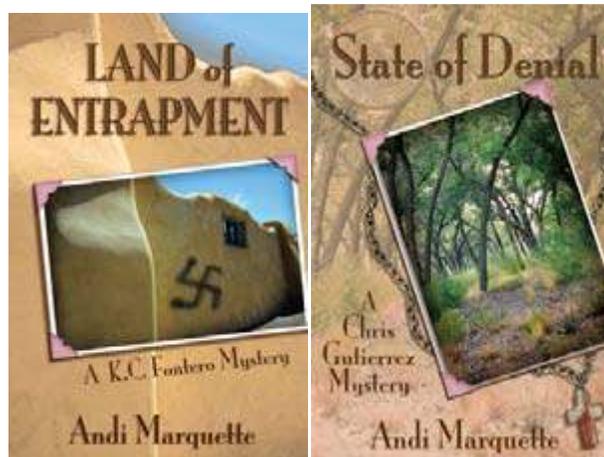


## Andi Marquette revealed at



*Andi was born in Albuquerque and grew up in Colorado. She completed bachelor's and master's degrees in anthropology with an emphasis in archaeology and then pursued a doctorate in history, deciding that the more recent past might prove exciting, as well. While a grad student at the University of New Mexico, she fell into editing and has remained obsessed with words ever since.*

### **Who is Andi Marquette?**

*Andi:* I'm laughing at this because I've spent the past 25 years trying to figure that out! Holy crap, if you have an inkling, please share. I'll buy you a pizza. I did come up with a new acronym for myself recently: LOTFOE. Lesbian On The Fringe Of Everything. I'm one of those "bridge" people (GAWD that makes me sound like a troll in a Grimm's tale)--that is, I run in all kinds of circles (usually the outer edges) and occasionally the boundaries between my varied posses bounce against each other, with me as that link between them. Hence, bridge person.

Beyond the LOTFOE thing, though, I'm a westerner (as in American West) by birth and soul, and

tied more to the strangely spiritual topography and cultures of that region of the country than to any sense of my genealogy's historical underpinnings. I thus was born in the right place, I think, for who I'm turning out to be (which might change...check back next week).

And now for the short answer, since it's getting pretty deep in here: Just another dog-lovin' lesbian westerner outdoorsy writer and editor type who appreciates sunsets, slickrock, river-running, and a nice local brew at the end of a long day. Christ, now I sound a like a personal ad...<g>

**Hey I'll have one of those! Getting back to the "deep" Andi. Talk a bit about your work.**

*Andi:* L-J Baker (whose work I adore) asked me what genre "Land of Entrapment" was, besides kind of a mystery/thriller/romance thang. I told her it's "fluff with an edge." I also wanted to introduce readers to New Mexico, which is the drumbeat of my soul in many ways. So what you'll get when you read one of my NM books (thus far, "Land of Entrapment" and then "State of Denial") is a lot of New Mexico quirkage/history, including lots of Hispano/a culture and issues that have resonance in current life. LoE deals with white supremacists, and State deals with homophobia (internal and external). The third NM book, which is in progress, incorporates quite a bit of Native culture. So hopefully, you'll get a good story with characters you can relate to, but you'll also get a sense of NM's landscapes, the people that inhabit them, and the interweavings of different historical groups that have made the state a crossroads of cultures.

And yes, I do have to research these books. My academic training has proven really useful for writing the kind of fiction I do. Some day I'm going to do some historical fiction, but right now, I'm having a hell of a good time doing "fluff with an edge."

**That is so awesome and inspiring that you know already what each book will be.**

*Andi:* Actually, the characters told me. <G> That freaks people out when I say that... LoE was a story I started thinking about when I finished up my dissertation. "State" grew out of a story I had started about ten years ago. I have a great friend who was a colleague of mine in grad school and she and I used to joke around about how we were going to write a lesfic book together and we had this whole plotline totally figured out--it was this crazy romance between a hippie chick and a chi-chi art gallery chick and my colleague and I would die laughing at the storyline as we planned it (no, that has never come to fruition) but during that time that we were goofing off with this idea, I guess it provided some inspiration because I started mulling a murder mystery that had an element of homophobia to it. I had the first page written (10 years ago) but it wasn't "clicking" and when things don't "click" for me when I write, I just stop and put it aside and go with something that IS clicking. Well, fast-forward a few years and I finished LoE and was thinking about the second book, which I had already determined would star Chris Gutierrez, a secondary character from the first book. And at that point, I realized that Chris's book would be the story I'd started years before and sure enough, it "clicked" this time. I guess it was just waiting for the right character to find me.

