

Cannabis Capers

Rob Brunet's madcap debut a hit

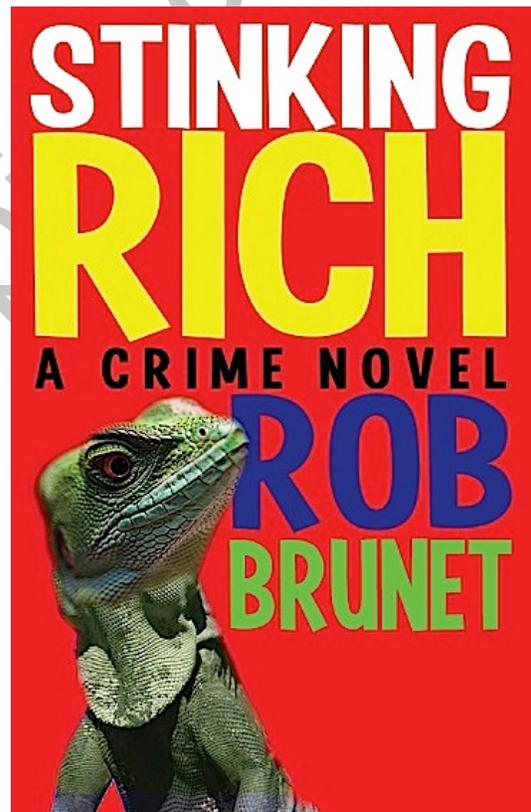
Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

In Rob Brunet's debut novel we are treated to a madcap action-comedy about Danny Grant, a hapless pot-grower in the Kawarthas who runs afoul of a biker gang and makes off with their cash. Not the thing to do, of course, as such people tend to have short fuses and long memories. In the ensuing mayhem Danny finds himself serving three years for manslaughter with a cell buddy he would willingly trade for the wrong end of a chain saw. Small wonder, then, that he takes a walk on his day pass to retrieve "his" stash. But before his saga has ended Danny will be make some life-altering discoveries and achieve some small measure of redemption.

The story opens with Grant (our Hapless Protagonist), his mother, who waitresses at a local restaurant and watering-hole, and Lester Freedon, a free-loading pal, along with Lester's maniacal guard dog Shooter. Interesting, but not yet compelling. Before long, however, we are introduced to a bizarre cast of misfits, oddballs and ne'er-do-wells, and they make the tale come alive. At the centre of the approaching storm are Perko Ratwick, a biker with a penchant for leather chaps with fringes, and Marty "Mongoose" Muldoon, a fellow biker with

the unfortunately-named Libidos, together with a nearly-blind recluse in a cabin in the deep woods, Ernie McCann, who harbours two secrets, one of which could just get him killed.



Each of these colourful characters has a role to play in Brunet's delightfully antic tale. Perko Ratwick has built a state-of-the-art grow-op on an abandoned farm, and put Danny in charge of looking after it. But after stealing a car and running out of gas, Danny's

friend Terry Miner gets picked up by a local cop, who discovers a bag of pot in the car and wants to arrest Terry for it. In an effort to cut a deal Terry offers to lead him to the grow-op; as luck would have it they arrive just as Perko and his gang show up to exchange cash for the crop with some out-of-town buyers, setting the stage for the mayhem that follows.

Stinking Rich is a fast-paced narrative that combines psychotic violence with manic humour with genre-bending fantasy. Think Quentin

Tarantino meets Bill Murray meets Dr. Who. It would be a cautionary tale if anyone were likely to find himself in such circumstances; but then, if they were, they'd likely throw caution to the winds. We've read it before, of course, but Brunet handles it with outrageously black humour. Published by Down and Out Books, *Stinking Rich* is an entertaining take on how life has a tendency to deal from the bottom of the deck, and some people just can't walk away from the game.

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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 site, *Deadly Diversions*. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com



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