

ENTERTAINMENT

Author Sandra Brown coming to Canton. New novel inspired by school shooting survivors



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Key Points

New York Times bestselling author Sandra Brown will appear on Nov. 16 at the Canton Palace Theatre as part of a Stark Library event.

Brown's latest novel, "Out of Nowhere" is about two survivors of a mass shooting and how they continue on in the aftermath.

Admission is free to the Sandra Brown event, but reservations must be made online.

Sandra Brown cried when she wrote parts of her most recent novel, "Out of Nowhere," which tells the story of two strangers whose lives converge in the aftermath of a mass shooting.

Brown, who has penned more than 70 New York Times bestselling books in the romance, suspense and thriller genres, was inspired to write the book when the Texas resident watched the events of the Uvalde school shooting unfold in newscasts.

"I thought these people have to resume their lives," she said of the tragedy. "Nothing catastrophic has happened to us ... but how do they deal with it – their lives are forever affected, so that's what interested me."

One of the most difficult scenes to write was when a character from "Out of Nowhere" opens up for the first time to a psychologist about what it was like to lose her child in a mass shooting at a Texas county fair depicted in the book.

"As a mother, I would feel that pain (and think to myself), 'If I only had done this or if only I had done that, or if only I had been five minutes earlier or two minutes later,'" Brown said in

a telephone interview this week in advance of her appearance at 6:30 p.m. on Nov. 16 at the Canton Palace Theatre as part of the Stark Library's Speaking of Authors Series.

Admission is free, but reservations are required at <https://www.starklibrary.org/> and through Eventbrite by searching under the author's name. Books will be available for purchase at the event. Stark Library also can be reached at 330-452-0665.

Debuting in August at No. 4 on the New York Times bestseller list for hardcover fiction, "Out of Nowhere" is among the scores of Brown's popular novels. Others include "Overkill," "Thick as Thieves," "French Silk," "Tailspin," "Envy" and "Rainwater."

During the interview from Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, where she has a writing retreat, Brown discussed her new book and whether the longtime author ever plans on retiring.

Deciding to write a novel centered around a mass shooting

Brown said her editor initially flinched when she told him a mass shooting would serve as the connecting thread of her latest book.

"I didn't want to really write (about) a shooting, and it was such a weighty topic, and we hear about it in the news, and I kept wrestling with these ideas and these characters just kept pressing on me," she explained.

"I don't want it to be about the death," said Brown, who noted she doesn't delve into political issues in the novel. "I want it to be about the recovery. How does someone who survived it, how do they ever get over the, 'Why me?' and the survivor's guilt, but also how do they pick up the pieces of their lives?"

Writing emotional scenes made her palms sweat

Another scene in "Out of Nowhere" made Brown's palms sweat at the keyboard.

The lives of the two lead characters dramatically intersect when giving statements about the mass shooting at a police station. And the male character realizes a bullet that ripped through his arm was the same one that killed a mother's child.

"Every time I wrote it, my palms would just sweat because I would imagine, 'Just, what do you say to somebody (in that situation)?'," Brown said.

Does writing get easier after 80 books?

Writing is still a laborious, exhaustive process for the author.

"I'm starting a book, and it hasn't been going extremely well," Brown said. "And I can't decide just different plot points, and whatever I have been trying to work out.

"... And I explained it to my son, and he said, 'Mom, you go through this every time, and it's the process.'"

"And it's part of the process, but ... this is my 86th book, and I said, 'How can it be this hard?'"

In response, her son later sent her a YouTube video of The Beatles laboring on a song in the studio before finishing what became one of the band's masterpieces.

Brown said the point was this: Nothing came easy even for The Beatles.

Why does Brown still keep writing books?

"It's so compulsive, and it's a love-hate relationship, it truly is," she said. "There are days when I just curse it, and I think ... 'Why aren't you on the beach?'"

But "unless you have that fire in your belly ... it really is hard for people to understand just how compulsive it is."

"I've thought, several times, well, maybe I should consider retiring, but ... I could not love anything more than I love writing, so as long as I can, and as long as a publisher will continue to publish me, I guess I'll hang in there."

What does the famous author like to read?

"I read everything, and I read all the time," Brown said. "I read fiction and nonfiction...

"... But I also venture out," she added. "It's just what I'm in the mood for like, 'The Wager,' (by David Grann) which is non-fiction I downloaded. It's about a mutiny (on a British sailing ship in the 1700s) and it's got five stars. I've read reviews, and it says it's really good. I typically read fiction.

"I thought that would be a change of pace, and I just finished Ken Follett's latest," Brown added. "I'm a fan of his, so I read all the time, and I read across the board."

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