**INTERVIEW WITH KIM DALLESANDRO 07.01.2023**

*Q: ‘Dead End (cul de sac)’ was a big departure for you in that you were juggling an awful lot of characters. How did that one come about?*

It evolved organically into what it became, I didn’t make it be what it is, I let it become what it became.

I start every story with research for a location, like a location scout, I search to find a city or town that appeals to me, the geography of it, the history, the people and what they do, what industries affect the population, what crimes have been committed and how those crimes may or may not have affected the residents of the city or town. I spend quite a bit of time on the foundation of the story, the land it sits on, the prejudices or beliefs held by the majority, the background, the families et al. All that begins with a location. Without a location, the story has no tether to what exists, what is real, it floats.

*Q: I understand that every character in your books has a complete back story, even though we’re only allowed a glimpse at it. Tell us about that.*

Every living person on this earth has a complete back story, when you meet a new person, they let pieces dribble out in conversations, their life, who they are, it’s a normal way of identifying oneself and finding likeminded persons to communicate with. Characters written on the page are no different. Without threads of their backstory, their history, there is no way to understand who they are or why they are the way they are.

*Q: How much do you identify with your characters? Are there any you identify with more completely than others?*

Every character that writes itself into a story of mine has qualities both good and bad that are part of myself. Writing has become a wonderful place to examine my own shortcomings or successes and failures and see the consequences of actions I’ve taken to deal with problems or to be part of the problem. I identify with all of my characters, they are simply showing me who I am, who I was, who I will become.

*Q: ‘Oklahoma’ contains some of your best dialogue. And each character has their own distinct voice, which is actually hard to do. Where does your dialogue come from?*

It comes from the inside, the character speaking, sharing truths and histories, lies, deception, whatever they say or do, I allow them to say what they say, as crazy as that seems. I know very little about the characters in my story in the beginning. As the story grows on the page, so does the interactions many of which surprise me as much as a reader is surprised.

*Q: Your prose is very economical and functional with brief bursts of beautiful lyricism. It’s also deceptive in that there’s much more going on under the surface than is apparent from a cursory read. Which is probably why a lot of your readers have said that after finishing one, they have to go back and read it again. What’s your take on that?*

I’m not an accomplished writer, I am always learning the craft, the ways to navigate through a story, the transitions that occur, the arc or arcs that develop, the beginning, the middle and the all-important ending. As I finish a book, my confidence increases once I take the time to read the finished manuscript in it’s entirety. It takes me about a week or so to even want to do that, the discipline of writing, the emotional toll some stories take on me, the sacrifices necessary to complete the book, the waking up at dawn to write without interruptions, the apologies to people that felt ignored or minimized during the writing, all this emotional baggage comes with writing. I feel like I’ve completed a jail sentence at the end most times, the story captures me and makes demands I try to keep up with. Perhaps that is where the economy comes from, the lyrical prose the best way to include readers in the emotional journey.

*Q: I’ve noticed your work is ‘character driven’ rather than plot driven, which makes them more organic in how they unfold. How conscious are you of that?*

I have to admit, I do not know how to write a plot driven story, I asked you what that meant, and when you told me I couldn’t even grasp how one would do that. Characters cover your mistakes, your shortcomings, they give you time to pause, time to laugh, time to take a step back or forward because they are just like me, human. A plot is a plot is a plot. Not much room to bend a plot, but I could be wrong.

*Q: You’ve employed techniques in your books like having an ‘unreliable narrator’ (in Mad Dog Tag), shifting points of view (in Trains and Dead End), and ‘Dream Maker’… well, I don’t even know what to say about that? Are these techniques you’ve just worked out for yourself?*

I have a fifth grade education, no college, I took one one-hour writing class with Juan Fernandez over a decade ago. I don’t have ‘techniques’, I’m an avid reader who has written consistently my whole life. I suppose some of what I’ve read, the ways others have overcome challenges with their writing have stuck with me and I use them to propel my stories forward and to the conclusion.