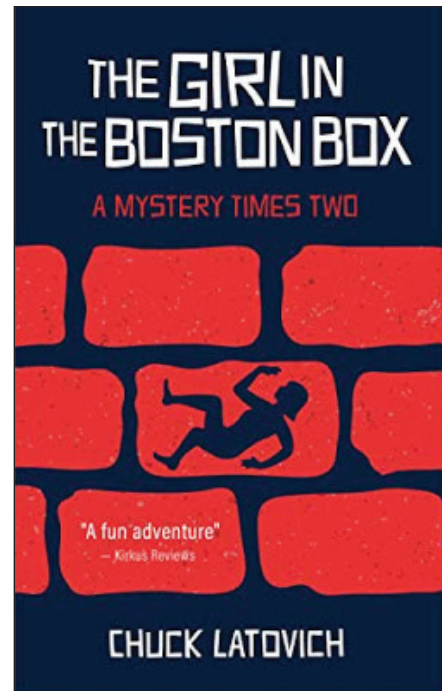


The Girl in the Boston Box by Chuck Latovich, 435 pp.

review by Lee Varon

During the ongoing pandemic, many of us have re-discovered the joy of getting lost in a good book. Especially, for me, this means a mystery. *The Girl in the Boston Box* by Cambridge writer Chuck Latovich is a perfect present for yourself or someone you know. Steeped in Boston lore and landmarks, the book follows two apparently unrelated characters—Mark, a 40-something gay man who works as a tour guide driving Duck Boats for a living, and Caitlyn, a graduate student in architectural history at Harvard. When the book opens, Mark's brother, from whom he's been estranged for decades, has been murdered, leaving few clues other than the mysterious words "Boston Box" on a scrap of paper in his apartment. The police have contacted Mark to identify his brother's body, and because it seems Mark stands to inherit a hefty sum of money his brother left behind. From the start, things don't go quite as planned. Mark soon learns other shadowy figures are laying claim to his brother's money. Meanwhile, in a totally separate storyline, across the river in Cambridge, Caitlyn is studying 19th buildings with hidden rooms called Boston Boxes. Though some of these rooms seem to have been used by the Underground Railroad to hide runaway slaves in pre-Civil War days, as Caitlyn delves further she uncover dark secrets and shocking crimes involving Boston's past.



How the story of these two strangers—Mark and Caitlyn—eventually connect is what makes up some of the excitement of *The Girl in the Boston Box*. The book alternates with galloping suspense between Mark and Caitlyn until their stories finally converge.

As an exciting mystery this book rates 5 stars, but it's more than just a thriller. I can always tell I love a book when the characters stay with me long after I've finished reading. I found this with both characters, but especially with Mark. At the beginning he's somewhat down and out. His long-term boyfriend has dumped him. He has no family and seemingly few friends. He lives in a shabby Brighton apartment and is clinging to his job as a Duck Boat driver. Yet despite this, Mark still has the ability to laugh at himself and to hope for better times. All in all, he's a totally endearing character who bumbles through Boston trying to piece together the clues to his brother's murder. Far from a one-dimensional character, Mark can be at times self-pitying, fearful, and petty, and at other times brave, noble, and selfless. I laughed out loud many times at his spot-on, sometimes ironic, observations of modern-day Bostonians and Cantabrigians. If you want to lose yourself in a truly absorbing book, pick up, *The Girl in the Boston Box*. You won't regret it!