

I'm often asked how I came to write 'Bad Blood Rising,' a thriller set against the sleazy world of the sex industry. I wrote the book in 2019, but my inspiration occurred a few years earlier.

I was working as a legal PA in Leeds. I was on my way home by train but unfortunately Leeds Station was undergoing a massive overhaul at the time. Most trains were delayed or re-directed. My train had been delayed by an hour so rather than sit on a drafty platform, I went to the pub on the concourse.

The pub was packed with weary travellers, all anxious to get home. I got my drink and then spotted a table being vacated by a couple next to the window. I rushed over to get a seat, as did another woman at the same time. She was in her twenties, very pretty with shoulder-length hair, and immaculately dressed. Talking with her as we both sipped our drinks; I could tell she was both intelligent and articulate. Her name was Carmel. Carmel was on her way to Manchester for the weekend. Twenty minutes later, her train was announced she got up from her seat. "What job do you do?" she asked. I told her and then asked her the same question. "Oh, I'm an escort, darling," she said. She was so matter-of-fact; I was somewhat taken aback. Well, you can't leave a statement like that just hanging, can you?

I'm sure like me, you hold pre-conceived ideas of sex workers. Carmel most certainly did not fit into that. My interest had been piqued, (not that I was considering a change of career, you understand. The Catholic Church had done too good a job for that,) but I just knew I needed to hear her story. That's why, a week later it was exactly the same scenario at the train station. This time however, Carmel was already at a table and invited me to join her.

She must have thought I was the nosiest person on the planet as I bombarded her with questions about her life. All too soon her train was announced, but before she left, we agreed to meet for lunch the following Wednesday.

When I arrived at the restaurant, Carmel was seated at a table, together with another woman. Her name was Laurel and I remember she had the most beautiful long auburn hair. It turned out Laurel, who was also an escort, had travelled to Leeds from London on National Express in the dead of night about a month earlier. She had been working for a vicious pimp who was insisting she smuggle drugs. She decided to run away, and

when she left, she had little money and few clothes. Laurel had changed both her name and her appearance and was constantly in fear of him finding her.

Again I asked a hundred and one questions about life under the control of a pimp, and her experiences really were mind-blowing. It was during our conversation that a third young woman came rushing into the restaurant. She was young and looked somewhat dishevelled. Her name was Maria. It turned out Maria had been working in a brothel in Chapeltown. The police had raided it that morning and Maria had made her escape via the kitchen window. This proved to be yet another experience for me to explore, finding out just how a brothel operated. Over the next few weeks I went on to meet more of Carmel's colleagues.

I soon learnt that the sex industry does have a 'pecking order.' On the bottom rung are the girls on the street corner, usually heavily dependent on drugs. Their work is by far the most dangerous. Next are the girls working in brothels. Although they are safer than the street girls, it can still be dangerous and the girls are open to abuse. At the top of the ladder are the freelance escorts like Carmel and Laurel. They can earn huge sums of money, partly for their services and partly for their discretion.

Like I said, this all happened a while back. It wasn't until I came to live by the sea and joined the U3A Novel Writing Group, that I began to think about Carmel and the girls I had met. I decided to write a crime thriller using the knowledge I had acquired of the sex industry as the backdrop of my story. It's surprising what details the mind retains. Once I began to write, I couldn't stop. Ideas and snippets of conversations flooded my mind, and soon 'Bad Blood Rising' was completed.

It was published independently at the end of 2019, but it wasn't until the middle of 2020 that I could go out and about promoting it. I did this by hiring a stall on Friday's Redcar Market, a venue that I am still using today.