

# QUILL & QUIRE

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## Q & Q REVIEWS

### FICTION

#### **Amuse Bouche: A Russell Quant Mystery**

Anthony Bidulka; \$21.95 paper 1-894663-47-0.

200 pp., 6x9, Insomniac Press, May

Reviewed from bound galleys

Skatooon private investigator Russell Quant spent his first year in business finding more than his fair share of wayward kitties and truant Corning Ware casserole dishes. But now he's been hired by wealthy businessman Harold Chavell to find his missing lover, Tom Osborn. Tom vanished without a trace on the evening he and Chavell were going to be married in a private ceremony, and Chavell isn't buying the idea that Tom changed his mind.

What's even more disturbing is that Tom appears to have run off to France, where the two were supposed to spend their honeymoon, and is following their planned itinerary. Off to Paris goes the ever debonair Quant on what turns out to be a first-rate goose chase. It's up to Quant to

solve the crime and, of course, he gets his man—he's gay, he's got to!

Bidulka's *Amuse Bouche* is an effervescent first novel that is much like the tasty French hors d'oeuvres from which it takes its name. It's an amusing, entertaining, and sometimes titillating story with a lively supporting cast of characters. Bidulka's given us just enough details about his queer P.I. to keep us interested in his adventures but leaves room for developing Quant into a more fleshed-out hero in future mysteries.

What really stands out here is the subtle way that Bidulka comments on the ordinary lives of the gays and lesbians in Russell's world. Bidulka touches on a variety of serious issues—how homophobia keeps gays and lesbians in the closet, the tension of family relationships, same-sex marriage, outing—while neatly weaving these strands into an engaging mystery. This a good start to an exciting new mystery series.

*—Jeffrey Canton, a writer and reviewer in Toronto*