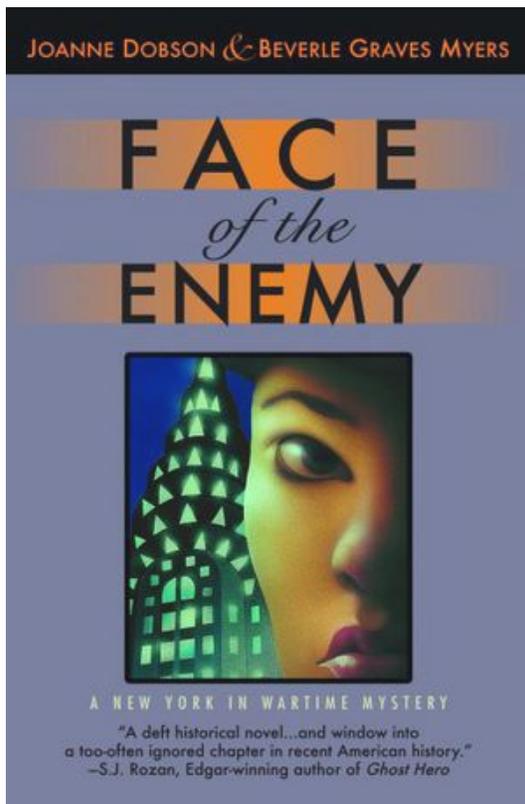


We are all victims: *the many faces of war*

Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

JUST IN TIME for Remembrance Day, and fittingly, a reminder that not all the victims of war are soldiers, or even their families. Three timely tales that show that when nations collide, everyone is affected.



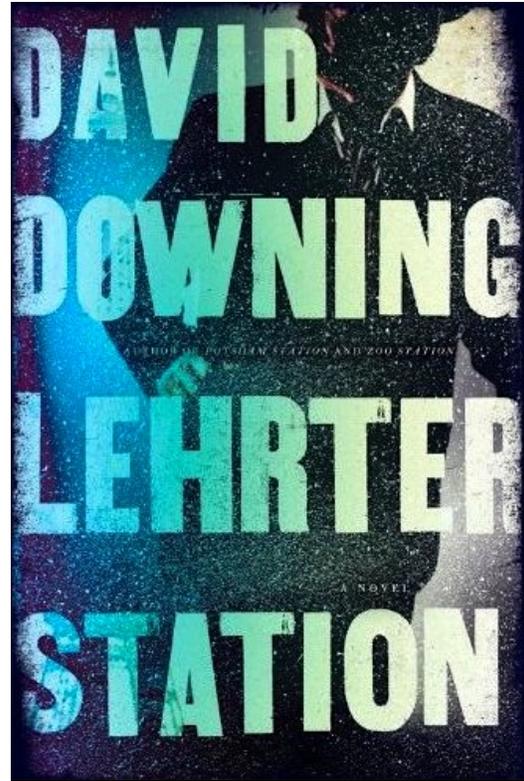
**Joanne Dobson
and Beverle Graves Myers,**
Face of the Enemy
(Poisoned Pen Press, 2012)

New York City, December 1941: suddenly and without warning, Pearl Harbor has been attacked by the Japanese, and America is gripped by hysteria. Asians are banned from American citizenship, and across the nation the FBI is arresting Japanese and Germans as enemy aliens. Caught up in this net is Masako Fumi, a prominent artist and the wife of American academic Robert Oakley. She is taken to a federal detention center on Ellis Island, where she is interrogated about her homeland connections. The fact that her father is an important official in the Japanese government doesn't help. As the federal agents press her relentlessly in an effort to determine whether she is an enemy agent, local authorities make an ominous discovery: one of Masako's paintings at a local gallery has been defaced, and at the base of the painting lies the body of the owner of the art gallery. He has been brutally murdered.

Robert Oakley is elderly and infirm, and his doctor realizes that he could well take a turn for the worse unless his wife's plight is cleared up. He persuades Oakley's nurse, Louise Hunter, to look into the case and try to gain his wife's release. No investi-

gator, but concerned about Oakley's precarious health, she reluctantly agrees. Her roommate, Cabby Ward, is a journalist who's been relegated to minor stories, her male colleagues assigned to cover the war. Sensing an important story in Masako's situation, she offers to help Louise; but she has her own agenda. Before the dust settles their inquiries will reach from Masako's circle of personal friends to embrace people she doesn't even know, immigrants like herself, but from very different worlds. It seems that when nations collide everyone is caught up in the maelstrom, and no one is safe.

In *Face of the Enemy* Dobson and Myers effectively capture a turbulent time in American history, and exploit it to dramatic effect. They've done their homework, and it shows: the dialogue is right, and the dated attitudes and actions that marked the events of those days come through clearly and believably. Using multiple points of view and converging plotlines the authors have produced a compelling tale of how a nation can go tragically wrong.



David Downing, *Lehrter Station*
(Soho Crime, 2012)

A classic cat-and-mouse game – except it's no game. David Downing's latest novel chronicles one man's odyssey in a nation emerging from war and pulled in many directions at once.

