

InD'tale!

Magazine

**BRENDA
NOVAK:**

Writing for Millions
While Fighting
for Causes

RJ Tolson:

Author, Motivational Speaker,
International CEO, Philanthropist,
all at 21 years old!

The World's *Thickest Skins:*
Records and Anecdotes on Rejection

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A Personal Look at the Pros and Cons

All That Glitters:
Jewelry Through the Ages

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Tammy Grant: We Are Not
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Rogue or Adventurer?

Fiona Jayde: Keys to Your
Words: A Crash Course in
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Rachel Rossano: Isbeth's
Redemption Episode 9

And Always...The Very Best
in Honest, Professional
Book Reviews

In the course of our lives, we come across many fun, smart, talented people. Every once in a while, we also meet those rare few who are truly sit-up-and-take-notice inspiring. Brenda Novak fits into the last category. Not only is she warm, fun and very easy to talk to, she is also an incredible, strong, amazing woman. She has not only raised five children successfully, and written nearly 50 novels, many of which sat on the NYT bestseller's lists, but she has also been a leading champion of diabetes research! She has struggled through hardships, been gracious in both success and defeats and is always just the kind of example others strive to emulate. Read on and you'll see just what we mean!



Brenda Novak

**Writing for Millions While
Fighting For Causes**



“...I really love redemption stories because somehow they speak to my soul. I don’t know anybody who has made a mistake and didn’t want forgiveness. Life’s not black and white.”

InD: Did I read correctly when I saw that you were born in Vernal, Utah? Isn’t that the home of Dinosaurland!?!?

BN: Yeah. I was born there and then we moved to Arizona. So I was only there a very short time, but we returned there every year. It was funny because someone was talking a while back about how they had passed through there and how horrible it was and how they hated it, and I was sitting there and finally said, “You know I was born there right?”

InD: That cracks me up. I remember visiting Vernal as a child, all the Dinosaur excavations and bones! But, you grew up in Chandler, Arizona?

BN: That’s where I went to high school. We moved there when I was 10, so I grew up there, then went back to BYU when I was 18. Both of the towns I grew up in weren’t a whole lot different than other small towns, if you have seen one...you know.

InD: You’ve seen them all!

BN: But I tend to like that kind of thing. It incites my imagination. People might think, “This is not interesting,” but I think – “What do people do here? What is this town like? What would it be like living here? What do people do for fun here?” I love all that. To me it’s fascinating.

InD: Now on to books... Oh My Gosh, Brenda, your books have more angst in them than any I have read in a loong time! I love them to death, but I’m telling you right now when I sat down and started catching up, I was mad at you half the time! I kept thinking, “I have things I have to do, but I can’t. I don’t want to put this book down!”

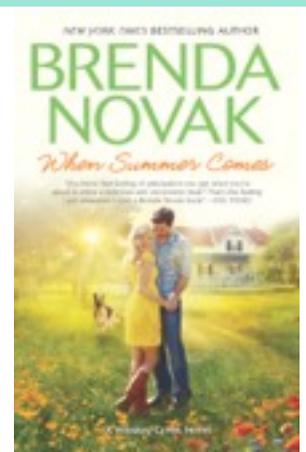
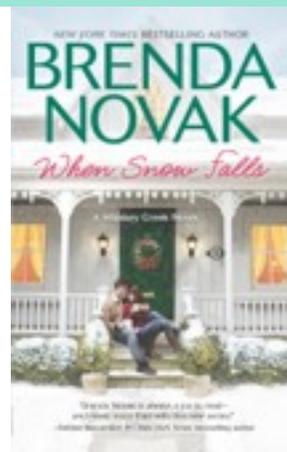
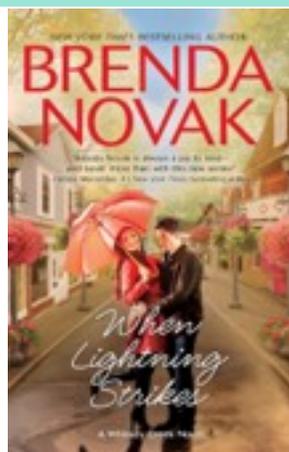
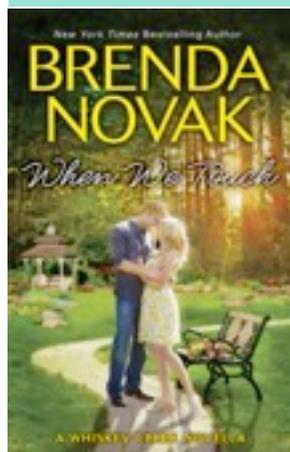
The only way I could describe them is to say that they stay with you. You are one of those rare authors where after one

