

# Singer Sequel

## *Smallman builds on series debut*

### *Suspended Sentences*

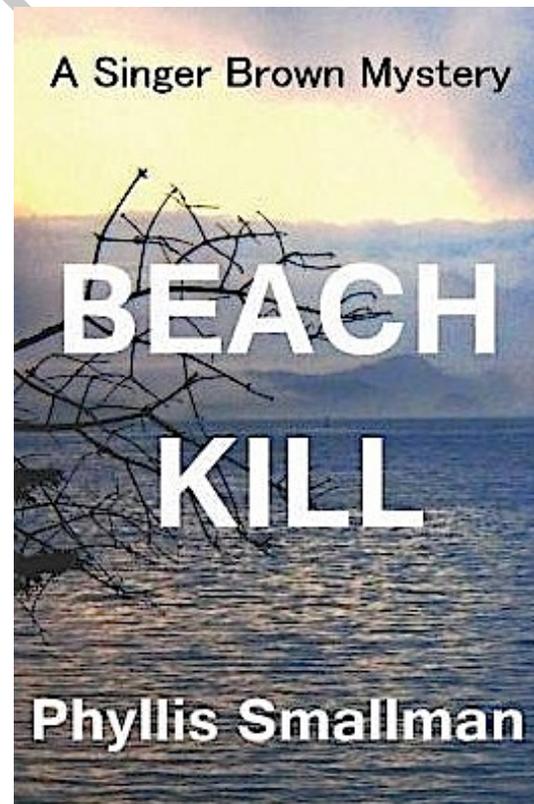
by Jim Napier

Canadian crime writer Phyllis Smallman recently released the second Singer Brown novel, which follows on the heels of the debut novel in the series, *Long Gone Man*. Singer's life is in limbo, her plans on hold while she lives in her new home on Glenphiddie island, a West Coast sanctuary to aging hippies and artists. The home had been a behest from her former rock band leader and mentor, Steven Davids, but Singer has to live there for a year to establish it as her principal residence, and so avoid paying heavy inheritance taxes.

In her short time there Singer's life is proving to be anything but dull. The body of a young woman has been found nearby, on a small forbidding outcropping called Ghost Island. Her head has been bashed in, and in the small local detachment of half a dozen RCMP officers Singer's lover, RCMP officer Louis Wilmot, is charged with investigating the case.

The body is soon identified as a local woman, Trina Strickner. She'd worked as a bartender at one of the island's watering holes, the Ferryman. She was also an aspiring writer, and kept a diary. Singer has that diary. It reveals that she'd planned to leave the island for a job in Vancouver, and

that she'd expected to take Cody Frieberg, a lover not yet graduated from high school, with her. She hadn't told her mother—nor, it seems, has she told the young man himself. Ominously, when Singer asks Cody when he'd last been with Trina, he reveals that it was only the day before, the day she'd been killed. Even more disturbingly he admitted they'd quarreled. But Cody insists that Trina had had several lovers. Singer is convinced that Cody isn't telling the whole truth.



When the diary disappears Singer wonders whether it might contain a clue pointing to Trina's killer. It's not long before Wilmot makes an even more disturbing discovery: it seems that Trina's stepfather had been molesting her, and Trina was going to have him charged. In the cloistered community that defined Trina's brief life, the circle of those who might have been involved in her death soon grows to include still others motivated by jealousy and fear.

Phyllis Smallman writes convincing, atmospheric tales involving believable people whose lives have been touched by crime. She made an auspicious debut eight years ago with *Margarita Nights*, the first of a Florida-based series featuring bartender and amateur sleuth Sherry Travis. The novel garnered Canada's Arthur Ellis Award for the best unpublished

author, and then went on to be nominated for the Malice Domestic Award in the U.S., and was shortlisted for Britain's Debut Dagger Award for best first novel. After writing half a dozen novels in the series she launched a new series featuring ex-rock performer Singer Brown, who journeys to the home of her mentor of the coast of British Columbia, only to find him dead and she a leading suspect in his murder. Drawing on the altogether different setting of BC's island culture Smallman showed herself fully up to the task, winning the Independent Publisher's gold medal in the Mystery/Thriller category in 2014, for *Long Gone Man*. *Beach Kill* builds on that storyline, and will win Smallman many new fans.

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Since 2005 more than 500 of 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*. His own crime novel is scheduled to appear in the Spring of 2017. He can be reached at [jnapier@deadlydiversions.com](mailto:jnapier@deadlydiversions.com)