

Write What Inspires You! Newsletter

July 2009
Volume 2, Issue 7

Donna M. McDine
Children's Author



Welcome to the July issue of my FREE newsletter: Write What Inspires You!

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The official start of summer vacation has begun today in my household. The students in Rockland County had their last day of school on Friday, June 26th and the weather is finally beginning to cooperate. We have had consistent rain for the last 4-5 weeks and it was becoming quite gloomy. I hope the weather in your neck of the woods has been pleasant and is inspiring you to get out there for a much needed break. Whether it be a walk, jog, or curling up with your favorite book in the sunshine. Don't forget to take along a handheld tape recorder or the good old pen and paper, you never know when inspiration will strike.

Best wishes for a fun filled and safe summer!

It is my pleasure to present to you interviews with authors Karin Larson, Katie Hines, and Kristi Holl; and illustrator Laura Redmond. Don't miss the goodies in the columns: Book Reviews, Reflections and Dreams by Roy McDine, Virtual Book Tours, and Sponsor Ads.

If you are interested, please feel free to submit your name for an interview, an essay and/or your successes to: dmc dine@optonline.net

Please share this newsletter with your peers in the writing industry and encourage them to opt-in as a monthly subscriber.

Here's to your inspiration and continued success!

Donna

Quote of the Month:

"In most cases the road to publication is long. But don't concentrate on getting published. Concentrate on writing the best work you are capable of. Expect rejection. Welcome revision. When you send a manuscript out, begin something new."

~ Anonymous

AUTHOR INTERVIEW – KARIN LARSON

Karin and I had the pleasure of being introduced by Gayle Jacobson-Huset early on in our writing careers when she placed us in the same critique group. It amazes me how quickly time has gone. It has already been 2 ½ years. Phew! And Karin's writing career is progressing terrific, with many successes along the way and of course the balancing act of wife, mother, daughter, sister, and friend. Come along and meet this dynamic author.

DMc: What or whom inspired you to start writing for children?

KL: I've loved to read and write for as long as I remember. I was an avid fan of both Judy Blume and the Nancy Drew mysteries as a young girl. I loved to lose myself in a story and started dreaming then of writing a book one day. I completed my first course at the Institute of Children's Literature in 2001 or 2002 and, while stories and articles for magazines are where I've enjoyed publishing success, it is still my dream to write children's books.

DMc: What is the most valuable piece of writing advice you have ever received?

KL: Just do it. Sit, butt in chair, and write. And it is true! I've found that it is only in persevering that one can hope to finish a project—whether in writing or anything else in life.

DMc: What has been your most memorable experience in your writing career?

KL: A couple things come immediately to mind. First and foremost, it would have to be receiving news of my first acceptance. I remember just staring at the check in amazement when it came, not even sure I wanted to cash it for fear it would make it less real somehow. Second, I was a few years in to my writing career and was really struggling to make a go of it. My children were very small at that point, and I was frustrated with the dreaded lack of time and sleep. It was hit and miss with my writing let alone submitting. One day, I decided to try to get focused and submitted a manuscript to an editor who has become very near and dear to my heart. She was instrumental in my life and really made me take stock in what I was doing and why. She gave me the courage and confidence to look at this as a career not a hobby, and I really credit her with jump starting my writing life. For those of you out there who have met or had the good fortune to work with Gayle at Stories for Children, you know exactly what I mean!

DMc: Are you a disciplined writer?

KL: I'm working on it! Like many, I struggle with the household messes and necessary chores that get put off while it is my writing time. My youngest is in his final year of preschool and goes to school every afternoon. I am—most days!—very focused and disciplined during those times. I have been working on Margie Lawson's Lecture Series, Defeating Self-Defeating Behaviors, and have a fabulous Change Coach who keeps me on track! I am hoping to be far more disciplined next year with my kids all in school the entire day.

DMc: What kind of obstacles or challenges have you experienced as a children's writer?

KL: My biggest obstacle is probably just my own perfectionistic analness that thinks everything has to be done and just so around the house before I can do what I need to do. As the kids have gotten older, I have tried to really separate out writing time versus family time. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't. I will say that I am getting much better at embracing the dust bunnies that keeping popping up around here☺

DMc: Please share with us your experience of querying to getting an acceptance with Nature Friend Magazine.

