



Act of God

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Boston is the scene for all Healy's John Cuddy mysteries, and the detailed Boston ambiance adds interest to ACT OF GOD. Cuddy is hired by two people, the likeable Pearl Rivkind and the eminently dislikeable William Proft, to find out who killed Holocaust survivor and furniture retailer Abe Rivkind, Pearl's husband, and also to locate Abe's secretary Darbra Proft, William's sister, who has disappeared since the murder. Pearl wants to know if Abe was telling the truth when he told her he was not having an affair. William wants to collect on Darbra's insurance policy.

Investigating the murder takes Healy back to an earlier death, that of the Profts' mother, and then leads him to another unexplained corpse. The reader is introduced to a variety of Boston characters from all levels of society as Cuddy shifts through a tangle of motives and opportunities. The dialogue is realistic and clever.

The most persuasive element in this novel is the characterization of John Cuddy, who develops through the series of novels from a man wounded almost to death by the loss of his wife Beth to cancer—he always goes to the cemetery to talk to Beth about his cases and his personal life—to a mature caring individual able to love again. His girlfriend Nancy is also convincingly portrayed. Nevertheless, this novel is flawed. There are too many characters for adequate development; some turn into shadows. The ending is unsatisfying on several levels, partly because the characters involved in the murder are sketchily presented that there is no sense of sound motivation. Nevertheless, for the experience of Cuddy and of Boston, as well as of the clever dialogue, ACT OF GOD is well worth reading.

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