

The Reality behind the Portrayal of the Mystery Genre in Books, TV, and Film: Interview with a Halifax Regional Police Officer

By: Allie Jardim

The mystery genre tends to portray crime-solving as exciting and dramatic. In reality, policing is not as exciting as it is in *Sherlock Holmes* or *Veronica Mars*.

Instead, real policing focuses more on petty crime and educating the public on safety. I had the opportunity to correspond with Constable Terra Bell of the Halifax Regional Police Department about her role as a police officer, and the reality of the mystery genre portrayed in novels and on screen.

Allie Jardim (AJ): What made you want to join law enforcement?

Constable Terra Bell (TB): I had a great desire to work in civil service. I wanted to do something every day that would benefit the greater community and help those around me. I also wanted to protect the community from those who do not respect it and hurt others from living free, successful lives. Being a police officer is

like being a lawyer, social worker, medic all in one job. It is a vast array of skills that come together in the moment of need, helping others.

AJ: What is your favourite aspect of your job?

TB: The spontaneous nature of it. I work patrol, responding to 911 calls. You never know what call is coming next.

AJ: What types of crimes are most common? What would be your steps to solving those types of crimes?

TB: Theft. There are extensive calls for theft all the time. Two steps to solve these crimes, prevent them from happening are:

- 1) Education should be a priority for those offenders who don't have a grade 12, or a community college trade.

If educated, employment is attainable and theft would decrease because there is a pride that comes with being self-sufficient. Most people want to do good and look after themselves.

- 2) Public service, putting offenders to work to serve the community.

AJ: What advice would you give to a teenager who is interested in pursuing a career in law enforcement?

TB: Be involved in the community. Refrain from recreational drug use. Focus on your education, the ability to converse, read and write, think critically. Becoming a police officer takes time, and education. Don't rush into becoming a police officer. Don't think you're a failure if you don't get into the academy the first time around. Travel, see other places and value where you live.

AJ: Do you have a favourite crime/mystery novel, movie or TV show? If so what is it?

TB: All-time favorite movies: *The Fugitive* with Harrison Ford, The Bourne Series with Matt Damon.

AJ: How realistic are crime novels, TV shows, and movies?

TB: They are not, it takes a lot of hard work by officers working together with the Crown to stick a charge and get a bad guy in jail. Doesn't happen in an hour like CSI or SVU. There is a lot of oversight and professional responsibility to being a police officer; we can't do car chases like in the movies.

We would like to thank Constable Terra Bell of the Halifax Regional Police for taking the time to share insights into her experience working for the Halifax Regional Police Department.