

Interview with Michael Bialys

Author of *The Chronicles of the Virago: Book I The Novus*

Today, Juanita Watson, Assistant Editor of Reader Views is talking with author Michael Bialys, about his new fantasy novel, "*The Chronicles of the Virago: Book I The Novus*."

Michael Bialys was born and raised in Toronto, Canada, and moved to Los Angeles in his mid-twenties to pursue a music career. He is a practicing attorney, and resides in Southern California with his wife and three children. Michael, a devout comic book fan, grew up on X-Men and Spiderman, and credits these early influences, as well as his family, for the inspiration behind his writing.

Juanita: Welcome to Reader Views Michael, we appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about your new fantasy novel "*The Chronicles of the Virago: Book I The Novus*." Would you start by telling us what your book is about?

Michael: I would characterize it as a coming of age story. We have a twelve-old girl, Makenna, who suddenly has this huge responsibility thrust upon her. She is now charged with protecting her newborn brother and sister who we are told are the hope for our world's future.

She is recruited by three faeries who are supposed to guide her in her new role. They refer to her as the Virago, and tell her that she is one of only a few select people in history, who has ever been given this crucial role. Specifically mentioned are King David and King Arthur, but there are others.

Makenna is given an ancient weapon to use against the forces of evil which conspire to destroy her baby twin brother and sister, Noah and Emi. In this contemporary fantasy/fairy tale, set in our modern and very real world, Makenna must learn to come to terms with her new role as the Virago.

Juanita: Your title indicates that this is the first in a series, is that correct? What direction are you going with your series?

Michael: Book two is actually almost finished and I do have plans for more in the series. I'm not exactly sure how many yet. In book two however, the readers will get more details about most, if not all of the main characters, including Makenna, Stephen her best friend, her three Fearie mentors,

Bree, Dee, and Marigold and even the Faerie Realm itself. I delve into some of their origins, what makes them tick etc. Additionally, we also find out more about the villains we love to hate, from book one.

The big surprise is the guest appearance of one of the most famous characters in modern literature. I have already been granted the license to use this character, so it is assured that he or she will be appearing in book two, but that's all you get for now!!!

Juanita: Well, you are going to certainly create some curiosity with that cliffhanger response! What is the age range of your reading audience?

Michael: I like to think the book will appeal to ages 8 and up, but it seems that most characterize it as a 10+ book.

Juanita: Would you tell us about your main character, Makenna? Why is she chosen to be “The Virago”?

Michael: Great question! In the first book we get the feeling that Makenna is chosen because of her heart. Makenna has a big heart and feels for people. She is very sympathetic/empathetic. This is often referred to in the first book by the other characters that surround her. This in fact is a part of it. Makenna's heart will help her wield her weapon and powers responsibly, however there is much more to it as we will learn further on in the series.

Juanita: Do you feel that Makenna is a good role model for children?

Michael: Absolutely! She is a regular twelve-year old girl, who now has been given a lot to contend with. To reiterate, she has a good heart, and I think in dealing with her new role and responsibilities she learns some very valuable lessons that readers can draw on. Moreover, her issues with some of her more adversarial classmates may help some of the readers identify with some of their own social issues.

Juanita: What other characters are pertinent to “*The Chronicles of the Virago*”?

Michael: Well, Bree Dee and Marigold as Faeries bring in the Fantasy element to the table. Fluffy adds an element of off beat humor. Sir Seaton and his henchwomen represent the classic evil antagonists!!!

Juanita: Your book leans strongly on the themes of good and evil. How do you handle these strong concepts in a context that will appeal to children?

Michael: In dealing with the evil themes I try infuse some humor or irony into the characters or situations, to lighten the mood. For example I use name **Ms. Creante** as one of the evil henchwomen the humor or irony being a take-off on the actual word **miscreant**, which is defined as a scoundrel; an evildoer; a villain.

