

OVER 25 YEARS OF EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS



LYLA FOGGIA, PRINCIPAL

✉ lyla@foggiapr.com ☎ (503) 227 3923 🌐 www.foggiapr.com

CLIENT:

Patrick Carman

WRITING EXAMPLE:

Media Kit

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.foggiapr.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, December 15, 2003

A riveting new book for young readers...

THE DARK HILLS DIVIDE

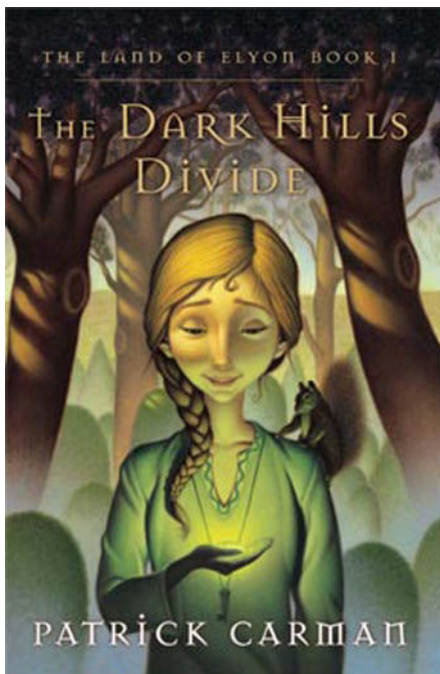
The first volume of The Land of Elyon trilogy by Patrick Carman

“The Dark Hills Divide weaves magic and heroism into a classic tale of good and evil.”

– Elizabeth George, the Young People’s Librarian, Walla Walla Public Library

“My daughter and I loved Alexas, as well as the twists and turns in the tale of *The Dark Hills Divide*. We couldn’t wait to turn each page!”

– Michael Wenberg, author of *Elizabeth’s Song*



Kids who loved *Eragon*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Lord of the Rings*, or *Harry Potter* will likely be mesmerized by *The Dark Hills Divide*, the riveting first volume in the new Land of Elyon trilogy.

This enthralling new series is set in a fantasy world in which animals can talk and enchanted stones can predict the future. In Book I, *The Dark Hills Divide*, the heroine, 12-year-old Alexa, has spent her life living behind the four-story walls that surround her village and the three others that make up Bridewell Common. Even the roads between the towns are walled in to keep its citizens safe from the unknown. But Alexa’s curiosity for what lies in the hills and forests on the other side sends her on a daring adventure into a secret world in which nothing is as it seems to be.

Ideal for readers 9-12, this lush story is filled with mystery, unforgettable characters, intriguing plot twists, and moral issues that are relevant to their own lives.

Several hundred copies disappeared in a matter of weeks from the Book and Game Co. in Walla Walla, after author Patrick Carman visited local schools. “*The Dark Hills Divide* is a great adventure story for all who are curious about what is just out of our reach (or sight). Patrick Carman’s storytelling has made his first book one of our store’s bestsellers

within the first month of being released. We can't wait for the next two volumes!," says store owner Joyce Bruns.

The Land of Elyon series was created by a successful businessman who began trading places once a week with his wife so she could have a night out, and he took over reading to their daughters. As the months passed, Carman began spinning a tale for his four- and six-year-olds about the escapades of a girl who became the inspiration for Alexa.

In the year that followed, Carman "journalled" his thoughts and sketched out impressions about the characters and place that would become The Land of Elyon. Then, in his spare time between running a national media production company and his ongoing commitment as a volunteer counselor to teens, Carman began to write.

The Dark Hills Divide (Amped Media, \$11.95) is available through bookstores, Amazon.com and the Land of Elyon web site.

For more information about the book, please visit www.LandofElyon.com.

*

MEDIA RELATIONS

Please visit www.LandofElyon.com for a complete press kit (click on "Online Media Kit.")

For a review copy of the book or JPEGs, please contact:

Lyla Foggia
Foggia+Associates
Public Relations
Los Angeles
(661) 259-6561
lyla@foggiapr.com

Biography for

Patrick Carman

Author of The Land of Elyon series

Though only 37, first-time author Patrick Carman had already built four successful businesses from the ground up before adding “novelist” to his resume.



Indeed, it wasn't until he began trading places once a week with his wife, so she could have a night out, and he took over reading to their young daughters, that Carman began thinking about writing a novel.

As the months passed, Carman began spinning a tale for his four- and six-year-olds about a girl trapped behind the walls surrounding her village and her adventures as she attempted to escape to explore the forests beyond. In the year that followed, he “journalled” his thoughts and sketched out impressions about the characters and place that would become The Land of Elyon series. Then, in his spare time between running a national media production company, devotion to his family, and commitment to mentoring troubled teens, Carman began writing.

