

On a Roll

Bowen dishes up another fine tale

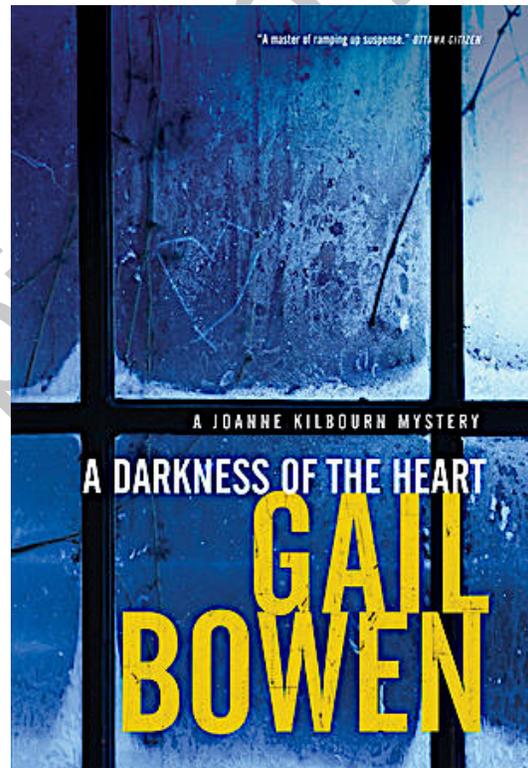
Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

One of Canada's most widely-acclaimed crime writers, Gail Bowen was this year named a Grand Master of the genre by the Crime Writers of Canada. Recently she released the eighteenth in her popular Joanna Kilbourn mystery series. The novel cements her reputation as a uniquely talented writer unafraid to create nuanced characters and a plot that takes on challenging social themes.

Joanne has recently discovered that the man she had always believed to be her father was the best friend of renowned artist Desmond Love. Now she has learned that Love was in fact her biological father. A top Broadway producer is planning to mount a film adaptation based on his Broadway play about the two families, and Joanne's daughter, Taylor Shreve, has become close to the young lead actress in the film. It looks as though things could not be going better for the family when ugly suspicions surface about the behavior of key people involved in the production. As Joanne and her husband Zack attempt to come to grips with these disturbing claims, they are forced to confront the possibility that if, true, the issue threatens to jeopardize not only the

making of the film, but also people's personal lives.



A Darkness of the Heart marks out new territory for Gail Bowen and raises important issues of our times. The narrative is leisurely paced, giving the author an opportunity to build a textured account of her character's lives. In many ways the main story is the backstory, but Bowen adroitly uses that structure as the basis for a probing exploration of the issue facing the reader: how

would we act in this situation, where reputations and livelihoods are at stake, and unproven accusations pose a dark threat hanging over the heads of more people than simply those

accused? *A Darkness of the Heart* is Bowen's finest work to date, and puts the author in the top tier of crime writers, Canadian or otherwise. I cannot recommend it too highly.

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Jim Napier is a professional crime-fiction reviewer based in Canada. Since 2005 his book reviews and author interviews have been featured in several Canadian newspapers and on multiple websites. His crime novel *Legacy* was published in April of 2017, and the second in the series, *Ridley's War*, is scheduled for release later this year. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com

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