

When Green was green

Detective revisits his first case

Suspended Sentences

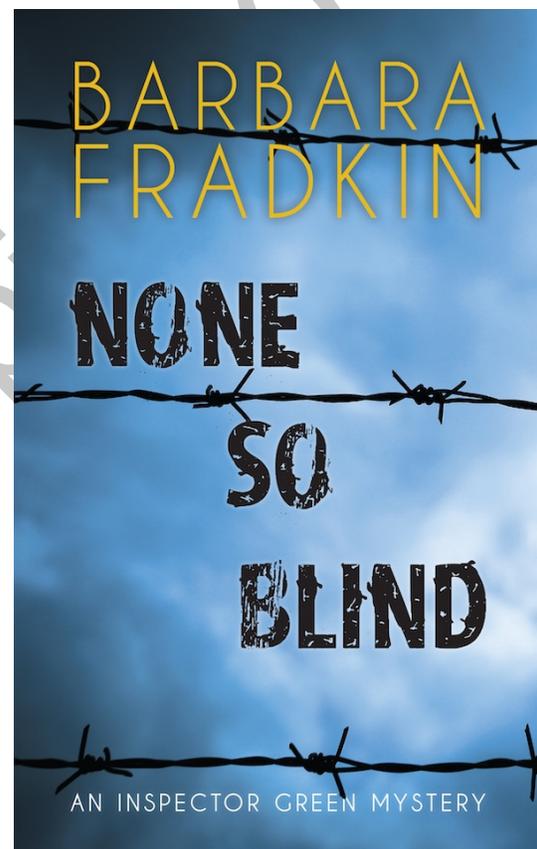
by Jim Napier

Ottawa crime writer Barbara Fradkin recently launched *None So Blind*, her 10th in the series that has already earned her an unprecedented two Arthur Ellis Awards for Best Novel of the Year.

In his latest outing Inspector Michael Greene of the Ottawa Police Service is marking his twentieth year as a detective, including six as Inspector, when someone rains on his parade. Green's very first case as a detective had been a homicide. Jackie Carmichael, a student at Carleton University, had disappeared; her body was found a week later, half buried in a forest near the city. The OPP had parachuted its own homicide team into the case, and the inexperienced Green was forced to take a back seat. Their investigation had led to the arrest and conviction of the victim's biology teacher, James Rosten.

Throughout twenty years in prison Rosten has insisted he was innocent; but the evidence against him, though circumstantial, had been damning: Rosten had suggested "private tutoring" to Jackie Carmichael; she had last been seen walking on campus with Rosten; she'd been killed on a remote logging road near Rosten's cottage, a road not even

appearing on a map, even though she had no car to get there; her body was



half naked, and she had been bound and gagged; a car matching Rosten's had been seen in the area the afternoon of her disappearance; and one of her hairs had been found on the passenger headrest of his car.

The case had haunted Green for decades. Rosten had often sent him

letters from prison, arguing his innocence in painstaking detail, even suggesting that Jackie's stepfather, Lucas Carmichael, had been responsible for her death. When Carmichael dies of a heart attack shoveling snow, Rosten sends Green a stark, two-word letter from prison: "He wins!!!"

Jackie's mother Marilyn had never got over her daughter's death, her own life put on hold all those years, convinced Rosten was guilty. Green attends Lucas Carmichael's funeral, where Jackie's sister Julia tells him she also thought Lucas was responsible at the time.

When he learns that Rosten had recently written Marilyn's family, he visits Rosten in prison. He finds a fifty-year-old man, crippled and scarred from prison violence, confined to a wheelchair, grey with age, and bitter: for the past twenty years Rosten has been denied parole, ironically because by insisting in his innocence he is unable to show any remorse.

But after speaking with the prison chaplain Green learns that an upcoming parole hearing might be different. The chaplain is helping Rosten prepare for the hearing,

arranging a transition to a supervised halfway house and volunteer work in Belleville in the event it is granted. Green also learns that Marilyn will be attending the parole review, and to his surprise she supports Rosten's release.

Rosten convinces the parole board to release him, but before long he disappears. His lifeless body is found in his cabin, the autopsy inconclusive. Is Rosten's death suicide, vengeance, or a desperate move by a killer to cover their tracks? Green must confront his own handling of the case, and in the process, more people will die.

The Inspector Green novels form one of the longest-running and most successful series in Canadian crime fiction, and for good reason. With each book Fradkin becomes a stronger writer, deftly exploring complex moral issues within the context of a compelling tale. A fine, layered police procedural that reveals how some people are not always what they seem, and how others change with time, *None So Blind* is Fradkin's finest work to date.

None So Blind is published by Dundurn

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Since 2005 Jim Napier's reviews and interviews have appeared in several Canadian newspapers and on such websites as *Spinetinger*, *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 site, *Deadly Diversions*. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com