

## 2008/May PSEUDONYMOUS BOSCH - Publishing News

The phone in a house in an unnamed district of Los Angeles picks up and I am speaking to 'Pseudonymous Bosch', author of *The Name of This Book is Secret*, which Usborne publish this month. I don't know the real name of the person on the other end of the line, or what he looks like (all available pictures are lacking in detail somewhat), and throughout the entire conversation neither do I know when the individual I'm talking to is 'in character', and when he isn't. It's an interesting exchange, to say the least.

Rumours do not so much abound about this person as peek from the shadows and run away when you look at them too hard. Bosch *claims* to be 72 years old (but sounds rather younger than that) and it's said that either he, or possibly his alter ego, actually started writing some four years ago when one or other of them got involved with an LA elementary school which had a programme called Writing Partners. "Adults from outside the school were effectively anonymous pen pals with students and I was paired with a Fourth Grader called May. For about a year we sent almost weekly samples to each other for peer review, as it were - not adult to child, but more one writer to another. She is actually one of the few people who knows my real name."

May started the ball rolling by sending Bosch a selection of material, including stories, poems and a cartoon strip about a chocolate bar that was afraid of being eaten. "I didn't have anything to reply with, so I thought I'd write a novel, which I sent to her three or four pages at a time. I was encouraged by May, and by her sisters and friends, to keep on writing and eventually the story became a novel, and one that I had never expected to write."

Thus was born Pseudonymous, the anonymous author, and the tale he wrote is told in an arch, playful tone of voice, with numerous knowing asides and the occasional footnote, which he likens to the hypertext his readers are used to seeing on-screen. The story is about a girl called Cass, who has strong survivalist tendencies (and here Bosch lets drop that his other self is a third generation Angelino, well-used to living with the threat

of various natural disasters hanging over him), and who finds a secret diary, itself full of secrets and codes. Helped by the oddly-named Max-Ernest, an aspiring stand-up comedian with an inability to shut up, Cass has to stop the nefarious Dr L and his stylish sidekick Ms Mauvais from getting their hands on it.

*The Name of This Book is Secret* has already spawned a follow-up, called *If You're Reading This it's Too Late*, which Little, Brown will publish in the US in October, and this unintentional novelist is now hard at work on an as-yet untitled third volume detailing Cass and Max-Ernest's further adventures. You have been warned. And Pseudonymous is still unnamed.