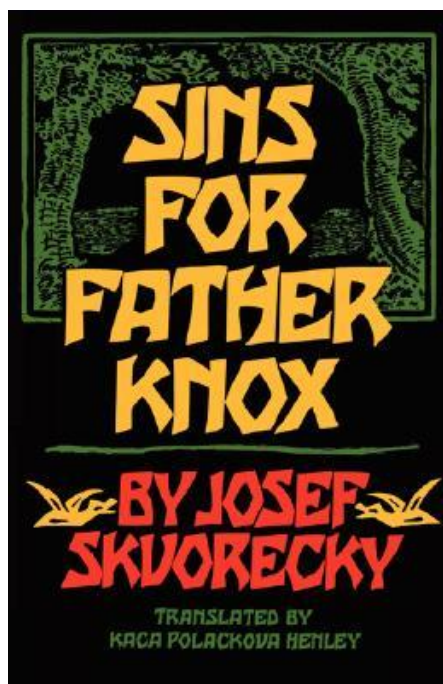




Sins for Father Knox

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A clergyman named Ronald A. Knox once set forth a set of rules for writing detective fiction. In ten new stories (two featuring Lieutenant Boruvka), a crime occurs that violates one of Father Knox's rules, thus serving up a double challenge: Who dunnit? and Which rule was broken?

Sins for Father Knox Details

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Author : Josef Škvorecký

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Monika says

Příjemná vzpomínka na seriál, ale jinak víceméně zklamání. Jazyk hrozný, nedokázala jsem se kolikrát zařít, jak moc mi dělalo problém se jím prokousat. A to je jeden celý příběh vyprávěn? jen tímto hovorovým dialektem a to mě pak opravdu bolela hlava....

Velvetink says

3 and a half stars.

10 short detective stories in the best Sherlock tradition with Miss Eve Adams a nightclub singer playing Holmes. The really fun parts of the book are the Ten Commandments of Father Knox and discovering which Commandments each story breaks. Father Knox (17 February 1888 - 24 August 1957) was an English theologian, priest and crime writer. He apparently had a decent career in the Church and made contributions to theological literature that were not insignificant. He was friendly with a lot of writers including G.K. Chesterton and perhaps from Chesterton developed a love of crime novels...

He not only read them but wrote them though his novels are not that famous. he did write two theoretical accomplishments that are truly Chesterton in spirit and for these he is mostly remembered.

Knox wrote a humorous essay in which he portrayed Sherlock Holmes as a historical personage which founded the entertaining body of pseudo-science known as Holmesiana, and in 1929 he issued ten commandments that crime writers should follow - at least those writing in the Holmes tradition.

Father Knox's Ten Commandments.

1. The criminal must be someone mentioned in the early part of the story, but must not be anyone whose thoughts the reader has been allowed to follow.

2. All supernatural or preternatural agencies are ruled out as a matter of course.

3. No more than one secret room or passage is allowable. I would add that a secret passage should not be brought in at all unless the action takes place in the kind of house where such devices might be expected.

4. No hitherto undiscovered poisons may be used, nor any appliance which will need a long scientific explanation at the end.

5. No Chinaman must figure in the story*

6. No accident must ever help the detective, nor must he ever have an unaccountable intuition which proves to be right.

7. The Detective must not himself commit the crime.

8. The detective must not light on any clues which are not instantly produced for the inspection of the reader.

9. the stupid friend of the detective, the Watson, must not conceal any thoughts which pass through his mind: his intelligence must be slightly, but very slightly, below that of the average reader.

10. Twin brothers, and doubles generally, must not appear unless we have been duly prepared for them.

* this was not a display on the part of the good Father, but simply his reaction to what was one of the most hackneyed ploys of cheap detective stories that he had read during his lifetime .

If you are not sure which commandment is being violated by which story, you can find out by turning to the "ab-solutions" at the end of the book.

I'm not going to tell you the stories that would be spoilers they are short enough as it is..I will say that not only are some of them difficult to solve "who done it", in some cases there are multiple options as to what commandment has been broken. All stories feature the pretty Czech nightclub singer Eve Adam, though the detectives vary as she travels around the world. There is even one story that maths geeks will adore.

I am only sad there were not more stories. In fact I would enjoy a whole novel about Eve's adventures.

bought for \$1.50./Salvos

Naomi Young says

I read this more as a curiosity than anything, and as that, it was satisfying. The conceit of the book is that it consists of ten loosely joined short stories, each of which breaks one of Fr. Ronald Knox's 10 Commandments of Detective Fiction (you'll need to scroll or search to get to the list). I've seen this book referred to several times in essays on Knox or on mystery short stories, and when I realized it was in our university library, I had to check it out, both literally and figuratively.

These stories were written at the height of the Cold War by a Czech who fled to Canada after the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia. They do come off as a bit dated, but not annoyingly so.

Each story pauses just before the denouement and a box cues you to consider which commandment was broken in the story. The answers (should you need or wish them) are in the back, labeled "Ab-solutions" (yeah, I know). Some of the applications are a bit of a stretch, in my opinion, but it was a good effort.

Worth your time for a diversion, but your life will not be much the less for not having read it, either.