KL: I was taking the advanced writing program at the ICL, Beyond the Basics, during the time our city and surrounding area got nailed with a major ice storm in November 2005. We were without power for 11 days. The writer in me saw an opportunity, and I worked on an article for assignments 6 and 7 of that class. The article eventually became "Freeze Point," and I submitted it to Kevin Shank, editor of Nature Friend Magazine, on May 30, 2007. I then received a letter, dated August 18, 2007, stating he was holding my manuscript for possible use. It further said that I could submit it to other publishers if it had not been chosen for use within one year of the date of the letter. Since I had not heard from him again, I sent a status check the following September and received an email early October in return stating he was hoping to use my article in the December issue of Nature Friend. They also wanted me to do some additional editing on the activity I had submitted with the original manuscript to make it more of a "Learning by Doing" activity. He was very specific in what he wanted, and we were under the gun time wise to get it all to the printer. I conducted some experiments myself—under the scrutiny of my 11 year old!—and wrote the activity accordingly. I received a check and complimentary copy of the magazine in early December!

DMc: Two of your children are published writers. How has your experience and success influenced your children?

KL: The girls have always been excited by both my writing and publishing credits. The first time they saw my name on a byline really made them realize I am doing more than just sitting here working on the computer☺ I think the successes I have had, as well as their own, have really validated that part of them that loves to read and write as well. Halle, my oldest, has had a story and a poem published at SFC as well as a poem written at school that was accepted and published in the 2008 edition of the Anthology of Poetry by Young Americans. Avery, my middle child, has a story that will be in the April issue of SFC. I am very proud of them, and it has been a lot of fun to share this with them.

DMc: If you were not a writer, what would you be?

KL: That is a good question! I have a Masters Degree in Speech/Language Pathology, so I suppose I would be back working in that arena. I have actually been approached about doing just that this Fall since my kids will all be in school. I am hoping to put that off a bit and

take a year to really focus and produce a book length manuscript—of publishable quality, of course!—to justify staying home and pursuing my dream.

DMc: What do you find to be the most difficult aspect of balancing your writing career with motherhood?

KL: It is an ongoing balancing act. Most difficult is probably that pesky feeling of guilt that gnaws at the outer surface of my brain with feelings of taking time away from the kids or always reminding me of what else needs to be done around the house. I just try to battle through those times, quiet the voice and know that I can only do so much. I am a much better mommy and wife if I've gotten in my writing time for the day. A solid prayer for the ability to balance it all doesn't hurt either!

DMc: A signature request I like to ask every author, illustrator, editor, etc., I interview is for the individual to share with us a tidbit from their lives that the reader will find either humorous or surprising. Karin, can you please share one with us?

KL: Hmm...I shouldn't admit this but, despite all the good books out there, I still love a really good smut book, like Butterfly (many moons ago, and I can't even remember the author) or Jackie Collins and would LOVE to write one someday☺

Thanks so much, Donna! Write What Inspires You is a terrific newsletter. You are doing a great job with it.

Visit Karin Larson today at: <http://www.karin-larson.blogspot.com>

AUTHOR INTERVIEW – KATIE HINES

The Internet has certainly made the world a smaller place and it provides the opportunity to meet people we wouldn't normally meet. Katie and I have been traveling in the same cyber space writing hallways and have had the privilege of getting to know each other more and more each day. Katie's book, Guardian is due to be released in the coming months and she took the time out of her busy schedule to chat with me about her writing career. The first part of Katie's interview was featured on my blog – <http://www.donna-mcdine.blogspot.com>, but I'm including the complete interview below. Sit back, grab a beverage and enjoy learning more about this dynamic author. I know I did and continue to do so.

DMc: Katie, you had several poems published in high school and then shelved your writing to raise your family. Did you always know you would go back to writing when time allowed?

KH: No, I didn't. At the time, I didn't realize how hard it is to get a book published the traditional route. When the editor of the anthology approached me about my poems, I was surprised, but not as elated as I would be now!

DMc: Your writing career is quite diverse. Please share with us how your articles are planned out for your feature writer and columnist position.

KH: I have a cushy position with the newspaper. I write the articles of my choice, and he publishes them in the local paper. To be honest, I have pretty much set my article writing aside in order to work on marketing and promotional plans for my middle grade urban fantasy, *Guardian*.

DMc: Your novel *Guardian* is due to be released July/August by 4RV Publishing. Please describe to us the process you went through from the time your manuscript was accepted to publication.

