

1. Which of the serial killers you mention in the book most terrified you, and why?

Kelly: For me it was Israel Keyes. He is the man that killed at least eleven people starting in the '90s. He had meticulous kill kits hidden throughout the country and even conducted one of his horrific crimes on his own property with his family nearby.

Meg: Jane Toppan really unnerves me. She was ruthless, she killed other women, and there is something so scary about that! As a woman, I am naturally wary about men, but I know I would allow myself to be vulnerable around someone like Jane. She seemed innocuous, and that gives me goose bumps.

2. What is the most surprising discovery you made during the research and writing of your book? Any details you'd like to share?

Kelly: We got to learn a lot about the actor's process when portraying these types of characters onscreen. Since we write about the science perspective in horror media, it was fascinating to learn how actors prepare for a role and the psychological differences between "method" acting and any another approach that lets the actor shed that persona at the end of the day.

Meg: The FBI agent we interviewed talked about the mental strain on people in his profession. I knew this was a reality, but talking to him and hearing some of his upsetting stories, it really put into perspective what these detectives and agents do every day to not only protect us, but to seek justice. Sometimes they sacrifice their own wellbeing.

3. How has science helped justice be served in bringing these serial killers to trial?

Meg: Obviously, DNA has been an absolute game-changer. Cold cases are being solved every day. We spoke to a retired FBI agent who echoed this new reality. He was often left with barely any clues, and serial killing is a difficult crime to solve because it most often is stranger to stranger. The advent of DNA has been a watershed moment in true crime, just as profiling, photography, and fingerprint analysis before it.

4. What role does nature vs. nurture play in the lives of serial killers?

Kelly: We learned about the difference between "made" killers versus "born" killers. Richard Ramirez, for example, also known as The Night Stalker, is considered a made killer because of his childhood circumstances. A study in 2020 that studied brain scans of convicted killers

showed that they all had one thing in common: a loss of function in the orbital cortex which controls our ethics, morality, and control of impulses. This doesn't excuse the behavior, of course, but it definitely explains it!

5. What are the facts regarding the rise of lead in the environment and aggressive crime?

Meg: The lead/crime hypothesis is fascinating and was probably my favorite "rabbit hole" to dive down. This concept, that the environment was exacerbating or even causing children to grow up with more violent tendencies, has been studied in depth. Serial killing is just one aspect of the research, but you'll have to read the book to learn more!

6. What do you think impels women to devote their lives to convicted serial killers and even marry them?

Meg: This has happened in the case of Ted Bundy, and with Danny Rolling (The Gainesville Ripper) which we discuss in the book. There is a condition called *hybristophilia* in which a person is aroused by a violent partner. But I think on a larger scale we found that while these women are in the minority, and most likely have maladaptations, there is an extreme societal problem in which these men are portrayed like pop stars. We researched "murderabilia" in which people put a value on items that killers touched, used, and lived with. This points to a societal obsession with these murderers.

7. Why do you think female serial killers murder for money while male killers are motivated by sex and power?

Meg: There is actually a biological component that makes this true. Men are naturally more sexually motivated, while women are driven to be protected. When we think of a lot of serial killers, we tend to think of those who lived in times when women were less than equal. Belle Gunness, Jane Toppan, Amelia Dyer, these were women who felt compelled to kill in order to keep themselves financially comfortable, although Toppan was known to mention a sexual thrill in her murders. A very rare thing indeed!

8. Tell us a bit about the Lake Bodom murders in Finland. The serial killer is still at large. What do you attribute that to?

Kelly: It's a fascinating case in a country not known for violent crimes. A group of teens went camping on Lake Bodom in 1960. All four were attacked during the night through the outside of their tent and three of them died. The fourth teen was able to escape with stab wounds and some

blunt force trauma. In 2004, he was actually arrested on suspicion of the murders but was found not guilty!

9. Is there anything else you'd like your readership to know?

Meg: We don't want readers to think this is just another serial killer book fetishizing violence and putting the killers on pedestals. This book is about our love of true crime, horror films, history, and of course every kind of science from biology to psychology. We strove to write something different.

10. What's your next project in your *The Science of* series? Any details you can reveal without scaring the living daylights out of us, although we realize how subjective that can be!

Kelly: Yes! *The Science of Witchcraft* will be out in October, 2022 and we'll be exploring the fascinating science and history behind our favorite witch movies. We got to speak to a mortician about mortuary science, an Indigenous botanist about plants used for healing, and filmmakers who were inspired by cultural legends and folklore to create their stories that keep us awake at night!

Meg: We have lots of exciting stuff on the horizon! Stay tuned to all our socials!