

Who Killed the Abbot?: A Meadows-Macdonald Detective Novel

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A Meadows-MacDonald Detective Novel

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iUniverse LLC

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WHO KILLED THE ABBOT?

A MEADOWS-MACDONALD DETECTIVE NOVEL

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Thank you to the three major influences in my life: my father, my not-by-blood brother John, and Jennifer, my best friend and love of my life - and, luckily for me, my wife.

[Author's Notes about Futurisms](#)

This novel is set in Montréal in the year 2082. Due to this, there are several terms used in the novel that do not yet exist but that I believe can become common terms. Most become apparent fairly quickly, such as the "room of many euphemisms" (thanks, friend MB) became "ROME," a.k.a. bathroom (although I use the term only when referring to public restrooms), "apfice" for an office building where upper floors have been converted to apartments, and "vimbox" for "virtual

mailbox" (i.e., an e-mail account). Other futurisms were discarded, such as using the gender-neutral and politically correct terms "hem" instead of "him/her" and "hes" instead of "his/her" because they would be too distracting.

Am I certain these terms will become common usage? Of course no one really knows the future. (Put your hand down, Cassandra.) That's speculative fiction for you.

(For the Greek mythology geeks out there such as myself, I hope you're amused by the Cassandra reference. For the others, forgive me the indulgence; it's really not important.)

Another prediction concerns racial identification. The usual follow-up question to "He's Indian"—"American or Asian?"—will be eliminated by the terms "amerind" and "asiind" (pronounced "AS-EE-IND"). Fairness would have people identified by Mohawk, Sioux or Punjabi rather than getting a continental catchall—after all, the European tribes of Italian, Spanish, French, etc., are differentiated—but who said life was fair?

Most of the science fiction in this novel is more speculative than imaginative, as the technology featured is either possible right now or a projection to developments already in progress (for example, computer glasses rather than a screen, and a glove rather than a keyboard or mouse).

There are two flights of fancy, and, ironically, they involve flight. Specifically, cars can fly.

But this is also a projection of current developments. An electrical current has been passed through a block of ceramic material, and this material has floated over a magnetic field. The scientific leap from this to making cars fly involves the invention of a new ceramic compound, "flaurenj" (rhymes with "orange"), which generates an anti-gravity field when a sufficient current is passed through it. Related to this development, although not spelled out explicitly, is that a new development in batteries makes them powerful enough to generate the needed current. This compact but powerful power source actually manifests itself in several ways in the book, even if the usage of the batteries is not obvious.

The social and political situation—other than the separate nation of Québec and some pleasant developments on the African continent—is pretty much the same as it is now.

Unfortunately.

[Chapter 1](#)

My mind wandered.

This was not normal for me in the middle of a game. It happened once before, and I got caught flat-footed. Never again, I swore.

But tomorrow was my interview with Albert Osômë. This time tomorrow I could be working for the detective agency I've been admiring since I started police training at Ottawa U. I would have to make a good—

"Psssh!"

I froze. That sound in my helmet speakers told me someone had just been eliminated. Before I could think, One of theirs or one of ours?, I heard Jean-Guy's message: "Two? Present?"

No answer. Lorraine was gone. Damn.

“Three? Present?”

That’s me. “Present, One.” With Four—Marc—already gone, and now Two vaporized, that left just Jean-Guy and me.

Two of us left to face two of them.

I pressed my right index finger to my thumb. A map of the area appeared in my visor, showing my position as a white dot and the last member of my group in yellow. Jean-Guy was only 10 metres away. “Regroup?” I asked.

“Yes. Stay.”

I made the map disappear by pressing the same fingers again. Keeping my back to a blue opaque boulder twice my height, I looked quickly to the left and to the right ...

A tall, lean figure in a black slick-suit sprang into view: Jean-Guy. He held his left arm in front of him as he scanned the terrain.

He relaxed once he spotted me. I hopped briskly toward him; bouncing was more practical than walking due to the low Aldebaran gravity.

Suddenly he yelled “Quack!” and slapped his right hand to his chest. A small white fireball shot out of his left hand, directly toward me.

His “Quack!” was to warn me that something was coming my way. In normal gravity I would have dived to the ground, but Aldebaran gravity would have made that too slow.

I jumped and lifted my legs. The fireball just missed my feet.

I twisted in midair just in time to see the fireball slam into a woman in a red jumpsuit, her arms held in front of her as if they would stop the attack.

“Psssh!” The woman vanished.

I grinned at Jean-Guy as I landed, giving him a thumbs-up. Jean-Guy responded with his own thumbs-up. Our faceplates were clear, so I could see him grinning back.

But his grin instantly turned to panic as he was suddenly bathed in a white light.

“Psssh!” He disappeared.

I caught a glimpse of a red-suited woman before she scampered away to the left.

Damn! I ran to my left as well, peering over the rocky terrain for the woman.

There! I raised my left arm to shoot, but the woman ducked behind a bright-green boulder about two metres tall.

I sprinted to the boulder as quickly as the weak gravity would let me. Once in position I crouched and then leapt over the boulder, twisting my body so I would come down facing my opponent.

