

Unspeakably Evil

Suspended Sentences

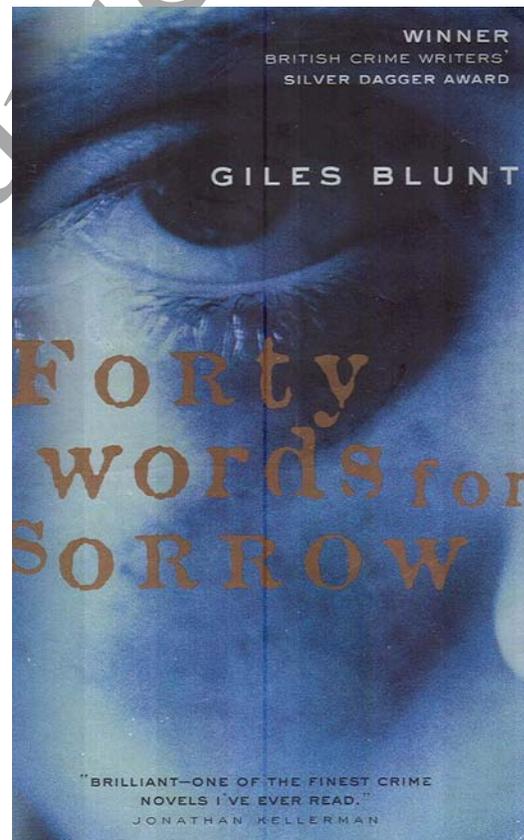
by Jim Napier

With over six and a half billion people on the planet, it is a statistical certainty that many persons will lie outside the norms of ordinary, civilized behavior. A smaller number will be so dysfunctional as to require custodial care, and a tiny fraction of those will perform horrific, terrible deeds, actions that cause us to question our most basic assumptions about what it is to be a human being. Most of us, thankfully, will never encounter such individuals; but those who do—and live to tell about it—will carry the scars, inside or without, of their experience for the rest of their lives. This week's pick is about just such twisted souls, and the many ways that they affect the lives of those around them. It is also a moving account of ordinary people, with human flaws and failings, who help to make us safe from those walking aberrations of humanity who are unspeakably evil.

Giles Blunt

Giles Blunt is a bestselling author in Canada, and is rapidly winning international acclaim. He was raised in North Bay, Ontario, as he puts it, “a child of parents so English that the space on their passports for citizenship could only be filled in: British Beyond Belief.” After attending a Catholic boy's school for most of his youth, he moved to New York City in 1980, where he shared an apartment with an American woman, Janna, who was later to become his wife.

Giles began his literary career writing poetry. After emigrating to the US, he worked in bars and hotels until landing a job as a screenwriter of police dramas, including a script for *Law and Order*. His first novel, *The Cold Eye*, was eventually made into a film by French director Alain Jessua, which was released as *Les Couleurs du Diable*. In 2002 Giles and Janna returned to Canada, settling in Toronto, where they continue to make their home.



Forty Words for Sorrow (2000) is the first novel in the John Cardinal series; it won the British Crime Writers' Silver Dagger Award in 2001. It was followed by *The Delicate Storm* (2002), which won an Arthur Ellis Award in 2004, and *Blackfly Season*, nominated for an Arthur Ellis Award for Best Canadian Novel of 2005.

Giles is currently working on his fourth John Cardinal novel, called *By the Time You Read This*.

Forty Words for Sorrow
(Seal Books, 2000)

Algonquin Bay, in the depths of winter: detective Sergeant John Cardinal, an investigator with the Algonquin Bay Police Department, is summoned to the site of a body found in the Manitou Islands. The victim's remains have decayed and been mutilated by animals, and are frozen in ice. They are the first tangible evidence in a string of disappearances, all involving young people, that has haunted the isolated community in recent months. He and his partner, DS Lise Delorme, are assigned the case. Complicating matters, Delorme has been ordered to look into Cardinal's personal life, to discover just how it is that a small-town police officer can afford to send his daughter to Yale University to study art. And John Cardinal has other baggage: his wife Catherine has been institutionalized once again in the psychiatric wing of the local hospital, suffering from depression.

In the course of his investigation Cardinal will wrestle with his feelings about his wife, cross paths with his arrogant superior, be drawn into a case that involves a secret from his past that

will threaten to end his career, and look down the barrel of a crazed killer.

Explores the human psyche

A clearly talented writer, Giles Blunt skillfully explores the full gamut of the human psyche. He lays bare the sordid souls and twisted thinking of sociopathic killers; but he also examines, with great sensitivity and insight, the range of emotions experienced by those who suffer from bipolar disorder, and family members who must somehow cope with their afflictions. His characters are believable (sometimes all-too-much-so), and his protagonists, John Cardinal and Lise Delorme, are fresh and engaging.

Forty Words for Sorrow is a deftly-constructed, literate tale. It has a puzzle at its heart, with sufficient police-procedural forensics to satisfy even the most intransigent *CSI* buff, and enough suspense to keep you reading until the final, gripping, conclusion. Despite his dark themes, you will want to read more by this author.

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