

Canadian Club

Crime writers from our native land

Suspended Sentences

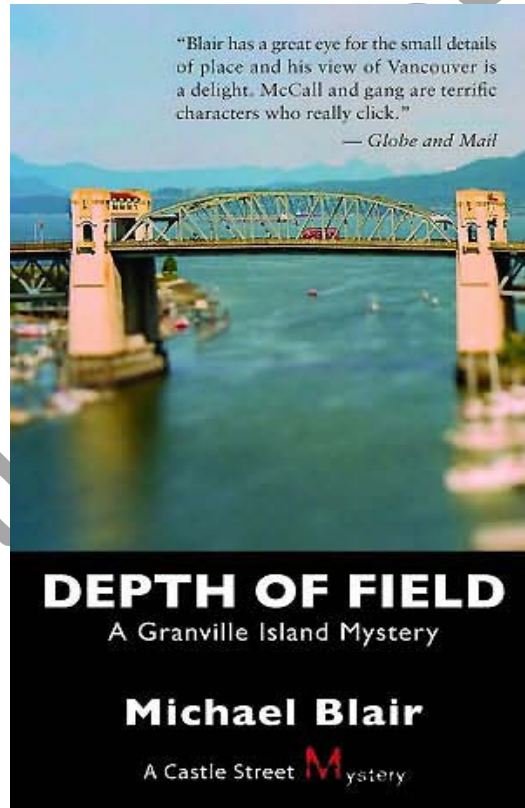
by Jim Napier

Perhaps it's because Canada has a reputation as a welcoming nation, attracting people of talent from all over the world. Or maybe it's simply that most Canadians must endure a six-month Winter, with little to do much of the time except watch hockey or play Scrabble. Whatever the reason, the fact is that Canada seems to be fertile ground for writers, and especially crime writers. Per capita, I would argue, we have more talented authors within our borders than do our nefarious neighbours to the South. On second thought, maybe it's just that more Canadians can read.

Whatever the case, we should rejoice at the bounty of our literary harvest; and so, herewith I offer a small sampler of some of the murderous merriment served up by those among us who, after most people are comfortably ensconced in their beds, are burning the midnight oil in search of the perfect crime.

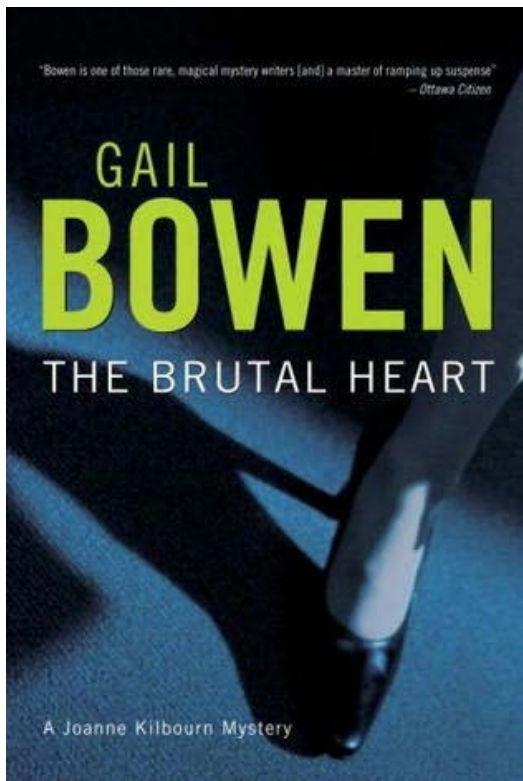
Michael Blair,
Depth of Field
(Dundurn Press, 2009)

The Montreal-based author of *The Dells* is back with another fine tale, this one set on Granville Island in Vancouver. Photographer Tom McCall has to turn over a photo shoot on a yacht to his



partner Bobbi due to a scheduling conflict. When she's assaulted during the assignment and hospitalized in a coma, McCall is consumed with guilt and sets out to find her assailant. Not so straightforward as it seems, when he discovers the person who commissioned the photo assignment was an imposter, and the boat belongs to an anonymous numbered company. McCall's search will take him into the glittering world of Vancouver's elite, as he mixes with philanthropists and art collectors. An original tale with a rich cast of

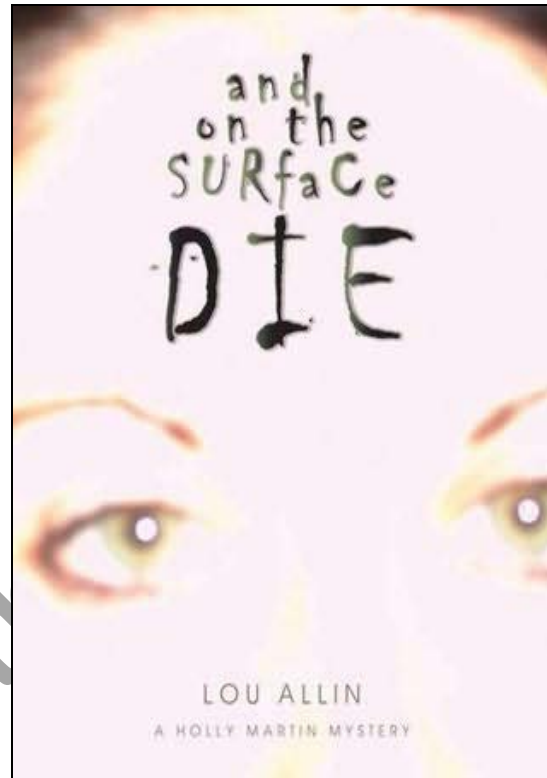
characters and a convincing sense of place, it will make you want to read the others in this series.



