

Geonn Cannon Interview by Moondancer Drake

After years of believing he wanted to be an actor, he wrote his first story and, to his surprise, made a woman he was sweet on laugh.

Everything after that was focused on this new superpower. Put down some words, get girls to laugh. The more he wrote, the more joy he got from it. Years later, when he realized he could barely close his eyes without a new story forming on the backs of his eyelids, he knew it was too late to turn back.

Moon: How would you describe to a stranger who Geonn Cannon is?

Geonn Cannon: Hm. I suppose I would start with my name. I would make sure the stranger knew it was pronounced just like "John." Some people go for Gene, some people give it a French "Jean." But it's just plain old John. Beyond that... I've always been someone who enjoys stories. Telling them, reading them, writing them. I love to read. My perfect evening involves music (I prefer oldies music, sixties and seventies stuff) and reading a book. Beyond that, and the fact I have two cats, my writing is everything you need to know about me. Mainly because it's the most interesting aspect of my life. :-)

Moon: What are some of your favorite books?

Geonn: Oh, wow. Well, a lot of times I just pick whatever I happen to be reading at the moment. But *The Time-Traveler's Wife* by Audrey Niffenegger is an all-time favorite. It has everything: Romance, sci-fi, humor, drama, angst. It's an amazing, amazing book and I try to reread it at least once a year.

Some of the other books I've read recently that I heartily recommend... *East Wind, Rain* by Caroline Paul is a fantastic view of an unseen part of the Pearl Harbor attack. *The Last Town on Earth* by Thomas Mullen is another fantastic novel that just grabbed me and refused to let me go. Other than that... most things by Stephen King and anything by Dennis Lehane goes on my must-read list.

Moon: Was it your love for reading that led you to write or something else?

Geonn: My love of reading was a big part of it. But to be honest, the first thing I ever wrote and let someone else read - big difference there *G* - was a note to my friend. It was a highly-fictionalized version of our lives and our friends and kind of got carried away over the rest of the year. We wrote back and forth and I realized how much I enjoyed coming up with plots and characters.

The real start, though, was when I wrote a script for theatre class. A girl I had a crush on read it and laughed in all the right spots. That's when I realized that I had a way to make girls laugh, I knew I had to harness the gift.

Moon: Is "On the Air" your first published works?

Geonn: It is! Considering I've only been sending work out to publishers since 2004, it's really amazing to me that it's happened this quickly (even if it felt like ages in the process *G*). Since then, I've gotten two more books accepted by PD Publishing. "Gemini," which takes place in the same universe as "On the Air," but doesn't involve any of the characters, and "World on Fire." Those are due in late 2008 and early 2009 respectively.

Moon: What an amazing feeling that must be. Tell us a bit about these three books.

Geonn: Thank you! It's an amazing thrill!

"On the Air" was a very surprising story. It came out of a conversation - a joke, really - with a friend of mine. I came up with the bare bones of the plot - a local celebrity in a small town accidentally comes out of the closet - off the top of my head. But the more I talked about it, the more the story and characters came to life to me. The story is about Nadine Butler, a DJ at KELF Radio, who accidentally comes out of the closet in a big way. The rest of the novel is about her dealing with the aftermath and learning who her true friends are.

"Gemini" is the story of Molly and April Page, twin sisters. Molly is a successful chef, happy in her routine, not looking for anything to shake up the status quo. When her sister dies in a car accident, Molly is forced to take a long, hard look at her sister's life and see what she might have been missing all the years they've been estranged.

"World on Fire" is the earliest-written novel of the three. It focuses on firefighter Alex Crawford and her budding relationship with a doctor named Rachel Tom. A dangerous fire sends Alex to the hospital where they meet, and they soon realize that first blaze was the work of an arsonist. The fires start to get bigger and Alex is soon worried that killing firefighters may be the arsonist's intention. It's also the only book that doesn't take place on Squire's Isle, but the island is mentioned in the epilogue as a wink to the fans of the other books. :-)

Moon: A dj, a chef, and a firefighter. There's an eclectic mix. So are you a full time writer or is there an alter ego to Geonn Cannon?

Geonn: I am a full-time writer! I've worked in a kitchen, and I worked construction with my father, neither job really felt right to me. So I was fortunate enough to have very, very understanding parents who have been (unknowingly, really) been supporting my efforts to become a writer.

The strange careers of my characters are really just luck! I picked a dj because it felt like the most accurate celebrity job for the character and the story. It gave her the right level of notoriety and it enabled the scene towards the end of the book where she decides to use her show to take a stand. Plus, it was a way to get almost everyone on the island

involved: TVs and newspapers aren't available to 100% of people 100% of the time, but radio is in restaurants, cars, homes, work... it's everywhere!

Molly is a chef because, literally the day I began writing, I looked at a list of professions and chef popped out at me. It turned out that being a chef is a very big part of who Molly is. It just picked an odd way to show itself to me.