KH: First of all, there was the huge high I got when I was notified my manuscript was accepted by the publisher. Then I got the contract (which I read carefully, as everyone should), and signed it and returned it to the publisher. Another huge high then! This was October 2008.

Next, I received a copy of the book cover from the illustrator via the publishing company. I have to admit it is a really awesome book cover. Diana did such a great job with it. For Christmas that year, my husband printed out copies of the book cover and copied the signature page of the contract and framed them for me. They now grace my wall in my office!

In December, I began working on marketing and promotional work. I struggled to create a meaningful media kit, but had good writer friends who helped me with that. I also began a blog. I should be creating a website, but I haven't gotten to it yet.

I also joined several social networking sites, but use Twitter and Facebook most often. I belong to some .ning groups that I feel might have any sort of connection to a theme in *Guardian*.

A couple of weeks ago, I got the edit from the publisher, with changes to be made as indicated. That took me a couple of weeks, and I sent it back to them earlier this week.

That brings me to now. Apparently, they're doing the layout of the book, and will get back to me to work with them about hyphenated nouns and widow and orphan control.

The final step, I believe, is to actually get the book in my hot little hands.

Q: I have heard many times over authors need to be actively involved in marketing their novel. What actions have you set in place to build the momentum of *Guardian*?

Katie: I pretty much signed up with social networking groups, and created a media kit. That media kit is really important because it can be sent to all sorts of people: local newspapers, libraries, book stores blog tour hosts, etc.

I also wrote to various writer friends who had already been through blog book tours and marketing, picking their brains for good ideas, and what strategies worked and which ones didn't and why.

Additionally, I have ordered business cards. Plan to order some bookmarks, postcards, some posters of the awesome book cover. I'd also like to get some book bags made with the cover on it, as well as t-shirts for my family to wear advertising the book. Maybe even ball caps.

Q: All writers have different creative processes. Do you work off an outline or do you write straight from your heart and thoughts?

Katie: I've done both. I don't like outlines, because it seems I always deviate from them. That said, I use an outline for my middle grade books because I want to know how I'm going to get to the end of the book (which I always have figured out ahead of time.) I have a young adult novel that I am writing that uses an outline, but a few chapter books that don't. The young adult novel, I write from an outline, but only in the general sense. That book is mostly from the heart.

DMc: What is the best writing advice you've ever received?

KH: Oh, my goodness. I've gotten so much. I think though, that it is to write what is in your heart to write, to write your own story. Too often, writers try to emulate someone else's style and voice. When I write what is in my heart, then it comes out with my own unique style and voice. And, ultimately that's what publishers are looking for: novels written in a unique style and voice.

DMc: Have you ever suffered from writers block? If yes, what works for you to break through it?

KH: Yes. I was about halfway through *Guardian*, and I couldn't figure out what to write next. So, armed with pencil and paper, my husband and I went to an internet cafe and brainstormed. He has some marvelously creative ideas. I either use them as a springboard, or adopt some variation on his thoughts. It's a good way to do it, and I've already been brainstorming about various parts of my next book, "*Glassblower*."

DMc: Please share with us your current W-I-P (works-in-progress).

KH: Okay. I have begun a series of chapter books based on "*Grandma Helga*." She's a marvelous old lady who likes to drive Dodge Vipers, visit her grandkids, and have her false teeth take a walk in the middle of the night. Those are fun books to write. As I mentioned before, I am working on another middle grade urban fantasy that is in the infancy stages. I have a lot more thinking to do about it. Finally, I have a young adult novel entitled, "*My Name is Bib*" about a teen whose sister was murdered.

DMc: A signature request I like to ask every author, illustrator, editor, etc., I interview is for the individual to share with us a tidbit from their lives that the reader will find either humorous or surprising. Katie, please share one with us?

KH: When I was first married those 23 years ago, my husband and I went to Virginia Beach from Tulsa, to visit with his family and friends. I'd never visited the Atlantic Ocean before.

We were driving in the area, when there was a sign “tunnel ahead.” I was confused. Everything surrounding us was flat. It did not occur to me that we were going into an underground tunnel! It was disconcerting, to say the least. But I made it, and have gone through others since.

Also, don't forget to visit Write What Inspires You blog - <http://www.donna-mcdine.blogspot.com> on July 20th to learn more about Katie and read the synopsis of Guardian.

