

The pen and the sword

Journalist caught up in murder

Suspended Sentences

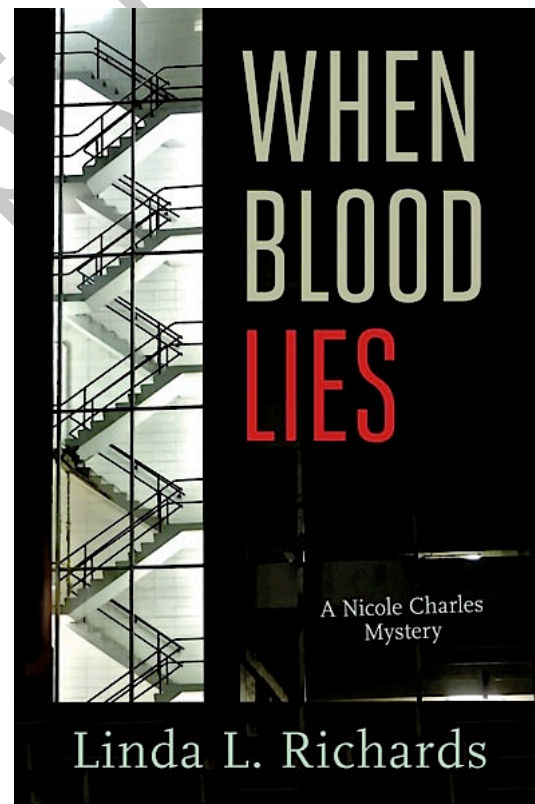
by Jim Napier

During the past decade Canadian author Linda Richards has penned an enviable list of crime novels, her most recent two featuring Vancouver-based society columnist Nicole Charles, whose normal duties consist of covering weddings, product launches, gallery openings and fashion shows. But that's about to change. The *Post* is downsizing, and in the future Nicole will need to work from home. The good news is that the paper is prepared to buy her a desk.

Nicole inherited her apartment from her grandmother, and the look is definitely retro, mostly dating from the mid-nineteen hundreds. Deciding to give the IKEA look a pass, and armed with her employer's budget of \$800, Nicole sets out for a local auction house to try and find something with character.

Before the auction begins Nicole discovers a midcentury Danish modern desk from the estate of a well-known Vancouver architect named Morrison Brine, who had recently died. She decides to go for it, but discovers that a man in the audience is bidding against her. The bidding heats up, and soon Nicole is at her limit. She's resigned to it slipping away, but before the bidding

can go further half a dozen Vancouver policemen burst into the proceedings and arrest the man, cuffing him and marching him from the sales room. The auctioneer is forced to begin the bidding anew, and when the dust settles Nicole has her desk, and at a bargain price.



Returning home, Nicole calls the paper's city editor and suggests that she might have a story for him. The dramatic arrest at the auction house is certainly newsworthy, and might, she

hopes, be her ticket out of the grind of the gossip columnist and into the world of covering real news, a move she's been wanting to make for some time. But Nicole is unaware that her newly-purchased desk itself is still very much front and centre, concealing a murder and holding out the possibility of her finally landing a front-page news story.

Linda Richards deftly draws on her journalist's background to produce a fast-paced and entertaining tale with a twist near the end. The latest entry in Orca Publishers' growing list of short novels aimed at readers seeking a quick but quality read, *When Blood Lies* will not disappoint.

Originally reviewed on the *Ottawa Review of Books*, February 2016.

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



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