Anyway, while I was writing LoE, I had already decided that I was going to do a series of books based in New Mexico and all these ideas started coming up about what kinds of things New Mexicans get all riled up about. Because it's a western state, the big issues are usually water, land, and people. And because of New Mexico's past, the issues express themselves through tensions between "old" and "new" and between different cultural groups.

However, there are issues that affect New Mexicans that also affect other people in this country. White supremacist groups, for example. Homophobia. These are the big issues that LoE and "State" deal with. I'm interested in how bigger issues affect small regions, and how the peculiar historical and cultural nuances of a specific place can create different reactions. New Mexico, because it is part and parcel of who I am, seemed the most logical place for me to write about because I spent a lot of time there and I just really love it as a place, whether physical or

metaphorical. It's probably the only place I've ever lived that is both real and surreal, with those two things intertwining in really intriguing layers of culture and history. So yeah, it inspires me and I hope that I do it justice through the characters in this series and through my plotlines.

**You certainly love the land and it's reflected in the passionate detailing of your descriptions. I wonder is it because you have all of this information inside that it comes out easier than just making stuff up?**

*Andi:* I'm sure that's a big part of it. All this crap stuffed in my head...and I've always had this weird...um...obsession's too strong a word. Weird fascination, maybe, with the idea of "place." Consequently, I spent a lot of time outside, experiencing various topographies. I learned, from an early age, how to read landscape and what sorts of conditions create certain features. There's no substitute for getting outside and feeling how you and your body react to different landscapes and different weather patterns. And I've always been interested in how people interact with their environments, whether natural or built.

Anthropologically speaking, the history of humans as a species can be tracked through how different groups adapted to the type of environment and climate in which they found themselves. That's still true to a certain extent; we've just developed more options through technology to keep ourselves warm and cool, depending on external conditions. And as an archaeologist, the relationship I had with landscapes became more intimate because I was literally IN the landscape in some instances. I was also blessed with a pretty good sense of direction and internal compass and I don't really get lost, whether I'm in a wilderness or urban setting. A lot of that is simply because I pay attention. I like knowing where I am in relation to features on the land, how those things look from various distances and directions, and how long it takes to get there on foot or by driving. I do that in cities, as well. So, yeah. I like my characters to interact with their surroundings and to be aware of their surroundings and out West--if you've spent any time traveling there or living there--the land is extremely important because there are still vast expanses of unsettled space and it is entirely possible to drive through some areas and not see another vehicle or human-made structure for miles. So you have to know where you are and where you're going or you could run into trouble, especially if the weather's bad.

It's a mixture, thus. I personally love landscape. I love reading books that incorporate settings, whether inside or outside, because I think it really can ground a reader (pun intended) in a place and provide another sense of where the characters are and why they do what they do. That said, I also CREATE landscapes for some of the things I write--especially spec fic. But when I write contemporary fiction and historical fiction, I try to write places I've been so that I can better envision who the characters are. In spec fic, however, all bets are off! Those places I've only visited in my head, so I draw on my experience with climates and earth-bound travels to extrapolate settings in other worlds. But I still do research for that, as well.

**Land of Entrapment's K.C. is such a brilliant literary creation, where did she come from?**

*Andi:* Okay, wait. As in she herself is brilliant? I'll let her know you propped her. She was whining the other day about how I don't appreciate her genius (ungrateful wench! I give 'em life, and THIS is the thanks I get!). K.C. and I have a long history. We started our relationship around 1993, when I moved to New Mexico and I was so desperately homesick for Colorado that I started writing a novel in the wake of a break-up (um, yeah. One of mine). In that novel (handwritten, notebookpaper), K.C. returned to Boulder, Colorado. She was not a sociologist--she was actually an ex-cop in that early incarnation--and she certainly didn't give a rat's ass about white supremacists. Anyway, about halfway through this project, which a good friend of mine and I dubbed "The Bad Lesbian Novel" (BLN), I stopped writing and got caught up in that dang research of my own. I thought about the BLN every now and again, and I liked K.C., but we just weren't ready to commit. K.C. resurfaced in 2006 in "Land of Entrapment" with a Ph.D. in sociology from UNM and the last name "Fontero" and she was now ready to pick up where she left off with me. In LoE her expertise is in political and social movements, especially the white supremacist right. So she does give a rat's ass about them now. K.C. is on a typical

