



Handwriting Analysed

**Letters from a 1929 cold case
surrounding the death of
Norma McLeod**

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Documents analysed

1. Anonymous documents by Asmodeus:
 - a. Two page letter in pencil
 - b. Envelope
 - c. Second note
2. Anonymous letter identifying JG David (Norma's paternal uncle)
3. Anonymous letter identifying 'Mr Birt'
4. Anonymous letter from 'The Fox'
5. Signature by Walter Maxwell Dumont Dunn (Max Dunn)
6. Dunn's signature on his witness statement
7. JG David signature
8. Norma's writing:
 - a. Book inscription
 - b. Signature on land title
9. Edith McLeod:
 - a. Signature on witness statement
 - b. May 1918 note
10. Norman McLeod
 - a. Note from military documents
11. Rhys McLeod
 - a. Note on photograph

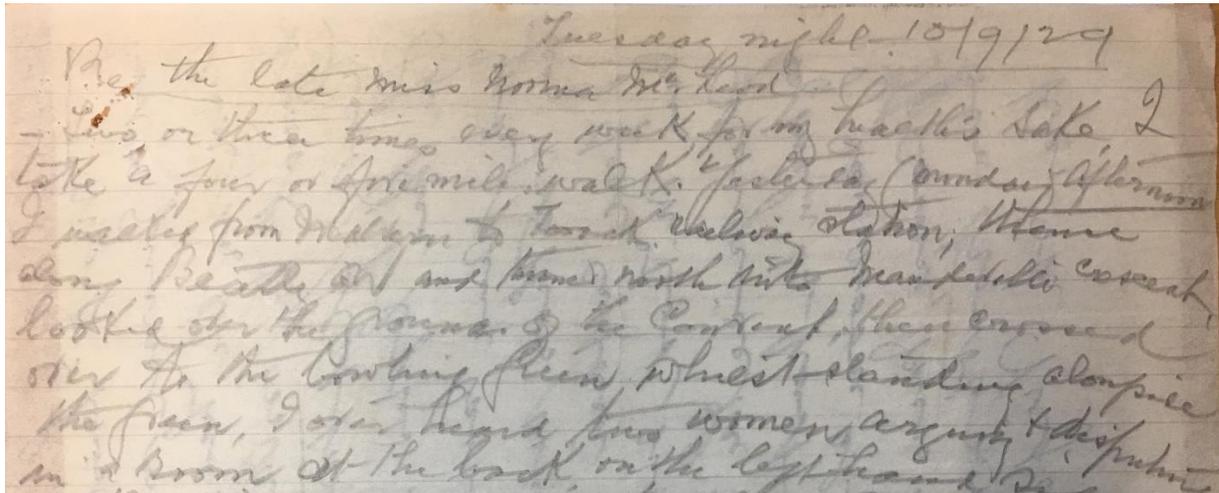
Graphology, the study of personality through handwriting, reveals who we are on a conscious and unconscious level. Our character is unmasked when we write, just as body language or tone of voice portrays our emotions. The writings above have been closely examined, and tell a story of their own. They also pose important questions.

Questions asked to guide analysis

1. Anonymous letters and envelop written by 'Asmodeus' - Does the handwriting reveal anything to you about the writer?
2. Two notes claiming a knowledge of who Asmodeus is (the first identifying JG David; the other naming a Mr Birt -
 - Do these notes tell you anything about the writers?
 - Is there any possibility that the writers of these two notes AND the Asmodeus note could ALL be written by the same person?
3. A note from someone calling themselves 'The Fox' - Does this note tell you anything about the writer?
4. Signatures of Walter Dumont Dunn (also known as Max Dunn) -
 - Do these signatures say anything to you about the writer?
 - Is there any possibility that this writer could be Asmodeus?
5. Signature of John Gomer (JG) David -
 - Does this signature say anything to you about the writer?
 - Is there any possibility that this writer could be Asmodeus?
6. Family signatures - Does their handwriting reveal anything to you about the writers?

The Asmodeus documents

Document 1a, a two-page letter in pencil, was the first to be received by the police.



It is intense, impatient and relentless, with a marked right slant, connected (even some words) and angular, with frequent long horizontal strokes. This is the writing of an impulsive and competitive man¹, who can only see his own point of view, and will take what he needs by force. He is authoritarian and proud, but with a disdain for convention in the formal sense. He makes his own rules and will impose them with complete disregard for those he encounters.

