

**Bourne**  
**toWrite...**  
creative writing  
workshops

## Claudia

by Sho Botham

Some people say you never know what's going to happen next. This was true for Claudia.

Wet pavements glistened in the street lights. Clipped sounds of people walking home from work. Chatter between friends and colleagues interspersed with outbursts of frustration as space became limited.

Claudia was walking her usual route home as she had done every Thursday since volunteering at the charity shop a few months ago. She could hear something different in the early evening sounds. A thudding footstep trying to disguise haste. Uneasiness crept over Claudia making her increase her pace but the thudding footsteps stayed with her.

Detective Inspector Mike Mason turned to his colleague Detective Sergeant Susie Sharp and said, "what a waste. Do we know who she is?"

"Not yet," came the reply. "There's no bag or purse. No ID. She can't be more than 20 or 21," said Mason.

Claudia reached her front door as her landline phone was ringing. She turned the key quickly and pushed against the front door. Rushing in she grabbed the receiver from the phone on top of the white hall table.

“Oh it’s you Maddie. I know, I almost ran all the way home. Someone was following me. No really. I started to hurry and the footsteps behind me hurried too. I will lock the door here and put the chain on when we are finished our chat. I hate horrible things like this. Makes you feel all creeped out.”

Mason and Sharp had missed dinner again. They were heading back to the office when they got the call. The body of a young woman had been found only a couple of minutes away.

The front door was open and the body was lying awkwardly on the wooden floor. The pathologist looked up at the two detectives and said, “she hasn’t been dead long. She’s still warm. The phone cord looks like your murder weapon as far as I can tell at this point. She was strangled with it. Her name is Claudia Hemmingway. She lives, sorry, lived here on her own. Your constable found that out from one of the neighbours.”

“You don’t seem to need us then,” said Mason to the pathologist who had gone back to examining the body.

Oh I wouldn’t say that. I just thought you would want all the information I have,” said the pathologist smiling.

“We’ll have a look around but it would seem that it all happened in the hall. Did anyone dial 1471 to find out who she was speaking to last?”

“Yes sir,” said the constable. “She was talking to a Madeline Brown right at the time she was killed. A car has gone over there to pick her up. She only lives about 10 minutes from here.”

A familiar buzz buzz came from Mason’s pocket. He put his phone to his ear and his eyebrows raised as he nodded his head. “Is that so,” he asked?

“Well you can forget about Madeline Brown being of any help. She has just been found beaten to death outside her front door.”

Bloody hell, what do think is happening here boss,” said DS Sharp to Mason. “Do we have a serial killer on steroids on our hands?”

“Fuck knows,” said Mason wearily.