Merry Wives of Maggody: An Arly Hanks Mystery by Joan Hess

I Love Maggody And It’s Eccentric Citizens.

Maggody, Arkansas (pop. 755) is perceived of as a two-bit hick town, filled with one-bit hicks. But Mrs. Jim Bob Buchanan seeks to change that perception with her latest scheme—a charity golf tournament. This presents a bit of a challenge, since no one in Maggody plays golf and there is no course. But when the prize for the first hole-in-one is announced—a top of the line bass boat—nearly everyone in town develops a new-found interest in the sport. The town goes golf crazy, trying to learn the sport in time to win the bass boat, with limited success and maximum domestic disorder. Sheriff Arly Hanks, who has better things to worry about, just wishes it would all go away.

When a small-town golf instructor wins the bass boat on the first day of the tournament, it looks like all the excitement is over. But the next morning, when he’s found dead, sitting in the parking lot in the front seat of the bass boat, the prize is once again up for grabs and nearly everyone in town is a murder suspect.

My Personal Review:
The 755 residents of Maggody, Arkansas are overall excited over hosting the first ever Maggody Charity Golf Tournament, which symbolizes how far from homemade cornpone to country club whiskey the townsfolk’s have come; though secretly most prefer the products of the back woods distillery. Mrs. Jim Bob Buchanan who came up with the idea refuses to accept any issues to prevent the tournament; for instance there are no golf courses, clubs or players in the town; most of the folks cannot spell the word golf.

When Mrs. Jim Bob announces the prize of a $40,000 bass boat for the first hole in one, everyone takes out brooms and what not to practice golf. Faberville Country Cub professional Tommy Ridner wins the prize over the hoot and holler of locals claiming he is an outside ringer as is PGA player Bonaparte Buchanan brought in by his clan to keep the prizes inside the family. Someone murders Tommy and soon afterward his friend. Pregnant police chief Arly Hanks puts aside her tea for tee time to investigate the homicides; while a LPGA pro files an assault complaint.

Merry Wives of Maggody is even zanier than the title implies as golf proves a lethal sport with a hole in one having new meaning as a hole in the head.
The thin story line is fast-paced from the moment Mrs. Jim Bob tries to change the town's rep from the centerfold of hick to glamour and never slows down as Arly investigates the homicides and the assault. Golf has never been crazier than in Maggody as Joan Hess strokes an ace on the sixteenth hole with this amusing cozy.

Harriet Klausner

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