

Sherlock Shenanigans

Delany's latest series a winner

Suspended Sentences

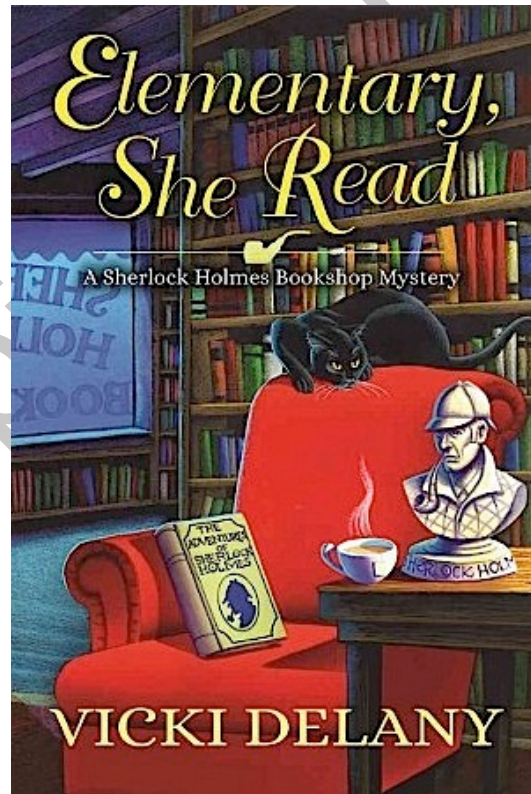
by Jim Napier

Talk about timeless: well over a century after Arthur Conan Doyle's classic tales first appeared, interest in the Victorian supersleuth known around the world as Sherlock Holmes is stronger than ever. Movie and television versions based on the original character abound, some faithful to the original canon and period, others featuring contemporary settings. It seems that readers cannot get enough of the eccentric detective and his colourful exploits. New versions of these engrossing stories seem to appear almost daily, and one of the most recent comes from the very capable pen of Canadian crime writer Vicki Delany.

Gemma Doyle has the perfect life: she runs the Sherlock Holmes Bookshop in the small town of West London, on Massachusetts's Cape Cod. The store, located at 222 Baker Street (where else?) specializes in books by and on The Great Detective and assorted ephemera connected with the Holmes characters and stories. Her best friend Jayne Wilson runs Mrs. Hudson's Tea Room next door. All in all, Gemma's living her dream.

But her dream quickly turns into a nightmare when a valuable, if not

priceless, copy of the very first magazine to feature the first Sherlock



Holmes story turns up in her shop. While not all Holmes memorabilia is particularly rare, this issue is highly collectible, and might be worth well over half a million dollars. Gemma tracks down a woman who was in her bookstore shortly before the magazine was found; she's staying in a local hotel. But when Gemma arrives at her room to question her about the

magazine, she finds the woman dead, apparently strangled. Things take a turn for the worse when the lead detective—an old flame of Gemma's—is removed from the case because of their history and Detective Louise Estrada—the officer who replaces him—is certain that Gemma is involved, if not the culprit herself. It's up to Gemma to apply Sherlock Holmes' famous deductive reasoning and find the real killer to establish her own innocence. When she finds her home has been burgled it's clear that someone wants that magazine badly, and won't stop at anything to get it. Gemma and Jayne press on, determined to get to the bottom of things, but when she discovers a second body—this time a member of

the family claiming ownership of the magazine—Gemma moves to the top of Detective Estrada's list of suspects.

The first in a new series, *Elementary She Read* is informed by the author's considerable knowledge of all things Holmesian. Fans of The Great Detective will find abundant references to characters in the original canon, as well as later works written in the Doyle tradition. Delany draws on her considerable narrative skill to spin a tale that will appeal to the considerable number of Holmes fans, who seemingly cannot get enough. Readers will look forward to more in this series from this prolific and talented Canadian writer.

Since 2005 more than 500 of 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*. His own crime novel, *Legacy*, is scheduled to appear in the Spring of 2017. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com

