

Lakeside Chatter FM



> IWOTW <

Presents...

An Interview with Adie Raven

Annie Cook: Hello, listeners in Cumbria and beyond! Welcome to today's 'Inspiring Woman of the Week' interview! This morning, we're talking to Adrienne Raven – also known as Adie. She's from Torley town, and she's one of its busiest people. She co-owns a farm, she organises Torley's hugely successful Farmers Market, and she also has a holiday house that she rents out, not far from the town.

Hi Adie – may I call you that?

Adie Raven: Sure. Most people do, and I've been called a lot worse. And, hello!

AC: Ha! Thanks for taking the time to chat today. I know how busy you sometimes get, with the different balls you juggle. How are things going in Torley town?

AR: Oh, its ticking along as usual. Not much happens, of note, to anyone who doesn't have an interest or live here. We're in a gorgeous little tucked-away spot, but we're not really on the tourist trail, are we?

AC: Not really, no. But can you explain why that is?

AR: Well, it's a very small town, isn't it? And there aren't many listed attractions that would draw tourists, compared with some of the other Lake District towns and villages. People pass through, but it's really only hikers that tend to come here for any length of time, to do some of the fells that flank the Torley Valley. It's more of a farming community, here. Most of us are either farmers or business owners that cater to their needs.

AC: You're a little of both, Adie! A farmer's wife and a businesswoman; one of many in Torley town! Quite a lot of enterprising women who run successful businesses there. You work Ravensdown Farm with your husband, organise the busy weekly

Farmer's Market in the town, and you're also the landlady of a lovely holiday cottage on the outskirts. That's a fairly full plate. How are things going with the holiday house? Any interesting tenants lately?

AR: They're all interesting, in their own way (laughs), but some more than others. Some, I never get to know much about. Others; I learn a lot, sometimes more than I really want to.

AC: Well, tourism is always of interest in Cumbria. Has the cottage been busy?

AR: Teapot Cottage *has* been pretty busy, actually. I've had back-to-back bookings for weeks now. There hasn't been a lot a lot of time in between, to get things tidied up between one lot leaving, and the next lot turning up, but it keeps me off the streets and out of trouble, as the saying goes. That and running the market and preparing each week for my own stand there.

AC: What do you sell, at the market?

AR: Free-range eggs, jams, jellies and lavender shortbread, which I really only tried as an experiment, but people seem to love it, so I keep making it.

AC: People say that you've turned the Torley Farmer's Market into something quite sensational. Is that true?

AR: Well, it's a lot better than it was! When I first 'met' the market, for want of a better term, it wasn't doing very well. I think the previous organiser had lost the enthusiasm for it. I saw what it could be, and what it actually *needed* to be, for the town, so I offered to take it over. I tried to raise its profile a bit, around town, and luckily a few people took a punt on taking a trade stand there. It's taken off, and it's now a very well-resourced and thriving place for people to come to buy and sell local produce. It's the hub of the town on Saturdays now and of course that brings trade in for the town's other businesses too. It's a big win for everyone, really.

AC: It's interesting, how you became a landlady. In fact, your entire story is interesting! Would you like to tell the listeners a little about it?

AR: Okay, well I arrived at Teapot Cottage on Christmas, a few years ago, to house sit for three weeks, for the people who owned it back then. They were heading off to Australia to visit family, and they needed someone to take care of the cottage and their pets while they were gone. At the time, I was living in Guildford, and going through a marriage breakup, and I'd lost a lot of friends in the process. People kind of 'pick their camp,' you know, when a couple splits up? You get to find out who was in your camp, who was in his, and all that. Well, I found out that not many people were in mine, and that was pretty painful. My kids weren't really talking to me at the time either, for different reasons. Anyway, there I was, trying to see through the fog, make sense of everything, and the chance came up out of the blue, to take care of this cottage and its critters. It felt like kind of a refuge, at the time; like I could catch my breath, in a place where nobody would know where to find me, and try to figure things out.

AC: That wasn't all you were dealing with at the time though, was it, Adie?

