

The Little Creative Interview
with Charity Bradford

Let's Meet...

Charity Bradford

Charity Bradford has been a voracious reader ever since her 5th grade teacher introduced her to the world of books with *WHERE THE RED FERN GROWS*. She soon became kindred spirits with Anne Shirley and got lost in the worlds of Card, McCaffrey, Bradbury, and Nagata. By college, she was sewing her own Starfleet uniform and developing her alter-ego as a comic book sidekick. She lives in Northwest Arkansas with her hubby and four kids. Some of her guilty pleasures include binge watching Doctor Who and Ancient Aliens. Charity also writes clean contemporary romance under the name River Ford.

1) When did you first begin expressing yourself creatively and how?

I believe I've always been a creative person, but I struggled to find my outlet. In grade school it was painting (badly), singing on the playground, reading, and making a pact with another student that we would write a book together one day. By junior high I started spending a lot of time alone in the woods on our forty-acre piece of land. What was I doing? Making up stories about the boulders and rock formations. I spent hours turning them into places and creating people to live there. In high school I even tried theater and started a few really bad novels. None of which I finished.

Then life took off. I got busy with college, married, and had children. There wasn't much writing, but I learned to quilt, to garden, and even to decorate cakes trying desperately to find that creative outlet that would fully satisfy me. After a near-death experience, I finally sat down to write something, anything. That was a turning point for me, and I'm much happier now because of it. When I get "stuck" on a writing project, I simply pull out one of those other creative outlets and it helps "unstick" me.

2) From where do you draw inspiration for your work?

Most of my early science fantasy stories came from crazy end of the world dreams that I used to have all the time. In fact, my first novel is about a woman who always dreams of her own death during an alien invasion. Every single dream in that book were parts of a dream I had when I was nineteen. Eventually, I wrote enough of those dreams into stories that I stopped having them. Strange, huh? I actually miss the one where I'm rowing a boat down my Jr. High hallway that was full of lava. Wonder what that was all about.

Now I get ideas all the time from little things I see and hear around me. For instance, one day I was at the park and I saw this mom, dad, and set of grandparents that never moved more than three feet away from this child that must have been two or so. I watched how protective all of them were and wondered what could have happened to make them that way. I love making up background stories for people walking through my life. And music! My first love is science fantasy, but I also write contemporary romance. Music is a great source for ideas on that front.

3) What work are you currently most proud of?

This is a hard one. There is always a time when the book you've just completed is the one you're most proud of. This is because if you're doing it right, each book should be better than the last. I'm proud of every project I've started because they've allowed me to tackle some emotional issue that I've needed to face. My guess is I haven't written the thing I'll be the most proud of yet.

However, if I had to choose from what's out there, it would be FADE INTO ME. It's a young adult modern-day faerie tale with a sci-fi twist to it. What I love about the book is the message behind it. I wrote it for my children. It was my way of trying to tell them how much we all need love in our lives. Love of all kinds, not just romantic love. There's the love of family, friends, and of course our significant others. I took one of my biggest fears and gave it to my character, Ryanne. FADE was her journey of healing from a horrible experience that left her feeling worthless and unworthy of love. Through her story, I wanted to tell my kids and anyone else who read it, that no matter what happens to us in life, we are all worthy of love. We simply have to allow ourselves to grab hold of it.

4) What advice would you give to others about the creative side of what you do?

Embrace the crazy, because sometimes it's a bumpy ride. When the muse shows up, listen and go with it. When the muse takes a holiday, keep working as if it were still beside you. That way when it returns, you won't have to play catch up.

What I mean by that is this. Creativity can flow freely and be wonderful, but it's also a lot of work. There are days when writing feels like my favorite thing in the world, and other days when it feels like sucking marrow from my bones. Sometimes I desperately want to quit writing and be normal like everyone else. But I know I never can because writing is the thing that keeps me whole.

We go through the process of being creative because we must.

5) What advice would you give to others about the business side of what you do?

Ha, let's repeat what I just said above. We do it because we must. Learning how to market has been the hardest thing I've ever had to do. It doesn't come easy to me. Sure, I could talk about my books and writing in general for hours on end, but figuring out how to write ad copy and work with SEOs zaps my creativity. I hate doing it. I'd love to be able to write to my heart's content and toss the finished product out into the world and forget about it. However, the world is so full of writers and books that doing so would result in that story getting lost in the sea of what's available.

I'm still trying to figure all this out, but my biggest advice is to take classes, watch webinars, study what others are doing, then figure out what works for you. My favorite thing is newsletter swaps. They're free and they allow you to reach targeted audiences. It's the best place to start when you don't know any other thing to do. Then, just don't give up. Learn a little at a time and slowly add to what you can do.

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