

Leslie A. Lindsay | Writer & Creative



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## WRITE ON WEDNESDAY

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### Write On, Wednesday: Author Extraordinaire Josie Brown

written by **Always with a Book**

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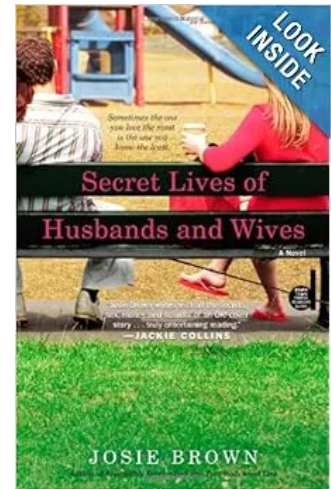
*By Leslie Lindsay*

I'm delighted and honored to have Josie Brown, author of fourteen novels and several non-fiction books here on Write on, Wednesday. Josie writes from the San Francisco area and has lots of great things to share about the craft of writing. Not only that but her book, THE SECRET LIVES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES has been optioned for a television mini-series by Jerry Bruckheimer.

Be sure and check out her "tips for writers and NaNoWriMo, too!!:

<http://www.authorprovocateur.com/2011/11/nanowrimo-tips-all.html>

**LL:** Your first book was a non-fiction how-to co-authored with your husband—ironically, the topic was how to snag a husband. Can you tell us the journey from non-fiction to fiction? Is there much of a jump?



**Josie Brown:** Before the digital publishing revolution, my husband and I—both of us have a background in relationship trends journalism—wrote a self-help book, called *Marriage Confidential: 102 Honest Answers to the Questions Every Husband Wants to Ask, and Every Wife Needs to Know*. As the editors of self-help guru John Gray’s *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* syndicated newspaper column, we felt we could give an insightful spin on the topic.

We sent it around to friends. I didn’t know it at the time, but one happened to work for a literary agent. The agent called me, introduced himself, mentioned a couple of his big name clients, and told me the book “came highly recommended, and if he liked what he read, he’d be back in touch.” He was, and he got me my first non-fiction deal.

At the time, my dream was to write fiction—in fact, I started my first book the very day I brought my first-born child home from the hospital. But motherhood got in the way of that dream. Fifteen years later, now that I had a lit agent for my non-fiction work, I felt comfortable enough to pitch him a fiction story I knew I could write. It was *True Hollywood Lies*, and based on an experience I had while writing celebrity profiles for magazine.

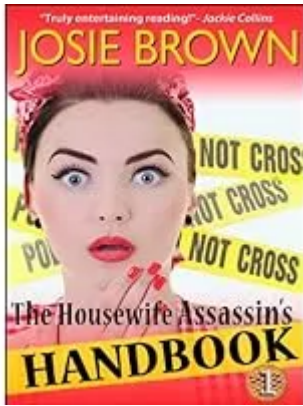
It went to auction, was sold as a two-book deal, and I never looked back.

When I told my sister about it, her eyes opened wide. “You mean to say they can *make* you write another book?” she asked.

Make me? Heck, try to stop me! I’d have to live to be a hundred to publish all the stories living inside me. (Note to self: cut out all sugar...)

**LL:** Speaking of genre, what genre would you place your current work? In your opinion, does genre matter, can it ever be limiting?

**Josie Brown:** My series, *The Housewife Assassin’s Handbook* (now five books – with the sixth book launching prior to Thanksgiving 2013) is classified as romantic suspense. But I’ve noticed that it’s made different bestseller lists: romantic comedy, women



sleuths, and cozy mystery to name a few. Although it is lighthearted and darkly humorous, I've stayed away from classifying it as "cozy" mystery because it is a bit spicier than most cozy reader like it. But hey, we all like a little romance, so if you like mystery with a little humor and a dollop of sex, I think the series is for you.

As for writing genre, my motto is this: write what comes naturally to you. Don't be a square peg in a round hole. If it's a story you want to read, others will enjoy it, too.

I'm very proud this recent review of my novel, *The Candidate*:

"This is only my second book I have read by Josie Brown; the first was book #1 in *The Housewife Assassin* series. A pleasant surprise to read a totally different writing style like it was not the same writer! I can't wait to start another..."

Every story from every author can't be the same as the last. In fact, it shouldn't!

Literary authors are adept at writing in different voices, depending on the stories they tell. Jane Smiley and Joyce Carol Oates are perfect examples of this. Their stories can be contemporary, or historical. One is a comedy, the next a tragedy. They can be told in first person, or third. What we as readers look for is not the same *story*, but a cadence—or *voice*—that resonates with us. We look for well-drawn characters, and satisfying (if not always happy) conclusions.

Even authors who write within a genre (mystery, thriller, romance, or the sub-genres of, say, historical romance or cozy mystery) can create rich characters and layered plots. Again, the bottom line is a satisfying story.

A perfect example of this is Martin Cruz Smith's *Arkady Renko* series, which sometimes reads as poetry, and whose characters have emotional depth. Another is Brad Parks' Carter Ross series, whose well-drawn plots are filled with humor and pathos.



**LL: To have a book optioned for television must be a writer's dream come true. What and how did that come about? Were you actively seeking representation for**

**television, or was it something that just fell into your lap?**

**Josie Brown:** It starts with a good literary agent—in my case, Holly Root—who was enough to play to my strengths: in this case my commercial voice, which is perfect for television. She pitched me to my wonderful talent agent at Creative Artists Agency—Jon Cassir, who makes sure my books are read by television and film producers. Besides Jerry Bruckheimer’s option of *Secret Lives of Husbands and Wives*, I’ve got a producer now pitching *The Housewife Assassin’s Handbook*.