What evolved was a riveting trilogy for young people that is filled with mystery, intrigue, endless surprises and moral questions that are relevant to their own lives.

Carman grew up in Salem, Oregon, where he graduated from Willamette University in 1988. He spent the following decade in Portland, starting out working for Central Point Software. After one year, Carman realized he wasn't cut out for the corporate environment. The son of a successful entrepreneur, he decided to strike out on his own. Encouraged by Central Point's President, Cory Smith, who had become a friend, Carman wrote up a business proposal to create an advertising agency, submitted it to a former college roommate's investment family in Chicago, and received a phone call only days later, saying they would be sending the \$20,000 in needed capital. “So at 22, I started my first company, Pinpoint Design Team,” he says.

With a staff of about ten employees, Pinpoint Design produced print advertising and collateral material for Hollywood Video and various mid-size companies in the area. “I did a lot of the

copywriting and editing. That's where I kind of got my start with writing, by just working in the ad business," Carman says.

After nine years of coping with the stress inherent in the advertising world, Carman was ready for a change. He sold the agency and moved his family to Montana for a year. "We felt like we'd been in a city for a long time and that we really wanted to go someplace totally different," he says. "So we made up a list of the top ten things we wanted in a small town."

They found it in Hamilton, an historic town in Montana's famed Bitterroot Valley. During the year that followed, the Carman's second child was born, Pat pursued his love of fly fishing, and he came up with his second inspiration for a business. "We rented a house there on about ten acres and just kind of really took a deep breath for a year and tried to figure out what we were going to do next. And, of course, me being an entrepreneur, I couldn't help myself," he says with a laugh.

The idea was for a movie trivia board game, which became the highly-successful "Applause." To finance it, he called up his old boss and friend, Cory Smith, who joined him in the venture. They formed Big Game, Inc., with Carman as president. "I ended up writing thousands of trivia questions and researching all these different actors and films, which was just a lot of fun," he says. Carman subsequently created the movie game "Action," the biography game "Profiles," and the "Smart Games" line of card games. The games became so popular that the company's products were being carried in over 4000 stores nationally, including Blockbuster Video, Hollywood Video, Musicland, Sam Goody, and Gamekeepers.

Meanwhile, Carman and his family decided to return to their roots, Walla Walla, Washington, where he was born and his wife, Karen, grew up and still had family. It turned out to be the idyllic small town environment they'd been searching for. Once the hub of a rural agricultural region, Walla Walla today is world-renowned for its award-winning wineries, picturesque turn-of-the-century downtown, and large artistic community.

In 1998, Carman and Smith went on to form Mywebpal (www.mywebpal.com) and built it into the third largest provider of online newspaper publishing in the U.S. Filling a void for mid-range newspapers that lacked the means of building and maintaining their own web presences, Mywebpal provided over 130 newspapers with sites that their own staff could upload stories and classified advertising to on a daily basis. In 2002, the partners sold it to Myles Communications, Inc.

Carman immediately launched into a fourth new start-up, Amped Radio (www.ampedradio.com), which has quickly grown into a premiere producer and syndicator of programming for the CHR market. Amped produces both the fastest-growing radio show in Christian music today, called "The Weekend 22," and the weekly television show, "Inside the Music," which simultaneously airs on three cable networks.

Since graduating from college, Carman has spent much of his spare time volunteering as a youth counselor. About four years ago, he created his "Lifetime Mentoring Program," and began working with the same eight young men, who will graduate from high school this coming

summer. The program's objective is to "walk" with them through life as they face the myriad challenges of college, careers and raising families. "Young people need an adult who will not disappear at graduation and move onto the next group of kids. Lifetime Mentoring is an attempt to provide this missing link. Imagine what would happen if every healthy adult walked with one troubled child through all of life's challenges," he relates.

During the last five years, Carman and his wife, Karen, have also been deeply involved in the Agros Foundation, a non-profit organization founded in 1982. Agros (www.agros.org) currently assists seventeen developing communities in Central America and has helped over 3000 people break free from poverty through land ownership and technical assistance. Both Karen and Pat have made numerous trips to Nicaragua and Guatemala to better understand the cultures and impact Agros is having. Carman also served on the film crew that produced a documentary on Agros' effort, directed by Jeffrey Townsend. The Carman's also spearheaded the fundraising effort for the Aduana II village, in which housing will be erected in 2004.

