

Debut thriller beats the odds

Suspended Sentences

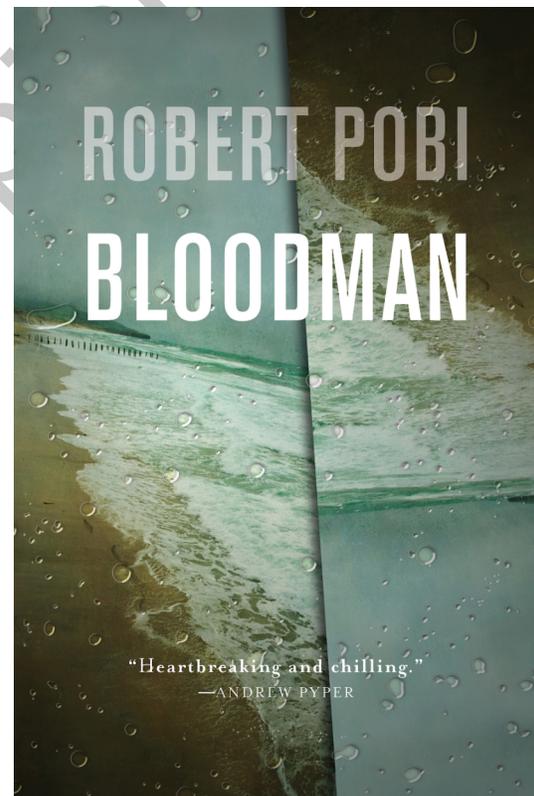
by Jim Napier

IF THERE'S A MORE ENDANGERED species than debut authors I don't know what it is. Handicapped by having unknown names, almost always given a limited print run with often minimal publicity, their success depends on attracting the attention of book buyers who, according to some studies, linger over a title on bookstore shelves an average of seven *seconds* before moving on. It's a wonder that any new authors manage to survive such an inhospitable environment, and of course most simply do not; confined to remainder bins or returned to publishers for pulping after a few scant weeks on the shelves, the fate of the typical debut novelist is harsh indeed.

Yet against all odds, each year promising new authors surface and incredibly, some even thrive. One such author is Montrealer Robert Pobi, whose debut novel *Bloodman* is a compelling, original tale that will be an exciting find for thriller fans in search of a quality read.

In *Bloodman*, Jake Cole — born Jacob Coleridge Jr. — has returned to Montauk, Long Island after an absence of nearly three decades, to deal with his father, who's been fighting a losing battle against the crippling effects of Alzheimer's Disease. A painter with an international reputation, the elderly recluse has been hospitalized fol-

lowing an accident stemming from his dementia. The timing is unfortunate: a massive hurricane is rapidly converging on the small community. Quickly gathering force as it approaches the East Coast, the storm threatens to decimate the exposed village and its vulnerable residents. As the locals prepare for the worst, news crews move into the area to begin their grim reportage.



Even the most terrified residents cannot imagine the horrors that are about to engulf their isolated peninsula, for there is another storm descending on the region. Jake has

not even settled into his childhood home when he gets a call from the local sheriff: a multiple homicide has occurred only minutes away, and aware that he is out of his depth, the sheriff has contacted the FBI for assistance. They gave him Jake's name, aware that he's nearby; as a consultant to the Feds Jake has dealt with some of the most dangerous killers in the country. Torn between his family crisis and the murder case, he reluctantly agrees to help.

BUT NOT EVEN JAKE COLE is prepared for the grim tableau that awaits him at the crime scene. A woman and child have been savagely murdered, literally skinned alive. The sheriff of the normally placid community, a decent man, simply cannot comprehend the sheer brutality of the crime. Cole, however, recognizes

the signature of the killer from an earlier case: it involved his own mother, murdered when Jake was only a child. As he moves to track down a deranged serial killer Cole must come to terms with his own horribly scarred past, and before the case comes to a conclusion it will take a terrifyingly personal turn that not even Cole can anticipate.

AN EXQUISITELY LAYERED TALE that will haunt your dreams, *Bloodman* is intensely graphic – as it must be; but it is also a probing account of one man's troubled journey through life, told with heart-rending pathos. Wrapped up in a literate, compelling debut that can more than hold its own with the best thriller writers of today, *Bloodman* should generate legions of fans for this talented author.

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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, and *Type M for Murder*, as well as on his own award-winning site, *Deadly Diversions*. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com

