



The Bishop As Pawn

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The author of a series based on the activities of an amateur detective frequently finds it necessary to account for the frequent involvement of the central character in homicidal situations. This necessity perhaps accounts for the popularity of ministers, priests, and rabbis as protagonists in the mystery game. In each instance, they presumably have lots of free time as well as constant association with the common and uncommon sins of the human community. In consequence, William K. Kienzle did not step off the beaten path when he presented Father Robert Koesler in the ROSARY MURDERS. If the choice of profession was conventional, however, what followed was not. Father Koesler was center stage in the ROSARY MURDERS, but Kienzle quickly introduced a plethora of supporting characters—men and women who stepped out of the shadows to occupy singular roles.

In BISHOP AS PAWN, Lieutenant Alonzo “Zoo” Tully and his minions strive to prevent an impetuous and vengeful prosecutor from perpetrating an obvious miscarriage of justice. Meanwhile, Father Koesler applies his own peculiar brand of detection to the case in pursuit of a similar truth. Tully and Koesler must also contend with an ambitious police detective and a priestly suspect with a penchant for being in the wrong place at the right time for the cross of suspicion to fall across his shoulders.

There was a time midway through this series when Kienzle seemingly lost his way. The ostensible lead was reduced to a bit part in terms of the central drama. This work returns to the proven formula and that is good news indeed. Zoo Tully may be an impressive onstage presence, but it is Father Koesler who rings down the curtain.

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