

Written In Blood

Author: Sheila Lowe

W*ritten in Blood* is a forensic handwriting mystery and the second in the Claudia Rose series published by Penguin Books (Obsidian Mystery imprint). In this adventure, Claudia finds herself hired by a grieving widow to prove the signature on her husband's will is legitimate. The major problem with the document is the signature was supposedly signed by Torg Sorenson after he suffered a stroke and his handwriting had changed so much it was unrecognizable.

Now, this wouldn't be a major problem had the widow not been half the old man's age; had he not left her the majority of his millions, including the Sorenson Academy, a very exclusive private school in Beverly Hills; and his two children from a previous marriage hadn't wanted to raze the school to build multi-million dollar condos.

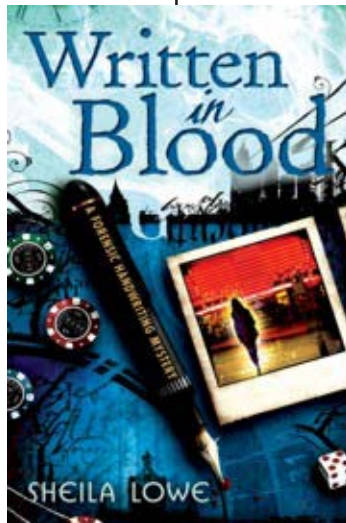
So, will Claudia be able to prove the will is valid or fraudulent? Either way she gets paid. Her client may not like the end result of her analysis, but as a court certified graphologist, Claudia Rose is bound by her ethics to tell it like it is, even if it goes against the results expected by the client.

With *Written in Blood* Lowe lifts the veil to the courtroom and lets the reader experience, in a real sense, what happens when Claudia's expertise is called into question by a rebuttal witness for the plaintiffs. The manner in which Claudia

helps the defendant's lawyer destroy the credibility of her competitor on the stand is sheer genius.

With several subplots running simultaneously, it is no wonder *Written in Blood* keeps the reader turning the pages until the very end. My only objection to the work is that it too so long to get to the murder. But after careful examination of my own expectations, I see that this is more a mystery than a murder mystery, even though someone dies a foul death and without the precursors, Claudia couldn't do what she loves to do. And that is find the bad guy and bring them to justice.

All in all, Lowe has outdone herself with *Written in Blood*. The manner in which she sets the stage, builds the suspense, sends the reader on red herrings and finalizes the tale is unique in the genre of murder mysteries. As much as one thinks they know who the bad guy is, they are usually mistaken. And this experience is only enhanced by Sheila Lowe's complete knowledge of the science of handwriting analysis. I am salivating in anticipation of her next book.



On a personal note: Written in Blood is the first book in a long time that I couldn't put down. I read it in two days and managed only about four hours sleep during the intervening night. Had I had the time to devote to the book, I would have probably read it in a single sitting, ignoring food, bathroom breaks, and my wife until the absolute last minute.