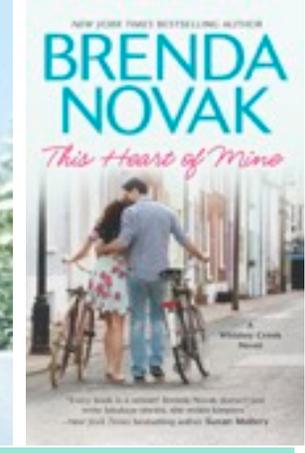
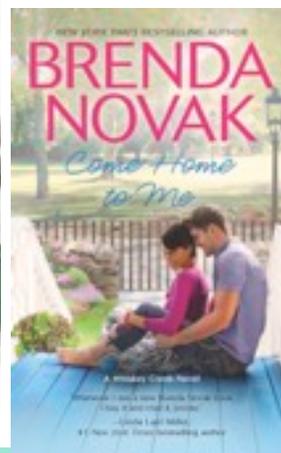
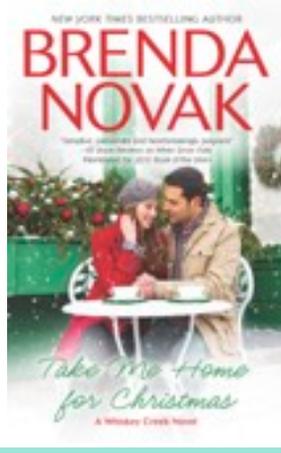
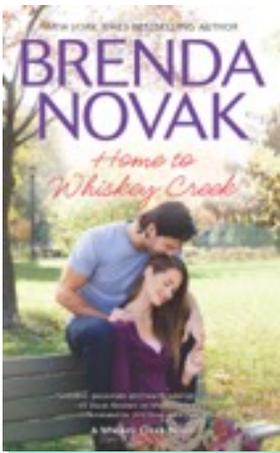
reads them, two days later they’ll still be thinking about the characters and the storyline and trying to analyze it all out!

BN: Well, that is a huge compliment! Thank you I appreciate that!

InD: Take the “Whiskey Creek” series, for example, I think two of my very all-time favorite characters at this point in time are Cheyenne and Dylan [from “When Snow Falls”]. But then I noticed the firestorm over where you took that couple in later installments.

BN: Everybody loved these two characters. What readers don’t understand is that they want the characters to have more face time, but they don’t want more conflict. However, to have more face time you have to have more conflict, or it is boring, right? So, I came up with something that would be intriguing but not truly threatening to them. It’s not death or anything, in my mind, that would tear them apart. She tells a lie. For me, it depends on what kind of thinker you are. If you are a black and white thinker and you just don’t lie ever, ever,





ever regardless, then you are going to be upset, because you are going to say it is wrong and people deserve to go to hell regardless the intent of the person telling the lie or what the lie was supposed to do.

If you are somebody who sees shades of gray, and understands that sometimes there are reasons that people tell untruths when they love somebody and are trying to protect them, then you may not have a problem with it. Especially if it's not going to tear them apart.

That being said, I do have a fun twist planned. That subplot wasn't finished, people didn't get the resolution. So, as you know, some of my readers were very sensitive to it and did really freak out.

I really feel like writing is about taking risks. You have to write fearlessly, and I also think that all characters are not going to be perfect, if they're perfect they are boring. We want layered characters, we want characters who actually make a mistake and have to redeem themselves. To me this is all more real and more natural to what we encounter in everyday life.

InD: Were you surprised that people had such a strong reaction when you put out that book?

BN: Absolutely, because I know what is going to happen, but readers don't so I had to step back and think, "Well, it's

because they love these characters, and they are afraid this may tear them apart." I understand that's where the whole reaction came from, but my response was, "You know Dylan is not the type of man that is going to leave a woman who did something because she loves him."

InD: That's why these characters are unforgettable, they have so many layers. That's what we're thinking about afterwards and that's also why we love them so much when they are finally able to obtain happiness and work through their problems. Do they resolve things in following books?

BN: Well, the following book it goes another step further, but the mystery isn't solved there because I am waiting to get back to the Amos brothers' [Dylan's family] books where it would be more natural to include them. There is also the fact that time has to go by in order for it to be realistic... does that make sense?

InD: Yes.

BN: So, there are other stories happening in the series in-between, while the subplot with Cheyenne and Dylan's plot-line is happening in the background and then it will come back to a head again when I get to the Amos brothers' story.

InD: Do you regret doing it that way?

BN: No, I don't regret doing it that way even though it upset some people. To me, it made the story more interesting, and if I were a reader I would have found it more interesting that these characters aren't perfectly married rather than try and believe that nothing bad ever happens. I really did think that the conflict I created was small enough that it would not cause this big of a firestorm. I was shocked by that.

InD: By how big the firestorm was?

BN: Yes, to me it was just something that I thought would be interesting, like what would you do if this was the case? How would you handle it? Would you make him accept the truth, what would you do? Instead I thought she can just circumvent him. Not that she did anything wrong, so why does he have to know? It could protect him, right? But everybody just freaked out, so evidently we have a different take on that.

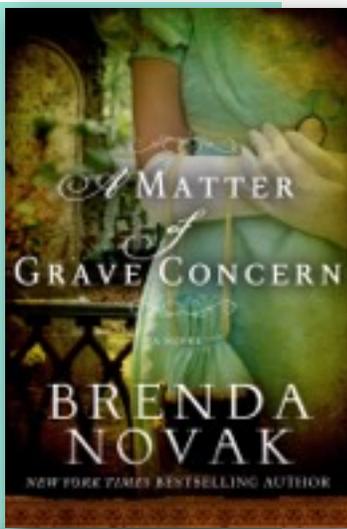
InD: Okay, okay, okay, I'll keep reading!