Visit Katie Hines at: <http://katiehines.blogspot.com>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/people/Katie-Hines/1442953493>

Follow me on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/katiehines>

AUTHOR INTERVIEW – KRISTI HOLL

I first became aware of Kristi Holl through her book, *Writer's First Aid ~ Getting Organized, Getting Inspired, and Sticking to It*, when I enrolled in a writing course at the Institute of Children's Literature. Since then Kristi's book has become my “bible” of sorts. It is earmarked and highlighted to the hilt and I refer to it often. And then I had the wonderful opportunity to meet Kristi and form a personal connection while taking Margie Lawson's course, “Defeating Self-Defeating Behaviors” and we continue to build our bond on a daily basis. Kristi's accomplishments and what she continues to strive for will leave you inspired for your own writing career.

DMc: Kristi, your writing career is simply outstanding. How do you balance your responsibilities of writer, editor, speaker, and ICL instructor?

KH: Like many women writers, it's not the balancing of work that is the biggest challenge for me. I can break up my free time fairly easily into writing time (preferably first in the day), editing and teaching (later in the day), and marketing (including blogging and speaking) where I can fit it in! For me, the difficulty in finding balance among all the responsibilities has to do with family and extended family and church ministries. When I started writing, my children were very small. If I was with them, I felt guilty that I wasn't writing more (like truly “dedicated” writers I read about.) If I was writing, I often felt guilty that I wasn't playing with the kids. These days, if I throw myself into writing and studying and blogging and marketing, then I tend to feel guilty that I'm not babysitting my grandkids more or my husband is eating one more thrown-together supper. (None of them ever complained—it's always my own internal thing.) I remember once that James Dobson said women prioritize according to guilt. I think finding balance between family and writing is 100 times tougher than finding balance within my writing schedule for the necessary roles. But that's just me!

DMc: You have quite the following for your blog, *Writer's First Aid* at <http://institutechildrenslit.net/Writers-First-Aid-blog>. Do you find it difficult to come up with fresh topics?

KH: I have to admit that the following for the blog has surprised me! I had originally hoped to have 500 subscribers someday. As of today (6-25-09) there are over 6,400 subscribers. I know that's small for many writing blogs, but it was much more than I had expected. As for difficulty finding things to write about—that hasn't been an issue so far. I just tackle a writing problem that I'm having myself—procrastination, or writing-related health issues, or writer's block, or cash flow problems, etc.—and I find that others are having the same problems. We're all in this together, regardless of how many years we've been writing. Some things don't change!

DMc: Your background includes elementary school educator. Do you draw from these experiences to develop your writing?

KH: To be honest, I don't think so. I taught such a very short time before I stopped to have children. I probably draw more on my own childhood and my kids' (and now my grandkids) experiences than the teaching.

DMc: Please share with us your series, Boarding School Mysteries. How do you keep each title exciting and different from the previous title?

KH: I've read mysteries all my life, and that probably helps. I must have a thousand mystery plots filed away somewhere in my brain. I also have a shelf full of mystery writing books. Reading those gives me ideas. Writer's Digest Books has a great series that helped a lot too. I don't write murder mysteries for kids, but rely on lesser crimes like theft, arson, kidnapping, and forgery. Books in the WD series include titles like *Deadly Doses*: a writer's guide to poisons, *Modus Operandi*: a writer's guide to how criminals work, *Rip-Off*: a writer's guide to crimes of deception, *Missing Persons*: a writer's guide to finding the lost, the abducted and the escaped, and several other good books. It helps me get the details right. I also own half a dozen "how to write mysteries" writing books which spark ideas when plotting and planting clues. You can watch a book trailer for the new mystery series at my website www.KristiHoll.com or www.BoardingSchoolMysteries.com.

DMc: You also have another series, Faith Girlz Devotions. Please share with us your inspiration behind this much needed series.

KH: The inspiration came from the publishing house this time. Zondervan/Zonderkidz had just started a Faithgirlz imprint for 'tween girls. They had a couple of fiction series lined up, but they wanted a nonfiction devotional series for this age group. The editor there at the time (one I had worked with previously at Tommy Nelson) called and asked if I'd be interested. I was! Even though I had never written nonfiction books, I had published many nonfiction articles. And I had a real desire to reach girls at this critical age. 'Tween girls are making decisions today—sometimes life-threatening decisions—that my own daughters weren't faced with till junior high, and I wasn't faced with till high school and college! Choosing your life values that will influence those decisions and mold your character requires guidance and love—things that many girls aren't getting at home. And of course, the media bombards girls with messages that their value and worth is in how they look, not what they know or who they are inside. The devotional books have sold well since they were published, and thanks to the Internet, I hear from girls around the world through my

website. They write with their problems and ask for advice. It's been more of a ministry than I had expected. The books in the series are *No Boys Allowed*, *Girlz Rock*, *Chick Chat*, *Shine On, Girl!* and *What's a Girl to Do?* These can be seen at www.KristiHoll.com or www.devotions4girls.com.

