

Trouble in Trafalgar

Delany's latest a hit

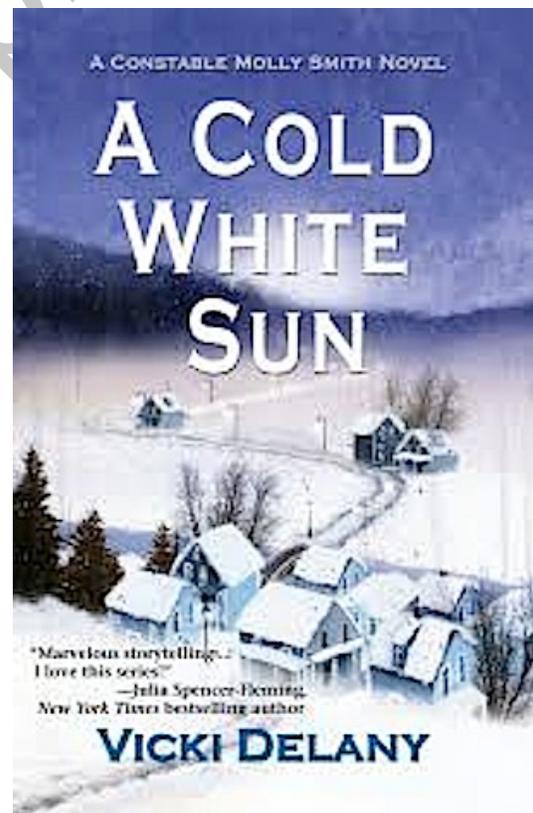
Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

Spring is finally coming to the mountain resort town of Trafalgar, B.C., the snow is relenting, and in the woods nearby an innocuous stroll by an unsuspecting woman and her dog takes a tragic turn when she is suddenly gunned down, shot in the back from some distance. Cathy Lindsay had been a schoolteacher and mother in Trafalgar. On the face of it, then, a random act of violence. But two troubling possibilities remain: it might have been only the first of a series of shootings, or it might not have been random at all. The possibilities narrow when a second woman is shot.

Delving into Cathy's private life Constable Molly Smith and Detective Sergeant John Winters soon discover that the victim's marriage was not untroubled: she had a crush on a colleague at work, and her husband Gord has a mistress out of town. The couple had talked about divorce, but

nothing had come of it. Recently, however, Cathy had bought some new clothes and jewelry, and begun dressing better. Had Cathy found out about her husband's mistress, and was she planning to leave him for her co-worker? If so, was this the motive for her death?



Complicating matters, Molly is sailing in uncertain waters herself, the object of attention from a handsome young ski instructor, and trying to determine whether her relationship with Adam Tocek, an RCMP officer, is going anywhere. All this while she tries to come to grips with a growing closeness between her recently-widowed mother and Molly's overweight, chain-smoking boss, the Chief Constable of Trafalgar.

Before long the investigative threads of the case have widened to include a former Canadian soldier who saw action in Afghanistan, and a series of similar shootings in Arizona, stretching back years. And in the deceptively tranquil town of Trafalgar more lives will be placed in jeopardy before the case is solved.

Nuanced characters and red herrings galore

In her sixth outing with Constable Molly Smith, Vicki Delany has served up yet another fine puzzle mystery, with nuanced characters and red herrings galore. Readers aware of Molly's past travails will relish the chance to follow the new developments in her personal life, including her relationship with her irrepressible ex-hippie mother Lucky, and not forgetting the twists and turns involving Detective John Winters and his wife Eliza. But lurking beneath all the human-interest stuff is the tangible tension of a well-structured and scarily believable tale, reflecting the violent times we live in.

A final word to those who wrestle with authors, trying to second-guess the solution: the ending will surprise you. For in Vicki Delany's imaginative world, nothing is ever quite what it seems.

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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, and the *Montreal Review of Books*, as well as on his own award-winning site, *Deadly Diversions*. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com