* * *

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Lyla Foggia
Foggia+Associates
Public Relations
(661) 259-6561
lyla@foggiapr.com

Q&A with author Patrick Carman

Creator of The Land of Elyon trilogy

*Patrick Carman, who lives in the Northwest, was in his mid-thirties before conceiving The Land of Elyon series, and writing his first book, **The Dark Hills Divide**. An entrepreneur like his father, Carman can't remember a time when he wasn't searching for a way to creatively express himself, an urge that led him to start an advertising agency, then create board games, and finally develop and sell a dotcom before finding the thing he was obviously meant to do: write youth fiction.*

One could say it was serendipity how he finally got up the courage to take that path. The father of two young daughters, Carman began trading places once a week with his wife, so she could have a night out, and he took over reading to their young daughters.

As the months passed, Carman began spinning a tale for his four- and six-year-olds about a girl trapped behind the walls the town elders had built around her village and her exploits in trying to find a way to explore the forest that lay beyond. In the year that followed, he "journalled" his thoughts and sketched out impressions about the characters and place, which became The Land of Elyon series.

Please talk about the creative process you went through for the book.

Carman: It was a journey. Getting to the point where I was ready to write a book has been about a 20-year journey of being, really honestly, too afraid to try – which I think is pretty common for people who are trying to write a large piece of fiction.

When did you start thinking about writing a book?

Carman: I remember all the way back in high school thinking about writing books. And in fact, I've written a lot of stories. I've got dozens of stories I've written that no one's ever seen.

Did you ever take writing courses?

Carman: I took English courses in college, but I don't have an English degree. I have a degree in economics. But, for me, I think it was more about the creative process. I've always been somebody who wanted to be involved in creative things and felt like that was my passion. And so I was really involved in filmmaking and film studies when I was in college, and put on a big film series at Willamette University for a couple of years and was just really into that whole scene.

Is that why you got into advertising, because you could be creative?

Carman: For the nine years I spent owning my own agency, I think I tried to fulfill that desire. I mean, I actually did a lot of the design, but I never felt like I was really doing more than looking at what everybody else was doing and just kind of doing the same thing. That's pretty typical of designers. So I was just spitting out work and running the business, but I felt frustrated in terms of the creative process. And I think it was the same thing with the board games I designed in a sense.

And what got me into writing was I finally came to the conclusion that I can't really draw. I really am just an okay designer. I can't paint or sculpt. No matter how hard I try there's no way I'm ever going to be very good at those things. And with writing, it was like from the very beginning – when I started thinking, okay, I can do this – it just felt like *this is perfect*. I can totally do this. It feels very natural. It's a great creative outlet and I just love doing it. And so I think that for me part of that journey was just coming to a place of understanding about the creative process. For each person it's different, but for me writing feels very natural. So, anyway, that's kind of the journey I went through.

Have you and your wife always had a ritual of reading to your daughters every night?

Carman: Yes, we're pretty into books around my house. We have lots and lots of books around. We have TV, but really no one ever watches it.

Were you reading the classics to them?

Carman: Pretty much everything. We read everything from the classics to *Captain Underpants*. It just depends on their mood.

So you were pretty much up on the children's books out there?

Carman: Right. And I did a lot of research, and I just like those stories anyway. I just like youth fiction myself. I read it just because I like to read it. You know, they just tend to be good, fun stories.

So how did *The Land of Elyon* series evolve?

Carman: It started out where Karen and I decided she'd get out of the house one night a week and I'd just hang out with the kids. And I came up with this idea of a girl who's in this town surrounded by walls and she has to figure out a way to sort of crawl under it and she'd go out and have these little adventures. And more than anything that was the spark that kind of got it started.

I had been working on all these different stories. It was like, okay, I'm ready to write a book. And for whatever reason, this just sort of emerged as I started keeping a journal as I was weaving the story for the girls each week. I spent about six months with this journal working out the rest of the characters and the plot. And it just developed from there.

What was the purpose of the journal?

Carman: As I tell students at the schools where I speak, if you have some idea for a story, start making little pictures about it and writing little notes about the characters and where they are and all this kind of stuff and pretty soon it'll evolve into something interesting. And so this journal that I had started out as, well, what does this place look like? So I was drawing all these crazy little maps and things. And then who were some of the characters? And what might happen in this story? And so a good deal of the work was kind of done before I even started. I spent all this time doing all this research and all this writing on little notes to myself in this journal. And then, of course, once you start writing, everything changes.

When did you officially start writing the book?

Carman: I would say the actual writing of the book started at least two and a half years ago. It took about six months to write the first draft, then it went through all the editing. I hired a professional editing company to go through it.

How did you find the illustrator and the book designer?