academic track--finishes dissertation, applies for post-docs (post-doctorate work), gets one, and moves to Austin to teach and research at the University of Texas. A post-doc is basically a fellowship where an institution or university pays you to research for a year, two years, or maybe even three. In return, you teach a few classes in your field. But the stipulation is, you generally have to write a book during that post-doc, to prove that you didn't waste it. That's what K.C.'s in the process of doing when her ex shows up to ask for help in locating her sister back in Albuquerque. K.C.'s character is thus based on my own experiences in academia and in research. Her professional interests are also a reflection of my own, and her academic track is probably what mine would have been if the teaching bug had bitten me and I'd gone the traditional academic route. K.C. and I share a perfectionist streak with regard to our work, we both live in our heads quite a bit and we approach the world analytically. She's rather funny, but she's honest about who she is and she admits her shortcomings. She also has people to keep her in line and remind her of who she is and where she's from, something I hope everyone has in their lives. Her family background is different than mine, and her high school experience was much different than mine.

She's driven in terms of her research, she loves teaching and doing the whole academic thing, but she doesn't take herself too seriously. Usually. When she does, it's annoying as hell. In other words, K.C. is the colleague I wish I had when I was slogging through my doctorate. And she's the one I'd co-edit nonfiction anthologies with. K.C. is the one I'd call to ask for her take on something I'm working on, and she's the one I'd ask to assess something I'd written about the right wing. And when she gets too big for her britches, I just pull MY degrees out and tease the crap out of her. Invariably, she pouts and then laughs. She's very down-to-earth and she enjoys hiking, biking, beer, and zombie movies. In case you wondered. <G>

#### **How would you most like readers to respond to *Land of Entrapment*?**

*Andi*: "HOT DAMN THAT ROCKED! Let's buy Andi's next book, read all her stories, and tell all our friends, family, and strangers on the street to do the same!" I sure hope that people enjoy it. I hope they like the characters, get into the dialogue, and get at least a little caught up in the story and where it takes them. And then maybe they'll go to Albuquerque and hang out at the places K.C. and the crew did. I didn't make the restaurants or neighborhoods up, y'all. So...road trip? <g>

#### **Which of your characters has been hardest to write?**

*Andi*: Geez, this is like being in therapy. "So tell me, Andi...how do you feel about your characters? And does this have anything to do with your childhood? Or your mother?" I have characters in stuff that's unpublished (at this point... <cross yer fingers!>) that have been kind of difficult but not because I hated them. Even the characters that aren't so nice I like writing. What makes a character difficult for me is "doing that character justice." So, if we're talking about LoE, the most difficult was Sage Crandall, the photographer. First, she's being filtered mostly through K.C.'s POV, and second, she's a free spirit but also very grounded and I found that hard to capture at first. Sage is not that "woo-woo new-age crystal-chompin' hippie chick" though she has some of those elements to her. She's a really interesting mixture because she grew up in a sort of "frontier" existence outside Sheridan, Wyoming, in a cabin with no running water. Her father had some problems and he was gone most of the time and when he was around, he was not a nice man because of his problems. So Sage learned from an early age to take care of herself and her younger brother as well as their mom, to some extent. She's the quintessential western libertarian in some ways--she's a great shot with a gun; she's hunted and fished; she's an outdoorswoman--but she also has this kind of "woo-woo" side to her, and she expresses it through her photography and through some of the ways she approaches life. She's able to understand the essence of something or someone in a short period of time because with Sage, there's no pretense. She's extremely intuitive and K.C. learns very early that you cannot bullshit her. Sage just knows things. She's able to pick up on people's

unspoken edges. She is who she is, and because she grew up close to the land, she's in tune with natural forces, maybe, beyond the understanding or recognition of most people.

Also, I wanted her to have this complete quirky spastic side but then a really mature serious side, the combo of which makes her endearing, I think, but also a force to be reckoned with. K.C.'s reactions to her, I hope, are able to convey that. But writing her in such a way to make sure she's NOT that complete stereotype "woo-woo chick from Santa Fe" was difficult. I had to draw on a lot of different people to capture her and I think she turned out how I wanted her to--at least she seems happy with it. I'm sure she'll let me know if she's not...<lol>

**Did you write when you were younger? Are there any "I'd rather this story never saw publication" manuscripts lying around?**

*Andi:* short answer: That would be a BIG hell to the YES. To both.