BN: You'll be fine! Don't worry but definitely read on! The one that's about to come out is my favorite of the series, so even if you skip the ones in between, definitely get the new one!

InD: The newest one is about Phoenix, isn't it?

BN: Yes, Rylie and Phoenix.

InD: She is the crazy girl that's been in prison.



BN: Exactly. You're going to get to know her and you know that saying... everyone is the hero of their own story.

InD: Why is that one your favorite?

BN: Part of it is the ease of writing. This one just flowed out. I mean it kind of hit an emotional center for me. So, I felt like I was really tapping into the emotions of the book, and I really love redemption stories because somehow they speak to my soul. I don't know anybody who has made a mistake and didn't want forgiveness. Life's not black and white. Everybody has made a mistake where they have to question themselves and ask, "Was I wrong to do what I did? I did what I thought was best at the time, but in hindsight maybe that wasn't the best way to go, and maybe I need to make reparations for it."

It's a moving story of the relationship between Phoenix and her son, and touches on how close I feel to my son and he was just leaving for college, and was a similar age at the time I was writing it. The boy was modeled after Thad [Brenda's son]. Not that you would put a whole person in there, but there are elements of Thad in that boy. I don't know, that one just has a really close place to my heart and it seems to be affecting people positively. I've had better reviews on this one than any of the others, so I think people agree with me that it is one of the best, hopefully you'll like it.

InD: When you say it is getting the highest ratings, that's saying a lot because, you have a lot of highly-rated books!

BN: Yeah, I've had some good luck with the reviews for sure.

InD: So, when you started the first "Whiskey Creek" book, did you know it was going to be a series and a long series at that?

BN: I was hoping it would be a long running series. That is why I started

with a big group of friends to give myself plenty of material! The one I didn't know would be a series is my "Dundee, Idaho" series. That one started with just one book with sort of a subplot running through it. I knew something was wrong with the book when I turned it in so when my editor met with me at conference and wanted to talk about the book I knew I was going to hear what was wrong and I was nervous. I could be easily crushed at that point, but she just basically said, "You've got two plots that are roaring in this book, your subplot is fighting your main plot and stealing attention away from it."

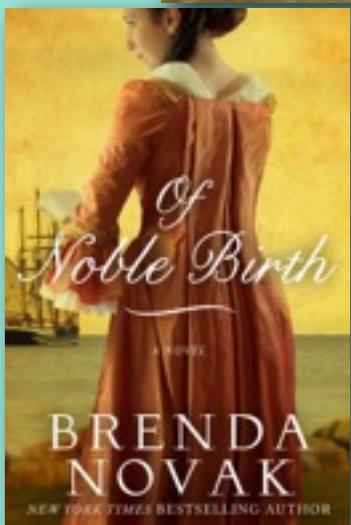
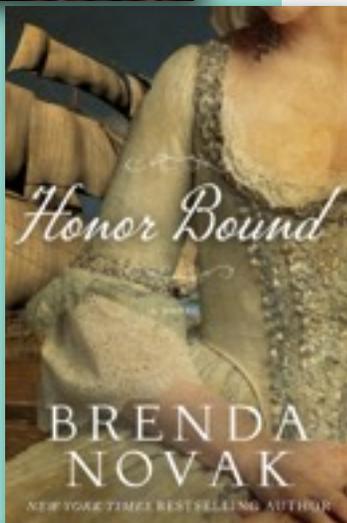
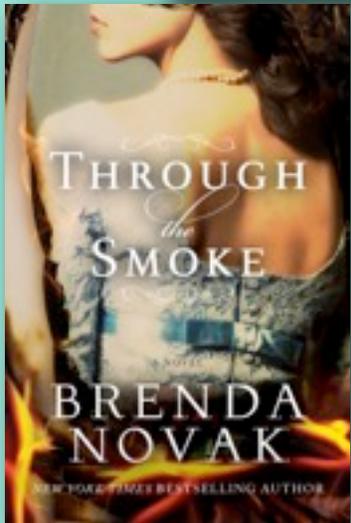
So we took out that subplot and made a second book out of it, and that led to my whole 8 book "Dundee, Idaho" series, which is basically very similar to my "Whiskey Creek" books as far as the editorial goes. Its stories are about small towns and how people interact in those towns. That's sort of the model that I was going back to when I decided to do "Whiskey Creek".

InD: So, what is the difference between "Dundee, Idaho" and "Whiskey Creek"?

BN: I would say that other than setting and characters, it is just different relationships between the characters and different types of characters. They are all unique, different stories but as far as the feel and tone in a small town atmosphere, they are similar.

InD: BUT... two contemporary romance series aren't even the tip of what you write! You are also incredibly successful in the Romantic Suspense genre. Out of the two very different genres which is the hardest to write?

BN: I would say the romantic suspense is probably the hardest to write, just because it always takes longer for me. When you are doing a romance plot within a suspense plot, they have to be so intricately



woven together that it makes for a bigger puzzle, so it is always harder to figure out what your next move is going to be. So I think that the suspense is much harder. But, by the same token, because there is so much going on in the suspense, it is easier to make the stories more interesting. So it kind of depends on what you are in the mood to do. When I want just a heartwarming kind of angsty, emotional read, I will do a “Whiskey Creek” book.

