

Criminal Intent

Featuring Carolyn Arnold

Interviewed by Arlene McCarthy

Carolyn Arnold is a prolific writer of mysteries, having published 26 of her novels between 2011 and 2016.

The Brandon Fisher FBI series (currently six books) are police procedurals that feature a rookie criminal profiler. In the Detective Madison Knight series (currently nine books), the lead character is a strong female who is an experienced veteran on the force.

The McKinley Mysteries series features an independently wealthy married couple who dabble in detective work. (The 11th book in this more lighthearted series is available now for pre-order and will be released October 3.) And the Matthew Connor series features an archaeologist who is passionate about hunting treasures that have been relegated to legend.

Carolyn has also penned Assassination of a Dignitary, a stand-alone mystery, as well as a couple of short stories.

You can get to know Carolyn better on her website www.CarolynArnold.net, or on her blog www.CarolynArnold.net/blogposts. Or find her on Facebook or on Twitter @Carolyn_Arnold

Q: Writing four quite different series is a great feat of imaginative and memory juggling – how do you do it?

A: I really should take the time to write out detailed notes for my characters, including everything from their looks and personality traits to their relationships, and the cars they drive. But for right now, if I'm writing along and I know that an aspect was mentioned in a previous book, I'm usually pretty good at knowing off the top what book and approximately where inside it was mentioned. If I'm not leafing through a paperback to find the answer, I usually know a string of search words and open the Word document.

Q: Law officers in Canada and the United States praise your accurate descriptions of law enforcement and investigation, as well the reality of your characters and their relationships in the novels. You have said you try to “ground your characters in truth.” How do you do that?

A: When it comes to police procedure, I do my due diligence with research. I also have contacts who work or have worked in law enforcement, and they are selfless in answering any questions I may have.

As for the characters themselves, I strive to keep them as authentic as possible when it comes to their professional lives as well as their personal lives. I put myself in their minds and listen to their thoughts, their desires, their concerns.

Q: How did you select the different locations as settings in which to place each series?

A: Tough question. For the Detective Madison Knight series, I opted for a fictional city in the United States by the name of Stiles so that I would have the freedom to create it as I wished. In the Brandon Fisher FBI series, the locations “come” to me, usually dependent on how the serial killer is taking out their victims. For the McKinley Mysteries series, I wanted it based out of Albany, New York, because I'd visited there and fell in love with the architecture.



As you've likely gathered, the above-noted series are all based in the United States, but when it came to my action adventure series, I opted to base my main characters out of Toronto for something closer to home.

Q: Reviewers of the Brandon Fisher FBI Series praised your intricate story lines; the other series also share this inventiveness. What tends to inspire these twists of plot?

A: I love reading something that makes me think, and that's what I aim for with each of my books. I'm blessed that a lot of these complicated twists and underlying threads come to me by “magic”; that is, when I'm in the zone writing and going with the flow. I flesh them out during the rewriting and editing process.

Q: Your characters are interesting and nuanced. How has Madison Knight's work partner, Terry, influenced her development as a character?

A: Terry's happy and more than comfortable being a married man. When readers first meet Madison in *Ties*

That Bind, she's hard-edged and terrified of commitment. She's ready to end any romantic relationship that even hints at becoming serious.

But their backgrounds are different, and she's carting around a past hurt and wearing it as a shield to protect her heart. Over the series, Terry's small pokes at her lack of a personal life and a romantic one start to take root. She begins to realize she deserves more out of life.

Q: If Madison Knight were to interview you, what would be her first question? Why?

A: Why did you create me, and why am I here? We all have deep existential questions... LOL

Q: From what sources do you get the most feedback?

A: Through e-mails from readers, reader reviews, comments on Wattpad. I've never been a believer in critique groups.

Q: What is the best advice you've received as an author and what might you say to aspiring writers?

A: Have fun. That's where it all begins. Not to say that you shouldn't take writing seriously from the start. For myself, I never thought of writing as a hobby even when I hadn't made a penny.

Q: Each of your mystery series has its own brand in the vein of specific well-known television series. You have described Brandon Fisher FBI as a kind of *Criminal Minds* police procedural, Detective Madison Knight as more like *Law and Order* or *CSI*, the McKinley Mysteries as a more gentle *Hart to Hart* cozy mystery style, and Matthew Connor as an action adventure series in the Indiana Jones vein. Your overall brand is obviously yourself, Carolyn Arnold. What are the advantages to an author of having a brand or several brands?

A: It gives readers clear expectations before they pick up a book, which leads to more satisfied readers. It also helps



readers find you, because you become known for a certain type of book. They'll come to know that you'll resolve the murder(s) in a rewarding manner. They'll come to know that you include multiple twists. They'll know that they need to think when they pick up your book. They'll know that when police procedure or forensics come up, the details are accurate. And the list can go on.

Q: In your personal time, how do you feed your abundant creativity?

A: I love reading, meditating, taking time to just "be." My favourite spot has to be next to a large body of water, whether that be a lake or ocean. I also like watching movies.

Q: How would you tweet a summary of your most recent book?

A: Sean and Sara will need to carve out the truth to find themselves a killer. HALLOWEEN IS MURDER 10.3.17

One hit man who's back for revenge. One detective who's not going down without a fight. POWER STRUGGLE 11.28.17

Q: How has being a Sister in Crime affected you?

A: Being a Sister in Crime has made it possible to meet other amazing female authors who courageously put their work out there for the world to enjoy.

Q: Complete the sentence: "Because I write mysteries I..."

A: *I look at the world a little differently. Or... I have a healthy outlet for my homicidal tendencies!* LOL Just kidding. I have no desire to hurt anyone in real life. My book disclaimer should include: No one was harmed during the making of this book.
