

All Good Things

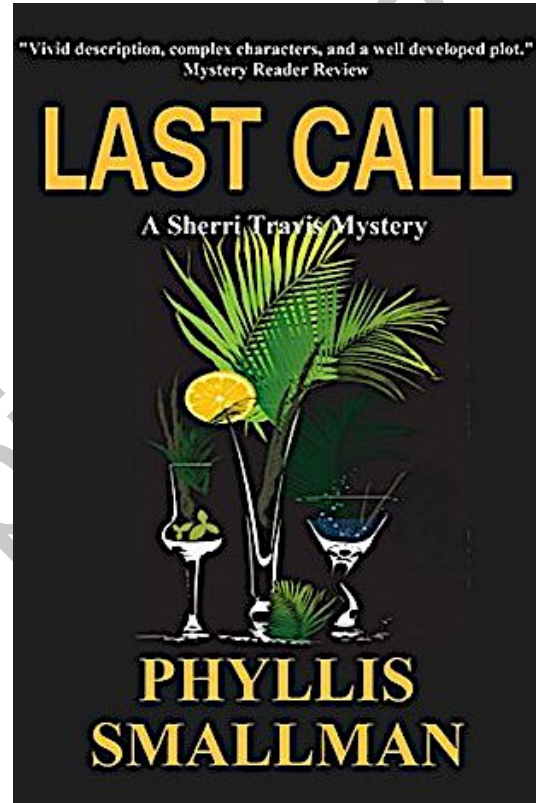
Captivating series draws to a close

Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

Move over, Bogart, and make way for Key Largo Redux. For the swan song of full-time bartender and part-time amateur sleuth Sherri Travis, Canadian crime writer Phyllis Smallman has her travelling to the Florida Keys in the face of an impending hurricane named Alma. Sherri and her friend Marley Hemming are in search of some last-minute fun before the deluge.

For Sherri the trip is an adrenaline-fueled catharsis. Clay, the light of her life, has been murdered, and she's trying desperately to fill the aching void in her life. Pulling into the Rawhide Saloon they touch base with the manager of the bar, who, it turns out, is in jam: someone is skimming the profits, and the owner thinks it's her. As a former bar owner Sherri knows all the angles, and she offers to help track down the culprit. In short order she runs into Dixon Selby, who she knew had been busted for pushing drugs, and who may still be dealing. Somehow he'd avoided doing time. The rest of the regulars include Father Pat, a defrocked priest with an all-too-worldly interest in Sweet Young Things, an Elvis impersonator named Jon Kidd, a bartender with the improbable name of Skippy, and an undercover cop.



Before long Sherri figures out who's been raiding the till, but her plans go on hold when Marley disappears, along with the Elvis impersonator. Never one to let her friends down, Sherri enlists the help of Lexi Divine, a local drag queen, to help find her friend before the storm hits. But well before the hurricane makes landfall Sherri's in over her head, and her own life is very much on the line, all the while dealing with the forces of nature.

The Sherri Travis series began with Phyllis Smallman's debut novel, *Margarita Nights*. It garnered the first Unhanged Arthur Award from the Crime Writers of Canada in 2005, and with good reason: it was a corker, with a sassy and engaging protagonist, and a strong setting. Twelve years on and five more novels later, it remains a signature series, fresh in every sense of the word. But never one to rest on her laurels, Smallman

has added a novella, four short mystery series and a second set of novels set on Canada's west coast, and featuring ex-hippie vocalist Singer Brown. They are all cracking good reading, but none, in my opinion, more captivating than the Sherri Travis tales. The aptly-titled *Last Call* is the final book in the series, and I for one, will miss this irresistible sleuth.

Since 2005 more than 500 of Jim Napier's reviews and interviews have appeared in several Canadian newspapers and on such websites as *Spinetangler*, *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, *Legacy*, was published in April of 2017. He can be reached at



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