

A BSB Interview With C.J. Harte

by Connie Ward, Bold Strokes Books Consulting Publicist

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What made you decide to become a fiction writer?

I've always loved to read. My mother loved to tell about me about reading the newspaper for her while she cooked when I was four. Since then I have always had a book in my hand. I then began to make up my own stories about the characters. By the time I was in high school I was writing plays for my 9th grade civics class. I've never stopped writing.

What type of stories do you write? And why?

I love writing romance stories.

First, I am a hopeless romantic. Second, romance stories offer us hope and confirmation about our lives. When I was growing up, and even as a woman in my 20's, there were very few positive images of romance for the GLBT community. (In fact, the term GLBT didn't exist). I remember reading *Patience and Sarah* and being so excited. I continued to look for more positive books. When Barbara Grier and Donna McBride opened Naiad Press, I thought I had died and gone to heaven. When they moved their bookstore to Florida, I knew I was in heaven. I started writing short stories, poetry, getting some things published. All the while, I continue to believe in romance and our right to love.

What do your family/friends think about your writing?

They are excited and proud. My family, however, is proudest that I stayed in school long enough to complete my doctorate—finally. They were certain I was a professional student. People who have known me a long time are both amazed and embarrassed. It's hard to look your friend in the eye after reading a particularly erotic chapter that friend has written. We laugh a lot about that.

Where do you get your ideas?

Lots of places. Sometimes I see a movie, read a book, read a story in the newspaper and wonder, *What if...?* I now have a writing file with lots of story ideas, characters, etc. Enough for a lifetime.

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How do you write; do you plan everything out or just write?

I've tried outlining stories chapter by chapter and find that I lose interest. Had the same problem with my dissertation. Once the research was done, I had my answer to the question. I had to force myself to write—not fun. I like to spend time with my characters and story, working through basic plot and personalities before I start writing. I always go through each chapter at least twice—once as one of the major characters and then again as the other. It helps me to be truer to the characters.

What makes *Dreams of Bali* special to you?

I particularly like the way each character has to move out of her own comfort zone in order to explore the possibilities of a relationship. Madison and Karlie are forced to reexamine their preconceived notions and attitudes about each other. I particularly loved writing the conversations between the two of them when they would revert to their old verbal bomb throwing.

How much of yourself and the people you know are in your characters?

There are some characters I am more comfortable writing about so I know they reflect who I am. At the same time, I may notice a particular characteristic about a person and allow my fertile imagination to wander off. In my next book, one character began as I watched a woman interpreting music for a GALA chorus. Her hands were fascinating. Those hands are what first attract one of the main characters in *Magic of the Heart* (being released January, 2010).

Which lesbian authors inspired you the most? Do you have a favorite of this author(s)?

Katherine Forrest—*An Emergence of Green*; Rita Mae Brown—*Rubyfruit Jungle* (after all, we both went to Univ Florida); Radclyffe—because of the diversity of the stories she writes; Sarah Dreher—*Stoner McTavish* (set in the beautiful Tetons, WY); VK Powell—*To Protect and Serve*; Catherine Friend—all her work; Jennifer Knight—under whatever name she writes (these were some of my earliest finds); Cliffl Henderson—what a wonderful sense of humor in *The Middle of Somewhere*. There are so many wonderful authors that I am beginning to explore, thanks to Bold Strokes Books. What a great group of writers. Two other authors that I admire are Toni Morrison, especially *Beloved*, and Maya Angelou (*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*). I also appreciate Maya Angelou's willingness to stand up for the GLBT community.

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Do you have any suggestions for new writers?

A friend, Sallie Ann Harrison, once was encouraged to write by Rita Mae Brown, who gave the perfect advice: Read Read Read Write Write Write.

When you're not writing what do you do for fun?

I spend time with friends, take my four-legged babies up to the mountains, travel, and keep my family close. And read, read, read.



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