

A Chilling Look at Obsession

Giles Blunt's latest a winner

Suspended Sentences

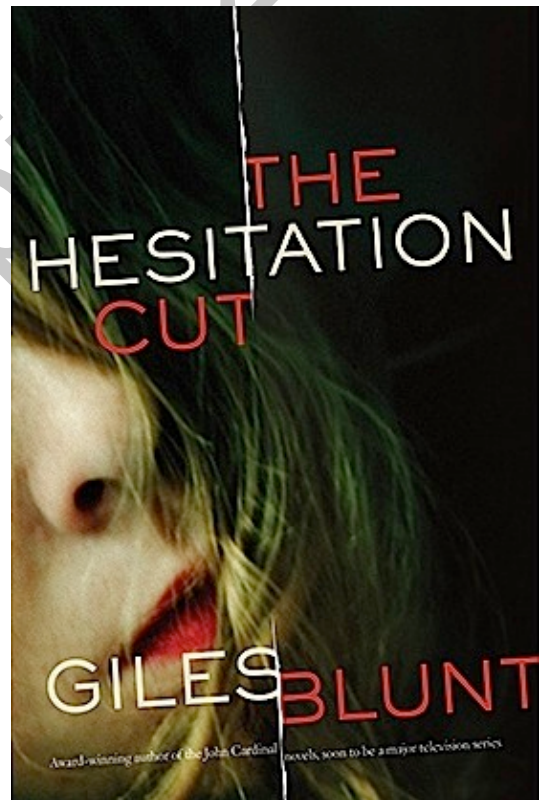
by Jim Napier

Good news for Giles Blunt fans: his latest book is out, and—no surprise—it's a winner. But if you're looking for further exploits of Police Inspector John Cardinal you are in for a surprise: this time around the author has given readers a standalone: set largely in Manhattan, it's very much a psychological thriller rather than the compelling police procedurals based in northern Ontario that Blunt's many readers have come to expect.

The central character of *The Hesitation Cut* is an earnest young man known as for the past ten years as Brother William. Sequestered in a Benedictine monastery in upstate New York, his days are circumscribed by his religious devotions and duties, where he spends most of his time looking after the library. Despite its rigours his new life is, for Brother William an undemanding existence, and he has adapted well, at peace with both his surroundings and himself.

All that suddenly changes, however, when an attractive young woman named Lauren Wolfe comes to the priory to research a book she is writing. Significantly, it concerns the star-crossed lovers, Heloise and

Abelard, a portent of things to come. When Brother William notices a self-inflicted scar on her wrist, clearly the mark on an attempted suicide, his interest in her becomes compelling.



When Lauren suddenly leaves the monastery and returns to New York City, Brother William is not far behind. Abandoning both his calling and his adopted name, Brother William becomes Peter, and manages to track down Lauren to her

apartment. Totally consumed by his obsession he finds himself a job, manages to rent a tiny studio apartment in the very building where Lauren lives, and sets himself the task of protecting her from harm, insinuating himself by degrees into her daily life. When she recognises him from the monastery and tries to warn him off he refuses to hear her, and only becomes further entangled in her tortured existence. We soon learn that Lauren harbours her own obsession, a low-life named Mick who threatens to drag her, once again, into his own twisted and very dangerous life.

Giles Blunt has given readers a unique perspective on a common theme, the world of the obsessed stalker. But this time the stalker is in a very real sense revealed as the victim, and we cringe as we witness him drawn, like the proverbial moth, to the flame that is Lauren's very flawed life. Part cautionary tale, part chilling account of the illusory nature of choice, *The Hesitation Cut* is a superbly-drawn, layered portrait of human frailty in its various forms, as well as a taut suspense tale that will hold you in its grip until the very end.

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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 crime fiction site, *Deadly Diversions*. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com