AR: No, it wasn't. The menopause had hit me hard, without much warning. A lot of women experience peri, but I didn't so much, just a few random things that had

me thinking; 'uh-oh, it's all coming!' But then, wham! No warning at all, and I was literally in the throes of the worst kind of hormonal see-saw! Virtually overnight, I literally became a menopausal basket case! I couldn't believe myself. My hormones were completely haywire, and some of the symptoms I was having had me questioning my own sanity for a while. I really did think I was going completely mad. Trying to stay sane though all that, and a marriage break-up, friends who'd deserted me, kids who were barely speaking to me, Christmas on my own; well, it was a trick and a half to stay on top of everything. It was pretty tempting to just let myself dissolve into a screaming heap in the corner. I had to fight pretty hard, not to give in to that.

AC: What kind of menopausal symptoms did you have?

AR: Lots! Almost everything in the book, for a while. Some of it dissipated but the hot flushes didn't, and I found those hard. The randomness of those, and the mood swings too, they were the worst things. Only a few fleeting thoughts of violent homicide towards innocent people, thankfully. Mostly it was just being tearful and sad. Lethargic and in a weird kind of 'what's-the-point' stupor, for a lot of the time. Oh, and my waistline disappeared virtually overnight, so all my skirts drifted north to sit under my bustline like some badly-created costume in *Pride and Prejudice*. And my hair morphed into something that looked like it had been dragged along the bottom of a fishing boat keel. I used to have very long hair I could sit on, and at one time it was beautiful. But thanks to the menopause it became a hanging pile of soggy string. I couldn't stand it, so I found a hairdresser that could face it, and had it all cut off.

AC: What was the turning point in your story? How did you right your own rocking boat, and achieve the calm and serenity you seem to have now?

AR: To be honest, it was hard for me to know, at the time, how much of my emotional derangement was down to menopause and how much was caused by all the other stuff that had gone wrong in my life. It was all tied in together, and it felt so complicated, I couldn't even begin to unpick it. I kind of just had to ride it through. But while I was doing that, and taking things sometimes just an hour at a time, I meet my husband, Mark. He's the owner of Ravensdown; the farm that surrounds Teapot Cottage. He invited me to his Christmas party at the farmhouse, and another woman I'd met in the town talked me into going.

AC: And the rest is history?

AR: (laughs) Kind of. It did take us a while to understand how we felt about each other. Neither of us was looking for anything, when we met. Mark was widowed and I was facing divorce, and all we really wanted was a friendship. We started off as friends, and being happy just with that, but it evolved quite quickly into something more, after he had a terrible accident and I realised how important he'd become to me. I adore him, and I'm happier than I once ever thought I could be.

AC: Tell us a little bit more about Mark. He's quite a character, isn't he?

AR: (laughs) He certainly is! He's one in a million. He hails from Lancashire, and he has the broadest and funniest 'Lanky' accent you've ever heard in your life. I couldn't make sense of half of what he was saying, back when I first meet him, but I'm used to him now. Nobody makes me laugh like he does. He's got the most hilarious sense of humour ever, and he's funny without even realising he is. He's also very down to earth. A spade is a spade, and what you see is what you get.

He can be blunt to a cringing fault, but he has a heart of gold and he's a rock to the whole family.

AC: You inherited a step-daughter too, didn't you? Was that tricky, for you?

AR: No, not at all! I actually met Feen first, before I met her father. She's an amazing woman! She's married now with a family of her own, but she was still finding her way, when I met her. She has a lot of unique and very special gifts and talents, and there's a real sweetness and innocence about her. It was Feen who encouraged me to look at life a little differently than I used to, which helped me to adjust to a lot of the changes I was going through at the time.

AC: Can you explain a bit more about that?

AR: Feen's very intuitive and spiritual, and she has a very different way of viewing the world, from how most of us see it. She's very serene and accepting of things, and she's a big believer in vibrational energy; you know, where everything that happens is kind of ethereally connected, in ways that make perfect sense if you can look at the bigger picture? She has explained to me that certain energies exert a certain influence, and how we respond to that influence drives the energy we put back into the world, and it all goes round again. It's all a bit complicated to be trying to explain here, but the way she navigates her way through a world that doesn't understand her, and continually challenges her, is something I've come to admire and appreciate. I've learned so much from her!

