

# Troubled Waters

*Brunetti explores the murky history of Venice*

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## *Suspended Sentences*

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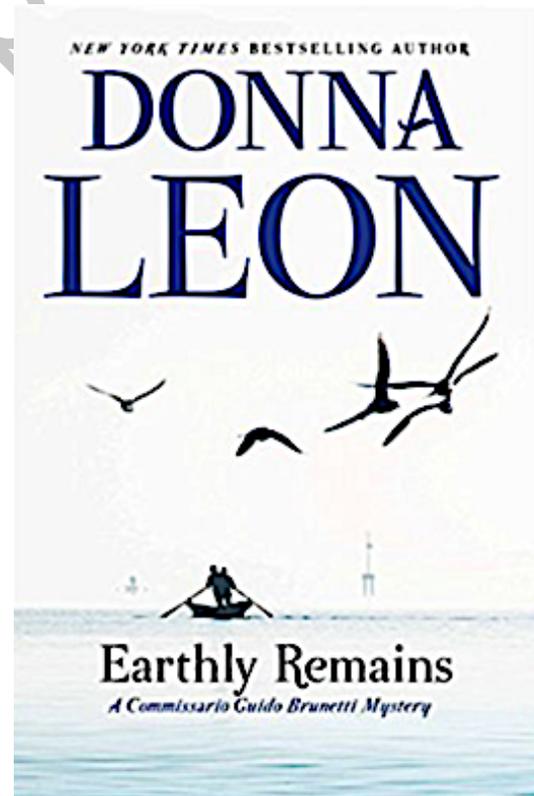
by Jim Napier

We are used to quirky endings, but less so quirky beginnings. When Commissario Guido Brunetti is forced to feign a heart attack in order to prevent his outraged young assistant, officer Pucetti, from attacking an offensive but influential suspect during an interview, things quickly get out of hand. To play his hand out Brunetti is forced to go to the hospital, where the attending dottoressa says there's no physical evidence of a medical crisis. Looking for a graceful way out, Brunetti cites the stress of his job. She accepts that, but at the cost of recommending he take several weeks' leave away from his place of work.

Brunetti's astute wife, Paola, smells a rat, but agrees with the doctor's prescription. She arranges for Brunetti to spend some time on the tip of Sant'Erasmus, one of the many islands that make up Venice. She has a relative with a vacation villa there, looked after by a chartaker and his daughter.

Brunetti travels to Sant'Erasmus and is delighted to learn that the man,

David Casati, is the son of a very good friend with whom he used to row in the lagoon many years ago. Brunetti and the man quickly become friends themselves, and spend their days together on the waters. For Brunetti it is a chance to reconnect with nature, to reminisce about times spent with his old friend, and to forge a new friendship.



But idyllic as Brunetti's time there promises to be, it is marred by events beyond his control. Casati is something of a naturalist, and he has discovered that the bees are dying. Seemingly a small matter perhaps, but important to him. The cause is unclear, and Casati continues to investigate, until one day he disappears. Thus Brunetti is drawn into the murky waters of Venice's past, and before it is over someone will die.

In *Earthly Remains* Donna Leon has delivered yet another fine tale

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Since 2005 more than 500 of 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*. His own crime novel, *Legacy*, was published in April of 2017. He can be reached at [jnapier@deadlydiversions.com](mailto:jnapier@deadlydiversions.com)

featuring one of the most original and enduring characters in crime fiction. We are treated to her nuanced depictions of her mercurial yet quietly dogged protagonist, immersed in a richly textured story line that will hold readers firmly but gently in her grasp. The ending contributes to a wonderful story that manages to be evocative and philosophical at the same time. Quite possibly Leon's best work to date, *Earthly Remains* is a gem.



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