

The Handfasting by David Burnett

Today's **Indie Book Buzz** comes to us from David Burnett as he tells us all about conflict! Check out what he has to say, learn more about his novel, *The Handfasting* and don't forget to enter the giveaway!

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Conflict is central to drama...we are naturally drawn to charged moments both large and small. We are not drawn to what our hero had for breakfast, unless he is on death row and it is his last meal. Alan Watt, *The 90 Day Novel*. Without conflict, a story becomes a simple account of events, strung together, one after the other, without direction or purpose. The conflict that drives a story can be external, resulting when our characters are prevented from reaching their goals by someone or something outside of themselves, or the conflict can be internal, reflecting the interplay of the hero's multiple wants, desires, and motives, man struggling against himself. We often identify several types of external conflict.

1 Man vs. Man: This is perhaps the most common type of conflict. Our hero's quest is thwarted by another person. Two men vie for the attention of the same woman. Two women seek to find the same treasure or win the same political office. Kings war against each other. Runners compete for a prize. You might think of Harry Potter versus Voldemort, the Lannisters versus the Starks in the Game of Thrones.

2 Man vs. Nature: We find our characters confronting the forces of nature: survival in a blizzard, fleeing a hurricane, destroying an asteroid that is hurtling toward the earth, confronting a dangerous animal, whether it is Jaws or Big Foot or an evil dragon. In Laura Ingalls Wilder's *The Long Winter* we read of blizzards so thick that one cannot

see five feet ahead. In *The Perfect Storm*, six crew members find themselves on a boat five hundred miles from land while storms descend from every side. *Into Thin Air* recounts the most deadly year on the slopes of Mount Everest where climbers confront cold, snow, thin air and the mountain itself as they attempt to reach the summit, some 29,000 feet above the sea.

3 Man vs. Society: A character may run afoul of society's values, expectations and rules. In Melissa Foster's *Have No Shame* a young white girl confronts the attitudes of her family and friends when she falls in love with a black man. In *The Hunger Games*, the government requires each of the rebel areas to provide competitors to an annual game in which they fight to the death. Katniss becomes the symbol of those who rebel against the government's tyranny. In my book, *The Handfasting*, Katherine must struggle against the expectations that people in her small hometown have about women, and she must confront her fear of ostracism if she does not comply.

4. Man vs God: The central character's goal is thwarted by some supernatural force. God can be the one against who the character is struggling or it can be one's fate or one's destiny that prevents him from attaining his goal. The book of Job in the Bible is a vivid description of man contending with God. Captain Ahab's obsession with the *Moby Dick* is often seen as a man's conflict with destiny. Several writers note that, today, these conflicts typically appear in science fiction stories or they are a special form of an internal conflict in which the character contends with his own idea or perception of God, rather than with God, himself. An internal conflict pits our character against himself.

Internal conflicts occur when our character is drawn in multiple directions at once – he wants two things, but can have only one (I love both women, but can only marry one of them); he wants something, but wants to avoid it, too (the emotional support of a spouse comes with the responsibilities of a family); he is faced with only bad alternatives (one man is controlling and the other is uncaring), but must choose one of them. The character's thoughts and ideas, his feelings, his perceptions, his moral codes are in conflict.

Harry Potter constantly struggles with the identity crisis that came from never knowing his parents. In *Dunham*, by Moriah Jovan, we find multiple both main characters consumed with a need to be happy while also confronting the need to prove themselves worthy of their father's legacies.

Alan Watt indicates that conflict is central to our stories. He tells his readers – aspiring writers - to put their characters in relationships with other characters and see what will happen. Conflict, he writes, will ensue. Without conflict, a story lacks a driving force. It lacks interest. Where is the suspense? Where is the fear that the hero will have her plans thwarted, her hopes dashed? Where is the relief when a satisfactory ending occurs?

Over the summer I read a book in which the seeds of conflict are planted in abundance, but none matures. The outcome is never in question, the roadblocks that arise are quite easily avoided, the happy ending is never in peril.

And I yawned. Without conflict, a story is bland, like store-bought white bread or hospital food. We all want lives without conflict, and most of us manage to make it through with few serious problems. However, few of our autobiographies would be best sellers!

Conflict makes the story.

Website/Facebook/Twitter/Goodreads

About the Author

David Burnett lives in Columbia South Carolina, with his wife and their blue-eyed cat, Bonnie. The Reunion, his first novel, is set in nearby Charleston. David enjoys traveling, photography, baking bread, and the Carolina beaches. He has photographed subjects as varied as prehistoric ruins on the islands of Scotland, star trails, sea gulls, and a Native American powwow. David and his wife have traveled widely in the United States and the United Kingdom. During one trip to Scotland, they visited Crathes Castle, the ancestral home of the Burnett family near Aberdeen. In The Reunion, Michael's journey through England and Scotland allows him to sketch many places they have visited. David has graduate degrees in psychology and education and previously was Director of Research for the South Carolina Department of Education. He and his wife have two daughters.

Blurb

Ten years had passed since they had joined hands in the ruins of the old abbey church. Kneeling before the high altar, they were handfasted in the Celtic custom, engaged to be married. A rose bush had bloomed beside the ruined altar. Steven had reached out to caress one of the flowers. "I'll find you," he had said. "In ten years, when we have finished school, when we are able to marry, I'll find you. Until then, whenever you see a yellow rose, remember me. Remember I love you."

In those ten years, Katherine had finished college, completed med school, and become a doctor. For a decade, she had been waiting, hoping, praying, and, today – her birthday– she finds a vase of yellow roses when she reaches home. Steven, though, is not Katherine's only suitor. Bill Wilson has known her since they were in high school, and he has long planned to wed her. While Steven and Katherine are falling in love again, he finally decides to stake his claim. His methods leave a lot to be desired, the conflict turns violent, and Katherine must choose the future that she wants.

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