Suspicion
by Rachel Wyatt

Reviewed by Donna Gamache

Suspicion, as the reader may suspect, is a mystery, but it’s much more than that. I very much enjoyed it, despite the fact that we more or less know, or think we know, what has happened. This is a book with multiple viewpoints, but the shifting views work well as the reader gradually learns the back stories of various characters. The story is not really a whodunit, but more an examination of the people involved in it, and the way they react during a stressful event.

The two main characters are Jack and Candace Wilson – a childless couple living in the small fictional city of Ghills Lake (a 90-minute drive from Vancouver, somewhere in the general area of Hope, BC). One October morning Candace, aged 37, a hard-working advertising executive, takes a little time off work for a dentist appointment. Finding the dentist’s office unexpectedly closed, she goes for a brief walk and mulls over how she can change her life. She finds her marriage stale and her life empty. She feels she must develop some real ambitions and plans, and make a decision as to whether to try adopting a child. On her way back to the office, however, she takes a shortcut. “She heard a cry and turned and fell, fell down inside a well, a hole, a trap, and landed on her side” (9). She calls for help – she has injured her leg and is unable to climb out.

When Candace doesn’t arrive home that evening, Jack is worried. He makes several calls, discovers that she hadn’t turned up back at work and that nobody seems to have seen her. Eventually he calls the police and a search is initiated, though at first the police believe Candace has merely taken off without notifying anyone.

Over the next couple of days, when there’s no sign of Candace, rumours begin to swirl around town. Suspicion begins to fall on Jack, as the person closest to Candace, particularly because of the timing of the disappearance. Jack is deeply involved with a new housing development and golf course that are bitterly opposed by some Ghills Lake residents. People suggest the disappearance is timed to put a stop to protests about the construction, which is on the verge of starting. Questioning by the police intensifies and Jack begins to feel paranoid about the way everyone looks at him.

But Jack is not the only one under suspicion. Everybody in town seems to know everyone else, and they all have ideas about what happened. Other suspects include: Erica, Candace’s sister, for the two sisters have underlying problems dating back to their childhood, and because Erica is one of those opposing the construction; Simon, Erica’s husband, another of the protesters; Hayden, a business cohort of Candace with whom she’d had a short-lived affair. (Candace thought she’d kept this a secret, but according to Erica, everyone in town knew, including Jack and Hayden’s wife, Verlyn, who is confined to a wheelchair but communicates through chat rooms under the pseudonym Marguerite.)

Even the readers begin to suspect that we don’t know what has really happened. Perhaps one of these people had engineered the disappearance. We even suspect Verlyn, who seems to know things that others don’t, and who manages to get around with assistance. The author has left Candace’s fall open-ended enough for the reader to doubt any possible conclusions.

It’s an intriguing mystery that keeps the reader involved right to the end. The book – at least my copy – is marketed with an additional eye-catching feature – a shiny yellow CAUTION sign like those put around a dangerous spot or a hole in the street.
Though the general overall tone of the novel is, of course, serious, the author has inserted a few touches of humour; for example, Jack wishes there were a manual he could buy entitled *What-to-do-if-your-wife/sister/daughter-goes-missing for Dummies*.

Rachel Wyatt is an award-winning author of eight novels, three collections of short stories, a biography of Agnes Macphail and over 100 stage and radio plays. She is 82 years old, but hopes to keep writing as long as the stories keep coming. Born in England, she has lived in various parts of Ontario but now resides in Victoria.

I admit I haven’t read any of her previous works, but after reading this novel, I’ll be looking for some of the others.

Donna Firby Gamache is a writer/retired teacher from MacGregor, Manitoba. Her newest work is *Sarah: A New Beginning*, a novel for children, loosely based on the coming of her great-grandparents to Canada in 1891.

*Buy Suspicion at McNally Robinson Booksellers:*  
http://www.mcnallyrobinson.com/9781550505177/rachel-wyatt/suspicion?blnBKM=1#.UNNx7o4f-04