

Crime across Canada

Fradkin launches new series

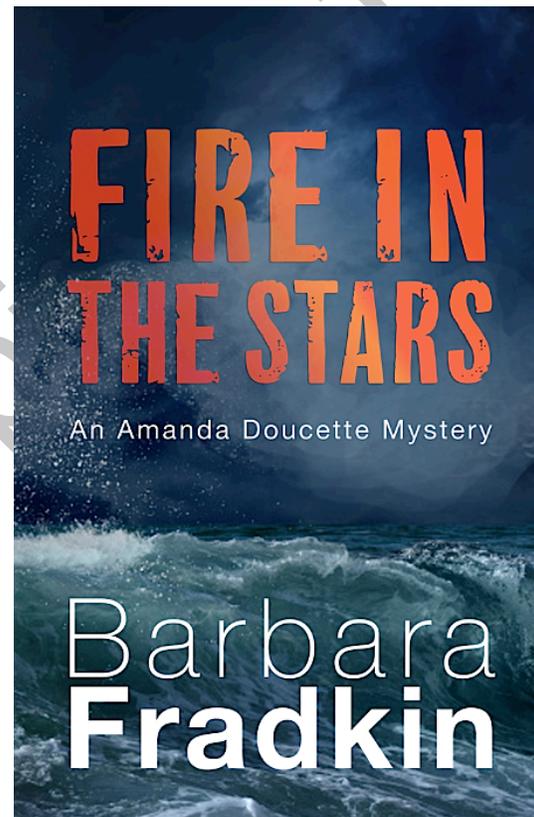
Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

For nearly two decades best-selling Canadian crime writer Barbara Fradkin has been entertaining fans with her unique Inspector Green series of novels set in and around Ottawa. In recent years she's added a second series based on rural handyman and amateur sleuth Cedric O'Toole. Always open to new challenges, Fradkin has launched a third series of tales, this time featuring Amanda Doucette, a former aid worker who has recently returned to Canada from some very dark experiences in Nigeria, and who is striving to rebuild her life in Canada. Each novel will feature a distinctive part of the Canadian landscape.

Amanda's new life gets off to a rough start when her closest friend and fellow trauma survivor, Phil Cousins, invites her to join him in Newfoundland and experience the natural beauty of The Rock. But on arriving with her dog Kaylee, Amanda is disconcerted to find that she has no word from Phil; he has simply disappeared, along with his son Tyler, from their home. Amanda has an uncomfortable meeting with Sheri, Phil's wife, who assumed he was with her. When they try his cell phone they find he's left it at home; before long she questions whether his

leaving the phone and essential survival gear at home was accidental.



A local RCMP officer and friend of Phil's, Jason Maloney, believes he has simply gone off somewhere, and is inclined to keep his disappearance unofficial; he reasons that everyone in the area knows everyone else, and that Phil will soon turn up. But Amanda is uneasy with that approach, not least because Phil and his wife had been having marital issues, and she had been seeing Jason behind

Phil's back. Unsure about how far to trust Sheri and Jason, Amanda decides to set out for herself to find Phil and his son, even though by now it seems that he doesn't want to be found. It is a troubled odyssey that will introduce Amanda and Kaylee to the wild beauty of Newfoundland, but also to the utter desolation that puts every life on the island at the mercy of the elements. Before it is over Amanda will find her own survival skills tested to the breaking point in a story that goes well beyond coping with the forces of nature to confronting the evil in men.

Fire in the Stars is a cracking good

novel, and a fine way to kick off an ambitious series. Barbara Fradkin is a seasoned veteran of crime writing, and well versed in the Canadian landscape. A particular strength of her storytelling is her ability to evoke a convincing sense of place and set a compelling tale there. Each of the forthcoming Amanda Doucette novels promises to add to our appreciation for the primal diversity of the Canadian landscape. Fradkin's newest series beckons readers who want to explore some of the more remote and darkly beautiful settings that make up the country, and be entertained by a fine tale along the way.

Jim Napier is a professional crime-fiction reviewer based in Canada. Since 2005 his book reviews and author interviews have been featured in several Canadian newspapers and on multiple websites, and his own novel is scheduled to appear in the Spring. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com

