

The Handfasting Blog Tour



Title: The Handfasting

Author: David Burnett

Genre: Romance

Release Date: June

The Interview 😊

Jenn: Hi David, Thanks for visiting Books, Brownies and Barkers!

David: I'm happy to be here.

Jenn: So tell us a little bit about The Handfasting.

David: Katherine meets Steven the summer after she completes high school. She is hitch hiking around England, there are a number of other kids doing the same thing, and Steven is one of them. They fall in love. Standing before the high altar in the ruins of an old Scottish abbey, they are handfasted in the Celtic custom, engaged to be married.

Unfortunately, Katherine has college ahead of her and medical school. Steven is spending the next year studying art in Italy. They can't get married, not then. They decide to wait. In ten years, Steven tells her, they will be finished with school, they will be free to marry, and he will find her.

Steven does find Katherine as he had promised. Unfortunately, there is another guy, back home, who has long planned to marry Katherine. Shortly after Steven finds her, the other guy finally decides to stake his claim.

Jenn: I love the storyline, how did you come up with the idea?

David: I hate this question! I don't know exactly where the story originated. I thought about it for a couple of years, and the story turned out differently each time. In one version, for instance, Katherine and Steven are married during that summer in England, not engaged, and are separated for ten years. You can imagine the complications that might arise.

Jenn: What made you choose to write about the seventies?

David: Much of the conflict in the story stems from the attitudes that people in Katherine's small, Southern hometown have about women, sex, and marriage. Change came slowly to the rural South in the nineteen-seventies, and attitudes toward women were most resistant to change. Women were expected to be subservient to men, to have children, to keep house. A woman was to be above reproach, and any hint of scandal was met with censure, with ostracism, with shame. Attitudes have changed quite a bit in the last thirty-five years, and the story would not be nearly as believable were it set in 2013.

I actually found it difficult to remember that it was nineteen seventy-seven. I kept wanting Katherine to pull out her iPhone! I wanted Steven to rent a video – a VCR, actually – years before Blockbuster opened.

Jenn: Some of your characters are very... colorful... do you take inspiration from people you meet or just let the voices in your head take over?

David: Sort of a combination of the two. I begin with an idea of the person's character. Then, I let the voices take over. None of the characters in The Handfasting are real people. On the other hand, I am familiar with all of the characters.

Bill Wilson, for instance, is a stereotypical "good old boy," a small town lawyer. He believes that he is God's gift to the world in general and to women in particular. He feels entitled to have – and to take – whatever he wants. We all have known people just like him.

Katherine is the over-achieving girl next door. Every boy wants to date her. Every girl wants to be her friend.

I recall one of my mother's friends who might have been Mrs. Howard, a bitter old woman who gossips about other women and delights in destroying their reputations. I heard this woman's voice and saw her face when I wrote about Mrs. Howard – and in rural Virginia in the nineteen-seventies it would have been Mrs. Howard!

Bill talks to his good friend, Melissa, about his love for Katherine. Melissa is a level-headed, fun-loving person who is willing to try anything once. She is everyone's best friend. I can hear Melissa's voice as she tells Bill how dumb he has been behaving.

Jenn: Who was your favorite character to write?

David: Probably Bill Wilson. I recall being told that actors often find villains more fun to play than heroes. Well, evil characters are often more fun to write than good ones. Evil characters place fewer limits on the author's imagination. They can do anything the author might imagine, as long as you avoid creating sympathy for them. No one feels sympathy for Bill Wilson!

Jenn: Ok, Time for the quickfire round...
Chocolate or vanilla?

David: Chocolate, definitely. Always: ice cream, candy, cake, anything.

Jenn: Beach or woods?

David: Beach- the waves pounding the beach, the smell of the salt, the sound of the gulls flying overhead, the warmth of the sun in the summer, the smell of sun lotion. I love the beach. We find ourselves at the ocean most Saturdays in the summer.

Jenn: Steak or Fish?

David: This one's not hard – Surf 'n Turf!

Jenn: Happily ever after or Oh no he didn't?

David: A book should have a satisfying ending. Generally – not always – this means happily ever after or at least the possibility of it.

Jenn: Favorite Food?

David: Barbeque pork with South Carolina's mustard-based sauce.

Jenn: Favorite Color?

David: Blue. Most of my clothes are blue, my car is blue, our cat's eyes are blue, my wife's eyes are blue...

Jenn: Favorite Series of all time?

David: Harry Potter, believe it or not. I read the first volume after hearing a member of our State School Board ranting about how evil it was. I wondered how it could possibly be as bad as the

woman claimed. Well, I was hooked. My daughter gave me the last two volumes, with delivery the day after release. I don't read particularly fast, but I never took more than three days, maybe four, to finish one of the books.

Jenn: Favorite Author of all time?

David: Harper Lee. To Kill a Mockingbird is a terrific book.

Jenn: Well thanks again for coming to visit us today I hope you had as much fun as I did. Is there anything else you want to tell your readers?

David: I hope that they will enjoy reading The Handfasting as much as I enjoyed writing it!