derelicts in New York and fate of several other people who are even indirectly involved with the past events at the famous Carnegie Hall make for a fast-paced, very engaging story. Alan K. Austin draws a number of rich characters, each with their own set of strengths and weaknesses and as such extremely believable and in most cases quite likeable. While the characters of the derelicts at the Shea Stadium "camp" might not be exactly charming, they are undoubtedly compelling and convincing. One can practically smell them.

There is enough action in "The Adagio" to satisfy, enough romance to soften the story and definitely enough intrigue to keep you busy for a few hours. I highly recommend this to any lover of intelligent mystery – and just as an aside, "in flagrante dilecto" is not misspelled... Check it out, it might provide a nice chuckle.