Long answer: I've always had stories in my pointed little head. I was always making up scenarios about pirates and space exploration/contact with alien cultures. And I was way into things like ghosts and vampires and werewolves. I read constantly then and I read constantly now. When I was growing up, I read all kinds of adventure stuff like Tarzan and John Carter of Mars (Edgar Rice Burroughs). I read the classics, too, and I remember changing things in the stories as I was reading to better reflect my own thoughts and my own nascent lesbianism and identity as a woman. I could not for the life of me understand why Jo from "Little Women" would hook up with a guy. I mean, it was SO obvious to me that she clearly shouldn't have been on that road. So in MY alt-universe "Little Women," Jo hooked up with ME, dang it! Anyway, I started writing little vignettes and poems when I was in grade school, though my mom recently showed me some stuff I did before that--little stories about dogs and things like that. In crayon. I was probably three or so. And I've been obsessed with Halloween since I was a kid, so I remember writing creepy Halloween stories in grade school and creepy poems, too.

In high school, I had teachers who encouraged their students' creativity and I started writing more poetry and a few short stories. At 15 or so I wrote my first novel, which was an atrociously bad spec fic thing (fantasy) that dealt with a wizard, a disowned prince, and some swordswoman chick he hooked up with on his adventures. I totally identified with the prince in that story (he got the girl, after all), but I wasn't ready yet to deal with the fact that I really wanted WOMEN to hook up WITH EACH OTHER in my stories. So I instead identified with the male lead in that novel (we can get all Freudian about that if you want, but there it is). Oh, I hand wrote that pup. An entire package of loose-leaf lined notebook paper. It's probably a good 200 pages long, front and back. And because misery loves company, I wrote a sequel. I was probably 16 when I started that but I don't think I finished the sequel (which is definitely a good thing for the reading public! HA!) because right about the time I started getting ready to go to college, I was 17 and I was really hardcore into spec fic but was leaning more toward sci fi.

So I spent my college years writing bad angst-y-gothic poetry because I was struggling with coming out and had all these unrequited crushes on all these women. After I officially came out to myself (I was 19), I continued to write more poetry but it took on a decidedly lesbian cast and sort of a "seeker" tone. I notice a lot of landscape references in my poetry from that era, and I remember that I was trying to find my place in the world. I felt much more comfortable writing my true feelings about who I was during those years, though, and some of that poetry's pretty good; I have had a few poems published here and there. I am a completely untrained poet and don't pretend to be some kind of super-gifted mystical poet-type. I just happen to write it now and again and during my college years--especially the 10 years after I came out--poetry, for whatever reasons, was the way I expressed myself creatively.

When I went to grad school, I suddenly started writing all kinds of fantasy-based short stories starring women characters who hooked up together. I wasn't yet comfortable writing sex between

the characters, but I definitely got in some foreplay. At this point--around 1990--I began submitting stories to Marion Zimmer Bradley for consideration for that "Sword and Sorceress" anthology series she oversaw. I think I submitted three or four stories at various times, none of which got accepted but each time she wrote a personal rejection letter pointing out something I did well, something I needed to work on, and she hoped that I'd keep writing and she signed the letters. I really appreciated that she took that kind of time to let me know what she thought, given the hundreds of submissions she must've had to wade through. MZB's personal rejection letters sort of stayed in the back of my mind, which might have been a good thing because I didn't write fiction again for a good ten years. Instead, I was caught up in grad school and nonfiction writing. I also journal a lot, and poems are scattered throughout my journal entries.

So, yeah. I have a lot of stuff I've written over the years that will not see the light of day. It sucks! HA! But I'm not necessarily embarrassed about it. I have VASTLY improved over the years, and I can see that in the different eras of my writing. I'm an archaeologist, after all, and I track change over time. That's how I view the early writing in my own life. Beginnings. No, it is absolutely not publishable. But it foreshadows things to come. It's my own past and it reflects different eras of my life and for that, I appreciate it. Writing--both the good and the bad--has always been part of me and my life, but it's changed a lot over time and it will continue to change--hopefully for the better. We can all hope that!