But, I like studying individuals and human behavior and why people do what they do, so psychopaths fascinate me. The fact that they can do what they do without feeling any remorse and be that completely narcissistic without ever looking toward the future of what may become of them or how their actions are affecting other people, it just blows my mind. I can’t understand them so I keep trying to solve that puzzle!

The new suspense series I’m doing is a psychiatrist that basically has my mindset where she is just fascinated by why psychopaths do what they do and she is determined to figure it out, so she started this research facility in a remote town near a high security prison where they send the worst of the worst psychopaths. It’s been interesting to do the research for that one, but those books are tough to write.

InD: Is that series out?

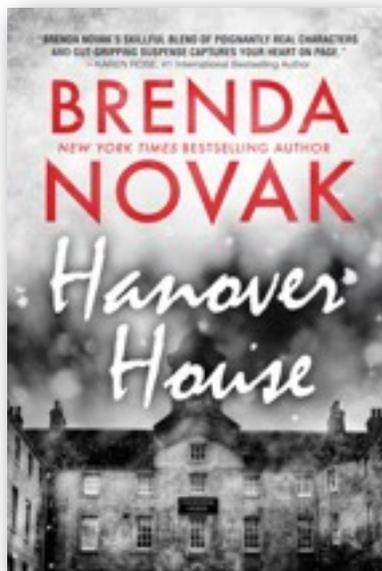
BN: Not yet, those are the ones I just sold to Saint Marten’s Press, so the first one will be out next year, but I am writing the prequel. The first one is called “White Out”. We are still looking for the best release month but “Hanover House”, the one I’m writing right now, is the digital prequel that is going into the box set.

InD: You say the series is about one psychiatrist but if it is romantic suspense how are you juggling that?

BN: Yeah, that’s going to be tough. The love interest is going to be an Alaskan state trooper and the only police presence in this remote outpost, so it is going to be more of a challenge. It will be a little bit more like J.D. Robb’s books, where the romance continues from story to story. This series will be a little heavier on the suspense than the romance, so it’s definitely a romantic suspense, but it will focus probably 60/40, whereas all my other stuff has either been 50/50 or even a little bit more weighted toward the romance.

InD: That sounds really interesting. It should be a lot of fun to see how that one works around. Did you write when you were growing up?

BN: Not at all! I mean I was good in school, I got really good grades. I went to BYU on academic scholarships, so I was a good student, but I never dreamed I would be a writer. I really thought I would get married, have kids and support my husband by raising those kids so he would work and be the financial end. That didn’t really work out so good for me.



InD: So tell me the whole thing! You thought you were going to be a stay at home mom, it didn’t work out and... where did you get this writing idea?

BN: Well, I caught my day-care provider drugging my kids with cough syrup to get my kids to sleep all day while I worked as a Loan Officer.

InD: Drugging them with cough syrup?

BN: Cough syrup and Tylenol.

InD: How did you catch her?

BN: I found it in the baby’s bottle when I was cleaning out my fridge, I opened the bottle and smelled cough syrup so strong. I was like, “Oh my gosh!” She was a member of our church so I thought I could trust her fully. I mean I was just so oblivious, a lot of it got by me. Until I found that bottle. Then things started fitting together, like why they were so awake at night, happy and ready to play, not grumpy and tired. I’m thinking, “I’m trying to work all day and then come home and have to entertain my kids all night, this isn’t working.” Which is why I think she may have made up that bottle. She thought, “She’ll use this, and it



will knock them out.” But when I didn’t use it but made a new bottle, and I smelled it. I confronted her and it all came out. She admitted to doing it. So, feeling terrible guilt at having risked my children in the first place, I had to quit my job to stay home with them. My husband is an entrepreneur, so sometimes his businesses go really well, and sometimes they don’t. So it was hard.

InD: How is that for you? Does that kind of drive you crazy sometimes?

BN: It’s hard because I’m more conservative and I like the security and want to have everything handled without a lot of risks. He is a wonderful man, though, really kind and loving and supportive, he just has a real high threshold for risk and, at that time, he had started a residential development business. He had thirty houses in various stages of construction and they were all sold, and then the market fell apart so bad and we started losing money on everything. We were worried about losing our house. I had three of my five kids, my youngest daughter Alexa was just a baby and I was thinking, “I gotta help but I can’t do anything, I can’t leave them, I won’t leave them again.”

So, I was trying to think of what I could do at home. At this time, I was reading a good book my sister had given me and I thought, “I wonder if I could do this?”...because it was something you could do at home. So the next day I started.

InD: You had never thought about writing before that, huh?

BN: No.

InD: Wow, that’s amazing.

BN: As soon as I started, I realized I had found my calling in life! This is what I wanted to do, even if it didn’t work out. It wasn’t the quick fix. You know what writing is like, you’ve been around the industry. I was just oblivious. If somebody had told me that my chances were not very good at getting published (this was before you could self-publish) maybe I would have been discouraged but I was just thinking, “I’m going to write a book!” My husband would get home about 8 pm, and I would rush down with all the nickels and dimes I could find in our house and I would pump them in that copier trying to get enough research material (because I was writing a historical).