Personal boundaries mean nothing to him, seen in the lack of margins all around the page. Those he knows will find him a great talker who rarely lets them get a word in, and is not really interested in their opinion. He's so intent on getting his message across that he'll slam down any contradictions; he thrives on argument and competition – where he can win. He uses sarcasm, manipulation and a commanding presence to get his own way. This behaviour however brings him little satisfaction, as it is a desperate and unconscious attempt to address deep insecurities.

This letter is intended to convey some very important information, so it is interesting to note that it is difficult to read. Many letters are completely compressed, lines mingle, and superfluous strokes abound in a tangled and hurried scrawl that shows a cluttered and nervous mind. This is not the writing of a genius, but someone whose aim is to remain a mystery. He does not want anyone to know him at all, but strives to control events and outcomes by sheer will and deception. The rise and fall of the baseline, especially on the second page, show his moody nature, and the distinct fall toward end of lines tell us that negativity and determination combine when he's pushed to the limit.

Along with the most prevalent handwriting traits indicating a critical and combative character, there are also numerous miscellaneous features that occur frequently, and raise serious concerns:

- The long, pointed strokes of the t bars, which extend over entire words - malicious and controlling, cruel with a sarcastic tongue.
- The small letter k is greatly inflated – defiant and argumentative.
- The small letter d varies dramatically – inconsistent self-image, highly sensitive and easily offended without the ability to deal with emotions.

¹ Man or woman? — Graphology reveals the graphic sex of the writer; it tells us what the dominant element is within the psyche of the person. The writing of Asmodeus contains mainly masculine features, so I have referred to the writer as 'he' for the report. If this writing was produced by a woman she would have an abundance of traditional male qualities.

- Small oval letters are filled with ink, and often angular – personal resentments are bottled up, with explosive outbursts.

The insincerity revealed by the text makes the validity of the content highly questionable. It also leads one to ask why someone would write such a letter. The signature, of similar style, also tells us that the writer sees himself as aligned with the above character features, and the slightly quick hand he writes with supports this conclusion.



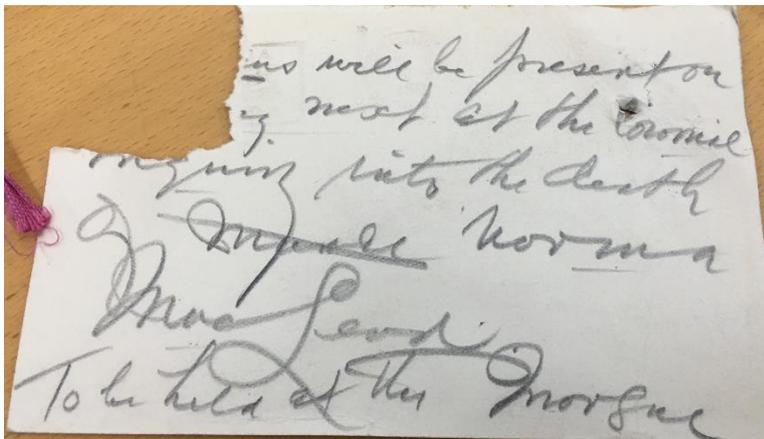
We also have the envelope and second note to offer further clues about the writer’s personality.

In 1b (the envelopes) we see that the address takes up the entire writing space in his characteristic style, with large t bar slashes, falling baselines and flourishing capitals.

He enjoys making a big impression, and sees his contributions as being of the utmost importance – he will not be overlooked.

The high and aggressive crossing of the t bars reiterate the strength of his agenda, and that he holds himself above the law.

The second note (1c – below) is about the coronial enquiry and contains more exaggerated movements as his interest in the case increases.



The large extension of the letter ‘y’ in ‘enquiry’ cuts markedly through the line below, which shows that his instincts can take charge, and find release in uncontrolled physical outbursts – which is concerning to say the least when considering the note’s contents.

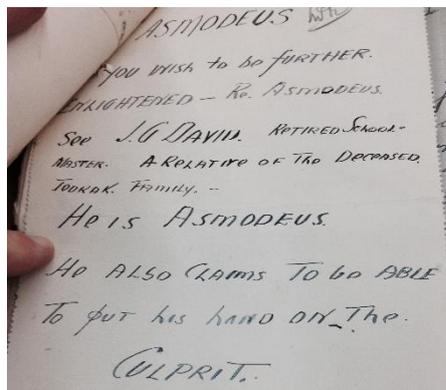
Norma’s surname has also taken on a greater meaning for the

writer; he extends Mc to Mac with elaborate curls and additions that are greatly enlarged. These unnecessary additions show how his mind is captured by the events taking place. At the end of this note we see that ‘Morgue’ is commenced with a flourish and written in a thick pasty stroke that descends. This word of course has significance, and the writer makes superfluous additions.

