

## Interview from Women of Mystery:

**Deborah Adams is the award-winning author of the Jesus Creek novels, as well as numerous short stories and articles in various genres. The following interview reveals more about her writing, her other interests, and her (sometimes strong!) opinions.**

*Q: I know you've been asked this before, but could you explain--just once more--where the name Jesus Creek came from?*

A: I wish I had gotten around to making up an entertaining story for this. I keep threatening to do that. Okay, I was driving a boring stretch of road, early one morning. And I do not do morning. I passed a sign that read 'Guices Creek Recreation Area.' Now in the first place, there was absolutely nothing anywhere around that could be called a recreation area. But more important than that, I couldn't decide how to pronounce the name *Guices Creek*. You know, this is the place where Buena Vista is pronounced "BEWnie Vista", and Versailles, KY is pronounced, "Vuhr-SALES."

So I was playing with that name and Jesus Creek popped into my head. I thought it was pretty darned funny. Later, when I needed a name for the town in my books, I thought that one was perfect.

*Q: Have you gotten any flack for the name?*

A: Yes, from one woman who felt it was sacrilegious. I told her it's okay to pronounce it "Hay-SUS Creek."

*Q: One of the most unique elements of these books is that there's a different protagonist in each. Do you have a favorite character from Jesus Creek?*

A: I adore Roger. Unfortunately I don't think anyone could stand an entire book written from his perspective.

*Q: Why not? I like Roger, too.*

A: Oh, but he's so irreverent! Nothing is serious to him. Well, except for Delia. A protagonist needs to *care* about something, and Roger's take on life is ...laid back.

*Q: But you're the author. You can change him, right?*

A: Hah! Good luck!

*Q: Are you saying your characters are in charge?*

A: I hate to admit this because it sounds spacey as hell--and I'm not spacey. I'm not, I'm not, I'm not! But, yes. The characters are in control. I was halfway through *All The Hungry Mothers* when I realized that two of the characters had developed a decidedly unfortunate relationship. I was against it all the way, but there it was. Nothing I could do about it.

*Q: You're kidding, right?*

A: Nope.

*Q: Let's just move on, then. Are you working on a new Jesus Creek book right now?*

A: No, at the moment I'm working on two other books. One is a book I wanted to write--oh, for a

while now. I'm not sure what category it fits into, and that may keep it from ever being sold.

*Q: Is it the Great American Novel?*

A: For the sake of literature, let's hope not. It's fun. Fun for me to write.

*Q: A mystery?*

A: Well, someone is missing and others try to find her. I can't tell you more than that. It's a superstition.

*Q: Has anyone ever told you that you're a tough interview?*

A: Only those who interview me before noon. (looks pointedly at watch)

*Q: Sorry. We'll get you more coffee. Let's go back to the earlier comment--about literature. Do you want to write more literary, more mainstream-type books?*

A: I don't want to sound syrupy, but I just want to write. I'd prefer to get paid for doing it, but bottom line? I want to write. I don't care what you call it, I don't care what genre it fits into.

*Q: Would you say you were born to write?*

A: Well, in the way that some people are born to be botanists. I've always loved writing and I've done all I can to improve my skills. I like to think I'm a better writer now than I was when I wrote my first book.

*Q: When was that?*

A: Fourth grade. Took me a while to figure out that books were written. I just thought they appeared by magic, I guess. Anyway, as soon as I noticed that, I wrote one. *Adventures in Space*, featuring those intrepid space explorers Chris Cosmic, Connie Crater, and Rob Retro.

*Q: So you were into science fiction! Are you still?*

A: Actually I was into a Saturday morning show called "Fireball XL5". Which nobody else remembers, but I swear it was there. I remember being annoyed that they pre-empted it for coverage of President Kennedy's death.

*Q: And you never had any other interest in science fiction?*

A: I'm a sort of sideline Trekker. Went to a convention once. Can name all of Lwaxana Troi's titles. And I watch shows like "Third Rock from the Sun" and "Homeboys in Outer Space." Oh, and of course, I schedule my life around "Babylon 5." Think I should write sf novels?

*Q: I thought you already were. What about those UFOs in the Jesus Creek books?*

A: Yes?

*Q: Are they real or not?*

A: Well, people in Jesus Creek have seen them.

*Q: A lot of writers use their own experiences in books. Is that the case here? Have you seen a UFO?*

A: No, and I'm really distressed by that. It seems to me that I'd be an ideal candidate for abduction. I don't understand why they're ignoring me.

*Q: But you have used some personal experiences in your books.*

A: Horses. I'm an expert horsewoman, but I had to fall off a horse in order to write about it.

*Q: Really? You're an accomplished equestrienne?*

A: Didn't your mother warn you about believing everything you hear? Actually, I've been riding about four years. I did complete an endurance race--25 miles--but that doesn't take skill so much as determination. The rules say you have to finish, not that you have to look good doing it.

*Q: But you really have fallen off the horse.*

A: Oh, once or twice. No, wait. I never *fell* off the horse. I was thrown a few times. And once the horse fell on top of me, which I thought was a fascinating tale. I mentioned it to Chris Scott (Randolph's son, nice guy) and asked if he was impressed. He said, "Hell, no. I'd be much more impressed if you'd stayed *on* the horse.

*Q: Time for the Big Question: How does someone get started as a writer? What's the first step?*

A: It never hurts to learn to write. And then to actually write something. You'd be surprised how many people don't bother with that before trying to get published.

