

Clash of Cultures

Fradkin's latest confronts timely issue

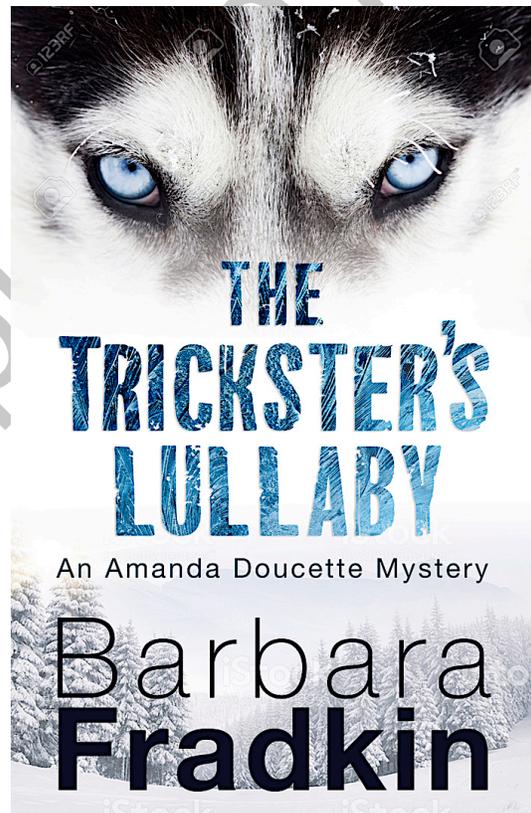
Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

Having experienced Boko Haram's atrocities in a Nigerian village at first hand, former Canadian aid worker Amanda Doucette is still recovering, and struggling with her own demons. Along with her Montreal friend Matthew Goderich she has created a series of activities aimed at helping diverse young adults in Canada to broaden their understanding of the country and of one another. It is a venture aimed not only at helping others, but also at helping Amanda to rebuild her own life.

Amanda's efforts at the moment are focused on organising a winter camping trip for inner-city young people in Mont-Tremblant Park, northwest of Montreal. It's a mixed group, consisting of the organizers and several youths who hail from the Congo, Somalia, Vietnam, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Haiti. They will be joined by Monsieur Zidane, an Algerian-born counsellor who has vetted the young people participating in the adventure, and experienced local guides Sebastien and Sylvie Laroque, along with Amanda and her dog Kaylee. The plan is for six days of winter activities involving snowshoeing, ice fishing and camping in a wildlife reserve within a national park, where people

from different backgrounds can come together and gain a better understanding of one another.



What Amanda doesn't know is that someone in the group has their own agenda, very much at odds with hers. When one of the youths disappears it sets off a chain of events that reaches far beyond the small group and puts all of their lives at risk. Cut off from the wider world Amanda is forced to confront her own beliefs as she

struggles to cope with events that reach far beyond an isolated group in a tranquil park.

Barbara Fradkin has an impressive record of tying her stories to themes and issues taken from the world at large. Her previous novels have dealt with such challenging topics as war crimes in the Former Yugoslavia, teenage drug use, and people falsely convicted of heinous crimes. Drawing

on that tradition *The Trickster's Lullaby* ventures into the shadowy world where personal convictions and ideological beliefs intersect, and will prompt readers to examine just how far any of us can truly understand those from radically different cultures. It is a daunting task for a writer to bring all that together, and Fradkin manages to pull it off in a timely and compelling tale.

Previously published on the *Ottawa Review of Books*, October 2017.

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 crime novel *Legacy* was published in April of 2017. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com



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