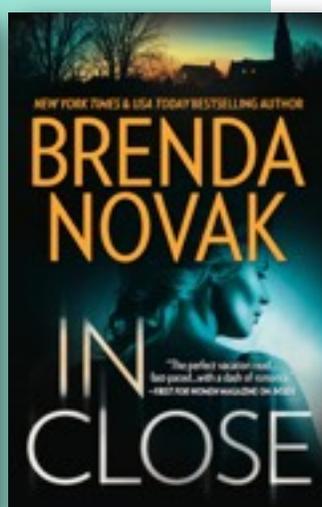
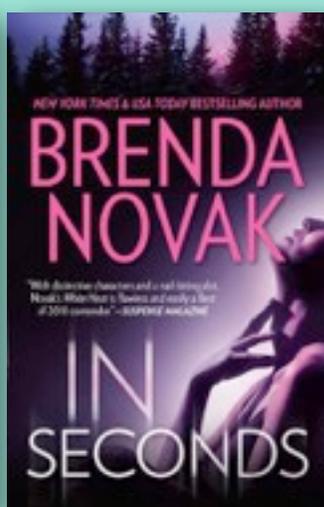
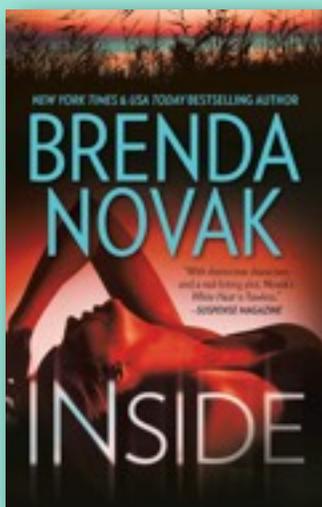
It took me five years to research the craft and the era because I didn’t know anything. Questions like did they have gas lights in

Victorian England? Then, trying to recreate what that world would be like. But, it saved my sanity at a difficult time, I would lay down at night thinking, “My book is good, I like my book, it’s going to sell.”... And it did. I got very lucky.

InD: How did your historical migrate over to contemporary?

BN: Well, you know publishing is a difficult beast to stay seated on and I was orphaned after that first book came out. My editor read my next two historical proposals and she said, “Oh I love them, we’ll go to contract with them when I get back from vacation.” She came back a couple of weeks later to a pink slip. Harper was buying Avon, so they let all of their own romance editors and most of their authors go. My first book wasn’t even out and they were like, “Brenda who? We don’t need her. We have our other slate.”

So, I would have been a one book wonder except that I had gone to Park City, Utah to a regional conference of RWA. There was a Harlequin editor there. I had never read them but I didn’t want to miss an opportunity, so when I heard she was taking verbal pitches, I went in and thought up this contemporary story and pitched it with everybody else. She was so patient and so kind and wonderful. I saw her after and realized I had never thanked her for how great she was. So I said, “I really think you are making a difference in the industry, thank you for treating us newbies so well.” And she called me and I just about dropped the phone when she said, “Well, are you ever going to turn in that story?” I have now done 50 books with her! I originally thought I would be doing contemporary and



historical, then the historical died, but the contemporary has never! Harlequin has bought almost everything I've written since then.

InD: Wow. That's amazing. Has it been a good experience all along? Honestly, that is a lot of years to stay with one publisher.

BN: Yeah, I have been with the same editor and publisher for 15 years.

InD: How did that all work? Did the five years you spent researching that historical help?

BN: It was all trial and error with me. I really didn't have a lot to work with, other than my love of reading and the examples that are out there. When I first finished, it was 800 pages long, and it was a straight historical, it wasn't even a romance.

Then someone asked me if I'd heard of RWA. And I said, "No. I'm just out here by myself writing." I didn't know one other person who was doing it. They said, "They have a big conference every summer, you should go." and so I looked into it. I was 5 months pregnant with Thad, my youngest, and I scrounged the money together and went there. I didn't know a soul and I was standing in this lobby with 2,200 women walking every which way and I was just buzzing with excitement because I knew I had found what I needed. I knew I would get to the next step of how to market my book, how to get a publisher. I came home just so high, I was freaking out I was so excited! I learned my book was way too long, it would never sell and wasn't targeted right. So, I went back and rewrote it and trimmed it way down, to about 430 pages, and turned it more into romance and put it in the Golden Heart, it

was a finalist, which gave me a little bit of credibility to approach agents.

InD: Your first book went that far, huh?

BN: Yep well, it's because I'm stubborn, I just kept rewriting it until I got it right.

InD: That's awesome. If your very first book goes as far as the Golden Heart finals, that's impressive!

BN: Well, they only take the first 50 pages, so you only have to have the first 50 pages good.

InD: Yeah but I'm still very impressed. Okay, out of all the novels you have written to date which of the characters have the most Brenda inside?

BN: That's a tough question. I think there is a part of me in absolutely every heroine, in different aspects. People always say, "Do you put people you know in your books?" But that would be impossible. We are all so contradictory. We do one thing one day and something else the next...if you had a character do that people actually do, they'd think, "She's not consistent, the characterization is terrible." So, I would say that certain aspects of every character are me. But, I don't know if there is one more than the other.