AC: Tell us a bit more about Teapot Cottage itself.

AR: Well, it's a very special little place. I got the opportunity to buy it, around the same time as I was realising my feelings for Mark, but I still wanted my independence, in case a relationship with him didn't happen, or didn't last. The cottage was unusually serene, and calming, and I realised that I felt very safe and comfortable there, in a way I'd never felt in my life before, even when I was married to my first husband, with the kids, and we were all practically and financially well-settled, and everything. That was a pretty stable life, and I never had cause to doubt it, until things changed. But Teapot Cottage gave me a *different* kind of peace. It's impossible to describe, actually, other than to say that it wasn't something I knew I'd even needed, or for how long, until I was there and I felt it.

AC: So, something slotted into place for you, while you were there. Can you tell us what that felt like, and whether it influenced your decision to buy the cottage?

AR: I suppose the best way to describe it was I felt like I'd come home after a long journey. The people of Torley were also very welcoming to me at a time when I needed solace and shelter from the crap I was going through. They seemed to be a lot more genuine than the ones I knew in Guildford. I knew I needed a fresh start, so when the cottage came onto the market, and I found myself in a position to buy it, it just felt like the *obvious* thing to do. It's an incredibly special little place, and not just for me, but for a lot of other people too.

AC: In what way is it special for others?

AR: It seems to attract people who are suffering from trauma or serious upheaval of different kinds. Feen describes it as having its own special healing vibrational energy, and over time I've come to believe that, because so many people have

said that staying there has given them a sense of real peace and healing, and they usually leave with a greater sense of strength or direction.

AC: And since you experienced healing there yourself, do you think you were the catalyst, or was the energy already there?

AR: I think it was already there. The couple I bought it from were incredibly chilled-out, happy people, and they absolutely hated to sell it. Family circumstances forced them to, but it was the last thing they wanted. From the minute I walked into the place, I felt something change within myself, in a way that hadn't seemed possible, even just the day before.

AC: Do you think you were one of the people that was 'drawn' to Teapot Cottage?

AR: Looking back on it, I do think so, yes. I was in absolute turmoil, on every level in my life. I was literally overflowing with negativity, but it didn't take long for that to change, after I arrived there. I don't think it would have changed if I'd stayed put in Guildford, wallowing in my own grief and self-pity. I'd never house-sat in my life before, never had a Christmas all alone before. Going to Teapot Cottage changed everything for me. The house was the definitely catalyst for me, not the other way around.

AC: So it's a *magic* cottage?

AR: No, I don't believe in magic, per se, but thanks to my amazing step-daughter I believe in *energy*, and that's what the cottage has; the kind of energy that heals people. (Laughs); at one time I would never have said anything like that, but it's happened too many times now, with too many people, for me to keep being sceptical about it. It's pretty hard to argue with what's in front of your face. No point in saying black is blue. I'm just profoundly grateful that my lovely little house helps so many people in the way it does.

AC: So what's next, for you?

AR: Well, Mark and I usually have at least one holiday planned, at any given time, but aside from that, things are just ticking along as always. I feel quite content nowadays. There's no great urge to shake things up, or do something huge. A lot of the people who used to know me would probably say I've turned into a boring housewife, but I think I'm probably a lot happier and a lot more occupied with meaningful things than some of them are!

AC: You don't sound like a boring housewife to me, Adie. Far from it!

AR: Well, I couldn't be, even if I wanted to. Life around here is anything but boring. There's always a lot going on. Some of the cottage tenants are fascinating people, and I've been amazed at how many have actually decided to stay in this area, as part of rebuilding their lives. Some of those have become good friends in the process, and that just keeps on happening! My life is constantly being inspired and enriched by the most amazing people who drift into it, thanks to the cottage! The farm is interesting, too. Like most farms, no two days are ever the same around here, and we never run out of things to do. There's no such thing as having time to be bored, but I wouldn't change that.

