

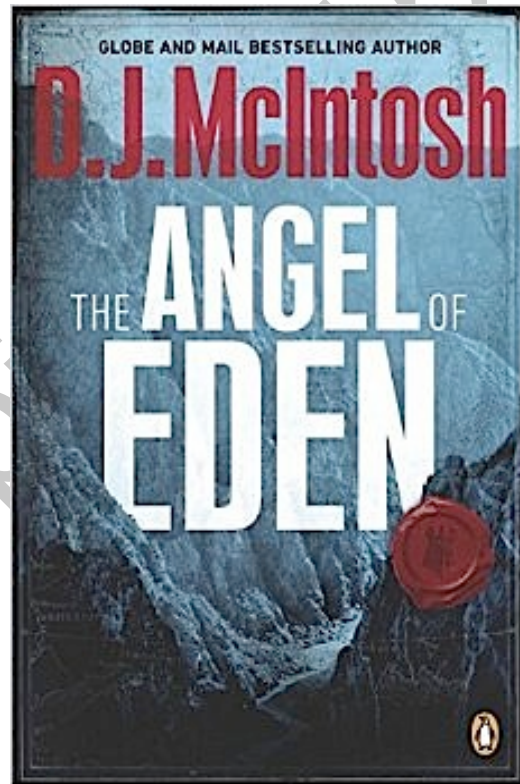
The Angel of Eden

The third in Prize-winning trilogy

Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

Full disclosure: normally, archeological action novels are not my first choice of reading material. All too often they are poorly researched and casually written, the plots taken a step too far for credibility, and substituting mindless action involving two-dimensional superheroes for more nuanced treatment, often with banal dialogue (though perhaps it simply fits the characters). For me, one of the great appeals of good crime fiction is the puzzle at the heart of the tale, challenging readers to match wits with the author, in a contest of reasoning and logic. For these reasons you won't find me praising the questionable virtues of such best-selling authors as Dan Brown and his legions of imitators.



That said, Canadian author D. J. McIntosh has recently completed the latest in her series of tales featuring antiquarian art dealer John Madison, as he tackles yet another puzzle rooted in the often mystical traditions of the

Ancient Middle East. These are thoughtful and well-constructed stories that will appeal to a wide audience, including readers who are reluctant to lay reason aside and delve into the murky realms of the unknowable.

Her story begins in northwestern Iran, near the border with Turkey, in 1970. A young woman is being urged by her father to flee their home with her baby and seek refuge in the city of Tabriz. The cause of his concern soon becomes clear: her father possesses a book that evil men will do anything to acquire, and they have already killed at least one man for it. She mounts a horse guided by her brother, and leaves the only home she has ever known, realizing she's seeing it—and most of her family—for the very last time.

Thirty-five years later antiquarian John Madison is resting in a borrowed Manhattan apartment, savouring a box of chocolate truffles that has been delivered for Valentine's Day. The sender, a

stranger named Margaux Bennet, asks in return that he meet her to discuss a project, and he agrees. When he goes to her flat Madison learns that she is a ghostwriter, and is working on an article about him. She's been hired by a man named Lucas Strauss, a Harvard-educated illusionist interested in tracking down a rare book stolen from him by a man named George Helmstretter. The man had claimed he was descended from none other than the real Dr. Faust, the legendary 15th-century German alchemist and magician. Madison is skeptical and not interested, until Strauss offers him something that no one else can, something for which he has been searching for years: the knowledge of who his own parents were.

It is the beginning of a relationship, and a quest, that will take Madison and Bennett halfway around the world, reveal the possibility of an ancient world rooted in myth, but very much a reality, and put both of their lives at risk.

The third in her best-selling and award-winning trilogy, McIntosh draws upon her formidable knowledge of Mesopotamian studies to craft a solid tale that is both rooted in fact and intriguing. *The Angel of Eden* is testimony to the fact that if handled intelligently, one can base a tale in mystical beliefs that will appeal to intelligent

readers. And to those who might be inclined to question the basis for her latest book, in a quotation taken from a German academic, McIntosh cannily offers a parting word: "The only magic is really that of words."

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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