Additionally, I try to bring humor in other various ways to help lighten the mood generally when things are getting to heavy. The characters of Fluffy, Bree and Dee all help to provide this.

Juanita: Michael, you mentioned earlier that children can relate aspects of this story to present day social issues, such as handling adversarial classmates. What other issues might “*The Chronicles of the Virago*,” reflect for children?

Michael: I’m hoping young readers might be able to relate to the issues of family, having new babies come into the house, even friendship.

Juanita: Would you comment on the “evolutionary age of hope and enlightenment” that the forces of evil are trying to prevent? Are you making any real-life statements with this scenario?

Michael: I guess the best way to define is actually, “Hope.” The twins are destined to provide this to our world. They will show our world that good exists and that people can choose a path of good or evil, in addition to providing a deeper knowledge and understanding of our world.

Juanita: Michael, what inspired this novel?

Michael: One of my favorite questions! My eldest daughter Makenna inspired the book. I began writing the book as a short story and tribute to Makenna who was so helpful in helping with her new baby brother and sister. The demands of two new babies in the house took a lot of attention from Makenna and I wanted to give her something to let her know how special she was to her mother and I.

Juanita: That is beautiful Michael, Makenna sounds like a very special young girl. What are you hoping to convey to children through “**The Chronicles of the Virago: Book 1 The Novus**”?

Michael: I guess there are certain messages that ring through. I try to draw from history and certain family values to teach lessons but I really want the readers to find something the rings through to them. As I have discovered talking with some of the readers and reading some of the reviews, everyone seems to find their own level of identification with the book. I’m finding that each person takes something different from it. I truly enjoy that the most.

Juanita: Michael, you have expressed yourself as a very devoted family man. How did your strong family values influence the story, characters and message?

Michael: The story itself grew out of love. I never take for granted how fortunate I am to have an incredible wife and healthy happy children. I adore them all but my wife Misty truly is the wind beneath my wings, she inspires me daily.

Juanita: Would you comment on the power of mixing strong “value” messages in the context of a fantasy story?

Michael: I think strong values give meaning to the world of fantasy. When writing a story you have to answer the, who, what, when, where and, why, questions. The values very often provide the answer to why, and if handled properly, and by this I mean not to preachy, they give very a very legitimate basis to the story.

Juanita: Have you found it difficult to find books for your own children that reflect topics you'd like them to read about?

Michael: Noah and Emi are still too young to read books of this nature. They're still at the Thomas the Train/Backyardagains stage. Makenna reads a lot of school assigned work, so I'm not certain that she's getting all of those same values, because the emphasis is on reading for knowledge.

Juanita: What are your thoughts on the importance of children reading fiction to stretch their imaginations and/or comprehension skills?

Michael: As a fiction writer, I am obviously biased. That having been said, I believe that our imaginations are an absolute part of our being human. It is our ability to see and think beyond our normal everyday existence that is responsible for almost all of our technological advancements. This develops right from childhood, and it is reading that helps us to further develop this very necessary tool.

Juanita: How long was the writing process? Will you do anything differently for your next book? When can readers expect the second installment?

Michael: It took about 6 months to complete book 1. In book two I plan on really opening up the storylines and adding a lot more detail and depth in terms of character and sub-plots. Book 1 laid a very basic foundation book 2 really gets into the seriousness ad depth of Makenna's role. The next book is likely 18 months away from hitting the stands, so to speak.

Juanita: How can readers find out more about you and your endeavors?

Michael: I have a web site where I will be occasionally posting tidbits of new information.
www.thevirago.com

Juanita: Michael, thanks for the opportunity to talk with you today. "*The Chronicles of the Virago*" sounds like a great fantasy book for children, with some worthwhile messages. Before we depart, do you have any last thoughts for your readers?

Michael: I just really want them to enjoy the book. As I began writing "The Chronicles," it was for Makenna, but now I think of the fans. I've got many more surprises in store, so keep watching and reading.