

What Goes Around...

Church thriller deftly combines past and present

Suspended Sentences

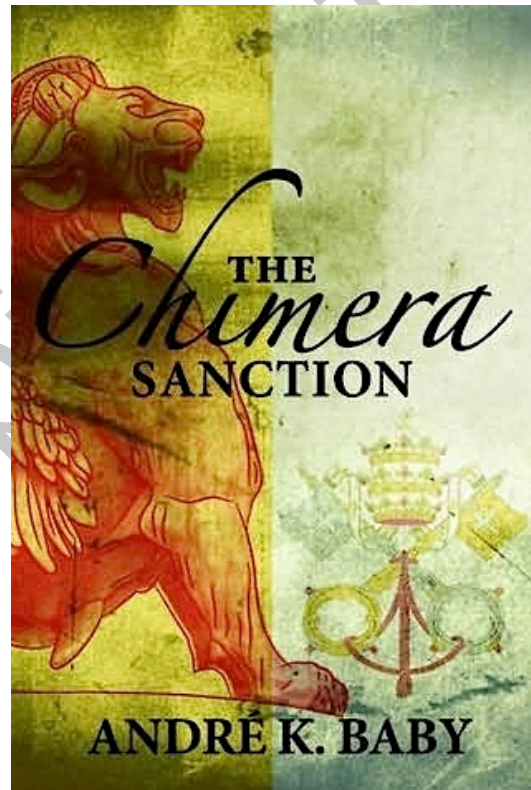
by Jim Napier

Thierry Dulac, an investigator for Interpol, is yanked off a mountain in the Canadian Rockies and flown to Italy on a matter of some urgency. Pope Clement XXI had shown signs of suffering a heart attack, and on the advice of his personal physician, both were ordered flown to a private clinic, where the tenth floor was always reserved for His Holiness on a 24/7 basis. Cardinal Legnano, the Secretary of State of the Vatican, summons the members of the inner Curia, the Pope's most trusted advisors. Though concerned, they are sanguine; the Pope has no history of heart problems. It is most likely a simple case of indigestion. He'll pull through.

After waiting for thirty minutes for what should have been a ten-minute flight Cardinal Legnano telephones the clinic for information on the Pope's condition. He is astonished to learn that the helicopter has yet to arrive. When the airport traffic control center is contacted they confirm the helicopter had been spotted briefly on radar and asked to identify itself; it had failed to do so, and in a matter of moments had disappeared.

A search of the Vatican grounds soon reveals the trussed-up pilot and co-pilot, confirming Legnano's worst

fears: the Pope and his personal physician have been kidnapped.



The Cardinal wastes no time bringing others into the picture. He begins by informing Inspector Guadagni of Rome's main police station, the Questura Centrale. Crucially, he also contacts Interpol and asks for the assistance of Inspector Thierry Dulac, who had been instrumental in solving an earlier case of two Archbishops who had been murdered.

When Inspector Dulac arrives at the Vatican he learns that Inspector Guadagni's forensics team has not been idle: traces of dobutamine and arbutamine, drugs used in cardiac research and which mimic the symptoms of a heart attack, have been found in the Pope's drinking water. Dulac wastes no time in ordering a search of recent purchase records for the perishable drugs, and directing search patterns for the helicopter based on its most recent known position and flight path, along with the known range of the aircraft.

What Dulac doesn't know is that this is no normal kidnapping, based on a demand for ransom or a desire to make a political statement. It is merely the next logical step in a dia-

bolical plan that dates back to events that occurred nearly eight hundred years earlier. Dulac will have his work cut out for him tracking the movements of a shadowy figure who has crossed his path before.

Montreal author André Baby has done his research well in crafting a compelling tale that is grounded in historical fact, but told with the immediacy of today. A layered story that astutely explores the many faces of Vatican life, *The Chimera Sanction* will appeal especially to fans of such accomplished thriller authors as Len Deighton and Frederick Forsyth. Not bad company.

The Chimera Sanction is published by Robert Hale Limited (London).

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Since 2005 Jim Napier's reviews and interviews have appeared in several Canadian newspapers and on such websites as *Spinetingler*, *The Rap Sheet*, *Shots Magazine*, *Crime Time*, *Reviewing The Evidence*, *January* magazine, the *Montreal Review of Books*, the *Ottawa Review of Books*, and *Amazon.com*, as well as on his own award-winning site, *Deadly Diversions*. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com