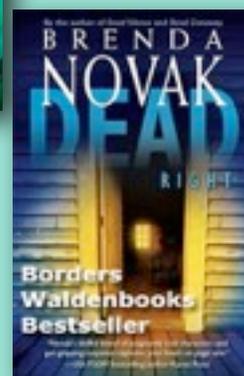
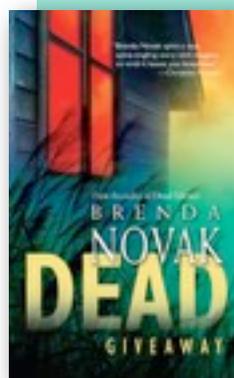
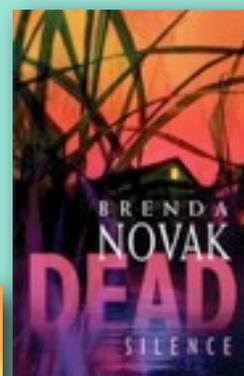
InD: What are a few you have written to be quite a bit like you?

BN: I started out believing that my heroine had to be perfect and that nobody would like her if she made a mistake, but I've gone way away from that now and I just make them believable. I think you can do almost anything as long as it's sympathetic, believable and people understand why you did it, especially if you are trying to overcome something you did wrong, but they can understand

how you screwed up. I think that's a sympathetic thing.

InD: Do you relate to any of them more than others?

BN: I really relate to Phoenix, the new one that's coming out but I haven't been through anything like what's she been through, so I don't know why. I just sympathize with her journey. She has such a horrific thing happen and yet she turns it into something good and walks away



from it all in the end, so it's a real triumph.

InD: How does that creative process work for you?

BN: Boy, when I first started, I just had that first title, "Of Noble Birth", and that's what generated the whole idea. That was my only idea! I wanted to show nobility as the condition of the heart, not the bloodlines so it was perfect to set it in an aristocratic type of background, but that's all I had. I remember

thinking, “Gosh, what do I do now? This isn’t going to be “Gone With The Wind” where I have written just one fabulous book.”

So your brain just starts turning into a sifter. You start looking for ideas everywhere. Any piece of information you hear, any news, true crime shows, certain types of characters will stand out and agitate your imagination - scenarios, things your mother tells you. Your brain just goes sniffing around trying to find your next good idea! Sometimes I have a good inventory of ideas in my brain and I’ll work through them all and then lift up my head and go, “Wow, I have to get some more inventory!” Then I start writing down and toying and brainstorming ideas to come up with something else.

InD: How many hours a day do you write?

BN: All day. Every day, except Saturdays and Sundays. I probably work 12 hours a day during the week, easy.

InD: Basically Monday – Friday, what to what?

BN: 7 am – 7 pm

InD: Are those definite hours?

BN: No, I’m just really driven, and I won’t give up on something until I’ve hit my goal. If something interrupts, I just keep going back until I get my pages done or until I have reached my goal of what I needed to get done that day.

InD: Your kids are pretty much out of the house now, but was it that way even when the kids were home?

BN: Well, no. I spent much less time writing when they were younger because of their sports and homework. Their dad has always been working, so it pretty much fell to me. When they were home, I

would work every minute that I could whenever they were napping or in school. I went to all of their games and school activities. I really enjoyed that aspect of my life, but as they have gotten older and have needed me less, my work time has inversely proportionally gone up.

InD: That’s totally understandable. What do your kids think about your writing? Do they read your books?

BN: Yeah, you know it’s funny because my middle daughter never read and my husband would just hound her, so when she was about to graduate high school, she took one of my books and went in her bedroom. We didn’t see her for like two weeks! She just went from one to the next to the next. I remember him poking his head in her door saying, “You can’t lay in here and read the whole week!” But, he finally got her reading! So yeah, all three of my daughters have been a big support and have read my books. My boys don’t read them. Thad’s barely 18, so he would just now be at an age, and I can’t imagine the boys being that interested in romance. I think they are more interested in the more blow ‘em up kind of stuff.

InD: What about your husband?

BN: He hasn’t read any, but I have read every single one of them to him. When I finish a book, we go for a long drive and I read aloud. It really helps me catch errors because when I stumble on dialogue I’ll say, “Okay, there is a problem that needs to be ironed out.” Or he’ll say, “No, no, no, that’s not how cell phones work...” or give input that way. I can always tell whether the story is working by his reaction, even though what I’m gauging isn’t necessarily what he’s saying. I’m watching for when he gets bored, you know what I mean? I can tell when it is really grabbing him and he is really into the story. It’s a nice way to have a sounding board. I don’t think I could read aloud if I didn’t have somebody I was watching for that reaction, it’s a really great help.

InD: That is one thing I always hear from audiobook narrators! They say, “We wish authors would read their books out loud! They would be able to tell what is not going to work and what is so much better!”

BN: Absolutely. I don’t pretend to catch everything but I really do think it helps me polish the manuscript, so that it reads nicely. That’s sort of our frosting on the cake pass. And my husband is getting more and more able to articulate when something’s wrong, before I could just tell that something was wrong, but now he is able to tell me. I have kind of trained my own little critiquer! He’ll



say he didn't like the logic of this or that. In a new book I started, I read him the opening and he said "No, I don't think that is working." So I rewrote it, and we both liked it much better afterward. That was really good input. I'm glad I have him to tell me the harsh truth. He is very gentle.

