

Today, Norm Goldman, Editor of Bookpleasures.com is pleased to have as out guest, Brian R. Smith, author of Losing Innocence.

Good day Brian and thank you for participating in our interview.

Norm:

Why do you write and why did you feel compelled to write Losing Innocence?

Brian:

Writing fulfills my creative spirit. I don't go a day without writing; it's a need within me that requires quenching. Losing Innocence is a story many families struggle through daily. It was a story I felt needed told from a different perspective that I knew adults would relate to especially those that have been involved in a divorce.

Norm:

Where did you grow up and was reading and writing part of your life? Who were your earliest influences and why?

Brian:

I grew up in Iowa, the oldest of six kids. My father, now retired, was a high school football coach and teacher who moved every two years trying to find the best football team so when people ask me where I grew up I tell them Iowa rather than a town.

My earliest memories are of me telling stories to my younger siblings. Being a child of a high school educator in Iowa meant money was scarce so books checked out from the local library became an affordable means of entertainment. Night after night, I would lie awake in bed and read the Hardy Boys books series. These books allowed me to have adventures even though I was surrounded by cornfields.

Norm:

Do you have a particular writing philosophy that you follow?

Brian:

I touch my work everyday no matter what. Even on my busiest days, I will still find time to write at least a sentence or two, keeping the story fresh in my mind. I never go back and look at my work until I get the first draft done. The important thing to me is to get the story written and edit later.

Norm:

Is there an underlying message in your book?

Brian:

Abuse comes in many different forms and it steals the innocence away from so many people in the world. That stolen innocence can never be recaptured, but

life can go on. One choice, one action can easily destroy someone but each of us hold the power to make the right decisions and stop the cycle of abuse.

Norm:

What kind of research did you do to write this book? How much real-life do you put into your fiction? Is there much "you" in there?

Brian:

Losing Innocence came from life and the people I have experienced in life. Research was minimal since the story took place in the area I lived in and the things that occur in the story were events that actually happened to a mixture of different people.

I think all of my fiction has a huge amount of real-life in it, which makes my characters believable causing people to root for some and hate others. There is a lot of me in Losing Innocence. People that know me identify me in the character Lance almost immediately.

Norm:

Tell us about the character Lance. How did you create him and what was your inspiration for him?

Brian:

Lance starts out in the story as a lost soul unsure of his past decisions and ridden with guilt over the decisions he has made. He is a loving father, trying to do his best raising a teenage daughter on his own. He has given up on love and is searching out abuse as a form of penance.

Things change for him dramatically once his daughter takes command determined to change her father's life. Lance is based on my life experiences, although mixed with fiction, the situations and feelings Lance is forced to deal with are taken from my own life experiences.

Norm:

While writing Losing Innocence, did you ever encounter writer's block and if so, how did you overcome it? And as a follow up, what obstacles did you have in trying to tell your story?

Brian:

I am now writing my third novel and I have not yet encountered writer's block. I consider myself lucky since I have heard so much about it.

My head has too many stories in it dying to be told. The only obstacle I faced was me. Losing Innocence was my first novel and I was unsure of my own abilities. There were times I got caught in the edit trap, going back to pages already written, and judging my work. Another writer encouraged me to plow straight ahead, never look back. Heeding his advice I have continued gaining confidence in my abilities with each new line.

Norm:

What has been your experience with self-publishing, as I believe Losing Innocence is self-published? Do you recommend it over traditional publishers?

Brian:

My publisher claims to be a traditional publisher since they do in fact pay a very tiny advance but my own personal judgment of them is that they are a POD publisher.

They have been professional every step of the way, made no false promises, and have delivered perfectly. Losing Innocence had agent representation for nearly a year who shopped the early manuscript every where.

At least on four occasions my manuscript made it into the boardroom of traditional publishers only to be denied due to it's content being considered a bit taboo and because it was from a new author. Finally, my agent told me that could no longer in good faith represent me but he made it abundantly clear my story was remarkable and that I should look into alternative publishing methods.

I would never recommend self-publishing over traditional publishers but my experience taught me that traditional publishers are extremely selective when it comes to new authors and stories. Traditional publishers are flooded with manuscripts every day and many good authors are turned away. Many traditionally published authors and organizations turn their nose up to POD, self-published, authors and insist every writer should continue sending query letters and never give in to anything else but traditional publishing. I know good writers who have been playing the query game with agents and publishers for four or more years, their story never gets read- their talent never gets found and ends up slipping away into disappointment.

Norm:

Mia's son Vincent is a real handful. How did you approach writing this character? Did you plan him out or did he evolve as you wrote the book?

Brian:

He evolved as he grew up! Vincent is one of those believe it or not stories, he is based almost 100% on a real boy. I just wrote the facts about this troubled young man who is filled with rage and hate. This is the case with many children from divorce, they hate the fact that their parents are no longer together, they scheme and do whatever is necessary trying to prevent new relationships from occurring in their custodial parents life.

Norm:

What is next for Brian Smith as a writer?

Brian:

I have just completed my second novel, The Bastard's Plaything. The Bastard's Plaything shows you the wicked circle of abuse, progressing from generation to generation, if left unchecked it can become deadly. One action, one event can

change a person's entire life, not just yours. Thirteen year old Jennie Grace is a survivor, a fighter, and her mind has no choice but to become just as strong in this emotionally charged, suspenseful, action packed novel. I currently trying to decide how I want to publish The Bastard's Plaything, whether or not to pursue traditional publishing or use POD. I am nearly done with the first draft of my third novel, The Tree. I have so many stories in my head that I want told, so I am sure there will be many more books from me.

Norm:

Is there anything else you wish to add that we have not covered?

Brian:

I have recently teamed up with RAINN – Rape, Incest, Abuse National Network who I will be donating part of all proceeds generated from the sale of Losing Innocence. Since all of my books thus far seem to deal with some type of abuse, I hope to have a long relationship with RAINN.

Thank you once again and good luck with your book.