



A Little Darling, Dead

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Jack S. Scott is not as well known in America as several of his fellow British detective-novel writers, but this is his eleventh book. His best-known character is probably Detective Inspector Rosher, but Pete Parsons and Sergeant Wimbush are excellent creations.

This book details the very odd occurrences at a girls' school, which include murder, robbery, and suspicion of illicit sexual activities. The case is solved, as is usual with Scott, by good sound police work and just a bit of luck.

The story itself is not an uncommon one for British procedural novels. The thing that makes Scott's work notable, however, is his ability to blend cynicism, a wild satiric streak, and some of the techniques of "black comedy" with his solid understanding of the British detective novel.

No British institution escapes Scott's acid pen (and Americans may recognize some of our habits and assumptions among Scott's targets as well). Yet he manages this mixture of scathing humor and good police work without the absolute cynicism sometimes found, for example, in the work of Robert Barnard. Scott can even set up joke or two at his own expense as a writer, as when we are told that the body was discovered by "a man with bony knees called Rawson," and then informs us that the rest of the man was called Rawson too.

Scott fans will be pleased with A LITTLE DARLING, DEAD. Those unfamiliar with him may well find that "rather different" detective story which most of us long for at times. Both sorts of readers would do well to look into previous Scott books they have missed.

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