This note also contains the same dominant features as the longer letter and envelope, so a sense of consistency can be drawn as the writer repeats the same angles, slant, degree of connection and overall rhythm. The strength of these dominant and supporting features paint a portrait of a dark and aggressive individual, who cannot be trusted and carries deep resentments. And as these letters concern the culprit of a violent and mysterious death, the question remains – did he play a part?

Anonymous letter identifying JG David

One of the first assessments made by a graphologist is the graphic speed of the writing. This not only helps to identify the strongest traits, but also indicates how genuine it is. Slightly quick writing is spontaneous, and usually sincere; the writer doesn't hesitate when expressing himself. Medium writing shows a calmer nature; someone with regular habits and common sense. Slower writing can indicate a self-control and perfectionism, however the reduced speed also allows time for calculation and possible dishonesty. It can also mean that the writer has taken the time to disguise the writing.

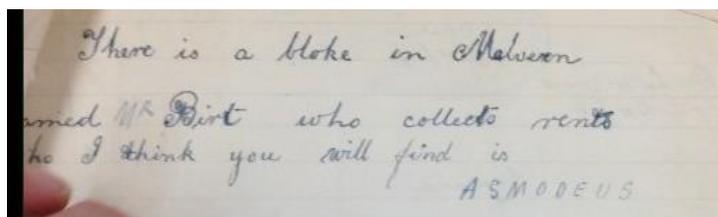


In Document 2 the printed script is significantly slower, and at first appears quite different from the Asmodeus letters. It is disconnected, mainly in capitals with more spaces between the lines. The variable texture of the strokes and corrections also indicate that this writer may not be used to writing in this style. There are also an uncanny number of similarities that can be identified:

- The degree of rightward slant is identical
- First letters of the words are slightly larger, a feature called 'initial emphasis'— writer puts himself before others
- The small letter 'k' extends above other letters — argumentative and confrontational
- The shape of the capital letter 'C' in Culprit and Canterbury is identical to the 'A' in Asmodeus
- The hook at the beginning of 'Culprit' is identical to the hook at the beginning of 'Mr' on the envelope (1c).

While this may be coincidental, the slow nature of the script raises suspicions. There are also other signs that indicate someone capable of deception. If this sample were to be assessed independently the writer would be found to be a complex character with many inner conflicts. The highly reactive nature of the character portrayed is not unlike that of Asmodeus albeit under different pretences.

Anonymous letter identifying 'Mr Birt'



As handwriting is both a conscious and unconscious action, it is difficult to alter every aspect of handwriting by sheer will. If we focus on changing one feature, we are likely to ignore another, and this slows the writing down. Some

aspects which reveal hesitation are wider spacing, copy-model forms with careful retracing, and jerks or smudges which tell us that the writing process isn't smooth.

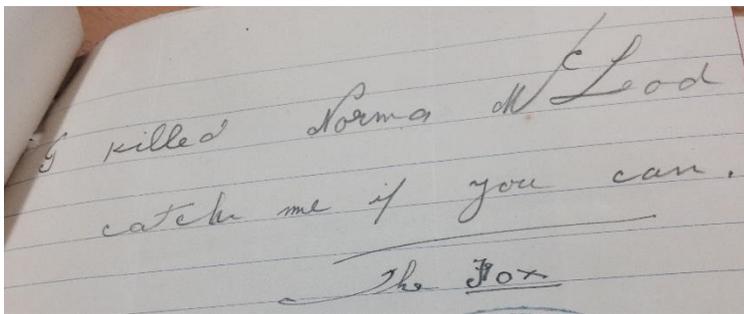
The anonymous author of Document 3 (above) writes with a laboured hand in a simple style similar to the copybook of the time, however the fluency is poor. The pen halts frequently even in this short sample, causing muddy patches and blurred letters. It appears artificial, especially with the additions of initial curls to the capital letters. Starting strokes show that every care is taken in this act of writing.