INd: Just curious, the daughter that never wanted to read but finally did and never came out of her bedroom until she'd read them all, what was her reaction to them?

BN: She loved them, but she is super sweet anyway.

INd: So when she came out with the book she just loved them all, and she didn't say well, "What about this, mom?"

BN: At that point she wasn't as critical. Now, she will be a little more critical, and she'll say she likes this one better or that one better and why. But back



Last year, I had a boxed set done, in addition to the auction. It was only available for a month, and were stories that had been out there before, just recycled or repurposed. But, they were really huge names like Susan Mallory - Debbie Macomber did the foreword. It netted \$100,000 to the charity! So that told me the idea could really work. This year, I thought, "I won't do the auction, but I'll step up the boxed set effort and I'll do three different genres. One that is a thriller, one that is small town contemporary, and one that is hotter stories."

My friend, Lauren Hawkeye, is heading up the hotter boxed set, she writes that genre, and also has a child who has type 1 diabetes. She has been supporting my auction all along. When I did this boxed set last year she wanted to include some hotter stories in it, but there was no way I could with the authors who are not known for steamy reads so people wouldn't expect that, and many readers would be shocked and upset. But this year she said, "Since you now are diversifying your genres, let's do one with hotter stories, one with the more middle of the road contemporaries and one with thrillers."

This year all the books are also brand new novels and novellas from some really popular writers: Cheryl Woods, Linda Lael Miller, Molly O'Keefe, Rosalind James...some real popular indie authors. We want to mix traditional authors with indie



then, she just kind of shyly smiled and said she liked them. So, it was really cute.

INd: When they are out with their friends do they go, "That's Brenda Novak...my mom?"

BN: My other daughter has a bunch of friends that read me. So sometimes for Christmas she'll come get some [books] for them and that's fun. Or on her Facebook they'll say, "I love your mother's books!" or they'll want to come out to a launch party or something, so that's been neat to get that positive reinforcement.

INd: I noticed that you are very involved in Diabetes charities. Tell us about that.

BN: I have done an online auction for Diabetes for 10 years now. This year is the first year that we are taking a year off. I felt like I was kind of wearing out all the people we ask to donate every year. After 10 years of me coming knocking on their door, I decided to give everybody a rest, change it up and do something different.



authors; we thought that might give them a chance to combine their readerships.

InD: That's is a great idea. Authors are authors, good books are good books, why separate them anymore? I don't think readers really care where they are coming from, it's the quality of writing that matters.

BN: Yeah, the mode of delivery doesn't matter, whether it is an e-book or a print book, traditional or indie. Although, in this case, it will be an e-book because in print it would be way too huge, but it will be available for two months instead of just one, and of course we will have the three boxed sets instead of just one. So we are hoping we will net as much for the charity with this endeavor as we would have if we had run the full auction.

InD: Tell me what the names of the sets will be, for our reader's sake?

BN: The three boxed sets are: "Sweet Dreams", the thriller boxed set; "Sweet Talk", the small town contemporary boxed set; and "Sweet Seduction", the erotica or hotter boxed set.

InD: Are they buying each boxed set separately or are they all coming in one digital download?

BN: No, they are separate. Because the brands are still separate, we didn't feel like we could mix the hot stuff with Cheryl Woods and Linda Lael Miller. That was our way of clearly delineating, so that we get the right kind of reader for each box set. They will be available for \$9.99 each, which is less than a dollar, a story because they all have a minimum of 10 to 13 authors in them. I think it is going to be a fun endeavor. They will be available through the months of

May and June. We will take them all down on June 30th. It is a very limited edition - a two month shot for readers to get a lot of great reading material, and all the money goes to charity, so it is kind of a win-win for everybody.

InD: I hope it garners huge sales! Diabetes is such an important cause. It's one that I think all of us not only are familiar with, but many of us have people in our families dealing with diabetes.

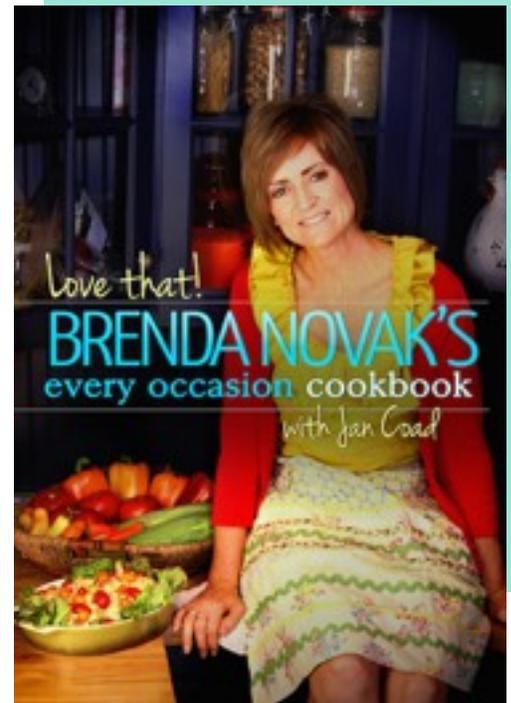
BN: Well, it is becoming epidemic. I mean I don't know if you have heard some of the statistics, but studies show a huge proportion of the population will have it by 2050. I can't remember what the exact statistic was now, but it was crazy. I remember reading it and thinking, "This is nuts!" Hopefully we'll find a cure and be able to eradicate it before it gets that bad.

