

## A CONVERSATION WITH PATRICIA GUSSIN about *COME HOME*

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

My first novel, *Shadow of Death* was published eleven years ago and I have been writing ever since. *Come Home* is my seventh. Four of my novels are in a series, *Shadow of Death*, *Twisted Justice*, *Weapon of Choice*, and *After the Fall*. They comprise the Laura Nelson series, and over the four books, have chronicled the life of Laura from a 23-year-old medical student and young mother through her life as a surgeon and chief of surgery to her career as a 42-year-old pharmaceutical executive with grown children. *And Then There Was One* and *The Test* are stand-alone novels, and *Come Home* is a hybrid. The protagonists of *Come Home* are the twin daughters, Nicole Nelson and Natalie Nelson, both physicians themselves, Dr. Laura Nelson.

### WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE YOUR NOVEL?

I have always been fascinated with families, with how they come together and draw apart, especially multicultural families. *Come Home* stresses that dynamic when a seemingly happy couple responds to life's stresses differently and families put impossible demands on their children. But most importantly, I believe that the abduction of a child—even and sometimes especially—by a parent is the most horrific terror a parent can endure. Suddenly, a child—in this case a five-year-old little boy—is missing, gone, out of the parent's ability to discern any insight as to the child's well-being, safety, even survival.

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

I like to use my expertise in medicine to create the background for families in crisis and to use my experience as a mother to overlay the emotional elements. And my novels are all thrillers so something drastic must happen to shake my characters to their very core.

### ARE ANY CHARACTERS BASED ON PEOPLE YOU KNOW?

In *Come Home*, I feel that I know my two protagonists, Natalie and Nicole, because they have grown up in the Laura Nelson series. But now they are adults, have their own careers, their own husbands, their own aspirations. How much are they alike—or different—from the cute little Nelson twins in *Twisted Justice*?

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

My most sympathetic character is Ahmed Masud, Nicole's husband. What he does is heinous, but he is so conflicted and so torn by his Egyptian family and his American family. In the end, he is full of regret, but he can't reverse the outcome.

### WHO IS YOUR LEAST SYMPATHETIC CHARACTER? AND WHY?

Each of the Masud brothers, Jafari or Seth. Ultimately, Seth. He's existed under the radar for so long, that he's not even a candidate for badness until his scheme is radically deployed.

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

In ***Come Home***, the extent of international travel was a challenge. Different aircraft with different flight capabilities, different time zones, varying passengers. Moving from the East Coast of the United States to Egypt to Liberia to Belgium to Uruguay back to Egypt and the United States over a one-week period was tricky.

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

A better appreciation of multicultural issues and the core value of family.

#### WHAT WRITERS HAVE INSPIRED YOU?

The bisection of romance-saga writer Barbara Taylor Bradford and adventure-saga writer Wilbur Smith have inspired me greatly. Both about families; both about conflict, albeit domestic or on the African savannah. I read every thriller writer I can, but at the top of my list is Ken Follett for his ***Eye of the Needle*** and then for ***Pillars of the Earth*** and ***The Century Trilogy***.

#### WHAT IS THE WRITING PROCESS LIKE FOR YOU?

I write when I can—when I have a free three hours to concentrate. My first drafts always need lots of edits. I do as much as I can, then I turn it over to an editor for polish.

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

I am not sure what's next, but I'd like to write a thriller-in-the-White House. Something like David Baldacci's ***Absolute Power***. In my novel, ***The Test***, I have a character, Senator Frank Parnell. Perhaps he will find his way into the White House.

#### ANY FINAL WORDS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY?

I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to every single person who has ever read one of my books. I am so appreciative and I consider myself so fortunate—all because of you, my readers. Thank you.