

Turbulent Times

WW II Novel explores drama on the home front

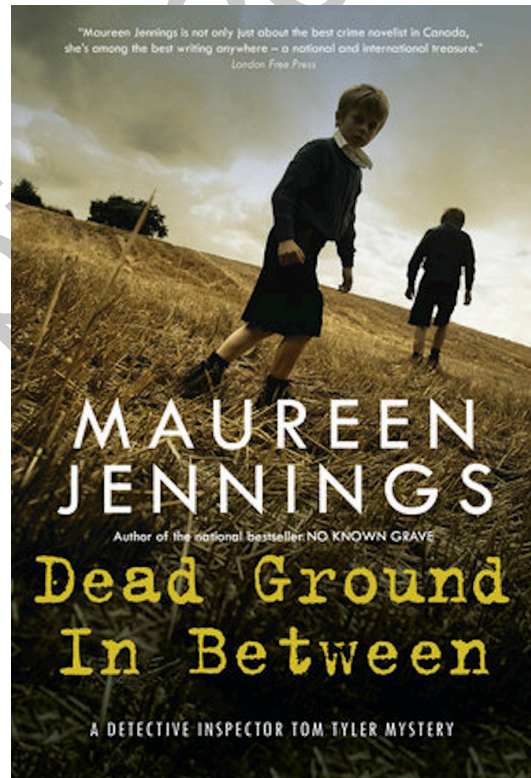
Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

With over a dozen novels and several TV series based on her books, Maureen Jennings ranks in the very top tier of Canadian crime writers. Her latest series, begun in 2011, is set in Britain during the Second World War, and features Detective Inspector Tom Tyler. *Dead Ground in Between* is the fourth book in the series, and focuses on events near the town of Ludlow, Shropshire, during 1942. It is a farming area, forming a bucolic backdrop for the darkening events of the war; but underneath the surface, life is anything but bucolic. First, an elderly farmer goes missing, and his body is found by two young lads who have been evacuated from Holland to the English countryside to escape the violence there. But the boys are concealing a secret that goes back centuries, and which only adds to the puzzle surrounding the farmer's death.

Tyler's investigation leads him to an Italian prisoner of war who is interred nearby. A young Land Army woman billeted at the farm stridently defends his innocence in the farmer's death, leading Tyler to

wonder if there is something between them. And two men who have already caught Tyler's attention for their shady dealings seems to know more than they're



admitting. Meanwhile, Tyler struggles to cope with events in his personal life. When his lover tells him he's free to find someone else, and he does, his life only becomes more complicated.

Maureen Jennings has many literary strengths, among them the

ability to paint a vivid picture of an earlier age. Her stories speak of turbulent times when daily life was certainly challenging, but that also, in retrospect, held out basic pleasures which are not always evident today. Jennings also draws us into her characters' lives, making them often engaging and utterly believable. We experience the challenges, large and small, facing not only people in the

police, but also in the village, in the military, or on the farm, as they struggle to cope with daily life against the backdrop of war.

Dead Ground in Between is well-paced, atmospheric tale, and a fine addition to the Tom Tyler series. It will appeal to readers in search of a delightful and engaging portrayal of an age gone by.

§Since 2005 Jim Napier's reviews and interviews have appeared in several Canadian newspapers and on various crime fiction and literary websites, including his own award-winning site, *Deadly Diversions*. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com



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