### **Have you kept those letters from Marion Zimmer Bradley?**

*Andi:* Yes. I guess I just needed to know that somebody really did read my stuff. I kept copies of everything I submitted and all the fiction projects I was working on in folders and the letters just stayed in there for years. She typed them (it was ol' skool in the late 1980s and early 1990s) on small sheets of blue paper and she signed them by hand. In the first, she said I wrote poetically and nicely but I needed to work on my tale-telling skills. And she was so right. In the third rejection she told me to try again. But I got caught up in writing my master's paper and applying to Ph.D. programs and then the rigors of a doctoral program...I never did submit to that anthology again.

### **What do you think she'd say of your work today?**

*Andi:* Dang, Deven. You're a scary evil twin to have! Questions like that! I have this image of me sitting in that waiting room to the afterlife in that movie "Beetlejuice." And I'm waiting for MZB to come on up to the counter and have a chat and all. Like visitation in prison or something. Oh, look. Here she comes. She's got her glasses on and she's trying to place me...I'll help...

A: YO, MZB! What up, girl? Remember me? The chick with the lame-ass pen names back in the day?

MZB: <recognition dawning> Why, Andi. How are you? And you know I'm no longer taking submissions for S&S. <looks at me over her glasses with an expression like "hello? You're talking to me in the waiting room to the afterlife...?">I see you worked on your ABC's.

A: Yes, ma'am. Apply Butt to Chair. Good advice, that.

MZB: I'm pleased with how you've been working on plot and tale-telling. Much better, how you've managed to tell a story now that makes sense and that has logical parts. Oh, and I must say that I do like your characters better. They just weren't speaking to me in your early submissions. Rather flat. Frustrating read because I think there might have been some potential there. But it was quite endearing that you admitted you were just starting to try this writing stuff out. I could tell that was certainly the case. You did have a poetic style that I rather liked and that I thought would work well with fantasy. Still, I'm glad to see you've trimmed your adverbs and adjectives to minimums.

A: Well, I put a historian trained in journalism on my dissertation committee and she whipped me into shape right quick. Whew. If I had a dollar for every time she pointed out passive voice and excessive adjectives and adverbs, I'd be able to buy myself a spot on the space station.

MZB: <laughs> It's a good thing, too, that you got into editing. It really helps you see the flaws in your writing. But do use your betas. Because I think you should work a bit more with your first-

person POV. And you do still need to work on your adverbs. Tighten up those dialogue tags, as well.

A: Thanks. You know I saved those rejection letters you sent. That was pretty cool, that you took the time to write to me in the midst of all those submissions. I appreciate that.

MZB: You took my advice to heart. So it was worth my writing them.

A: Dang, I wish I HAD sent something else to S&S before you...well, you know. Ended up on the other side of the counter here.

MZB: <smiles sort of sadly>Well, it wasn't to be. And besides, you had to find your own path. I'm glad that I might have played a role in that, however small.

A: Yeah. Thanks. Um...I guess I'd better go. Thanks for talking to me. And thanks for the tips.

MZB: Certainly. Good luck to you and remember your ABC's and make sure you never stop wanting to learn. Bye, now.

And I'd hightail it outta there. Bad lighting.

### **What would your letter to God say if you were to write one?**

Andi:

You know, that letter would come back "return to sender...no such address..." So I'd have to do IM to check in with Ms. Head Honcha. She's way busy, after all:

A: yo yo yo la Reina de Todos, got a minnit?

G: 'sup, A? Been a while.

A: yeah, my bad. You know how self-centered we as a species get.

G: <lol> no comment

A: aiiight, so I have a coupla questions, yup.

G: <g> here we go...yeah?

A: what's the deal with all this funky-up weather?

G: girl, you know I move in mysterious ways. Trade secret, 'naw mean?

A: is it our fault or what?

G: c'mon. What do you think?

A: so it is?

G: <eyeroll smiley> you know y'all haven't been the best about keeping stuff clean...

A: DANG. Well, that's what I was thinkin', yeah. So how do we fix it?

G: even if I gave you the 411, you think anybody would listen to you?

A: d'oh.

G: you know what happens when anybody says they hear me talkin' to 'em.

A: <<YIKES smiley>>

G: <g>

A: so we have to figure this out for ourselves?

G: well...I might send a little inspiration along. But don't expect a hallelujah chorus. After all, it's your mess...so hit me with another question.

A: ok...if we're such the pinnacle of life forms and all that, how come we're such a\*\*heads to each other?