Similarities can also be seen when relating this sample to that of Asmodeus and Document 2. If this piece was constructed so as to appear from a different hand, then the following features may be worth considering:

- As in Document 1 (Asmodeus letter)
 - The letters are connected with a rightward slant
 - Personal pronoun 'I' is similar in form
 - Straight starting strokes at the beginnings of words
- As in Document 2 (Referring to JG David)
 - Asmodeus printed in capitals with a right slant and similar letter shapes
 - Clear line spacing that varies slightly
 - Amendments to letters

The lack of fluidity in this letter is probably the most concerning feature when considering its authenticity. And when compared to the next letter, even more parallels can be found.

Anonymous letter from 'The Fox'



'I killed Norma McLeod' boasts the writer of Document 4. This letter was again slow to produce, with its elaborate capitals, wide spacing of words and lines and breaks in words. This disturbing message has Norma's name enlarged and adorned, but also with variable pressure and hesitations. This reveals a frustrated

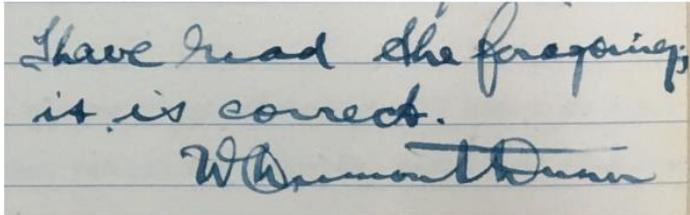
and reactive temperament; he lacks self-control and is unpredictable. These qualities are also seen in the Asmodeus writings but without the attempted disguise of 'The Fox'.

This letter appears contrived, with changes in style within single words, artificial adornments and extreme sweeping extensions. Some of these however, correspond closely to the previous samples:

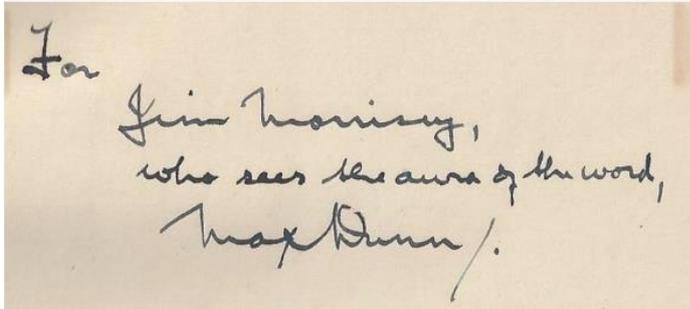
- As in Document 1 (Asmodeus letter)
 - Angular connecting forms
 - Marked right slant
 - Very long rightward lines, and underline under final name
 - Elaborate capital letters
- As in Document 2 (Referring to JG David)
 - Marked right slant
 - Clear line spacing
 - Initial hook in letter 'c' of McLeod matches the 'C' of 'Culprit'
- As in Document 3 (Referring to Mr Birt)
 - Similar in style - slant and connection
 - Initial curl on capital 'M'
 - Pressure pattern and proportions of the letter 'y'
 - Lack of flow or consistency

This letter is also full of hesitations which suggest that this is not the writer's natural script. Whoever wrote this clearly seeks to add further intrigue and hurt to Norma's family, who would have been distraught and full of grief. The fact that so many similarities can be seen between the samples, along with the signs of possible fabrication, is enough to raise many suspicions surrounding the authorship of these notes.

Walter Dunn



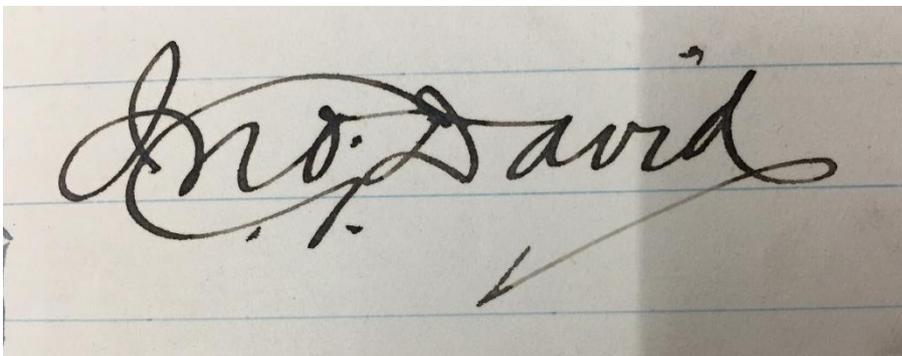
Walter Dunn's writing and signature (Documents 5 and 6) indicate a quite different individual.