**LL: What do you wish you had done differently in your writing journey?**

**Josie Brown:** I wish I hadn’t been afraid to walk away from my first two literary agents. Both weren’t as aggressive as they could have been, in getting my material in the hands of editors. What you have with your lit agent is a *relationship*, and all that implies. If, for whatever reason, it isn’t a right fit, move on.

**LL: What do you think you’ve done “right?”**

Jumping on the self-publishing band wagon when I did. Despite being proven commodity to New York publishing houses—strong reviews for my books, and aggressive self-promotion, at the time in which I was first published (the mid- and late-2000s) the publishing industry was going through an incredible upheaval. Independent bookstores were being squeezed out by large chain bookstores. Then the large chains were being pummeled by online bookstores as digital publishing grew—to the point where it was in a neck-to-neck competition with print books. Or as my husband put it, “Gutenberg gave us printed books, which lasted 400 years. You come along, and they’ll be dead within twenty.”

He’s always blaming me for world catastrophes. Go figure.

The great news: subsequently, some of my books—including *The Housewife Assassin’s Handbook* series—found their audiences online, despite having died in editorial committee votes in the New York houses. Best yet, I hold onto 70 percent of the sale price. This works out for my readers, too, since at \$3.99, my independently published books cost less than those published by, say, Simon & Schuster or HarperCollins, which are in the range of \$9.99 in digital.

**LL: What are you currently reading? Do you consider reading to be integral to the writing life? Why or why not?**

**Josie Brown:** Because my books are spy thrillers and the heroine is an assassin, I do a lot of research on spycraft and technical innovations. I'll read anything from *Popular Science* and *Wired*, to articles on forensics and, say, *The CIA World Factbook 2012*.

For fun, this month I've read *Double Dare* by Karin Tabke (erotica), Marc Cameron's *National Security* (thriller), James Salter's *A Sport and a Pastime* (literary fiction) and Brad Parks' *The Girl Next Door* (mystery).

**LL:** Wow—that's quite a variety!!

Josie Brown: Ha ha! Yeah I know, as a reader, I'm all over the place! In my defense, what I look for, first and foremost in a novel, is the author's "voice." If the tone and cadence resonates with me—if it makes me laugh and cry and love the protagonist—then I'll go with the flow of the story. Luckily, I find that my readers do the same with me.

**LL:** What is currently obsessing you?

**Josie Brown:** My daughter's wedding! Squeeeee! She's marrying the sweetest guy in the world. It will be the party of the century. And I'm just there to enjoy, to weep, to laugh, and to remember the good times.

**LL:** Of your own books, which is your favorite...I know, kind of tough like choosing your favorite child...but is there a book that really resonated with you? Felt like you did your very best writing? Hit the market at a ripe time?

**Josie Brown:** Agggggghhhhh! Sooooooo.....hard.

I have to say, I do love ALL my books!

However, if I have to pick just one book as my fave, I would have to say the very first in *The Housewife Assassin* series, *Handbook*. Why? Because I got cold chills when I conceived the heroine—Donna Stone. And I persisted with her, despite my then-agent's dismissive attitude toward her. With my next agent, editors at three different publishing houses were excited enough about her and her story to take it to their editorial committees. But everything in life is timing, including when—and if—a book makes it in print. All three houses passed, based on the contention of "more seasoned editors" that "no one wants to see a mom be an assassin."

I guess they figure it's okay for a father.

So much for Equal Opportunity Employment.

I am SO happy my readers disagree—not to mention, Hollywood. Should *Housewife* be made into a TV show, I and my readers, will be vindicated.

**LL: Finally, what advice can you give to emerging authors hoping to break into publishing?**

**Josie Brown:** Each of my books was conceived—and birthed—from a super “what if...” and written in a frenzy of excitement, anticipation and love. Each has a great backstory on how it might not have seen the light of day...

But did.

And found its audience.

So yes, each one makes me proud.

As writers, we are creators. Just like composer must write songs, and singers must sing them, and dancers must move to their music, and painters and sculptors must provoke us with their works, novelists must write their stories and present them to the world.

Last. Author. Standing.

Only you will write your story. When you do, the audience will find it, enjoy it, and beg for more.

So just DO IT.

**Thank you, thank you for your words of wisdom...and amusement, Josie! Great having you.**

Thanks for having me!

 **My Photo**

**Josie Brown** is the author of *The Housewife Assassin Novel Series*, including *The Housewife Assassin’s Handbook* (Book 1); *The Housewife Assassin’s Guide to Gracious Killing* (Book 2); *The Housewife Assassin’s Killer Christmas Tips* (Book 3); *The Housewife Assassin’s Relationship Survival Guide* (Book 4); and *The Housewife Assassin’s Vacation to Die For* (Book 5). Book 6, *The Housewife Assassin’s Recipes for Disaster* will be out in late November 2013.

She is also the author of the [Totlandia](#) novel series (3 books), as well as [The Candidate](#), [The Baby Planner](#); [Impossibly Tongue-Tied](#), [True Hollywood Lies](#) , and [Secret Lives of Husbands and Wives](#) which is being produced by Jerry Bruckheimer as a dramatic television series.

You can reach Josie on her website, <http://www.JosieBrown.com>, on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/JosieBrownCA>, or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/JosieBrownAuthor>.

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