

Killing the Dream

By Sharon Thompson

'Write about what you know.' Meredith reads the advice again. 'This genre of crime fiction is one which suits you.' The paid critic of her latest manuscript had written, 'you seem to have a flair for the macabre.' Checking her inbox for the umpteenth time, still there are no life changing emails.

Gazing into her cold coffee, Meredith drags her blonde hair from her face into a high ponytail. Pink lip gloss is left on the plain cup and her lips are puckered in thought, as she gazes out the café's window.

'Refill?' the waitress with the bright green hair asks.

'Please.' Meredith's desperation must have seeped into the air around her as the waitress says, 'tough work?'

'Yes. I'm a writer.'

In Meredith's head, she sees her father snigger, while he swings onto his tractor. As the waitress wipes the table, a fatherly voice lingers in her head, 'so instead of finding real work, you'll become a writer? Just like that?' his calloused fingers had clicked, 'you think that you'll become a best-selling author? Your mother god rest her, would be so worried about you. I'll fund one more year of this foolishness - then you must find a teaching job.'

The waitress's black-rimmed eyes, squint at Meredith's laptop. 'What do you write?'

'It varies.'

'You published?'

'Not just yet.'

'My friends write vampire and Gothic stuff.' Her voice kind of chuckles with pride. 'Real good shit you know?'

'Vampire stuff is good shit?'

'Yeah. They drink blood and stuff. So they know what they write about. Real cool.'

Meredith slurps her coffee and blood spurts from the waitress's abdomen. In Meredith's head the handle of a metal spoon jabs the black clad torso. The waitress smirks healthily though and slouches off in her fake Ugg boots.

Meredith resumes typing. *'Write about what I know. I know I could kill her.'* Meredith's mind talks, as the residue blood spatter on her keyboard seems real. *'I don't know about romance, so that's out. I don't know about science fiction ... I've no intention of drinking blood...'*

In the toilet after another two coffees, Meredith is in a caffeine fuelled despair. Passing what she presumes is the store cupboard she overhears her waitress. *'She says she's a writer. Not published yet. Ha! She sits there all high and fucking mighty for hours on end. Sad bitch.'*

Meredith pushes the door forward with one finger. The creak of it reveals the smell of disinfectant, mops and also the waitress with a mobile phone stuck above her mass of earrings. There is a loud gasp, then the silence is deafening. Meredith's eyes are murderous.

Following a flamboyant creature like the waitress for days, is easy for Meredith. Belfast students are predictable, so following her and her schedule is a piece of cake. Other than her few hours in University and the café, the waitress lounges on her grimy settee in a filthy flat nearby. Binoculars give Meredith knowledge that the girl is mostly alone or with drugged up friends, who don't pull their curtains.

'When are you coming home?' Meredith's dad asks as she sits hacking handful of green, female hair off in her mind. *'Soon,'* she answers dropping the phone into her Mulberry. The Mini Coupe's windows are steamed up and the burn of the rubber through sheer anger, is not noticed by many on the busy Belfast street.

The avenue is winding and Clonture sits picturesquely, peaceful in the nest of mature trees two hour's drive away. Mixed farming is scattered in many immaculately kept barns and outhouses. The large farmhouse is homely but smells distinctly of sweaty feet and sheep.

Throwing open the single-glazed sash windows, the drills in the fields look almost ruled

straight. The photographic memories of her mother all over the old furniture, do make Meredith weepy, but she has work to do. The accumulation of items for her research and preparations for her next writing ideas have to be completed.

The melons start her practice. Hard, meaningful punches with large knives at different angles. Assessing the gouges for hesitation marks, she feels like a pro. Alone, large grunts and sighs billow in chilled clouds, as she whacks blades into packaged bags of potatoes rejected for the shops and waiting for the pigs. The furthest fields are acres from the house and the roads. The cool of harvest evenings helps the sweat dry quickly, before it drips from her forehead as she corners small plump sheep in the brambles.

‘My good lambs were stabbed and slashed to death?’ Joe’s hands shake.

Meredith has never known her father to cry other than when her own mother was laid to rot into the ground. ‘There are some evil people in this world. Who would stab innocent lambs? They were ready for slaughter - but Christ!’

The police are no help. Photographs are all they take, as the knacker lorry takes the rest.

‘Never seen the likes of it, Joe.’ Sergeant Howard’s says.

‘For once I’m glad Meredith’s returning to the city,’ Joe tells him. ‘My Meredith’s an innocent soul. She seems to have stuck with this writing business. Determined she is.’

Meredith’s little car boot is not large enough, to be of much good. The back seat is leather and wipe able at least.

‘Running water is detrimental to collecting useable evidence.’ The Forensic Journal is a good research tool. Watching the quick flow of the Lagan River on her way back to her rented apartment, Meredith feels inspired. Living alone with no one to bother her, the words pop from the keyboard for hours.

Phone calls to her dad, reveal the lamb stabbings have ceased and peace has returned to their Clonture. Inspired now the weeks flit by as Meredith taps on her keyboard, convinced there’s a new ‘light’ shining from her work.

Writing Raw

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'The year must be up,' Meredith hears the dreaded words across the new iPhone she has bought herself as a present for working so hard.

'I know Dad! But sure you can't hold me to an exact date? I've submitted my best work yet. Research and working on your dreams takes time, you know.'

'In the meantime you live in a dangerous city Meredith. I worry constantly about you. There was news yesterday of another young girl stabbed not far from you. Her body was dumped in the Lagan but not discovered for ages. It's wild altogether. Come home to see me eh?'

'I've the car in getting serviced and valeted, it needed a spring clean. I'll come home soon.'

As Meredith hangs up the phone an email pings into her inbox. On the mat lying face up is one lone letter. Clicking it open Meredith can sense this is the one she has been waiting for.

Dear Meredith,

Thank you for submitting your initial three chapters for our consideration. We would like to see the entire manuscript at your earliest convenience.

Your writing about an Irish, female serial killer, who is also a budding modern crime writer shows great promise. For such a young and emerging writer, your writing shows great depth and realism.

Please contact me Patrick McHugh, CEO and founder of Crime Writer's Press.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Phone

Email

Meredith carefully places fake Uggs deep into her wheelie bin and rumbles it to the gate. Looking at her mum's serious face in the frame on the hall stand, she lifts the phone to ring father Joe and tell him some good news.

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The End

Sharon Thompson bio: Sharon Thompson lives in Donegal, Ireland and is a primary school teacher, on career break. Imagine-Write-Inspire, Brilliant Flash fiction, Bare Fiction Magazine, Mills & Boon and Malinki Press all acknowledged or published her short stories. Charity work, voluntary copywriting and highlighting children's palliative care issues interest her also. Sharon is submitting her first novel 'Devina'. Sharon Thompson. Writing Fun is her writing page. Her blog is www.remembervictoria9.wordpress.com and she tweets @sharontwriter