



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH SHAWN GRADY

1. Why did you decide to write *Through the Fire* as your debut novel?

I felt a pressing need to express something of the experiences and feelings I've had working for the fire department, particularly at Station One in downtown Reno. The people, the energy, the lack of sleep, the fires, the medicals, the three-story poles and the cast-iron cookware that's been seasoned for decades... I wanted to relate the sights and sounds and smells and the sensations of it all. I wanted to make it feel real for the reader and take them there so they could know it.

In that context, I was compelled in *Through the Fire* to tell a story of loss and redemption, of death and life, and to resonate a bit of the greatest story ever told.

2. What were you hoping to convey to the reader through this story?

The main character in *Through the Fire*, Aidan O'Neill, learns that in order to find a lasting peace he must choose to put his trust in something outside of himself. Like Job, Aidan comes to a place where he can say, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

3. Did you encounter any unexpected challenges while writing *Through the Fire*?

I was very fortunate to be offered the contract to write this novel and two others without a completed manuscript. Shortly after my elation tempered, I realized that I now had the huge burden to deliver a quality piece of work by a specified deadline that I'd already been paid an advance for. That stress was a new dynamic for me with writing, so I made my best efforts to not think too much about the length and ardor of the journey, but to focus on the joy of writing and the day-to-day goals I'd set for myself.

4. You recently won the 2008 Mount Hermon Most Promising Writer Award. How did that affect the way you approached writing this debut?

In my adult life I hadn't won an award for writing before, so the fact that the faculty at Mount Hermon nominated and voted for me to win that was a huge boon. It felt validating and gave me a much-appreciated boost to carry on with the hard work of crafting and honing *Through the Fire*. It definitely made me resolute to deliver on being 'Most Promising.'

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by Shawn Grady

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Media Contacts

PRINT/ BROADCAST: **Noelle Buss**

952-829-2765

noelle.buss@bethanyhouse.com

INTERNET: **Jim Hart**

952-829-2526

jim.hart@bethanyhouse.com

CANADIAN MEDIA: **Ellen Graf-Martin**

519-574-0442

ellen@grafmartin.com

Please send tear sheets to:

Noelle Buss

11400 Hampshire Ave. S.

Bloomington, MN 55438

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5. What are the setting and time period of your book? Are any real streets, towns, cities, physical structures, or landmarks used?

The setting of *Through the Fire* is pretty much present-day Reno, Nevada. Unfortunately, the downtown Station One of the novel no longer exists. It was demolished by the city to clear way for a triple A ballpark and a retail and dining district. In a way, that fact has made this book even more special to me, a type of In Memoriam for the central firehouse.

I used many real streets, landmarks, and even a couple real businesses—Dreamer’s Coffeehouse at 17 South Virginia Street, Pneumatic Diner at 1st and Ralston, Wingfield Park and the Whitewater Kayak Park on the Truckee River, the Park Tower building on Island Avenue, and the glowing Reno Arch at 3rd and Virginia that says “The Biggest Little City in the World.”

6. What are you working on next for your second novel?

My next novel will focus on a paramedic in Reno who feels like he’s chasing the Angel of Death. Like *Through the Fire*, it will have dynamic action and suspense with a solid romantic subplot. Readers can stay connected and up to date by visiting www.shawngradybooks.com.