
Christopher Moore

A Dirty Job

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Q: *A Dirty Job* seems to straddle a number of literary genres—surrealism, magic realism, hyperrealism, science fiction, fantasy . . . how would you characterize the novel?

A: I really don't think of my work in terms of a genre. I think of it in terms of what I want to say, what I think is cool, and what I'm good at. The fact that *A Dirty Job* has comedy and supernatural horror in it, that both are woven in and out of it with a whimsical tone, despite the fact that it's about death, makes it hard to characterize with standard genre labels—but I have no problem with that. I'd call it a funny story about death, and leave it at that.

Q: How did you first become interested in the mythological creatures known collectively as the Morrigan?

A: I was researching the different personas of death throughout history and the Morrigan had the triple duty of being very dark, distinctly female, and largely unknown, thus giving me freedom to portray them in a way that fit the needs of the story. Since Charlie is a Beta Male, who is pretty much dominated by his insecurities, I thought it would be a fun contrast to have these sexy, scary personifications of death as counterpoints to Charlie.

Q: Why did you decide to use San Francisco, a city you reside in, as the setting for *A Dirty Job*?

A: Actually, I wasn't living in San Francisco when I decided to set *A Dirty Job* there. Just the opposite, I think. Researching and writing the book make me decide to move there from Hawaii. San Francisco is a breathtakingly beautiful city, with lots of great contrasts between dark and light, often overlapping each other. It's a great setting for a horror story. It's also a very small city, geographically, yet ethnically very diverse, so it was possible to characterize the neighborhoods vividly without having to move the characters around too much. I put Charlie's apartment and business right at the intersection of three ethnic neighborhoods: North Beach, which is Italian; Russian Hill, which was Russian at one time and still has a number of Russian residents; and Chinatown. It's an interesting area and it made, I think, for some interesting cultural perspectives in the story.

Q: Why did you decide to leave the identity of the Luminatus a mystery until the end of the novel?

A: I don't really think it was. In fact, I'm completely disarmed when people say they figured it out early on and were disappointed. It was never meant to be a mystery. I think everyone but Charlie pretty much figures it out early on, so the fun is keeping Charlie in the dark. The book is not a puzzle to be solved; it's a ride to be taken. You just have to grab hold and enjoy the ride. If people want to solve puzzles they should get a book of Sudoku.

Q: How difficult was it for you to kill off your protagonist, Charlie Asher, and at what point in the composition of the book did you realize that you were going to eliminate him?

A: He died? Well now I'm bummed out. (Kidding.) I knew from the start that Charlie was going to die. It was important to the theme of the book. What is equally important, and what I think a few readers miss, is the point of his dying is that hope does not die with him. He continues. There's nothing better for a story than a good resurrection. Don't take my word for it, there are examples . . .