His writing is mainly upright, with garland and thread shaped connections. There is also a very small middle zone, which tell us that he is not a boastful type even though he can keep up appearances in formal settings. He's a quiet achiever, who may even come across as evasive at times, as he would rather avoid confrontation if at all possible.

He is not overly expressive however, and keeps a great deal to himself despite enjoying other's company and friendship. The writing also differs in stroke quality to that of Asmodeus, with the flow of ink appearing more pasty, or with greater light and shade. The colour however, is inconsistent, which suggest an ambivalent character and unpredictability. As the pressure is unable to be assessed it is unclear how much this would impact his personality. The garland forms too reveal a gentle character, but the wavy lines reveal an evasive nature and mean that most people never really knew who he really was.

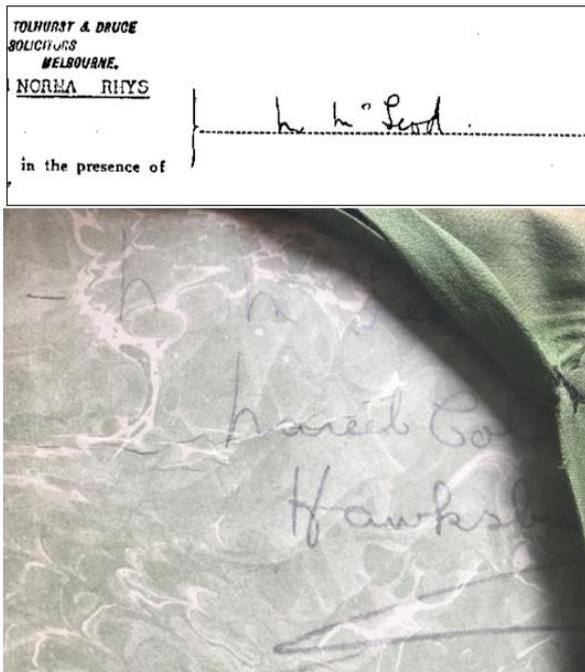
John Gomer David



How we sign our name reveals the image we would like to project, whereas the body of the writing will tell the story of who we really are. In this sample we can see that Norma's paternal uncle identified with his

surname, and he also underscores it partially to add some impact. There's some flamboyance, but also a desire to be open and genuine in how he presents himself. He's self-protective to a degree, seen in the circular stroke around the initial letters, but also willing to communicate shown by the connected forms. The final hook implies an irritation that may have origins in the past, but an analysis of his regular writing would be necessary to discover the full story.

Norma McLeod

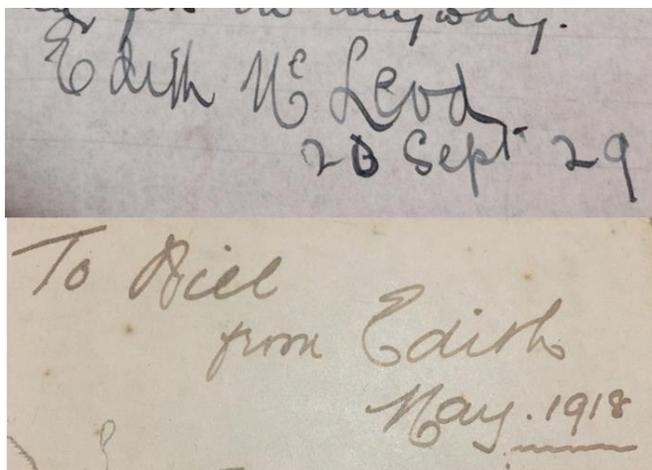


In the brief samples of Norma's writing (Documents 7a and b) we can see her signature on a land title and inscription inside a book-cover. Her writing is mainly upright and legible, with a well-developed upper zone seen in the tall letter 'd'. She has added extensions to her name by way of single strokes, and the capital 'M' has diminishing humps.

These features reveal a contained and independent young woman, with a mind of her own. She was logical, and expressed herself with diplomacy and respect for the listener. The light colour of the text suggests light pressure applied to the page, and along with gentle connections and clear loops, we can see that she was a sensitive and feminine woman who respected others.

The clever connection from the capital 'H' to the next letter also shows a keen mind, and someone who could solve problems creatively. The level baselines show a stable and reliable personality, all the hallmarks of someone with a bright future.

