

A CONVERSATION WITH PATRICIA GUSSIN about *AFTER THE FALL*

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF, HOW AND WHEN YOU STARTED WRITING.

I started writing when I was well into my career as a pharmaceutical executive. I had responsibility for worldwide research and development at a Johnson & Johnson healthcare company and found that I had extra time on long international business flights. So I began a story – now a saga – about a medical student, a mother who starts her professional life in Detroit at the epicenter of the Detroit riots. Since I love suspense, I naturally gravitated to the thriller genre, and am pleased to say that *Shadow of Death* was nominated by International Thriller Writers as best first novel.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE *AFTER THE FALL*?

Laura Nelson was a medical student in *Shadow of Death*, a thoracic surgeon in *Twisted Justice*, chief of surgery in *Weapon of Choice*, and now, a pharmaceutical executive when a debilitating fall ends her surgical career. In *After the Fall* I wanted to bring her story full circle, to transition her from clinical medicine to medical research, while not only putting her life in jeopardy, but allowing her to disclose tortuous secrets from her past, and introducing a romantic element.

HOW DID YOU USE YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCE OR PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND TO ENRICH YOUR STORY?

Since I'm a physician, I always blend in medical components and since I am a mother, I always include family dynamics. I've had a lot of experience juggling career and family so I often use that as background for the thriller component of the story.

ANYTHING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL IN *AFTER THE FALL*?

Like Laura Nelson, the protagonist, in *After the Fall*, I started medical school with a three year old and a three month old son in Detroit during the riots there in 1967. Like Laura, I made the transition from clinical medicine to pharmaceutical research. But unlike Laura, I did not face the terrifying personal and professional challenges that she had to overcome.

ARE ANY CHARACTERS BASED ON PEOPLE YOU KNOW?

In *After the Fall*, I did use composites of those I worked with in the pharmaceutical industry.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE OR MOST SYMPATHETIC CHARACTER? AND WHY?

Even though Laura is the protagonist, I think that Addie Abdul is the most sympathetic. A brilliant Iraqi scientist caught between cultures.

WHO IS YOUR LEAST SYMPATHIC CHARACTER? AND WHY?

Jake Harter, for sure. A ruthless psychopath who will stop at nothing to get what he wants.

WHAT PART OF WRITING YOUR BOOK DID YOU FIND THE MOST CHALLENGING?

I wanted *After the Fall* to be read as a stand-alone novel while addressing and bringing to closure incidents that had occurred in *Shadow of Death*, *Twisted Justice*, and *Weapon of Choice*. A reader will not have to have read any of the prior Laura Nelson novels to jump right into the story. This is the reason that I have always kept a seven year interval in Laura's life. So that in each novel she is in a totally different phase of her life.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE THAT READERS WILL TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR BOOK?

I hope that readers will come away with an appreciation of the approval process of important new drugs, a sense of complex family dynamics, multicultural assimilation issues, and the realization of how vulnerable we are to psychopaths we encounter in the navigation of an ordinary life.

WHAT WRITERS HAVE INSPIRED YOU?

Quite an eclectic group: Wilber Smith for his adventurous family sagas; Barbara Taylor Bradford, for her romantic sagas, especially *A Woman of Substance*; Michael Palmer and Tess Gerritsen for medical suspense; Frederick Forsyth and Gayle Lynds for their spy thrillers; Nelson DeMille for John Corey; David Baldacci for King and Maxell; Ken Follett for all his magnificent works especially *Pillars of the Earth*. And all the Oceanview Publishing authors whom I have personally selected as the "best".

WHAT IS THE WRITING PROCESS LIKE FOR YOU?

Very erratic, I am sorry to say. Not as disciplined as I'd like to be. I procrastinate as long as I can, but once I get started, I find it hard to stop. I start with a character and a situation and a series of "what if's". I don't outline except at the end when I know I have to bring it all together for a cohesive conclusion.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU? ANY NEW BOOKS IN THE PIPELINE?

My next book will have an international theme: a parental abduction of child from the United States to Egypt. No title yet.

ANY OTHER BOOKS BESIDES THE LAURA NELSON SERIES?

Yes. *The Test* and *And Then There Was One*, are both psychological thrillers about terrifying intrusions into ordinary family lives. *And Then There Was One* is a *New York Times* and *USA Today* best-seller.

ANY FINAL WORDS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY IN GENERAL?

I would like to thank my readers. I love your feedback and I so appreciate your support. Feel free to contact me any time: patg@patriciagussin.com