DMc: What is the best writing advice you ever received?

KH: I took the writing course at the Institute of Children's Literature thirty (gasp!) years ago. My teacher, Dorothy Van Woerkom from Texas, gave me the best advice. I had just switched from writing short stories to trying a book. I'd written the rough draft of the middle grade book very fast, without re-reading anything, as she'd advised me to do. Then I (with great and happy anticipation) sat down to read the rough draft. I cried and cried—I couldn't believe it was that bad. Her advice? "There's nothing so bad that you've written that it can't be fixed and rewritten." Even today, before I re-read rough drafts (or any drafts, for that matter), I always remember her words. Often drafts have looked hopeless to me—I've got one on my shelf right now! But her words always remind me to get busy and "fix it." Writing is, after all, rewriting!

DMc: What advice would you give to the newbie writer? The seasoned writer, experiencing a lag in publications?

KH: Because of the economy right now, most of my writing friends are dealing with the "lag" you mentioned. Publishers seem almost frozen at the moment as they decide how things are going to go. For right now, it seems wise to just keep on keepin' on. By that I mean, continue to write. Continue to hone your craft. Continue to get better and better, day by day. Publishers will open up again. This recession in publishing has happened before. The last time, when the economy shifted, there was a buying frenzy as publishing houses "restocked" on manuscripts. I hope it happens that way again! If and when it does, writers need to be ready with their very best writing. The competition will be stiffer than ever, I expect. Keep in mind that your best writing comes from the heart, from subjects you are passionate about, told in your own voice. These are the kinds of projects editors will want once the buying begins again. So continue to write and finish that book and revise it and let your critique group make suggestions and revise again.

DMc: The publishing industry is ever changing. What do you find to be the most daunting task in creating one's platform?

KH: The most daunting thing is finding the extra time—and not letting the platform building rob you of your writing time. Recently I posted a blog about this called "Time Gobbler" because I'd read a writing article that said to be very careful and not let the marketing online steal your writing time. Their "rule of thumb" was to market only one hour for every two hours that you spend writing. That sounds like a lot of marketing, I know, but it entails things like reading guidelines at websites, studying online markets, blogging, sending e-queries, marketing through Amazon.com profiles and things like Facebook, working on your website, writing a newsletter, participating in a blog tour, etc. Unless you (I) limit the time spent on such activities, it can take over the writing time. And, as you and I figured out when taking the Margie Lawson course on "Defeating Self-Defeating Behaviors," we needed

to write first before even getting online—or somehow the book writing got shuffled to the side and out of sight. I still find that a challenge!

DMc: What was your greatest obstacle in getting your first manuscript published?

KH: I started with short stories, and the rejections were the hardest. I got thirty of them before I turned to nonfiction and sold my first 500-word article for a whopping ten dollars. But with the first book, I don't recall many obstacles! Remember that this was in the early 80s though. I didn't have Internet, I lived on an Iowa farm with four little kids, and was very isolated. I'd never been to a writing conference. The only writer I had met (through the mail only) was my writing instructor for ICL, and she believed in me. I didn't know enough to be daunted. In my personal life people advised me to get "a real job" and repeatedly told me I couldn't make a living as a writer. But my husband was encouraging, and my ICL instructor believed in me. (I dedicated my first book to Dorothy for that reason. She was the perfect blend of teacher and encourager.) I think it was a case of "ignorance is bliss." So I studied book catalogues as I'd been taught, chose ten publishers I liked, and began submitting through snail mail, one publisher at a time. Atheneum bought that first novel, and they also bought my next ten hard covers. I even had the same editor for all eleven books, something almost unheard of now. I'm glad, in retrospect, that I didn't have a critique group or anything. I had such a thin skin back then that I might never have finished the book after being criticized. The first critique I got of the book was from the Atheneum editor—and it was daunting! But I remembered my ICL instructor's advice and started fixing right away.