G: ROTFLMAO

A: nah, fer real. What's up with that? How come we can't share the love? These huge brains and we're all fightin' each other and acting like haters. And we use YOUR name to say it's aiiight to do that. What's wrong with us?

G: <shaking head>you have powers for good and evil. And the ability to sort it out. That's the wonder and the pits of being human.

A: not sure I like that deal, Big G. Cuz doesn't look from this angle like we're sorting for greater good.

G: <shrug>had this chat with Descartes back in the day about free will.

A: what'd you tell him?

G: a joke.

A: ??

G: he didn't get it...a little ahead of his time. But he got it later.

A: share?

G: sure. Descartes walks into a bar. Bartender serves him a beer. Descartes drinks it. Bartender asks him if he wants another. Descartes says "I think not" and disappears. <<grin smiley>>  
A: ah, dang. So that's where my dad got that! That was YOU started that joke?  
G: maybe.  
A: ok wait...free will and "I think therefore I am." I'm not getting the connection between that and how we stop being haters.  
G: if you didn't believe you had free will, & if you didn't believe you are what you think...what kind of species would you be?  
A: cuddly?  
G: LOL  
A: geez. Maybe we'd be like the Borg or something. I don't know. Can't you just make us stop being haters?  
G: is that free will?  
A: but all this death and nastiness...is that a price for free will?  
G: it's not about that, A. Think yin/yang, maybe. Good and bad. Balance.  
A: so we're both awesome and potentially seriously flawed.  
G: maybe. <g>  
A: <grumble> you don't make this easy.  
G: neither do you! LOL. Hey, gotta go, A.  
A: hold up a sec--are you REALLY the Big G?  
....<<pause>>  
A: Big G?  
G: what do YOU think?  
A: Aw, geez. <<pfft smiley>> Thanks for the time, BG. Much appreciated.  
G: sure thing, girl. 'Til next time. Later.

**Which writers do you most enjoy reading and are there writers who have influenced your own work?**

*Andi:* Wowzers. That's a big question. I read lots of authors. I'm always reading stuff by people I haven't read before to expand my horizons, so I don't really have a set "MUST READ" kind of thing going. And my faves might shift year to year as I discover new things and branch out and change. I also read lots of nonfiction--I particularly enjoy travel writing. I'm currently reading Alice Steinbeck's "Without Reservations: The Travels of an Independent Woman," about a woman who travels by herself through Europe while she metaphorically is traveling through herself. I really like stuff like that. Another book I read that I just loved was Sarah MacDonald's "Holy Cow: An Indian Adventure." It's a biography/travel memoir and metaphor, about MacDonald's experiences in India. She's an Australian radio correspondent and the book opens with her in an airport trying to leave India in the late 1980s with her friend. Sarah HATED India but a beggar there at the airport reads her palm and tells her she'll be back for love. "Yeah, right," she thinks and sure enough, a few years down the line, she hooks up with this guy who's also a journalist and gets posted to India. So she goes with him and thus begins her painful, funny, inspiring journey through her own soul as she explores the spiritual traditions of India and her place in the world. Her descriptions of India and its cultures and tradition are so good that you can literally taste the saffron and feel the explosion of colors at the festivals. Great stuff.

Jon Krakauer is a great writer as well. "Into the Wild" and "Into Thin Air" are just exquisitely rendered stories that really put you in the moment with the people in the books. I also like Hampton Sides--check out "Americana: Dispatches from the New Frontier." It's a series of essays he did traveling throughout America and finding the weird and wonderful in this country. I discovered Jon and Hampton because I read "Outside" magazine religiously and they've had pieces therein. One of the most semi-autobiographical accounts of immigrant life in America is Francisco Jiménez's "The Circuit." It's a young adult novel, but conjures images of Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath." Powerful stuff. And on the macabre side, I read lots of forensics manuals that I score from people in the business and from presses that publish stuff like that. I also read lots of history and anthropology monographs because I try to keep up in my fields.