As for firefighter... I really respect firefighters and wanted to show - at least a little - how important their jobs are.

Moon: So tell us about the research you went through to do these three very distinctive types of people.

Geonn: The most research went toward "World on Fire." Firefighter equipment, methods, the way they approach a fire, the way they are around each other and what they do around the firehouse... I wanted it all to be as accurate as possible. So I went out and got as many books as I could get my hands on. Non-fiction, but also fiction books that could show how the info could be put into a fictional situation without sounding like a technical manual. The most helpful book I read was a memoir by Caroline Paul called "Fighting Fire." She was one of the first women in the San Francisco Fire Department and, although it isn't mentioned in the book, is an out lesbian. I knew that I would find her book extremely helpful, and I did!

The research for the other books was done in small ways. I read everything I could find on working in radio and spoke briefly with a real-life DJ to make sure I had some of the terminology correct.

The least amount of research went to Gemini. Mainly, I found recipes online so I could accurately describe what the heck the chefs were doing in the kitchen. I also read a few articles on chefs like Anthony Bourdain and learned things that, even if they didn't necessarily make it into the story, gave me an idea of what kind of person Molly should be.

Moon: [Squire's Isle](#). Tell us about the Island and how you came up with that name.

Geonn: I came up with the island on a 2004 trip to Canada. We made a sudden decision to stop and spent the day on this little island off the coast of Washington and go whale-watching. We spent maybe five hours there, if that, and something about it just clicked in my head. I suddenly knew that's where I wanted to set my stories, if I could. Well, all this time later, it looks like I succeeded.

There was a hill way out in the country outside of the town where I was born that I never knew the name of growing up. It was extremely steep, and going down it always made your stomach drop down like a roller coaster. Right after I started trying to think of a name for the island, I learned that this was called Squire's Hill. So, I used the name to my own advantage. :D

Moon: What a great connection. Do you travel a lot?

Geonn: No! In fact, that life-changing trip was the first time I'd ever left the state of Oklahoma! My parents are frequent guests of various hotels in Las Vegas, but I'm quite a homebody. The only places I've been are Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia, which was on that one single trip. I'm hoping to go back some day as soon as possible! Hopefully if the book sales are high enough... ;-)

Moon: Hey, with the book out you'll have all those fun conventions to go to. I hear you used to write for the Academy of Bards. Is this true, and if so, tell us about the stuff you wrote there.

Geonn: Here's looking forward to those conventions! Although the idea of reading out loud tends to give me the willies (fear of public speaking, even though I was in a theatre class.

;:-D)

I still post at the Academy! The things I posted there are pretty much what I'm getting published; stories about women in love. In fact, some of the stories - [Baked Goods](#), [Rounding Home](#), [The Christmas Boat](#) continue the tale of characters from "On the Air." I posted On the Air at the Academy and that's where it got noticed by someone who whispered my name to PD Publishing. If not for the Academy, I may not have gotten published! So I will forever hold that site in high regard.

Moon: So besides the AoB which many a career has been boosted by, what other experiences do you think have effected your work, whether positive or negatively since you began writing.

Geonn: I have to give credit to my Stargate fanfiction. From... around 2001 until recently, I wrote slash fiction for the characters Samantha Carter and Janet Fraiser from Stargate SG-1. I learned how to structure stories, write dialogue, all that fun stuff that's necessary for a novel. It was kind of like boot camp for writing. I got to play with all kinds of plotlines since the Stargate allowed for any kind of story to be told, you just had to come up with a planet for them to visit where King Arthur and his knights were still around or people turned into werewolves.

The biggest influence is my reading. Stephen King said in his book "On Writing" that the secret to writing a lot is reading a lot, and I took that advice to heart. So I do my best to make sure I always - or as much as possible - have a book on hand.

I don't know if there have been any negative experiences. I'm either very blessed or very naive about it and see all experiences as positive in some way or another. (We're not counting various computer crashes or documents closing without being saved ;-D).

Moon: I can relate to that last part recently. I was telling about your [website](#) and I saw you were [interviewed](#) by Nadine Butler (from On the Air) KELF's afternoon disc jockey. What was that like?

Geonn: *laughs* That bitch was impossible to work with. ;-D

It was very surreal, interviewing myself that way. I cheated a bit by having my friendslist on Livejournal come up with the questions they wanted answered. All I did was reword them and make them sound like they were coming from Nadine.

It was a very fun experience. Kind of immersing myself into the fictional world to make it a little more real for the reader.

Moon: I bet it was fun and a challenge, nice work. Okay, back to what you said about always having a book in your hand... tell us. What's waiting in you TBR pile?

Geonn: Right now I'm working my way through Thomas Perry's "Jane Whitefield" series. I'm on book four of five. It's about an American Indian (Seneca), Jane Whitefield, who uses her tracking and guiding skills to help people in danger disappear. People on the run from the mob or dangerous exes and the like find her, and she'll get them away from their enemies with a new name and a new job in a new city. Of course, it's hardly ever that easy, hence the books. They're quick reads, tense and thrilling and you always end up flipping through the last few chapters to find out how Jane's going to get out of the current trap. She's a tough character, brilliant, crafty. Just the kind of woman I love to read about.