DMc: A signature request I like to ask every author, illustrator, editor, etc., I interview is for the individual to share with us a tidbit from their lives that the reader will find either humorous or surprising. Kristi, please share one with us.

KH: I was a closet writer. As a child, I wrote in the closet in my bedroom to get away from my little sister. I wrote a sequel to LITTLE WOMEN in that closet called FOUR SISTERS (mostly because I didn't want the book to end). My first "office" as a young mom and ICL student was also a closet in that Iowa farmhouse. I painted the walls and ceiling orange to brighten it up. One of my favorite pictures is of me sitting in that orange closet, typing on my husband's old college typewriter. I wrote my first five published novels in that closet. I like cozy spaces!

To learn more about Kristi Holl's writing career visit:

Kristi's web site at www.KristiHoll.com

Writer's First Aid blog at <http://institutechildrenslit.net/Writers-First-Aid-blog>

New mystery series at www.BoardingSchoolMysteries.com

Girls Connecting with God web site at www.devotions4girls.com

What's a Girl To Do? blog at www.devotions4girls.blogspot.com

ILLUSTRATOR INTERVIEW - LAURA REDMOND

Laura and I first met through JacketFlap. She creates a wide range of images, Fantasy, Monsters, Dragons, Witches, Egyptian, Native American, landscape and Spiritual, not all for children. Laura has sold many images in prints and is now looking to do illustration for books. Laura's artistic abilities are breathtaking and worth a look see. But first enjoy learning more about Laura through her interview.

DMc: What inspires you as you begin a new project?

LR: I would say the best way to describe what inspires me when I create any type of image, is simply imagination and what visuals I pick up from a story.

DMc: Was there a person from your childhood who encouraged you to pursue your artistic talent?

LR: My Father was a great inspiration to me when I was a child and he still is today. I will always remember the funny little stories he would come up with, from nowhere. But there's one in particular that will always stay in my memory. When he was a young man he lost a thumb and badly damaged three fingers on his hand. My sister and I soon became aware of this as we grew, understanding that Dads hand wasn't the same as ours. He told us a fantastical tale of when he was in the Jungle. Wow! He fought Crocodiles, Lions, Tigers, he swung from vines and he helped Tarzan Lord of the Jungle keep the peace there. One day he said, he lost his thumb whilst wrestling with a Crocodile, rolling and rolling in the water. He won of course, and the Croc wandered off back into the Jungle never to be seen again! Then when we were older, my Father would play classical music and he would ask us to draw how the music made us feel. Both of my parents have wonderful artistic skills and drew little fairies, Santa, Elves etc for us to copy and color in.

DMc: What was the best piece of advice you received when you started your career as an illustrator?

LR: I would say the best 'pieces' of advice I have ever had is, never stop listening to your imagination. Also don't feel discouraged if you get a Publishers/Agents letter saying 'Unfortunately we do not feel we can represent you at this time!' Never stop trying to get your name out there. And it's a good idea to get a Gallery website.

DMc: Who are some of your favorite children's illustrators?

LR: I am afraid I don't have one particular favorite Illustrator. The style I do like though is whimsical, fantasy, magical.

DMc: Please describe your path to success in becoming an artist? Where there any particular obstacles that you needed to overcome?

LR: I have always had a creative eye and a very overactive imagination, which helps a great deal! At school and college I worked hard to get the levels I wanted. It wasn't until I

became older, married and with children I started messing around with Art programs like PSP and PS a totally different media than I had been used to. So overcoming that was a challenge in its self. Once I had mastered that, I desperately wanted to create images that looked real, but weren't, like the 3D images I create today. I have to say, if I hadn't have had help with certain things in that program, I t would have taken me a teeny weenie bit longer to perfect!

DMc: How long have you been working as a freelance artist and illustrator?

LR: I have been an artist, and actually selling my images on Canvas Prints, framed Prints and cards, T shirts, mugs, mouse mats etc, for a good few years now. I have had so many people informing me I should really be in the Illustration business for a long time, and now I am branching out. And loving ever minute of it too!

DMc: Do you have a favorite [medium](#) or style?

LR: I have used most media in the past Oils, Acrylics, Pencil etc. But I particularly like 3D imagery, it's most fascinating, I am able to create just about any scene I like, of course after that, the image I have created then goes into other programs such and Photoshop or Painter X for the final touches. And at least it's not a messy media either.

DMc: How long does it take to illustrate a picture book?

