

# When solitude is not solace

## *Chilling tale of terror in the woods*

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### *Suspended Sentences*

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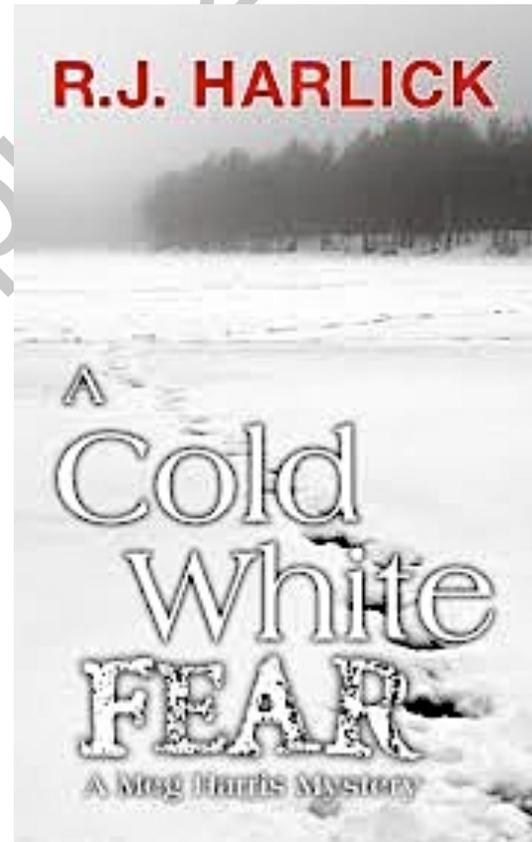
by Jim Napier

Ottawa-based crime writer J. Harlick has earned her place as the queen of Canadian wilderness fiction, having penned six previous novels in the Meg Harris series, the fourth of which was a finalist for the 2010 Arthur Ellis Award for Best Novel. Now she offers readers a glimpse of just how quickly an ordinary life can be turned upside down, in a harrowing tale that is all-too-frighteningly possible.

It's the run-up to Christmas, and Meg Harris is looking forward to celebrating her second season with her Algonquin husband Eric Odjik and his extended family. But Eric is nearly three hours away in Ottawa, not due home for a day or so, and the only company Meg has is an adolescent boy named Jid from a nearby Algonquin reserve and her puppy Shomi.

Their home is located deep in the woods of Western Quebec, at a place known as Three Deer Point. Engulfed in a blizzard of epic proportions, the power goes out and the house is suddenly plunged into darkness. At that instant an

unfamiliar voice on the front porch asks for help. Meg reluctantly pushes the curtain aside to see a stranger, his head covered in menacing tattoos. She lets the curtain fall, resolved not to open



the door, when she hears the voice of another man calling her by name, and identifying himself as Larry Whiteduck, from the nearby native reserve. Cautiously Meg

opens the door, and sees that the man is badly injured – the result, his friend says, of an accident with their car. Aware that they cannot survive in the snowstorm, she puts her fears aside and lets the men in. It isn't long before she realizes that Larry's wound is not due to an accident; he's been shot. Thus begins a chilling descent into terror that will threaten the lives of everyone before their ordeal has ended.

It's been said that setting is character, and Harlick's ability to

place the reader firmly in the wilderness that she knows so well lends her work an authenticity that makes for a compelling read. We smell the woods, feel the cold, and experience the frisson that comes from hearing an unexpected sound while thinking you are utterly alone. *A Cold White Fear* will make readers think twice about venturing out alone, or even answering a knock at the door. It is, in short, the perfect read for a dark and stormy night.

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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](mailto:jnapier@deadlydiversions.com)

