



Interview with PATRICIA W. GREY, Author of "Death has a Thousand Doors"



PROVERSE: Your manuscript, "Death has a Thousand Doors", was a Proverse Prize Finalist, 2010. Congratulations! I believe it will be published by Proverse Hong Kong in November 2011.

GREY: Thank you. Yes, 22 November is the date for the launch.

PROVERSE: How did you come to write "**Death has a Thousand Doors**"?

GREY: After moving to Andorra in 1996 after twenty years running a pearl-farm with my husband, I suffered the classic dilemma of the newly-retired – a loss of identity. I was no longer able to introduce myself with a job description and was struggling with the reality of retirement. One day our bankers asked what I was going to do besides learning Spanish, hiking and skiing. Before I knew it, "write a book" popped out of my mouth. I always wanted to be a writer, and justified my eighteen jobs before settling down in pearling as "gathering background". The book idea had been circling for quite some time and having announced it in public I felt compelled to begin.

PROVERSE: Did you have any particular genre in mind from the beginning?

GREY: I had read Agatha Christie books from an early age, which gave me a love of mysteries, and later I gravitated to books like Robert Wilson's "A Small Death in Lisbon" with its historical background. I am also a fan of books like Peter Mayle's "A Year in Provence", which chronicle the adventures and misadventures of moving to a foreign country. Why not combine the genres? I also wanted to explore the idiosyncratic historical aspects of Andorra as a country wedded for centuries to tobacco smuggling and the absence of a taxation system.

Before long a real-life mystery unfolded before my eyes. Not long after she arrived in the Andorran village of Ordino, a French woman went missing from her hotel. She had left her travel documents and luggage there and simply disappeared without a word to anyone as to her plans. There was no hint as to where the authorities could look for her. This gave me a starting point, wondering what her family would do to find her and how they would cope in a strange land.

PROVERSE: But your protagonist is an Australian?

GREY: Yes. Because writing about what you know gives a novel an authentic flavour, it was obvious that my protagonist should be an Australian, like myself.

PROVERSE: What about the time-frame of the book? Is it very specific? Does it refer to contemporary events in Andorra?

GREY: Since I researched, plotted and wrote the story over quite a long period of time it was hard to pinpoint a year in which the action should take place. Rather I wanted it to be evocative



of the period from 1995 on. It is not a history-book but a work of fiction and I draw on the Andorra I know and learnt about through my research as the background to this story.

PROVERSE: Perhaps there were advantages in not tying the book to specific dates and real-event sequences?

GREY: Yes. Writing fiction about specific places and officials is tricky. The places are real but the people are purely imaginary. I didn't want my readers to suppose there was a correlation between any character in my novel and an actual person. Not setting the action in a specific year or years helps with that.

PROVERSE: We imagine there were at least some problems in writing "Death has a Thousand Doors"?

GREY: Writing a book in a country where one doesn't speak the language and can't understand the workings of the government was a lesson in patience. But I like a challenge and no-one can accuse me of not having an appetite for change.

PROVERSE: Have you done any other writing since moving to Andorra?

GREY: I am a member of the Writers' Circle, Andorra and some of my work recently appeared in the short story anthology, "The Five Senses", which we published in 2010.

PROVERSE: Are you presently writing another book?

GREY: I am just finishing a book of short stories called "Family Relations." The stories are based on family dynamics. Husbands and wives, mothers and daughters, brothers and sisters, widows and orphans all feature. The stories are set in Australia, Andorra and America – countries where I have spent considerable periods of time. I am also plotting a sequel to "Death has a Thousand Doors".

PROVERSE: We look forward to seeing it! Thank you and the best of luck for your writing!

INTERVIEW ENDS

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