Gail Bowen,
The Brutal Heart
(McClelland & Stewart, 2008)

Regina author Gail Bowen deftly combines politics, greed, marriage and murder in this engrossing tale from the award-winning series of novels featuring television producer Joanne Kilbourn. In this outing Joanne sees the campaign of a friend running for the leadership of the federal Conservative Party, and who is involved in a bitter custody battle with her ex, as good fodder for a TV program she is preparing on women and politics. When the name of a friend who recently committed suicide turns up on the client list of a local call girl who's been murdered, she is understandably dismayed. But her world is rocked to its foundations when she learns that her new husband Zack's name is on the list

as well. Although she throws herself into her work in an effort to put the strain on her marriage behind her, Joanne is inevitably drawn back to the case, to confront the demons that have invaded her life.



Lou Allin,
And On The Surface Die
(RendezVous Crime, 2008)

Regular readers may recall Lou Allin's series of Northern Ontario-based mysteries featuring realtor and likeable amateur sleuth Belle Palmer. In the last couple of years Lou pulled up roots, and forsaking the notorious weather there, migrated to Northern BC in search of more sun and fewer blackflies. In this, the first of her new series, RCMP Corporal Holly Martin assumes command of the Mountie detachment at Fossil Bay. Expecting nothing more challenging than speeders, drunks, and the odd break-and-enter, Holly finds

herself literally in the deep end when her first case involves a body of a young woman found in the ocean. Is it a tragic accident, or did someone have it in for the high-school student? Before she can resolve the case, the small community is wracked by a major storm, and Holly must battle the very forces of nature, even as she struggles to take down a killer. An engaging new series from the pen of a seasoned writer who knows both her craft and the setting very well.



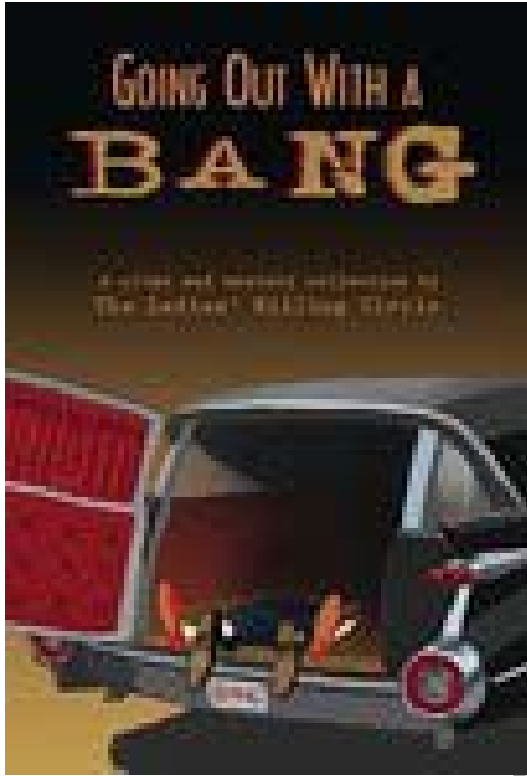
John McFetridge,
Everybody Knows This Is
Nowhere
(ECW Press, 2008)

It's just another evening in Toronto. A cheapskate john is seated in his Beamer, haggling with a local hooker over the price for oral sex when they both get a nasty shock: some-one has just done a header off the high-rise office building nearby and landed on the john's very expensive hood, and both he and the car are definitely the worse for wear. Did he jump, or was he pushed, and is the fact that he was an Iranian national relevant? The case is assigned to a Native American cop and his recently-widowed partner, and they must contend with druggies, ethnic gangs, bikers and a scandal simmering within the Toronto PD while they work the case. Miss Marple it ain't. Emerging as Canada's Elmore Leonard, John McFetridge serves up an edgy, darkly humorous



tale with an eclectic mix of fascinating characters exchanging crack-ling dialogue. Once started, you won't be able to put it down.

Jim Napier can be reached at jim.napier52@gmail.com



**The Ladies' Killing Circle,
Going Out With A Bang
(RendezVous Crime, 2008)**

You can always count on a chuckle or three from the Ottawa-based collection of murderous mischief-makers who call themselves the Ladies' Killing Circle. Seasoned writers all, they have served up a collection of thirty captivating tales of corruption and carnage that they have whimsically titled, *Going Out With A Bang*. With their characteristic dark take on the world, the stories run the gamut of life's bizarre experiences, from paranoid colleagues to expediting one's inheritance, from coping with a life of quiet desperation to bank robberies gone quirkily wrong. Firmly tongue in cheek, the authors remind us that everything in life, even death, has its lighter side.