

*Molly: Dorien, it has been a number of years that I have been reviewing books for you. And, I must say that I have grown to enjoy your work, your characters and getting to know more of what makes Dorien, Dorien.*

*Please will you tell us how you came to become an author?*

*Dorien :* Hmmm. Not sure how to explain it. My mom always read to me from the time I was an infant, and I have always preferred the world of fantasy to the real world. So I suppose, as Topsy says in Uncle Tom's Cabin, when it comes to how I became a writer, "I just grewed." I can't imagine myself ever being, or ever having been, anything else.

*Molly: I have enjoyed reviewing your PI series, and now your step into a somewhat different venue with your recent works. Please if you will, tell us which of your books you are most happy with. And why.*

*Dorien :* I always say that trying to pick out one's favorite book is rather like trying to say which of your children you love more. I don't think I've ever been *un*happy with any of my books, though on careful consideration I think the one that is the most powerful expression of myself and my feelings is "The Butcher's Son," the officially-first book in the Dick Hardesty series. After eleven or so books in the Dick Hardesty series, I began the Elliott Smith mystery series as a sort of counterpoint and to give me and the reader a change of pace. I now alternate the series. Having just finished *Caesar's Fall*, book #3 in the Elliott Smith series, I'm now working on *The Peripheral Son*, the 14th Dick Hardesty book.

*Molly: I do understand as you say that picking a favorite of your books is somewhat akin to picking which of your kids you love more.*

*I find your books are filled with a wealth of details, how much time do you usually spend doing background research before you begin a new book and what does your research involve?*

*Dorien* : I've been blessed with a wide range of friends with expertise in a number of areas. My cousin is a former chief of police and I rely on him frequently. In my most recent release, "Caesar's Fall," I relied on the knowledge of a friend who is a philatelist. And then there's always Google.

*Molly: chuckle. Google indeed. How wonderful that you can rely upon friends and family to fill in gaps. Excellent information for novice readers to consider as they write.*

*Beginning writers may not realize how difficult it is to get a book together. How long would you say it takes on average for you to write a book from start to finish?*

*Dorien* : Luckily I do not have to be distracted by a 9-5, 5-days-a-week job, so once I get into a book, I can generally finish it within 6 months or so.

*Molly: excellent!*

*I find, Dorien, that I particularly enjoy writing series because when one book is finished I don't have to say goodbye to the characters I know as friends, rather I follow them as they enter their next adventure. What do you find you like best when writing a series? What do you like least?*

*Dorien* : You said it perfectly. After 13 books in the Dick Hardesty series, it's become a matter not so much of writing another book, but merely continuing Dick and Jonathan's story...their lives...where they left off. And as I also often say I don't so much write my books but read them as they appear before me on the monitor. I do the basic

floor plan and nudge them from time to time, but by and large the characters build the story. I can't really think of anything I don't like about doing series.

*Molly: and what an interesting time it has been for me to watch as Dick and Jonathan have established their family and their lives.*

*I like your notion that you don't so much write your books, but read them as they begin to appear on the monitor.*

*Dorien, what do you attend to first as you prepare a new work? Write your book or seek out an agent or a publisher?*

*And, if you will please tell us of trials or successes you may have had in trying to find agent or publisher.*

*Dorien* : Write first, of course. There's little point in (especially a new writer) looking for an agent or publisher without having something to give them.

I have been very lucky with my books. It took what seemed like forever before I found a publisher willing to take a chance with me.

I gave up long ago on even trying to get an agent. Most of them wouldn't give me the time of day. I was lucky if one query letter out of 20 got so much as a "I'm too busy" or "Not for me." And I figured out that the good ones don't need you, and the ones who might deign to express an interest often don't have the connections necessary to do you much good.

*Molly: I think you have covered pretty succinctly the problem many writers encounter as they begin writing. Finding an agent is all but impossible unless you are well established. By then of course you may not need an agent at all. Good information for novice writers who may feel they should just chuck the whole process if they cannot find*

*an agent.*

*Moving on to some of the marketing aspect of writing, do you plan to do book signings within the next few weeks? Where can we expect to see you? Do you enjoy signings?*

*Dorien :* I do not do personal signings or any type of personal appearances. I did not choose the name "Dorien Grey" by accident.

I am what I call a "reverse narcissist" in that I have a mental image of myself which falls far, far short of my actual appearance. I want to be whoever the reader thinks I am, physically.

I do not want to disappoint them by not being who they expected.

*Molly: having a bit of mystery surrounding your life seems to be working for you quite well, I must say.*

*Now what one bit of advice do you have for beginning writers?*

*Dorien :* When I was a book and magazine editor, I had several stock suggestions. 1) Talk *to* your readers, not *at* them, 2) If you wouldn't *say* it that way, don't *write* it that way. 3) Never assume the reader knows as much about your story or characters as you do. 4) If a reader *can* be confused, he/she *will* be confused.

5) Don't use a 50-cent word to impress when a 10-cent word will do.

6) Never give up.

*Molly: excellent suggestions all!*

*Is there anything else you would like to add?*

*Dorien :* Just that I hope your readers might want to check out *Caesar's Fall* or any of my books, all of which are, with their complete first chapters, on my website (<http://www.doriengrey>).

*Molly: Would you like to tell us something about yourself, about your life outside writing?*

*Dorien :* Actually, I don't *have* much of a life outside of writing...or rather, there are relatively long periods of not much happening followed by a burst of *wheeeeeeee!* activity.

I just returned from a week in New York City, which was wonderful, and am making plans for a month in Europe this coming spring. Other than that, I read when I can (which is very seldom), go out to coffee with friends, see the occasional play or concert or movie, and watch TV in the evenings.

*Molly: sounds as though you are comfortable with your life and no reason to change.*

*Please tell us about the rewards you find from being a writer.*

*Dorien :* The ability to have control over what happens...albeit even in the fantasy world of writing...is exhilarating. To have people enjoy what I write...and be kind enough to tell me so...is a wonderful form of validation. And the sheer joy of creation is the ultimate form of reward.

Thank you, Molly, for the opportunity to talk to your readers. I'd love for them to also become *my* readers.

Best Regards,

Dorien

*THANK YOU*      Dorien Grey for a most interesting interview.