

Fate she calls it...

Personality Profile on Elizabeth Duncan

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FEATURE STORY

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As she sits on her lakefront property, watching the sunset with her Australian cattle dog Dolly she imagines a dead body washing ashore at their feet. An idea for a new book pops into her head. Like she says, “women of a certain age are just attracted to death.”

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As author, teacher and mother it is easy to see the passion in Duncan's eyes as she speaks of her life path. Starting out in journalism she took some time off to have her son, Lucas. The recession hit and she decided a career change was in order. Duncan attended the PR program at Humber as a mature student and is now a member of the Humber PR faculty. One morning a story in the Toronto Sun caught her attention. She went to her computer and started to write. Fate she calls it.

It became a combination of talent and good luck for Duncan over the next few years. In 2006 she won the Malice Domestic Grant for Unpublished Writers with a piece from her first book, *The Cold Light of Mourning*.

"It gave me the push I needed to finish," said Duncan. "I knew people believed in me." She finished the book and entered it into the 2008 Malice Domestic Award for Best First Traditional Mystery, and won again. This gave her a contract to write two more books in the Penny Brannigan mystery series, *A Brush with Death* and *A Killer's Christmas in Wales*.

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“I know how lucky I am,” says Duncan speaking of her fast success. “There were no bumps in the road, no rejection. I know how rare that is and am very thankful all these good things have happened to me.” Her modesty does not stop here. Duncan says she would never read her own books for fear of her own critique. She also rarely uses her own PR background to promote the books because it would make her uncomfortable.

The Brannigan books are set in Wales. Duncan used her award money to travel there for further research to finish her book, though she has previously lived in the United Kingdom. It has turned into her favourite vacation spot, just getting back from a trip before this school year began. The books are fiction. She describes her books as traditional mystery. No sex. No violence. No gore.

“I don’t like the F-word,” claims Duncan. Describing a time when she did PR for the Trailer Park Boys. She had to ask Ricky repeatedly to refrain from using it as part of his vocabulary. It’s funny to think of Duncan working with such characters, but she beams as she speaks of her time with the boys.

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Duncan's success in both Canada and the United States is without question, but her feet remain firmly on the ground here at Humber. She speaks highly of the culture on campus and how much experience she has gained. Her newest book is due out next fall. If it follows the pattern of the first two, her success can only grow. Luckily for Duncan it does seem to be true; some women have an attraction to death.