

Pleasant Hill woman inspired to pen first novel

Written by Charles Flesher

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Pleasant Hill author Stormy Smith's debut novel, 'Bound by Duty,' comes out tomorrow in Amazon ebook format. The paranormal coming of age story follows a young female protagonist and is aimed at readers in their early teens through young adults. Print copies of the book should be available in about three weeks. / Charles Flesher/Altoona Herald

Release party

WHAT: A release party for Pleasant Hill author Stormy Smith's first novel, "Bound by Duty." Guests will be able to order copies of the book. There will be prize giveaways, custom jewelry and metal stamped bookmarks with quotes from the novel.

WHEN: 5 to 8 p.m. Thursday

WHERE: Blue Moon Piano Bar, 5485 Mills Civic Parkway, West Des Moines

MORE: To find out more about Smith and her novel, visit www.stormysmith.com. There you can read the prologue and reviews by advance copy readers.

Inspiration can strike anywhere.

For some it's the shower; for others it comes lying in bed at night.

For Pleasant Hill resident Stormy Smith, inspiration came on a two-hour car ride to Omaha.

"I never knew I would write a book," the first-time author said last week sitting inside the lobby of the Temple for Performing Arts in downtown Des Moines.

She took a break from her communications position at Principal Financial to promote her novel, "Bound by Duty," which comes out tomorrow.

Smith is a word lover, but as she says, she never expected to become an author herself.

The Mount Pleasant native moved to Des Moines to study journalism at Drake University. She later spent several years in marketing and earned a master's degree in communications and leadership. She now writes internal communications materials for the employees at Principal.

What got her started down the road to writing was one of her favorite authors.

Last July — exactly one year to the day of her novel's release — Smith was driving west on I-80, daydreaming about the novel she'd just finished — "Endless Magic," the fourth and final book in Rachel Higginson's Star-Crossed series.

As a fan of the young adult, paranormal genre since middle school, Smith's mind raced with possibilities.

"I've always been drawn to those story lines," she said. "I thought, 'What if this happened? What if it went this way?'"

Soon she had crafted a story in her mind. The only thing left was getting it down on paper — or at least a hard drive.

“I had a drink in my hotel and went to my room and wrote for four hours,” Smith said.

When she stopped she had her first three chapters. Three months later she had her first draft finished.

“I had this naive notion that it was great and it was ready to publish,” she said.

Luckily a strong voice in her writers’ group — The Rebel Writers — told her otherwise. The draft needed a lot of work.

She’s spent the last nine months rewriting and revising that first crack. The book has gone through three drafts and been critiqued by more than a dozen writers and avid readers.

“It took a village between my writing group and my beta readers,” Smith said.

The result is a 390-page “coming of age” novel with a paranormal twist aimed at early teen to young adult readers. It follows Amelia, a teenage girl with supernatural powers she’s grappling to control, and her struggle to find her place in the “normal” world.

Although she was inspired by Higginson’s novels, and others, Smith’s novel is not fan fiction. Her characters and her story are entirely her own inventions.

She envisions “Bound by Duty” as the first in a trilogy of novels set in the same universe.

The book is published through Smith’s own Perfect Storm Publishing and will be available at first in ebook format through Amazon. Hard copies should be available in about three weeks.