Carman: I actually went through all the books on my bookshelf and picked the one I like the best, which was *The Thousand Balloons*. And it had this awesome illustration by Brad Wienman. His name was in the back of it and I looked him up and called him.

How did you find him?

Carman: I put his name in on Google and it came right up, because he's so well known. You know, honestly, I didn't think I'd be able to afford him. I was like, well, this is going to be way out of my league. But he's going to do all three books. He's under contract to do illustrations all the way through, and we're releasing a new sketch every month to anyone who signs up for our e-newsletter.

What are some of the moral messages in *The Dark Hills Divide*?

Carman: Probably a good passage to illustrate what I was really trying to get at with this book is on page 70 in Chapter 10. This is the first time she's been outside the wall, and she's walking up into the mountains and turns back and sees the circumstance she's been living in her whole life.

"I looked back over my shoulder and saw the wall getting smaller and smaller in the distance. I was surprised at how insignificant it looked, cowering at the foot of the mountains. Beyond the walls the Dark Hills rolled on and on, into ominous and forbidding valleys unseen from Bridewell itself. I turned to the mountains and began walking again. The higher I went, the higher they seemed to go, ever farther and brighter in the sunlight, ever expanding to places I could never fully discover. I stopped and turned to look upon Bridewell again, and I saw it as I had never seen it before. It sat squarely between darkness and light, its roads a three-headed snake, bound at the center with a hideous head, dividing vast lands. It had a certain balance, a symmetry – as if each land were pushing against the walls, trying to bring them down, to dominate, and to rule. As I began walking again, following the little man, I felt a profound sense of exhilaration and fear, and

I promised myself never to venture out into the Dark Hills no matter what duty might call into its sinister lands.”

Interestingly enough, the second book begins with her going off into the dark hills. But this to me describes in a metaphorical sense what the book is trying to get at: if we’re going to build all these walls around ourselves, then not only are the bad things not going to be able to get at us, but nothing good is going to be able to come in either.

Also, there’s another scene, where she’s in the forest with the big grizzly bear and she finally starts to understand: well, who’s the real enemy here? And the real enemy is the walls themselves. And so, in a very real sense, it’s a story about her beginning to understand as a young person that “I can’t just protect myself from everything. If I try to protect myself from all the bad things that can come into my life, then nothing good is ever going to come in either.”

How can kids relate *The Dark Hills Divide* to their own lives?

Carman: The walls in the book are very much like the emotional walls that kids build around themselves to cope with all the peer pressure. They feel they have to dress a certain way, to act a certain way, to talk to only certain people, and all of that. That’s not what being a kid should have to be about. You should be able to just be yourself and be with the kids you want to be with and dress the way you want to dress and, you know, have a good experience with school. But so many kids are so afraid. And they lose themselves and they lose the opportunity of meeting the kids they probably should have met – of being the kid they really should have been.

What makes Alexa so interesting to follow around is that she’s far from perfect. She’s *very normal* for her age.

Carman: I wanted the story to also be an examination of a person’s choices. Alexa tends to lie. She does it three or four times, and there’s always some sort of consequence to that. What I wanted to show is that you’re responsible for your own behavior whether you like it or not. It always comes back to bite you. And there are things she does and she has to say she’s sorry, that she has to come clean about.

How do you relate what the story’s about to the kids you talk with at schools?

Carman: When we get to the point in the discussion where, well, what’s the story really about? I try to get them to totally visualize themselves in this story. So I say, imagine yourself on a cart. One of the old-style Western carts. And you’re sitting with your father, and there’s a couple of horses in front and you’re just going down this nice dirt road. And it’s a hot day. It’s just like an oven. But if you look to either side, there are these walls – *big* walls that go very high up in the air. And you’re on this road with these walls next to you and they just go on and on like that. And pretty soon you come to a big, giant wooden gate. They open the gate for you. You go inside, and you’re in a town where you’re going to spend the summer. The houses are all single story. They’re all well below the wall. And the town is also walled in. And so that’s the way it is and you’ve never known anything different. There have always been these walls everywhere. And when you ask adults about it, they say, well, there’s this legend about why they were built and who built them – but you really don’t get the answer you’re looking for. So you’re just kind

of hanging around for the summer with not a lot of kids around. And you have one desire and really one desire only: this is the summer you're going to figure out a way to get outside the wall. To find out what's out there.

How old is Alexa going to be in Book II?

Carman: Sixteen. Four years will have gone by. The reason I waited until then is because this next story really is about her finally not just understanding that she can get out beyond the walls, but really journeying out to these other regions that no one knows anything about yet. And in the course of going to the other end of the Land of Elyon, she discovers what's really going on.

* * *