

CRIMINAL INTENT

Featuring: Jill Edmondson

Interviewed by: Janet Costello



Jill Edmondson is the author of the Sasha Jackson mystery series, in which Blood and Groom is the first title. She's a member of Crime Writers of Canada. She has been a member of Sisters in Crime, off and on, for 5 years.

Q: Your PI, Sasha Jackson, fresh out of Sheridan College, sings, drums, and thinks dressing up means pinning her hair up into a chignon, aka an eagle's nest. What was the inspiration for such a great character?

A: A little bit of everything. I wanted her to be something official. Not an amateur sleuth, like an antique dealer or a professor. I made her new to her profession so she can make mistakes. There's a fair bit of me in her. I've worked in bars, but I didn't want her background to be a waitress, which is rather boring. So I thought lots of bars have bands, and made her a singer. I can't sing to save my life, but if there's one thing I'd like to do, it's learn to play drums. The eagle's nest - well my little brother said that of me when I was about eight. I've always liked that so I put it in. As for Sheridan College, they do have an investigator course.

Q: Sasha is very designer savvy and uses current fashion trends in her descriptions. She grabbed me with her smart-ass description of Christine as a Manolo-shod Chihuahua. Are you a fashionista or do you scorn style as Sasha does?

A: Both. I couldn't afford designer stuff. If I had the money would I buy Manolo or Dolce & Gabbana? Probably not. But designer brands say so much about a character.

Q: Your musical references range from Thelonious Monk to Nine Inch Nails. Do you expect this variety will appeal to your readers?

A: I would hope so. It's a lot like me. My iPod has all the artists I used in the book. Sasha's musical background included doing the Toronto bar scene, corporate functions, and weddings. Working musicians have to know a bunch of different musical styles from jazz, to pop songs, to those cheesy songs played at weddings, like the Macarena.

Q: I found your mystery to be an investigative procedural, although you sprinkled in a fair number of clues as to who was writing off the grooms. How early in the process did you construct the puzzle?

A: I knew from the get-go who I wanted the perpetrator to be. It is intentional that the reader should discover the killer at the same time as Sasha. But once the guilty party is figured out, where do you go from there? I went back and sprinkled in clues. The puzzle was HARD. On a macro level it was easy. But figuring out all of the showsö?! I did like including the red herrings of other crimes. Backing up a bit - I submitted this work for the Unhanged Arthur (the Arthur Ellis award for unpublished authors). Between the summer and December I had written about 160 pages. For the initial entry you send in the first three chapters. They were due New Year's Day. I did that. Now, I still had about another 160 pages of writing to do to finish the book. In February, I got an email that I was one of the finalists. I had one week to submit the rest of the manuscript. So, the second half of the book was written in 6 days. I got it to 304 pages. Thank goodness it was reading week - I am a Professor at George Brown College so I had time to finish it. There were ten finalists. I didn't make it any further in the competition, but at least by then I had a completed manuscript. That summer I polished it up.

Q: Blood and Groom is such a witty, quick read. How many drafts did it take?

A: Once I had a completed manuscript? I'm not sure how to answer that. How many times did I print it out? I edit on the hard copy. Probably about 5 times. I changed details and some discrepancies. No structural changes...added some dialogue.

Q: Tell us how you sold your first novel.

A: The sales have been individual, not a multi-book deal. Okay, the first sale was a fair bit of luck. I know this, because I've heard some horror stories about the querying process from other writers. After a summer of tinkering with revisions, August 16th to be exact, (I've kept all my communications on this), I picked twenty people (two agents and 18 publishers), and sent them a query letter and synopsis. I wanted a Canadian publisher. I signed a contract, directly with Dundurn, by the end of November.

Q: What do you particularly like about Dundurn Press?

A: I DO like the fact that I'm with a Canadian publisher, especially one in Toronto. This means having face-to-face contact. I've met almost everyone involved in the process of publishing Blood and Groom. The personal touch is great. Also, they didn't ask for big changes to the manuscript, which was very flattering. I've heard of publishers who asked for re-writes of that included changing either the setting or the killer, - that would have killed me. They left the creative process to me.

Q: You follow a lot of blogs. How does this benefit a writer?

A: I'm new to the blogging thing; I only started in July 2009. I've gotten some good ideas about the publishing industry this way. There have been interesting chats about naming characters. It's been very helpful for learning where do you go from here, once your book is out. You know what to expect. I had about ten people at a library reading, and I found out that was a good turnout. It's helped me learn what NOT to do, too.

Q: How soon can we get our hands on more about Sasha Jackson?

A: I can give you some news hot off the press. My

second book, Dead Light District, will be released in the Fall/Winter of 2010. My third book, another Sasha mystery, is already half done.

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

A: It's funny. I was a member around 2005. Then I let my membership lapse, and Sisters in Crime fell off my radar. But recently I sent off for my membership. I missed the connections. I like the topic meetings, for example, poisonous plants. The newsletter is good fun, with the trivia and posting of events coming up. The Christmas party was great. I got to see people I'd only heard about. Sisters in Crime is rooting for you and in your corner. I've also learned a lot from SinC/their members over the years. I did a lot of graduate work on women in crime fiction, and SinC and/or its members have come up often in research for some of the papers I did for my MA.

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For more info about Jill Edmondson visit:

<http://www.jilledmondson.com/home>

And for links to many useful blogs:

<http://www.blogger.com/profile/05152599507268946811>

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