

Westerfield's Chain: A Mystery



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From Publishers Weekly A brisk style and fine descriptions help offset a less-than-scintillating plot in Clark's debut mystery. While investigating a traffic altercation involving an off-duty police officer, Nick Acropolis, a former homicide cop now working as a low-level PI in Chicago, learns about first one missing person, then another. Eugene Westerfield is "on vacation" indefinitely, and Jimmy Madison, a student who works in one of Westerfield's drugstores, disappears just after Nick gets his statement about the traffic case. Nick follows a suspicious car with out-of-town plates and meets Becky Westerfield, daughter of Eugene, who's come home to hunt for her dad. Although Becky is convinced her father is a saint, Nick gathers more and more evidence that Eugene has been committing an impressive amount of welfare fraud. As the off-the-books owner of a medical center, Eugene has been hiring

doctors who are no longer employable in the reputable world. These doctors prescribe hundreds of unnecessary medications, and the patients are sent to Westerfield's drugstores to get the prescriptions filled. Nick's backstory could have provided more nuances if it had been revealed sooner. A few minor characters come through strongly-such as a bike repair guy named Purcell and a fascinating mute homeless man-but there are so many others that it's hard to keep them straight, let alone appreciate them. Still, whatever the book's flaws, it's a great read, one that ought to appeal in particular to Robert B. Parker fans. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal P.I. Nick Acropolis inadvertently picks up clues to a tangled missing-persons case while investigating an automobile accident involving a cop in a desolate area of Chicago. There, a drugstore (scene of a recent murder) and a nearby clinic, both owned by a prominent but missing man, apparently serve as centers for welfare fraud. An ex-cop himself, Nick knows how to manipulate the investigatory ropes, save his clients, and trip up the bad guys. Extensive background detailing (e.g., driving around Chicago), personal observation, and an understated tone lend credence to this steadily engaging first mystery. Readers who like Chicago-based series such as Sara Paretsky's might want to check this out. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. See all Editorial Reviews

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