

A Death in the Islands

Second in Farrow's Storm Murders Trilogy

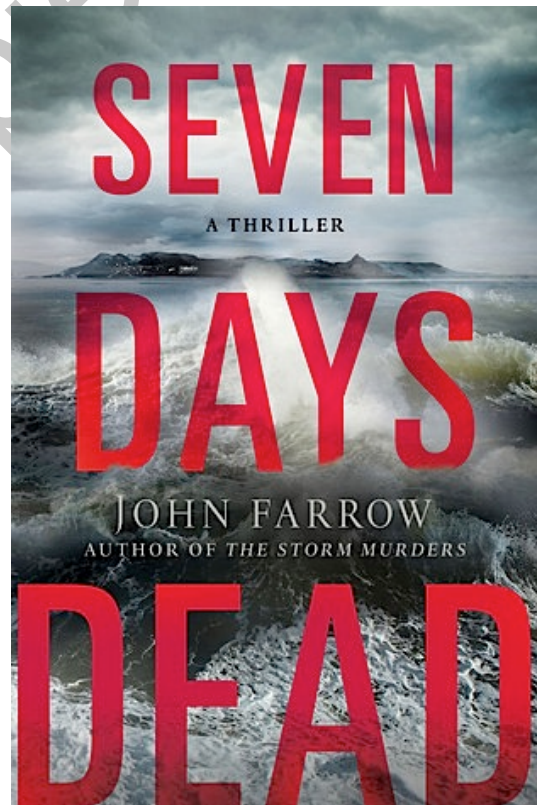
Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

At night, and in the midst of a fierce Atlantic storm, Maddy Orrick ignores the many perils of a New Brunswick coastal road as she races against time to reach her dying father's side. Alfred Orrock has sent for her, a rare occurrence in their relationship that has been, to put it mildly, strained for as long as she can recall. But before Maddy can arrive her father dies, of causes not entirely natural. His final moments are attended only by his housekeeper Ora Matheson, and by a village priest of lapsed faith, Simon Lescavage, whom he has summoned to hear his confession.

Orrock's death is certain to cause ripples in the various tiny communities that make up the population of Grand Manan, an island in the Gulf of Maine off the New Brunswick coast. He owned or controlled virtually every business in the region, and the lives that went with them. His death raises many questions about his business interests, and who will assume them. But even more troubling, the priest who witnessed Orrock's final moments goes

missing. Grand Maman is not so large, and before long the man, or rather his remains, are found bound to a tree along a Cliffside path: Father Lescavage has been savagely murdered, and his entrails gutted, exposed to the elements and scavengers that hover in the trees nearby.



Suspects are not hard to find. In the insular communities that make up the island, everyone has a

history with everyone else, and motives, whether founded in enmity, greed, or simply a bit of smuggling. We learn that a local man's father killed Maddy's mother, a crime for which he died in prison; but his son still lives in the village. Nor is the list of suspects confined to locals; a nearby village hosts a secretive group of mainlanders who seem to be practising some strange rituals.

Not far away, on the mainland, Émile and Sandra Cinq-Mars are enjoying a bit of a holiday – their very first holiday, in fact. But the retired Montreal detective finds a holiday during the summer months “decadent,” and when he notices police activity on the ferry to Grand Maman, his interest is

piqued. Faced with a shortage of police personnel on the isolated island, Cinq-Mars teams up with an RCMP officer from a nearby detachment to help solve the deaths. It is a decision that will put both the retired detective and his wife in mortal jeopardy.

The second work in Farrow's Storm Murders Trilogy, *Seven Days Dead* is an interesting take on the sequestered life of New Brunswick island fishing communities. Entirely at home in the setting he portrays, Farrow (aka Montreal's Trevor Ferguson) has a good eye for detail and an ear for dialogue, and spins a plot full of unexpected surprises. *Seven Days Dead* fills a void in the literature of maritime mysteries, and will earn the author many new readers.

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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