

# So Dark It Could Be Irish

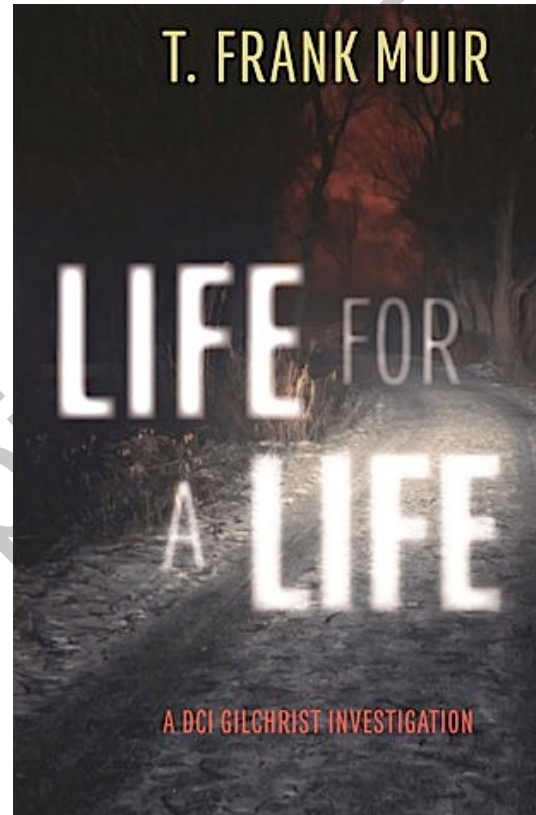
## *Fast-paced thriller set in the home of golf*

### *Suspended Sentences*

by Jim Napier

**St. Andrews, Scotland** is justly famed as the home of golf, drawing millions of tourists to the charming town each year. But it seems it has a very much darker side, as DCI Andy Gilchrist is drawn to a coastal path overlooking the sea, where the body of a young woman lies amongst the tall grasses, frozen to death on a chill December morning.

With his DI in hospital recovering from an assault, Gilchrist is joined in his investigation by a new Detective Sergeant, the improbably named Jessica (Jesse) Janes. She's recently transferred from Strathclyde, and very much a work in progress. With a cynical take on life, a smart mouth, and a lot of attitude—not helped by the fact that she's a single mother caring for a teenage son, deaf since birth—her dysfunctional family includes two brothers with criminal form and a manipulative mother who wants to take custody of her grandson and will stop at nothing, including fabricating stories about her daughter designed to land her in trouble, in order to do so.



On this, the first day of Jesse's new posting, it's the deep end of the pool for all concerned: before it has ended the team will discover two more bodies in a farmhouse nearby, both bound and murdered, and linked to the victim on the cliffs. Each of the three victims has a small tattoo underneath their arms: two small bones that resemble the figure eleven. It's meaning, however, is unclear.

Already enough to keep Gilchrist and his team more than occupied, the police soon receive a dvd that records, in appalling detail, a grisly beheading. The killer is not identifiable, but the victim is clear. It's one of their own: DS Gordon McArthur. Yet another disk depicts the decapitation of two notorious Russian mobsters, with their privates stuffed into their mouths. Clearly the killer, whoever he is, is both fearless and brutal. The police go all out to catch the man, but before it has ended the body count will approach a dozen, with Gilchrist's own life hanging precariously in the balance.

*Life for a Life* is one of the most atmospheric and gripping crime novels I've come across in a long while. Reminiscent of Ian Rankin's work for it's uncompromising portrayal of the dark underbelly of organized crime, coupled with a collection of interesting, though flawed, characters and snappy

dialogue, author Frank Muir takes his story to a new level of violence. All this gore is only slightly leavened by references to Gilchrist's personal life, which comes under the microscope when Rebecca Cooper, the married forensic pathologist, determines to get Andy Gilchrist into her bed, something he's reluctant to repeat in the aftermath of his own wife's desertion.

*Life for a Life* paints a very different picture of the genteel and picturesque town that the world knows as the home of golf. It is the fourth in a series that already includes a fifth (*The Meat-ing Room*, 2014), with another (*Blood Torment*) scheduled for release in 2016. Not for the faint of heart, the series will find an avid audience with those who like their crime fiction dark and more than oc-casionally gritty.

*Life for a Life* is published by the Chicago Review Press.

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**Jim Napier** is a professional crime-fiction reviewer based in Canada. His book reviews and author interviews have been featured in several Canadian newspapers as well as on such websites as *Spinetingler Magazine*, *The Rap Sheet*, *January magazine*, *Reviewing the Evidence*, *Crime Time*, *Shots Magazine* the *Montreal Review of Books*, the *Ottawa Review of Books*, and *Amazon.com*, as well as on his own award-winning site, <http://deadlydiversions.com/> He can be reached at [jnapier@deadlydiversions.com](mailto:jnapier@deadlydiversions.com)