

Exploring humanity through SCIENCE FICTION

THIS MONTH, we talk to Anthony J. Viola, Ph.D., a professor in the Department of English at Marshall University. Viola was born in West Islip, New York, and raised in West Babylon. He attended college at East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania, where he earned his bachelor's of arts in English (writing). After that, he moved to Grand Forks, North Dakota, where he earned his master's in English from the University of North Dakota. After attending Ohio University, where he earned his PhD, he moved to Lexington, Kentucky, for a two-year position before being hired at Marshall. He just started his 19th year at Marshall.

His third and latest novel is "The Law of Devil's Land," published by Black Rose Writing on Sept. 21, 2023. The novel tells the story of "17-year-old Ghonna 'Gyle,' an outcast unsure of their identity, trying to get by in a post-apocalyptic society where traditional values reign. To raise themselves out of the Lower Ranks, Ghonna participates in the Imperial Events. And with each stage, the stakes increase, the competition is fiercer, and the possibility of death becomes likely."

His second novel, "All Lies Begin With Truth" is also available through Black Rose Writing. His first novel,



"The Art of Death," is available through KDP (Amazon).

Q: What inspired you to start writing?

A: For the longest time, I always wanted to write; though I have to admit, I think that was mostly inspired by watching science-fiction films as a kid. I remember there would be a sci-fi/thriller screening once a week on Saturday mornings, and I somehow found myself looking forward to watching these. I remember meeting with a guidance counselor while in the fourth grade and she asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, and she was impressed with the specific nature of my response, which was a "science-fiction writer."

Q: How do you deal with the emotional impact of a book (on yourself) as you are writing the story?

A: I think if I weren't passionate about the topic, then I could never actually write a book about that topic. So, I would say, the emotional impact is always there, and I use it as a catalyst to keep writing. This impact also inspires me to craft a story filled with as much accuracy and verisimilitude as possible.

SEE **BOOK TEAM, 2E**



Anthony J. Viola, Ph.D., has written three science-fiction novels, the latest of which, "The Law of Devil's Land," is published by Black Rose Writing. Viola is a 19-year professor in the Department of English at Marshall University.

Courtesy photo

Those compliments that stick with us

A FRIEND AND I were reminiscing when she asked, "What's the best compliment you ever received?"

The one that instantly surfaced surprised me, as it happened over two decades ago, when my daughter was 6 or 7 years old.

At the time, I had been playing a bit wildly with Celeste and two other children in the yard of my ex-inlaws, though the "ex" part wasn't there at the time. When I finally went inside, Winston, my former father-in-law, was standing at the window, where he had been watching us for a while. He looked a bit wistful.

"I wish I could've experienced what it's like to be your kid," he said.

His words never left me — this sincere and lovely endorse-



Smell the Coffee
By Karin Fuller Patton

ment of me as a parent, given by someone I admired so much.

Revisiting his compliment made me wonder about the favorites of some of my friends, so I posted the question on Facebook.

David Miller of Oak Harbor, Washington, had a fun one.

"A second-grader at an elementary school where I used to volunteer after retiring informed me we couldn't do a particular task because, 'we needed an adult.' Apparently, in his eyes, I was just another kid," wrote Da-

vid. "When I later shared this with the teacher she paused and said, 'I'm going to tell you something, and I want you to understand I mean it as a compliment — you think like a 10-year-old.'"

That's great praise in my book. Once, when my brother's three children were small, we all went out to dinner at a restaurant with my parents. As the server was doling out crayons and coloring pages to the kids, she put one in front of my dad, who must've been in his late 60s at the time. When she realized what she had done, she became flustered and apologized, saying he "seemed like a kid." Dad smiled all through dinner.

Larry Meador of Hinton said his favorite compliment came from one of his daughter's classmates, back when they were in

elementary school. "I wish you were my dad," the boy said to him.

To have someone recognize your effort can mean a great deal, as evidenced by Kathryn Seymour Monk, who wrote: "I was working on my doctorate with two toddlers, while also working a part-time job. My dad saw me come back from the grocery store with both of them hanging on me and my books open at the computer and said I was 'quite a lady' for handling all of it."

Kind words about something small can stick with you, too. Said former Daily Mail Publisher Nanya Friend, "When I was just a kid, my mom told me she liked the way I dried the dishes, better than my two siblings, I guess. I never fail to think of that when I dry dishes."

Sharon McClanahan's favorite happened on the day she married her husband.

"The day Tim and I got married, his dad came to walk me down the aisle," wrote Sharon. "He opened the door and said, 'The van is at the door. You can still change your mind. You're too good for my son.' He really loved his son, but I realized I became his daughter that day."

My good friend Martha Braswell said my husband was responsible for her favorite compliment. "It was when Don told me he could see the joy of Jesus all over me."

And Peg Crockett Nagem was touched when her best friend told her he didn't need a spiritual director, because he had her.

SEE **COFFEE, 3E**



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