

violence. One of the more alarming stories she told me involves a well-known international conservative evangelical Christian organization that provides food, shelter, and clothing for those in need. Several of her clients turned to this organization for help but they were told to return to their abusive husbands because the bible forbids divorce, and a woman should never leave her husband under any circumstances. Regardless of where the story came from, the entire plot suddenly popped into my brain. It was the easiest and fastest short story I've ever written.

JC: What medium did you first enjoy writing in? Or maybe what medium did you know you found your creativity?

MF: *I'm also a musician and started writing songs when I was a kid. I moved on to poetry, then to short stories and novels.*

JC: There were moments reading your story that I was palpably anxious, not necessarily out of suspense (although that was a part) but out of my reaction to the treatment of another portrayed in your story. I wanted to jump into this story and help, to destroy this man. Do you think there is a justifiable reason for violence in a specific situation?

MF: *I hate violence, and our culture seems to be getting more and more violent. Violence against women is an epidemic. According to the World Health Organization, 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, most of it perpetrated by an intimate partner. Thirty-eight percent of all murders of women are committed by an intimate partner. Unfortunately, often the police, the courts, and social services are not able to prevent these crimes. To make matters even worse, many women live in places where violence against them is largely ignored, or even condoned. While I would never encourage anyone to kill someone, if your own life, or that of your loved one, is attacked, you must defend yourself.*

JC: Who are your writing influences and what do you look for in a story grasps you?

MF: *I love stories that challenge the status quo, that make us question conventional thinking. When I was a teenager, my favorite book was Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451. I've read it dozens of times. In the novel's epigraph, there's a quote from the great Spanish poet, Juan Ramón Jiménez: "If they give you ruled paper, write the other way." I've never forgotten that quote. I also admire writers who have such distinctive voices that after reading a paragraph or two, you know who the author is. Writers like Kevin Barry, George Saunders, Cormac McCarthy, and the poet Seamus Heaney.*

JC: Where does your work take us next? Do you have any ideas for your future writing?

MF: *I'm always writing. Most of my work is speculative fiction, a bit dark and satirical but often with a touch of humor. I love exploring the potential unintended consequences of biotechnology.*

And...for the toughest one...

If you were a songbird, what songbird would you like to be and why?

MF: *A Hermit Thrush because you'll hear her ethereal sound long before seeing her.*

You and your work are greatly appreciated. You've trusted us with your tale and I can only hope we've done due diligence (although I trust Tom and Charles with my life). Thank you so much for answering my interview questions and I look forward to hearing (meh, maybe interpreting your voice) from you.