November, 1945. World War II has ended, and people on both sides of the conflict struggle to put the events of the past five years behind them and rebuild their lives. In London, journalist and freelance spy John Russell is on the move again, trying to piece together the remains of his life with his German girlfriend, the actress Effi Koenen. But his plans take an unexpected turn when he is tracked down by Yevgeny Shchepkin, an NKVD agent he has worked with in the past, and who lays claim once

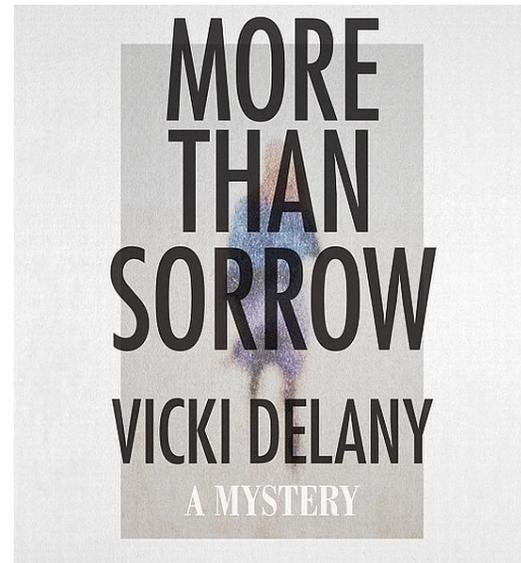
more to his clandestine services. In order to secure his family's safety he promised to work for the Russians in the future. It was a Faustian bargain, and now the time has come to pay the bill.

Russell returns to Germany with Effi, but not before striking a deal with the Americans to work as a double agent. Aware of his previous dealings with the Russians, the Americans are skeptical: where do Russell's real loyalties—if he has any—lie?

For her part, Effi hopes to revive her stalled acting career in post-war Germany, but like her partner, her wartime past dogs her, and she must wrestle with the occupation powers to prove she was not a Nazi collaborator. Neither is prepared for the tensions that are emerging between the occupying powers, or for the shadowy culture of post-war Germany on the street level, where deceit and treachery are the order of the day. Russell will weave his way between black marketeers and refugees on the run, European Jews headed for a new homeland, and ex-Nazis also scurrying for the safety of a new life. It is a rich mixture, and reveals the full measure of the turmoil of war.

Lehrter Station effectively captures the trauma of a defeated and dislocated people, some good, some bad, all trying to make sense of an uncertain world. Relying heavily on the backstory of Downing's four previous novels in the series, it is an evocative, penetrating account, impeccably researched, revealing Downing's trademark meticulous attention to detail.

Lehrter Station will appeal to fans of serious fiction about the chaotic days following the end of the Second World War, and those simply in search of a cracking good read.



**Vicki Delany,
More Than Sorrow**

(Poisoned Pen Press, 2012)

The horrible thing about war is that everyone is a victim. Not only soldiers and those working on the battlefields, but others caught up in the violence: parents, brothers and sisters, wives and husbands, and children who have sent a loved one off to war, or lost them on the home front. And then there are those who are victims of war simply because they find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Hannah Manning is a former journalist and war correspondent. The victim of an IED explosion while covering the war in Afghanistan, she is still scarred, both physically and mentally. Unable to concentrate, Hannah suffers from recurring headaches and visions of that terrible

moment as she struggles to carve out a new life with her sister on a small farm in southern Ontario. Her sister Joanne and her husband Jake make a welcome refuge for Hannah, and she forms a close bond with her precocious niece, Lily. Still limited in what she can do, Hannah helps with such modest chores as feeding the chickens, gathering eggs, and fetching vegetables from the 18th-century root cellar. While visiting the cellar one day Hannah begins to hear voices and see visions; but curiously, they are not limited to her experiences in Afghanistan; some seem to date from the American Revolutionary War.

It almost seems like fate is taking a hand when Hannah and Lily visit a nearby farm and encounter Hila Polpalzi, a young woman from Afghanistan. Although she wears a tunic and scarf, the traditional clothing of her homeland, it does not fully conceal heavy scarring on her face and one hand. It is clear that she too is a victim of the war. Their visit is brief, shortened by Hila's shyness

and Hannah's sudden headache, triggered by the disturbing image in front of her. Little does she realize that Hila's presence will trigger a series of events that puts all their lives in jeopardy, and that more than one person will die before the tensions have worked themselves out. And Hannah's visions will recur in a developing narrative that spans the centuries.

Vicki Delany has stepped up her game. In *More Than Sorrow* she paints a vivid portrait of a strong woman, severely limited by traumatic injuries, and attempting to regain her autonomy. Worthy in its own right, the story line is layered with events reaching back in time, and demonstrates Delany's growing ability to weave a complex and utterly original tale. There are enough twists and turns to satisfy the most demanding reader, and convincing portraits of people good and evil, thrown together in a compelling plot that will hold you until the final page.

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, and *Type M for Murder*, as well as on his own award-winning site, *Deadly Diversions*. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com