

What Happens in Vegas...

Murder and mayhem make for entertaining read

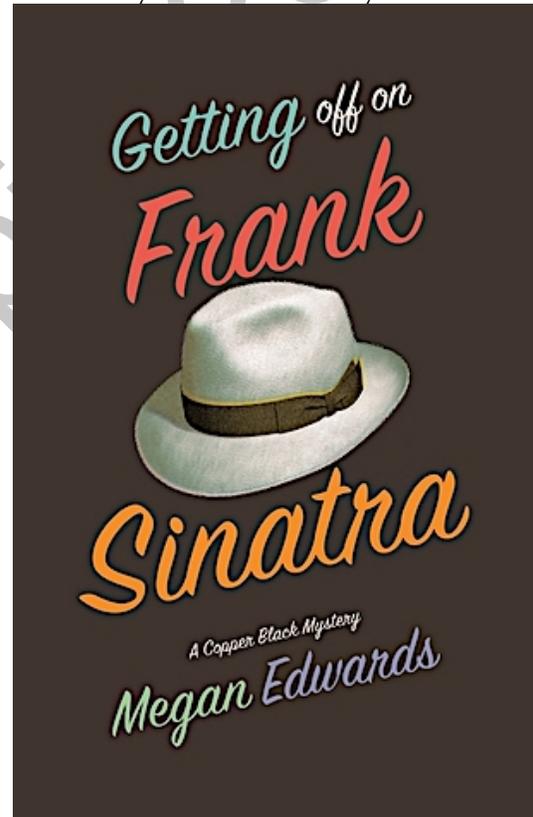
Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

Copper Black is an aspiring journalist in her late twenties working as the arts and entertainment editor at a local newspaper, Las Vegas Light. She's not without ambition, and is trying to parlay her present job into a promotion to columnist with her own byline, competing against another staffer with similar aspirations.

On the social side, things are complicated. Copper's current boyfriend has just announced that his not-quite-ex-wife Rebecca is pregnant. He's trying to have his relationship both ways, and unsurprisingly, she is not inclined to indulge him. So when ex-boyfriend Daniel emails Copper that he's coming to town and interested in seeing her, she invites him to stay at a sumptuous home she's housesitting. Originally built by a Las Vegas mobster for his chorus-line girlfriend, the present owner has been called away suddenly due to a family crisis. The house has all the luxuries she could want. It also has a live-in guest, a neophyte filmmaker who's working in the basement on his latest project.

In the course of her job Copper is invited to an event at a local academy. Founded by socialite



Marilyn Weaver, it is an upscale and highly successful training ground for students with exceptional talent and potential. While there she meets Marilyn Weaver's son, Sean, and he

invites her to his mother's house for a swim and lunch following the event. But soon after arriving Copper makes a gruesome discovery: Marilyn's body is hanging in a closet in the master bedroom.

The body turns out to be only the first in a series of crises Copper will face. When she grows suspicious of someone close to Marilyn, Copper heads for her new digs for safety. It turns out to be a bad move, and she finds herself locked in the filmmaker's studio, surrounded by explosives used for special effects, with a strong scent of smoke coming from nearby.

So far, a pretty standard puzzle tale, with the colourful atmosphere of Las Vegas forming the backdrop. But add to this a family reunion involving Copper's remarried mother and divorced father with his new paramour Graham, carnivorous plants, and a tortoise named Oscar, and you have the ingredients for an entertaining mix of madcap mayhem and murder. Part thriller, part romance fiction, part amateur sleuth and all damsel-in-distress, *Getting Off on Frank Sinatra* will appeal to readers in search of colorful characters, lots of action, and a breezy style, in an original setting.

Previously reviewed on *Reviewing the Evidence*, March 2018.

Since 2005 Jim Napier's reviews and interviews have appeared in several Canadian newspapers and on various crime fiction and literary websites, including his own award-winning site, Deadly Diversions. His debut crime novel *Legacy* was published in the Spring of 2017, and the second in the series is scheduled for release in the Fall of 2018.