*Q: Assuming they've done that--*

A: Network. Go to conferences, meet others who write, read the trade publications--in short, learn the business. I mean, if you wanted to open a dress shop, you'd research the market, right? You'd scout for a good location, determine whether or not there's a market for dresses, price your merchandise appropriately. Well, writing is a business, too. Learn your trade, hone your skills, then profit from the experience of others. Don't think you can do it your way until you know what the established way is.

*Q: Yes, but how does someone just starting out get advice from famous writers?*

A: Conferences. Lots of authors on panels, telling all they know, spilling their guts. Nobody's trying to keep the deep dark secret. It isn't necessary. If you're determined to get published, you'll do what it takes, with or without help from the already-published. Most of the authors I met when I was trying to sell my first book were delightfully candid. If they were willing to share with me, I have an obligation to pass it on. Most authors have the same story and feel the same way.

*Q: Is there anything you'd like to add?*

A: Have your pet spayed or neutered. Take a little responsibility, people!

**Review from Mystery Review, Spring 1997: All The Blood Relations, by Deborah Adams**

"The writing is humorous, tongue-in-cheek and imaginative. Adams has taken murder as far from tragedy into comedy as she can and she dares the reader to make something of it. There is an imp under the bland surface inviting the reader to read this mystery from an unusual perspective. The atmosphere, style and tone are wonderful."

-- Jill M. Smith

***Quantum South Literary Reviews , All The Dirty Cowards, by Deborah Adams***

ALL THE DIRTY COWARDS, by Deborah Adams  
Silver Dagger Mysteries ISBN 1-57072-115-7

Deceptively labeled ‘comedic mysteries’ the Jesus Creek novels have always carried an extra layer of meaning, a little more metaphor than is strictly required by the genre. The newest addition to the series, *All The Dirty Cowards*, is no exception.

Finding a murder victim's remains in the garden is, in amateur sleuth Delia Cannon's opinion, the very best way to become acquainted with her new neighbor Dan McClain. McClain exhibits a high degree of interest in the mysterious bones and encourages Delia to pursue the genealogical research that may identify the victims. Caught up in the mystery, Delia fails to wonder why McClain, a stranger with no ties to Jesus Creek, is so enthusiastic about the investigation.

As police and anthropologists investigate the buried skeletons as well as the murder of one of Jesus Creek's most prominent citizens, Delia looks for clues in the handwritten memoirs of nineteenth century schoolteacher Jeremiah Vickers. Gradually it becomes clear that Jeremiah's story leads directly to the mystery of the bones, and Delia's recognition of the fact makes her a target.

*All The Dirty Cowards* presents several story lines in a haunting chiaroscuro, the suspense building gradually until lives and dramas overlap for the heart-wrenching denouement.

**All The Hungry Mothers**, by Deborah Adams

"It was, I believe, Samuel Goldwyn, movie mogul, who said if he wanted to deliver a message, he would use Western Union. A wise decision on his part, but then he apparently did not know anyone as talented as Deborah Adams, who delivers her message with both humor and compassion in an excellent novel." -- *The Criminal Record*

### NOVELS

#### **ALL THE GREAT PRETENDERS**

Agatha Nominee, Ballantine, ISBN 345-37075-9

#### **ALL THE CRAZY WINTERS**

Ballantine, ISBN 345-37076-7

#### **ALL THE DARK DISGUISES**

Ballantine, ISBN 345-37765-6

#### **ALL THE HUNGRY MOTHERS**

Silver Dagger Mysteries, ISBN 1-57072-106-8

#### **ALL THE DEADLY BELOVED**

Ballantine, ISBN 345-39222-1

#### **ALL THE BLOOD RELATIONS**

Ballantine, ISBN 345-40378-9

#### **ALL THE DIRTY COWARDS**

Silver Dagger Mysteries, ISBN 1-57072-115-7

### SHORT FICTION

#### **"Cast Your Fate to The Wind"**

Macavity Winner, Agatha Nominee, MALICE DOMESTIC III edited by Nancy Pickard, 1994

#### **"Hagseed"**

HOMEWORKS, University of Tennessee Press, 1996

#### **"All The Ice-Cold Blood"**

MURDEROUS INTENT MYSTERY MAGAZINE, January 1996

**"Good Intentions"**

MURDEROUS INTENT MYSTERY MAGAZINE, January 1997

**"They Only Kill Their Asters"**

FUNNY BONES, edited by Joan Hess ,July 1997

**"The Cadaver Waltzed at Noon"**

MURDER, THEY WROTE II presented by Jessica Fletcher,  
edited by Elizabeth Foxwell and Martin Greenberg, 1998

**"Building Herbert"**

CANINE CAPERS, edited by Jeffrey Marks, Ballantine, 1998

**"Psycho Santa's Got a Brand New Bag"**

CANINE CHRISTMAS, edited by Jeffrey Marks, Ballantine, 1999

**"A Thief in Monkey Junction"**

MAGNOLIAS & MAYHEM, presented by Jeffrey Marks, Silver Dagger, 2000

**NON-FICTION**

**"Trailblazers, Pathfinders, and Gutsy Women"**

MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA YEARBOOK

**"The Mysterious Destiny of Daryl Dean James"**

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

**"A Matter of Pedigree: the Southern regional mystery as written by women"**

DEADLY WOMEN, edited by Jan Grape and Dean James, 1997

MYSTERY SCENE MAGAZINE, reprint

THE OLD STATE OF FRANKLIN, reprint