

Question and Answer with Rachel Amphlett, Author of *Scared to Death*

1. What can you tell us about *Scared to Death*?

Scared to Death is the first in a police procedural crime thriller series featuring Detective Sergeant Kay Hunter, who is clinging onto her career after enduring both personal tragedy and a professional vendetta against her.

We meet Kay as she's thrown into a new case – a kidnapping that appears to have gone wrong, and a teenage girl has died.

As the investigation evolves, Kay becomes convinced that there's more to the case than she first thought, and her worst fears are realised when a second girl is taken.

2. Where did you get the idea for *Scared to Death*?

Scared to Death originated from the family's point of view – a slightly wayward teenage daughter, a mother with a successful business, and a father who adores his daughter no matter her faults.

I also wanted a cunning, intelligent killer but one whose background would mirror that of some of the family's character traits – I wanted to explore how similar circumstances could motivate people in such extremely different ways.

Once I had each character's motivation sorted out, the plot developed very quickly.

3. *Scared to Death* features Detective Sergeant Kay Hunter. How did Kay Hunter's character develop?

Kay isn't based on anyone in particular, but a mixture of traits and characteristics I've seen in people over the years.

I was quite determined that she wouldn't have a broken home environment, even though she's had her fair share of personal tragedy and professional obstacles that she's doing her best to overcome throughout the series.

Rather than label her "strong", I'd like people to remember her as "resilient". She knows and understands her limitations – that's why she relies so much on the team around her. She's not a lone wolf.

4. The setting of *Scared to Death* adds much to the sense of place to the story. Can you tell us about why you chose the locations used in the book?

I'm lucky with the Kay Hunter series, in that I ended up basing it in and around the last place I lived in the UK before emigrating to Australia – Maidstone, in Kent. I used to live in Weaving, which started off as a village outside the town, but has now become joined up to it over time.

I return to the UK every year or so to catch up with family or friends, so that helps to keep my knowledge up to date, and I can email them if I get stuck.

Having that knowledge of the town where the series was based, and knowing first-hand about some of the locations used, I was able to conjure up the settings used in the story in such a way that I could give readers a real sense of place.

5. What drew you to this particular story?

It was as simple as the story idea popping into my head with the female detective already in tow.

When I get an idea, it's like remembering a scene from a film – I can see the whole thing in my head, so once I had that original idea, I started to jot down notes and get some very basic outlines down for stories for what turned out to be the start of a new series.

6. What other books have inspired you, with particular reference to *Scared to Death*?

The authors I keep returning to include Michael Connelly, Peter James, Val McDermid, Lee Child and Robert Crais – all fast-paced crime thrillers.

While I was writing *Scared to Death*, I read every single interview I could find with those authors and took copious notes about their advice on writing crime – it was like going back to school.