Larissa says

During the "Golden Age" of British crime fiction, Ronald Knox, a British clergyman, literary critic, and author of several crime novels himself, wrote the "ten commandments" of crime fiction (see here: <http://goo.gl/v1saO>). These rules vary from "Not more than one secret room or passage is allowable" to "No Chinaman must figure in the story." (In his introduction, Škvorecký explains that despite the regrettable epitaph, the rule "was not a display of racism on the part of the good Father, but simply his reaction to what was one of the most hackneyed ploys of cheap detective stories.")

Since the writing of these "commandments," most have been broken in very good examples of crime fiction. Josef Škvorecký, a Czech author who emigrated to Canada following the Prague Spring, set out to break all of Father Knox's rules in this collection of short, linked crime stories. You, the reader, are charged with two

tasks when reading: determining not only whodunnit in each story, but also which sin Škvorecký has committed against the commandments. (If you need some help working out the "who," the "what," and the "how" of each story, the "Ab-solutions" in the back will clear things up for you.)

Each of the ten stories find the gorgeous, clever, and world-weary Czech night-club singer Eve Adam unexpectedly playing detective in run-down bars and seedy districts all over the world. Having been cleared of a murder she was wrongly convicted of in the first story (with the help of Škvorecký's usual leading man, Detective Boruvka) Eve joins a traveling Czech performance group. But whether she's in Sweden, Italy, San Francisco, a cruise across the Atlantic, or Prague, certain things don't change for Eve--for all her cynicism, she's a romantic who can never stay away from smooth-talking men, and wherever she goes, someone seems to unexpectedly turn up dead.

Škvorecký taps into his inner Conan Doyle, and stresses logic and deduction in each tale, but honestly, sometimes the stories are convoluted enough (much like a Sherlock Holmes story) that it would prove a difficult thing to work out the answers. But while the stories occasionally feel a bit too clever, the surrounding characterizations are really rich and entertaining. Characters reoccur throughout the book and anecdotes told in one story pop up again and are put to good use in another. (You really have to read all of the stories in order--they build on one another in small, but meaningful ways. Also, it's best to read each story in one sitting--it's easy to forget little pertinent details and clues otherwise.) Eve is a sharp narrator, and a very funny observer of human folly--including her own--which really makes this a pleasure to read.

Kate says

For my full review click on the links below:

<https://crossexaminingcrime.wordpress...>

<https://crossexaminingcrime.wordpress...>

Quentin says

Interesting... I thought this was going to be a set of stories about Lieutenant Boruvka, but it wasn't. Although the Lieutenant makes a brief appearance, these concern the (mis)adventures of nightclub singer and occasional sleuth Eve Adam, and are set variously in Czechoslovakia, Sweden and America.

Some of the stories are pretty ponderous, some of them are a pleasure. It's all quite gentle and whimsical in a pre-1968 kind of way.

3.5 stars, rather than 3...

Czarny Pies says

Joseph Skvorecky went through a long period in which he wrote bad detective stories that were equally bad literature. Sins for Father Knox is the one good book to emerge out of this regrettable phase in the career of a truly great writer.

In this collection of stories, Skvorecky analyzes the pertinence of following rules of the genre when writing but taking Father Knox's famous rules for detective writing and breaking them one a time to see if it is possible to write good detective fiction while disregarding the laws.

For those of you unfamiliar with the famous Decalogue it is as follows:

1. The criminal must be someone mentioned in the early part of the story, but must not be anyone whose thoughts the reader has been allowed to follow.
2. All supernatural or preternatural agencies are ruled out as a matter of course.
3. Not more than one secret room or passage is allowable.
4. No hitherto undiscovered poisons may be used, nor any appliance which will need a long scientific explanation at the end.
5. No Chinaman must figure in the story.
6. No accident must ever help the detective, nor must he ever have an unaccountable intuition which proves to be right.
7. The detective must not himself commit the crime.
8. The detective must not light on any clues which are not instantly produced for the inspection of the reader.
9. The stupid friend of the detective, the Watson, must not conceal any thoughts which pass through his mind; his intelligence must be slightly, but very slightly, below that of the average reader.
10. Twin brothers, and doubles generally, must not appear unless we have been duly prepared for them.

Skvorecky duly writes ten stories in which one of the ten rules is broken in each. The reader is invited to identify which rule has been breached in each story. This exercise is in fact highly amusing and should satisfy any lover of crime fiction who has in fact stumbled over this book which is shelved in the literature section rather than the crime section of most book stores.

What Skvorecky really manages to do of course is to demonstrate that the rules of the genre must be respected if the writer is to produce a good mystery. The next step is to read Aristotle's poetics which lays down the rules for basic literature as would be found in the fiction department.

Georgie says

Very neat. Velvetink's review says it all. Perhaps more of an academic exercise than anything else, but still interesting.

Lucie Novak says

Fun, clever, any crime fiction lover will like this. How to write good detective story while breaking the rules.

Patrick says

Skvorecky apparently wrote these stories as a series of exercises to illustrate violations of rules for detective stories set out by the referenced Father Knox. Unfortunately, they also read like exercises, with terribly contrived scenarios, relevant facts being dropped randomly into the story, and resolutions that make little or no sense. Worse, the characters are rarely given enough thoughts or motivations or expressions to care about them, except for the protagonist, Eve Adam, and her encounters with Skvorecky's Lt. Boruvka in the first and last stories of the book. This is a step down from Skvorecky's first book of detective stories, which was no great shakes to begin with, and lacks his distinctive humor and sadness arising from human crimes and

errors.