InD: You became involved because of your son, right?

BN: Yes, I have five kids. My baby was diagnosed at five. He is now 18 and off at college. So we are new empty-nesters which is fun, but we miss him!

InD. How has he handled his diabetes?

BN: Oh, he does what most kids do. They think they are invincible. One of the things about diabetes is that the damage that you are doing to your body doesn't show up until you get a little bit older, so you end up dying sooner, and you start having problems with having children and all the different stuff happens. So when you are 0-20, you still feel like you can withstand whatever is happening to your body. He is kind of still in that period of thinking he's indestructible. It's



kind of hard to get him to be as careful as he needs to be.

InD: Okay, before we finish we have to talk about your cookbook.

BN: Oh yeah! Well, this was a beast, it is so hard! You don't think about everything that goes into a cookbook! You think, "Oh I have everything I need. I have all our favorite, healthy recipes that I have collected through the years that I have made and tinkered with and used... easy!" But, you have to make the recipe, you have to stage it, you have to photograph it, so it looks great - the photography can be hard! Then laying out the cookbook was a whole new thing - that was tough. I ended up going through two different designers before Alexa, my daughter, finally said, "Mom, I swear I can do it!" I was thinking, "You're too young, you're just a puppy"... but she has kicked their butts! She is just so much better than what they were showing me, so she ended up doing the whole design and I'm really happy with it. You know, without her it wouldn't have come to pass. She's the one that

made all the food, staged it, photographed it, and laid it out. It's actually turned into more of her project with my recipes. We've sampled them all and discussed everything together.

InD: What made you decide you wanted to do a cookbook though? Where did the idea come from in the first place?

BN: Well, my best friend is Pierce Maddy, who owns a PR company in New York, and when he first met me, he said I should do a cookbook. I was keen to the idea, so we started it.

InD: Why did he say you should do a cookbook? Where did that come from?

BN: He's a PR guy and he just thought it would be a good way get people involved in the auction and to get the word out about the fundraiser.

InD: I think I read that all the proceeds from the cookbook go to diabetes research?

BN: Yes, everything goes to diabetes research.

InD: Is the food for diabetics?

BN: It is not for diabetics, but it is very diabetic friendly. The carb ratio is a good ratio. But it's not like Atkins where there are no carbs. It just depends on balance, that is why it was hard, too. I am going to have some diabetics write me and say, "There are 15 grams of carbs in here I can't have this!" And, I will have to say, "My son can have it and most reasonably balanced diabetics can have this much, so you shouldn't have to take enough insulin to offset it. But you have to make sure." We don't have a lot of desserts and there's only a couple of pastas. You would have to have smaller portions to balance it all out, but there is something for everyone.

I call it "Brenda Novak's Every Occasion Cookbook." 'Cause it is more for people who want to eat healthy.



None of the recipes have huge amounts of sodium or fat or carbs. And, they are our favorites!

People used to always shove sugar substitutes at me saying, "You need to substitute all the sugar." Well, my son got deathly ill every time he ate a sugar substitute, and it took me a while to figure out what was causing it. At first, I thought it was the diabetes because he'd just been diagnosed. I remember thinking, "If this is how bad it's going to be I can't live like this, I won't survive!" I thought he was going to die. He'd be sitting on the toilet with sweat pouring off of him and leaning against the wall like he couldn't even hold himself up. He was just this little five-year old guy. Then I read something online that said something about sugar substitutes causing problems and as soon as I took him off he was fine!

So, my cookbook has very little sugar substitutes in it. There are a couple of the dessert recipes but by and large I just don't cook with sugar, butter or sour cream substitutes. I just use real food. It is just a very modern middle of the road approach that anybody would be able to get some good recipes out of.

InD: Even if they didn't have diabetes, they could eat and enjoy?

BN: Absolutely, they are my daughter's favorite family recipes. She doesn't have diabetes.

InD: You are self-publishing it, how did that go?

BN: Yep! Harlequin originally said they wanted to buy it but then as we got further down the road they got cold feet. Then Jan Code, a fan of mine that has been really supportive on my street team, instant messaged me and said, "Brenda let's do that cookbook together! I used to own a restaurant and I've done other cookbooks." So we exchanged recipes, cooked, tried them out and narrowed it all down. Some of her recipes were dynamite and filled in nicely with mine and so she helped out. It's the weirdest thing the help I've received at the perfect moment. She also did the nutritional information until her son became very ill and took her out of action. I had this cookbook that was up for pre-order and I had to get out, so I posted on an indie author group. A gal wrote me, her name is Elizabeth Johns, and she said, "I'm a dietician and if you need any help figuring out nutritional information, I would be happy to do that." I was like, "Are you serious?!?" and she was like "Yeah!" So I sent it to her, and she got the stuff back to me almost instantaneously. She has been a huge help. It has been a tremendous amount of work but it all came together.

InD: And how many recipes do you have in the cookbook now?

BN: It's like 75... that's a lot of pictures to take!