LR: It's hard to say just how long to takes to create a picture book, since it depends on the amount of Illustrations and what size they need to be.

DMc: Please describe the collaboration involved between you, the publisher, and the author.

LR: Being quite new to the Illustration business, I find collaborating with Publishers and Authors very helpful. I am learning quickly of the pricing structures and exactly what they expect from an Illustrator, and also what I should expect too.

DMc: Do you conduct school visits? If so, how is a typical visit structured?

LR: I help out sometimes with the local school that my children attend. I made a visit to a nursery school once, and we talked about the collection of crystals I have. I asked them to think of colors and I would select a stone to match, we talked about what else they could think of that was of the some colors. As yet I haven't made a visit on Art work alone.

Thank you Donna for giving me the chance to be interviewed, I thoroughly enjoyed writing it. Best wishes Laura.

Visit Laura Redmond at: <http://www.jacketflap.com/profile.asp?member=dawnsky>

BOOK REVIEWS



Title: Boarding School Mysteries Finding Tracks
Written by: Kristi Holl
Illustrated by: Bruce Emmett
Ages: 9-12
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Reviewed by: Donna M. McDine

REFLECTIONS OR DREAMS

Title: Just a Bad Dream

Author: Roy McDine

I went to bed more tired than I had been for weeks. After a few moments I soon was drifting into a peaceful slumber.

I became fidgety and felt the need to turn over; as I did I noticed the curtains flapping from a strong breeze blowing in. Much to my displeasure I decided it would be best to close the window to allow me to sleep undisturbed, but as I tried to remove the duvet from me an intense pressure seemed to trap me. As much as I pushed the laden cover it would not move, causing me to swear in rage "Get off me whatever you are for Christ's sake".

From my hurl of abuse the duvet became limp and as light as normal. I sat up and got my breath back, my heart was pounding and I felt a cold shiver run through me like icy fingers down my spine.

Moments later I slipped out of bed and closed the window, the curtains dropped and all became silent again. 'What had been holding me down?' I thought, 'What had entombed me in my own bed?'

I decided to make myself a hot drink to help settle me and went downstairs to the kitchen. I put on just the hall light so as not to wake my dog Louie or wife Sue, who had slept soundly through my ordeal.

As the kettle boiled, I wondered whether I had been dreaming or whether some strange force had pinned me down. Surely it was all a dream, my tiredness playing tricks with my consciousness. The hot chocolate was made and I took it into the lounge to relax myself quietly before attempting to get back into bed and asleep. The TV set was still on, yet no sound was coming from the set. I could not even remember either of us using the Television earlier that evening, so I thought I had better switch it off right away. Reaching for the remote, I pressed the power button which would not depress; the button felt like it was carved from stone. Nothing seemed to respond on the handset so I stepped over to the TV and switched it off at the mains. Like the remote, the mains switch would not move, even pulling the plug from the wall still would not stop the picture filling the dimly lit room with its images.

I sat back down and finished my drink, there appeared to be some sort of black and white horror movie playing. A dark sinister looking character dressed in a cloak

seemed to be staring back at me from the screen. As much as I tried to avert his evil, penetrating eyes, I had to stare back at him and take in his every move. I felt as if I was being dragged into the very screen itself and my body and soul entered the very world of the horror scene I had so much wanted to avoid. His cold clammy arms stretched out from beneath his cloak and I was powerless to resist his clawing like grip on my torso. He laughed and sank his razor like canines into my neck, with every moment my resistance disappeared and I was once more unable to defend myself.

He raised his head and he caught sight of my small silver cross I wore around my neck, a present I had received as a child and one I never would be without. He screamed as if in mortal pain and dropped me from his grasp. I turned away from him and tried to run but my legs felt like lead and uncoordinated. I knew I had to get out of this world and back into my own, then leaping like a wildcat all suddenly went silent. I was back in the lounge, the television was now blank and all was as if nothing had happened.

I made my way back to bed and slid quietly under the cover. Feeling totally drained and exhausted I fell back into a coma like sleep.

What seemed like only minutes later Sue whispered in my ear, "Morning sleepy head, come on and get dressed or we will both be late for work".

"Oh what a night I have had" I replied, "I had the most realistic nightmare I have ever experienced, "Thank God I am still hear to tell the tale!"

I washed and shaved in silence and as I slipped on my clothes my wife said "I should put a plaster on the two nasty cuts on your neck or you will ruin that shirt."



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