

A BSB Interview With Clara Nipper

by Connie Ward, Bold Strokes Books Consulting Publicist

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What made you decide to become a fiction writer?

- a. Super-model trophy wife was already taken.
- b. To quote Clarissa Pinkola Estes, stories are medicine. Early in my life, I discovered my voracious, insatiable appetite for good stories. Stories are at the very root of life. Our humanness is indistinguishable from storytelling. Stories entertain, comfort, guide, and educate, and are as necessary as breath. So I am honored to participate in my own obscure, forgettable way.
- c. As a child, I was deeply involved in stories, writing gibberish in the margins of adult books years before I could read. At age eight I wrote my first long story, called *Suddenly*, which was an action-adventure tale about a transmogrifying gerbil

What type of stories do you write? And why?

To be blunt, I don't understand one thing about people; they absolutely mystify me. So whatever I write, I make the story character-driven as part of my ongoing investigation into what makes people act as they do.

What do your family/friends think about your writing?

- a. I don't know; they won't return my calls.
- b. They're supremely jealous of my fame and wealth.
- c. Those left alive are so supportive, they make me feel guilty.

Where do you get your ideas?

From insignificant experiences and brainstorming. Such as, why would a woman wear white open-toed sandals with reinforced pantyhose in winter? I begin to wonder what sort of person you would be to make those choices—to look at those sandals in the middle of January and say “yes”—and if you're that sort of woman, then what else would you do and say? What would a character like that do if her spouse was cheating? Or if she needed money fast? What wakes her up in the middle of the night? And so on.

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

I just show up with a pen and tablet of paper and write what comes.

What makes *Femme Noir* special to you?

Because it was so much fun to write. It is tacky to laugh at one's own jokes, but while I was writing the manuscript in the privacy of my own home, I laughed myself silly and did a lot of kegels to keep from squirting.

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

- a. I cannot comment on this due to the multiple pending lawsuits.
- b. Only aspects. I will take a hairstyle here, a habit there. I only wish I knew Nora in person, but I'm sure I'm not cool enough to be her friend.

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

Carson McCullers, Jeannette Winterson, Nicola Griffith, and Sarah Waters. My favorite of Sarah Waters' is *Affinity*.

Do you have any suggestions for new writers?

If anything can stop you, let it.

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

To "do things for fun" is too much pressure for me. I am only comfortable with non-stop work, and if fun accidentally occurs along the way, that's fine. When I am not writing, I ride my bicycle to and from my day job; I do daily yoga; I am a fanatic for gardening (my particular passion is landscaping for wildlife habitats); I sing in a local women's choir, "Sisters in Song"; I volunteer at the library and for PFLAG and for the local farmers' market; I make all the candy for my sideline business, Andy's Candies (www.andyscandies.org); I'm considering joining a women's roller-derby team; and, of course, I read. With any time left over, I shop for shoes and try to straighten my hair.



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