As I came down I saw her standing behind the green rock, looking the wrong way. I pointed my wrist weapon at her.

Somehow she knew I was there. She turned her arm toward me as I came down, but the tension I saw in her body told me she knew I had her cold.

I hesitated. I don't know why, but I hesitated. Something about her made me pause before shooting, but I don't remember what I thought.

That's because she didn't hesitate. The fireball slammed into my chest. "Psssh!" Everything vanished.

Instantly the scene changed. The alien landscape of Aldebaran disappeared in a wink, replaced by a restored Roman coliseum filled to capacity with faceless viewers cheering and clapping. I was standing beside Jean-Guy, Lorraine and Marc at one end of the arena floor. At the other end of the coliseum stood the other team, four women of roughly the same height wearing tight red jumpsuits. I was so steamed at myself—why did I hesitate?—that I almost slapped the break switch on my glove.

But I held back. Being a sore loser would make the group look bad.

The eight of us lifted our visors. Theirs were red and reflective, so their faces had previously been hidden. I figured they ranged in age from mid-twenties to early thirties.

One of the women—not the one who nailed me, I think—stepped forward. Jean-Guy walked forward until he was almost nose to nose with her. Then he dropped to one knee and held up his hands as if he was holding something.

The Canadian Virtual Reality Combat Cup appeared in his hands, drawing waves of applause from the audience. The Red Team leader took the Cup and bowed to Jean-Guy. She walked back to her team, holding the Cup over her head. Jean-Guy stood, turned and walked back to us.

The three other Reds surrounded their leader. Each had one hand on the Cup while waving at the crowd with the other. The applause lasted for several long, painful minutes.

As the crowd finally died down, I heard Jean-Guy's request for team privacy to the controller. The crowd and the other team vanished, leaving the four of us alone in the coliseum.

Jean-Guy frowned and mumbled something. The coliseum vanished, and we stood in a grassy field surrounded by rolling hills.

Jean-Guy grinned at us. "Good match, people. We came close." He looked like he meant it.

"What?" I was still feeling hyper; it took an effort to force my volume down. "Yeah, great match, but we still lost."

"Nevertheless, Chris, we have nothing to be ashamed of."

"You don't, maybe. I'm sorry I blew it at the end."

Marc put his large hand on my shoulder. "Eh, ti-gars, don't discourage yourself."

Marc often referred to me as 'Ti-Gars' – little boy – because of the difference in our sizes. I stopped

being insulted after doing some research and finding out it's a term of endearment.

"You lasted longer than the rest of us, n'est-ce pas?" Even though the large Québécois was also smiling, I could tell it was forced.

"Yeah, but—"

Lorraine jumped in. "But nothing, Christopher." She also grinned, looking more relaxed than her boyfriend. "You managed to be the last one standing. But you did look like you had that last Red, no problemo. Why'd you stop?"

How did she—"How did you know what happened?"

Lorraine looked surprised. "What, are you kidding? I saw you from the audience, natch." Her eyes narrowed. "You've always been the last member of your teams to lose or you've won, right?"

"Yeah, that's right. How did you know?"

Marc answered for his girlfriend. "When you get eliminated before a teammate, you go into the audience and get to watch the rest of the show. How many matches have you done before the nine with us?"

I shrugged. "About 20."

He looked impressed. "And you've never been a spectator? No wonder you are disappointed."

Before I could answer him a voice alerted us, "Disconnect within one minute, please."

"Okey dokey." Lorraine took Marc's hand. "Time to go home. Jean-Guy, Chris, we'll be in touch." They disappeared.

Jean-Guy looked at me. "You did do well tonight, you know. The Reds aren't the championship team for nothing."

"Yeah, I know. It still hurts, though." I left out that I felt sorry for Jean-Guy; he had told us a few matches ago that he would retire after this sequence. After four years together, I was miffed that he was leaving on a losing note. He's easily the best web friend I've had.

He grinned again. "Getting killed usually hurts. But you'll live." A chime sounded. He looked up, frowning. "Just a few seconds, eh." Then he looked back at me with his grin. "I'll be in touch, Chris. Okay?"

"Definitely." Then I thought about tomorrow. "Listen, Jean-Guy, life's about to get complicated for a short while. Give me two or three days before sending me anything." *

It is 2082, and new detective Chris Meadows, who has an innate talent for identifying a liar, is fresh out of police training at Ottawa U. As he prepares for an interview for his dream job at a Toronto detective agency, Chris has no idea of what awaits him. All

he knows is that he is more than ready for a change.

After the owner of Osm Detectives tells Chris he wants him to spend a year training as an assistant to his friend and fellow detective agency owner, Rene MacDonald, Chris accepts, hoping that his eager attitude will eventually help him snag a position as an Osm agent. But when Chris arrives in the now-independent country of Qubec to help Rene investigate the suspicious suicide of a monastery's abbot, he soon realizes that some friends hide dangerous secrets. And thanks to his new boss, Chris discovers he has much more to learn.

In this futuristic murder mystery, a rookie detective must rely on his instincts and his boss's mentoring to piece together the puzzle of a complex death investigation and set the stage for what he hopes will be a successful career.

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