

A Conversation with Tom MacDonald

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF, HOW AND WHEN YOU STARTED WRITING.

Fifteen years into my career as a computer programmer, I went back to school and received a Masters in Business Administration from Boston College's Carroll School of Management, where I discovered that, though I didn't have the acumen for business, I did have the talent to write. Encouraged by a BC professor in the Leadership for Change program, I decided to pursue writing. I took three fiction-writing classes at Boston's Grub Street school, and was then accepted into the University of Southern Maine's Stonecoast MFA program in creative writing. I completed my Masters of Fine degree in 2009 with a concentration in fiction.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE YOUR NOVEL?

While pursuing in the MFA program at Stonecoast. It became apparent to me that I had a penchant for telling stories in urban settings. Two instructors in the program encouraged me to write stories about the streets of Boston preferable the underbelly of the city.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE OR MOST SYMPATHETIC CHARACTER? AND WHY?

Dermot Sparhawk, the first-person narrator. Dermot drives the story.

WHAT PART OF WRITING YOUR BOOK DID YOU FIND THE MOST CHALLENGING?

Delaying the solving of the mystery, pushing it to the end of the book as possible.

HOW DO YOU DIAL UP THE TENSION TO KEEP YOUR READERS ON THE EDGE OF THEIR SEATS?

Using dialogue to depict emotions and uncertainty. Dramatizing the important information in the story.

WHAT WRITERS HAVE INSPIRED YOU?

George V. Higgins, Raymond Chandler, Robert B. Parker, Lawrence Sanders, Dennis Lehane, Patricia Highsmith, Charles Dickens, Walter Mosely.

WHAT IS THE WRITING PROCESS LIKE FOR YOU?

I imagine the stories in scenes.

WHAT IS THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE ABOUT WRITING THAT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

Omit needless words.

WHAT IS THE WORST PIECE OF ADVICE ABOUT WRITING THAT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

Don't start writing until you have the story outlined.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU? ANY NEW BOOKS IN THE PIPELINE?

Yes, a second Dermot Sparhawk in the works.