As for that, the next in my TBR pile is to be determined. Most likely by a trip to the library (one of my favorite places in the world ;-D)

Moon: Assuming you don't live on Squire's Isle, where do you call home?

Geonn: I unfortunately do not live on the real Squire's Isle. One day, maybe! :D

Home is a small-ish town in Oklahoma called Yukon. It's a few miles west of Oklahoma City, so close enough to the big town that I don't see cows every day. But still small enough that I get that small-town feel that makes me love Squire's Isle so much. The sad part is that it, like all small towns, keeps getting bigger and bigger. Before long, we may be considered a neighborhood of Oklahoma City, rather than a neighbor to them.

Moon: So, you think you'll ever write a story set in Oklahoma?

Geonn: I would never say never! In fact, I have another unfinished novel that is set in Oklahoma in the years after the 1889 Land Run. It needs some more editing and some more rewriting before I send it out. It would be 2010 before it could get published anyway, so I have time. :D

Sorry about the delay between the question and answer. Some of those computer problems I mentioned. ;-D

Moon: No worries. You're doing great. I heard you do [Nanowrimo](#). Tell us about what that's like.

Geonn: It's absolutely amazing. The first year I did it was the first year I managed to get a novel-length story finished. The deadline, the sense of camaraderie with so many people trying to reach the same goal... it's a very good tool to those trying to get their first novel written. Which is really the hardest part, actually getting the words down on paper (so to speak). It's much easier knowing all those people are doing the same thing alongside you.

Moon: You willing to give us a little hint about what you'll be doing for Nano this year?

Geonn: I am, but you might not like it! :D

With the schedule pushed up to 2009, I felt like the time had come to take a breather from my lesbian-themed romance and focus on my very first novel idea. It's called "Miser" and, without giving too much away, it takes place on Squire's Isle. When I first came up with the island, it was to give Neil Miser - the title character - a place to hang his hat. So while it won't be a lesbian novel and will likely be put out by a mainstream publisher, it WILL have familiar characters. Neil lives above Gail's Seafood Shack. His office is over Coffee Table Books and he's good friends with Amy Wellis (both Gail's, CTB and Amy appear in "On the Air," while Gail's is a main locale in "Gemini.") I'm even pretty sure Neil will share a scene with Nadine Butler.

So while it's not the audience's main focus, hopefully the promise of seeing a few familiar faces will entice them to join me on the side-trip.

Moon: No judgment here. I'll admit to taking a side path every so often myself. What drew you to write lesbian stories?

Geonn: I really can't pinpoint any one thing. Back when I wanted to try my hand at Stargate fiction, none of the stories really worked until I wrote one that focused on a relationship between Sam and Janet. Once I added that element, Stargate fic became easy for me.

I've always been attracted to strong women, and Sam and Janet were both excellent examples of that. Putting them together - and then, when I moved to original fic, putting original creations of strong women together - just felt right to me.

Moon: Have you faced any particular challenges working in the LGBT genre?

Geonn: No! There's always that initial awkwardness when someone refers to me as a woman or asks me a question about being gay when I have to reveal I'm a straight male, but the response so far has been overwhelmingly positive. No one seems to mind one way or another, which I think is the way it should always be. Gay, straight, female, male... it doesn't matter!

Moon: **Okay, I have to ask because I know there are people out there who want to know. Tell us about your cats. :) You think they'll ever get to play a role in your novels?**

Geonn: *laughs* I don't know if they will! Perhaps if I feel the need to torture one of my characters and give her a kitty ;-D

I have two cats, a boy and a girl. The boy is Tigger, the girl is Sahara. Sahara, an ooold cat, declared me for herself at some point in the past. It's hard to sit down anywhere without her taking a flying leap at my lap. And just recently, if I get up from the computer for even a couple of seconds, I'll most likely return to find she's sitting in it.

Tigger... well, he's just nuts. He can break the sound barrier running from one side of the house to the other. He doesn't have a reason. He just needs to be there and he needs to be there *now*! :D

Moon: **I have had a blast hanging with you Geonn. I have one last question before we go. What advice would you give a new author starting out?**

Geonn: It's been fun being interviewed by you! I'm glad to have been interviewed by a fellow PD author. Keeping it in the family so to speak.

To a new author... the best advice I can give is write because you love it. To be really good, you need to spend an insane amount of time writing, rewriting, rewriting again, editing, researching and then doing one more rewrite just to be safe. If there's no love, it'll be torture. And I'll echo Mr. King's sentiment: Read, read, read. The more you read, the more you absorb. You pick up tricks to description and dialogue, you find ways to describe characters without it looking like a rap sheet... it's the best trick you can have.

Thanks for the interview, Moondancer!