AC: It sounds like you've found your feet again, after a rocky time. What do you think was the biggest factor, in helping you to pull everything back together?

AR: I think it's the combination of everything. Finding love again, after thinking it wouldn't happen. Being able to experience the beautiful energy of Teapot Cottage, and being able to offer it to others who need it. Getting a handle on the menopause, rather than having it shake me by the tail all the time. Having my family back together after shocks that blew us all apart for a while. Good friends that I can trust. Grandchildren who entertain and enrich me. All of those things are important, and it all makes for a very rich life on all levels. As for 'what's next,' well, I guess I'll have to wait and see, but there's always something, that comes along and challenges or delights us, isn't there? How we respond to it, or how we let it affect us; that's what keeps life interesting.

AC: Can you tell us a bit about some of the other businesswomen in Torley, and what they are doing?

AR: There are quite a few, especially in retail! There's Peggy Tripper, who runs Ye Olde Torley Tea Shoppe. Trudie Sangster has the GladRagz Boutique, Cat Marshall has the fish and chip shop Cat's Fish, and Maddie Murphy runs Torley Tresses, one of the local hairdressers. We also have Fiona Frost, who has the florist shop Heavenly Blooms, and Carla Walton who restores old furniture. She has a beautiful shop in the High Street, simply called Carla's. That's just to name a few. Other women in the town work from home, like Barbara deSoto, who operates a travel agency, Ravinder Kaur, a virtual assistant, and Emily Marley who runs a small domestic cleaning agency.

AC: Wow! That's a lot of female enterprise for one small town! What do you think it is, that makes them all successful?

AR: They just seem to have that spirit, I think. The location is lovely for people who want a slower pace of life, but still want the kind of challenge that running a business can offer them. The town is very supportive of all its local businesses with a real commitment to protecting and maintaining the infrastructure, and everyone wants everyone else to do well, which seems to be quite rare these days. There's a solid community spirit here, and I do think that women tend to be at the heart of most communities.

AC: Do you have any advice for older women who want to make a positive change in their lives, Adie? Something you wish you'd known yourself, a long time ago?

AR: I think the best advice I can offer is don't try to control everything, but don't let everything control *you*. Keep looking for the balance. Listen to your intuition, trust yourself, and take an opportunity that feels right. Being open to possibilities can take you to the most extraordinary places. Don't be afraid. Be fearless. Tap into the incredible power you have inside you to be, and do, and have what you want in this life. In some ways I do wish I'd known all of that a long time ago, but there again, we're all who we are because of our history, aren't we? That's what's shaped us. I'm no philosopher, but I wonder if maybe we all have to get to where we are now, having gone through what we have, for the next step to be the right one going forward. I do think it's never too late to change things for the better. We all deserve to be happy. We all have just have to find the courage to do it.

AC: Would you say that Teapot Cottage gave you your courage?

AR: No. Like everyone else, I already had the courage I needed, inside myself. But Teapot Cottage helped me find it. That's what good energy does. It helps you find

and be a better version of yourself. Being open to good energy changes everything.

AC: Adie, thanks so much for taking the time to chat today, and for being our 'Inspiring Woman of the Week.' It's a title that you fully deserve. It's been fascinating, to find out a little bit about you, and gain some insight about your journey. And, of course, to know about what some of the other women in your town are doing!

AR: You know, all women in our age group have a long and interesting story, but so many of us start to feel invisible as we get older; like nobody sees us as relevant anymore. It's nice to have the chance to share our stories and our wisdom with people who want to listen. I'm grateful for the opportunity, so thank you for having me.

AC: Mature women do have a lot to offer. I couldn't agree more! This series helps some of them to use their voices, and it's always a privilege to hear them. Thanks again, Adie.

Well, listeners – next week's 'Inspiring Woman of the Week' will be announced first thing tomorrow morning, at the beginning of the Breakfast Show. In the meantime, we hope you've enjoyed my chat with Adrienne Raven, and if you know an Inspiring Woman you think we should be talking to, who's story should be heard by us all, please email us here at the station to let us know.