

Prairie Pandemonium

Weddings and murder don't mix

Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

The latest in Gail Bowen's popular Regina-based crime series, *What's Left Behind* finds Joanne Kilbourn and her husband Zack happily immersed in plans for a lakeside wedding for their son Peter and his fiancée Maisie Crawford. The even is scheduled to be held at their lakeside cottage, but Simon Weber, a junior member of Zack's law firm, has different plans. He's become obsessed with Maisie's sister Lee Crawford, who will be the maid of honour. More disturbingly, he's just checked himself out of a clinic where he'd been being wrestling with a drinking problem and suicidal threats, and is likely to head their way.

Meanwhile Zack has his own issues. As the newly elected mayor of Regina he's putting together a plan to develop the city in a responsible way, rooted in a set of bylaws which will require a city-wide referendum. It doesn't sit well with a conglomerate of planners, developers, and others who have dominated the expansion of the city for over a decade, and who are fighting it tooth and nail. An opposition group called Citizens for Planned Growth is forming, but the stakes are high and the attitudes are hardening. Maisie's sister Lee is leading the support for Zack's plan,

and the development group is conducting a smear campaign to discredit her and the citizen's movement.



Despite these obstacles, on the day of the wedding all seems to be going well, the lakeside ceremony coming off just as planned. But a mere three hundred metres from shore Simon is seen sitting in a canoe, quietly observing the events. He seems calm enough, and makes no effort to draw

nearer; but all that may change when he learns that Lee has just accepted a marriage proposal from a neighbor she's known for years. It is a volatile mix of events, and one that will turn lethal before it is ended.

Having penned sixteen previous novels in the Joanne Kilbourn series, Gail Bowen has carved out a special niche in what might be termed Prairie

Thrillers. Her stories always carefully crafted and perfectly paced, her characters believable and (mostly) engaging, her use of setting and dialogue skillfully rendered. Bowen has a loyal and growing fan base who are always clamouring for more, and they will not be disappointed by this latest entry in the canon.

Jim Napier is a professional crime-fiction reviewer based in Canada. His book reviews and author interviews have been featured in several Canadian newspapers as well as on such websites as *Spinetingler Magazine*, *The Rap Sheet*, *January magazine*, *Reviewing the Evidence*, *Crime Time*, *Shots Magazine*, *the Montreal Review of Books*, and the *Ottawa Review of Books*, as well as on his own award-winning site, [Deadly Diversions](http://DeadlyDiversions.com). He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com

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