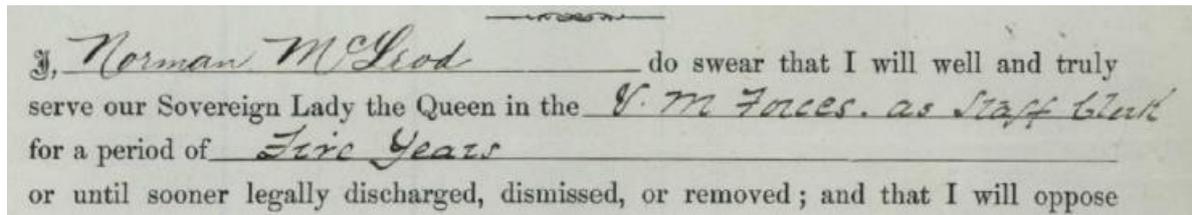
Edith McLeod



Edith's signature on the witness statement (8a) undoubtedly reveals her turmoil, with the wavering baseline that falls sadly toward the right of the page. Handwriting is a snapshot in time of the writer, and shows what someone is experiencing and how they are dealing with it. The spacing is erratic, and the slant fluctuates as she struggles with her grief, and inner world being pulled away as she is questioned by the police.

We also see in an earlier sample (8b) from 1918, similar forms by way of a well-developed and variable middle zone and a more rightward slant. This tells us that Edith was an emotional woman, more so than her daughter, and quite effusive in expression and in the upkeep of traditions. She was a kindly lady who would laugh and cry easily. The openness of her script also tells us that she was not one to hide her thoughts and feelings.

Norman McLeod

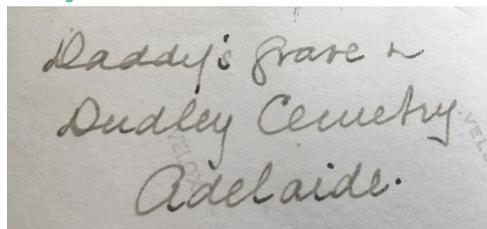


I, Norman McLeod do swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lady the Queen in the V. M. Forces. as Staff Clerk for a period of Five Years or until sooner legally discharged, dismissed, or removed; and that I will oppose

Norman writes with an extreme right slant and connected letters. The middle zone is small and stretched out as well, with some wavy lines seen instead of traditionally formed letters. He did not have an easy-going nature like Edith, but held strong opinions and ideas of his own. Privately his self-esteem was low; he lacked self-confidence, and remained elusive and mysterious.

Angles are also seen throughout his writing, and combined with thready forms, this makes for a tricky character indeed. He could be meticulous, secretive and logical to extreme lengths - inclined to nit-pick and be indiscreet, despite revealing little about himself. He was also capable of 'covering up' any material to 'keep up appearances', and could have sudden outbursts of temper. His, at times, meek appearance was not what it seemed, and he is likely to have baffled his family and work colleagues with his ambivalent behaviour.

Rhys McLeod



Daddy's grave in
Dudley Cemetery
Adelaide.

Looking at Rhys's writing (Document 10) we can see that he was cut from the same cloth as his mother. An approachable and balanced man, he constructs similar forms in the same flowing style that denotes his ease of expression. He also carries a persevering outlook, even when writing about his father's grave.

Though feeling his sister's death keenly, Rhys would have been able to carry on and make the most of his future opportunities. He was resourceful, with a sense of inner harmony that would have helped him to face the ups and downs of life. He had a realistic view of how he stood in the world, and a quiet confidence that made him a reliable friend and family member.

The Mystery

Who is Asmodeus?

Who wrote the letters?

Who killed Norma McLeod?

After all these examinations, are we any closer to the answers of these important questions? We now know that Norma's parents had very different personalities; her mother wore her heart on her sleeve, her father was evasive but with an intense character that was difficult to fathom. Norma herself was thoughtful and gentle, with ideas of her own and a life ahead of her.

The Asmodeus letters show the mind of a disturbed individual. If he did not commit the murder, he is certainly capable of inflicting harm. Without being able to assess the pressure from the original sample it is not clear how these outbursts would be expressed, though his words on the page are hurtful indeed. And as he never came forward we only have his writing to form our opinion.

Could the other letters be written by Asmodeus? There is no way to say for sure, but there are numerous signs that raise serious suspicions. And the mere fact that they all incriminate another while remaining anonymous raises red flags as well. From a graphological perspective, the slowness of the script, poor rhythm, and numerous similarities indicate that it is a possibility.

Perhaps even Asmodeus himself knows that his writing could give him away. So... what does he have to hide?

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