

The Oracle of Baal: Behind the Book

Ever wonder how perfectly sane and intelligent people get caught up in a cult? Well, wonder no more. The answer is revealed in my latest Mick Chandra mystery, *The Oracle of Baal*. This very different and challenging case forces Mick to understand “cult mentality,” and how people can be coerced into such insidious brain washing groups. This particular cult, known as The Oracle of Baal, preys on wealthy middle-aged successful professionals who have faced some sort of upheaval in their lives. In this particular instance, Mick must expose a cult who coerced a brilliant actress, Rosalinda Evelyn, into shooting herself in the head with a Magnum 8mm just after having won the Critics’ Choice Award.

He confronts the cult’s leader, a woman who calls herself “Madame Love,” and finds her disarmingly charming. Love insists that Baal is merely a harmless self-help group. Aid arrives, but from a most unexpected source. A young woman by the name of Prunella Hamley is being treated in a mental ward at a hospital in York. Pru, as she is known, keeps muttering the word “Baal,” before trying to harm herself. Mick must gain Pru’s trust if he is to expose The Oracle of Baal.

Researched in great detail, the story reveals how Mick learns why otherwise sane people can be attracted to cults. For this he receives valuable help from Dr. Solomon Deal, a professor of social anthropology at the University of London. With Dr. Deal’s help, Mick finally gains Pru’s trust, and together they expose Baal for what it really is — a sex-suicide cult.