

# Those that can, do

## *Former Canadian Chief Justice pens a winner*

### *Suspended Sentences*

by Jim Napier

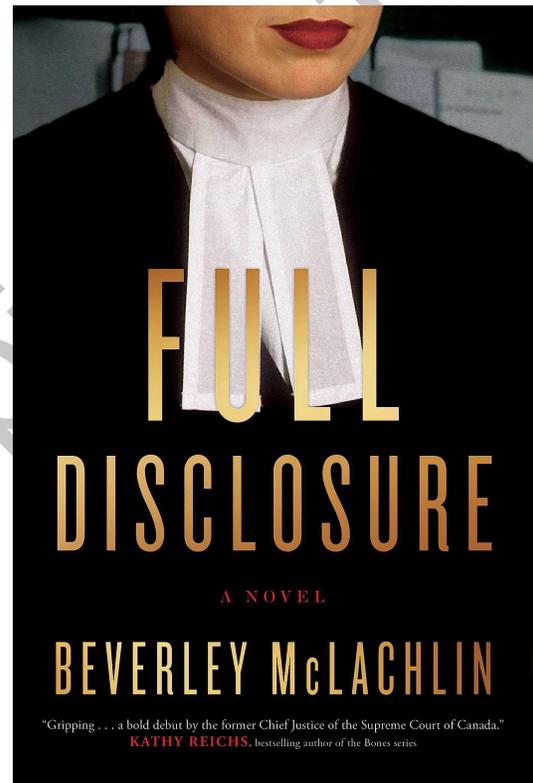
When many people retire they look forward to a life of leisure, far removed from the working tasks that defined their lives for so many years.

Not so Beverly McLachlin. After decades in the legal profession, including serving as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, what did she do? Why, she turned to writing a novel about a lawyer struggling to win her case in court. What else?

And the tale begins with a bang. Although she heads a tiny criminal law firm in Vancouver, Jill Truitt finds herself tapped to defend urbane businessman Vincent Trussardi on a charge of murdering his wife Laura, a prominent and highly-regarded socialite and social benefactor found dead in their home.

Defending Trussardi will prove to be a challenge. Trussardi is very wealthy, an intensely private man, self-contained to the point of arrogance, and conceals a personal history that can only harm his

defense. His background will not endear him to the jurors: Oxford-



educated, he collects cars and major works of art, sails in World Cup races, and in the past had kept the company of a succession of beautiful women.

Ignoring everyone's warnings Truitt takes the case, and before long her talents put to the test; for amongst the evidence against her client are the facts that his wife had been

found dead in her own bed, the victim of a gunshot to the head; the gun used to end her life was owned by Vincent Trussardi, and kept in a safe to which only he had the combination. His alibi is that he was out sailing alone when his wife was killed, and had his cell phone turned off. Not a promising beginning. Add to that the fact that Truitt will be facing a cunning and devious opposing counsel in the courtroom and the young lawyer is facing an almost certain recipe for disaster.

Making life yet more difficult for Truitt, Laura Trussardi was the cousin of Michael St. John, a man with whom Jill has been in a close personal relationship for thirteen years. He implores her to drop the case, and she refuses—a decision that just might drive them apart forever. There are many revelations that stem from the case and her investigation, but before the case has ended Truitt will make a life-altering discovery that will call into question not only her handling of the case, but also her personal future.

*Full Disclosure* is a fine, layered novel, part courtroom drama, part whodunit, and all entertaining

thriller. As already noted, McLachlin has impeccable credentials, having served as a lawyer and jurist for nearly four decades, including 17 years as Chief Justice of the Canadian Supreme Court. But *Full Disclosure* is no mere personal vanity piece, something produced to while away her retirement years and gain her a snippet of fame. It is a classic legal thriller and an entirely credible tale featuring believable characters, including not only an engaging protagonist but also the slimy and self-serving denizens of back alleys and the corridors of law; and although occasionally predictable, her story contains enough twists and turns to satisfy the most ardent fan of courtroom dramas. There are as well some tongue-in-cheek in-jokes: “*The Arthur Erickson building that houses the Supreme Court of British Columbia is light and airy, and [contains] a portrait of the chief justice of Canada on the wall (when she was young and looked good) to remind me that sometimes, occasionally, women actually do rule.*” Readers will, I am sure, look forward to the next instalment in this promising new series in Canadian crime writing.

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Previously posted on *Reviewing the Evidence*, May 2018.

§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*. His own crime

novel, *Legacy*, was published in the Spring of 2017, and the next in his series is scheduled for release in the Fall of 2018.

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