I do read lesfic--I read lots of different writers, published and unpublished. I've enjoyed stuff by Lori Lake, Karin Kallmaker, JD Glass, Jane Fletcher, Gerri Hill, Joan Opyr, Mari SanGiovanni, Sheila Ortiz-Taylor, Paula Offutt, Jove Belle, Barb Clanton, Nicola Griffith...geez, the list is long. I read across genres, as well. Check out Academy of Bards and e-scribblers.com to see some of the best-kept secrets out there. I read other fiction as well. I enjoy Annie Proulx's stuff (love her descriptions of western landscapes), Terry Tempest Williams (for the same reasons), and Jennifer Bové's short pieces, and I do enjoy Amy Tan's work. OH, and Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker. An interesting writer I worked with in New Mexico is Kate Horsely, whose writing I'd call literary-historical fiction based in the American West. Try "A Killing in New Town" for a taste of her stuff. Lyrical but tightly interwoven plot lines. I like Rudolfo Anaya--a true Nuevomexicano who captures the essence of New Mexico and the Southwest--and Manuel Ramos, whose mysteries star a Chicano lawyer based in Denver. I'm intrigued by Lucha Corpi, whose detective Gloria Damasco is heralded as the first Chicana detective to appear in American literature. Try "Eulogy for a Brown Angel" and "Cactus Blood" to see what Corpi and Damasco are all about. Corpi sets her plots against the backdrop of the 1970s Chicano Movement, which makes for some really cool integration of history with plot. And geek that I am, I like that kind of stuff.

Yeah, I'm a bit eclectic. Someone said once that if you want to be a better writer, you have to keep writing and do workshops and that sort of thing, but the other thing you have to do is read everything you can. Read across genres. Read fiction and nonfiction. But read so that you get a sense of how different people put sentences together and how they employ the mechanics of writing to their stories. I love reading anyway, so this was no big deal. But it's true. The more I read, the more I see things that I can do to tweak my own writing and the more I appreciate a turn of phrase or an expression or a plot twist or a great character. Anyway. Whew!

### **You're at a house party full of your favorite authors. Who do you talk to first and why?**

*Andi:* Andi gets invited to a house party, major stuffage in said house. Let's jet into her head for a bit:

Can't hear myself think, it's so loud in here. Holy crap, WHAT are they listening to...? Oh, thank god. Some Notorious B.I.G. just came on. THIS I can funk to. Okay...where's the food table... writers eat, don't they? Jesus, I think I just bumped into Anais Nin. No freakin' WAY. Is that really her? She looks GREAT...wench. And who knew Jane Austen liked Beck's? Whoa. Oh, food. I'm freakin' hungry...mmmm PIZZA. Okay, I'll go listen in to Carl Hiaasen chatting to Randy Wayne White...talking about the devastation of the Everglades...you GO, boys. Hammer on them sugar plantations and developers! This pizza is good...okay, need a beer...let's see...god it's loud...George Orwell can't dance. No big surprise. He probably thinks somebody's watching him too closely. Oh, no. Now I'll be singing that damn Rockwell song all night..."I always feel like...somebody's WATCHING me..." Crap. NO WAY Langston Hughes is drinking Jack Daniel's and lemonade! I SO pegged him as a wine guy! He looks good. Nice suit.

Dang, Audre Lourde looks fabulous. She's drinking water. Good for her. If I had room, I'd fall on the floor right now and worship Maya Angelou. But somebody would step on my head. Okay...where the (\*&#&^% is the kitchen? Oops...Isaac Asimov just dropped salsa on the floor. Gabriel García Márquez stepped in it. Bummer. SHUT UP Isabel Allende is here! I have to talk to her! Must...get...to...damn. Lost her. But found the kitchen. YAY. Let's see...how the hell can Dorothy Parker just sit there writing? OH, she's getting Virginia Woolf's phone number. I wonder...nah. But Dorothy's kinda hot. I love that 1920s look...holy hell, I'm in the same room as Virginia Woolf. I can't stand it. I'm swooning here...okay, okay. Breathe. Just say hi. That's all I have to do. Breathe. Okay...no, I don't JUST want to say hi. I want to ask her why it is that--  
V: What is that you're eating?

A: <<OMG...Virginia Woolf is talking to ME>>Pizza. Neopolitan style, with a light white sauce--olive oil-based--on a thin crust. Just a bit of tomato sauce, though I'm not sure why since it's not

entirely necessary. But I'm not adverse to creative liberties. What's so good about it is the prosciutto and basil, both so fresh they're like eating spring.

V: <<smiles>>

A: <<OMG Virginia Woolf just smiled at me! I'm going to pass out!>>

V: This is what I was just saying. Why is it that people discuss what happens OVER food but they never talk about the food itself? Ah, the scintillating conversations and witty remarks that food engenders--well, why is it that no one says the PHEASANT stirred such a thought? Or the broth spiced just so? Or even the roast duck? I think this is something women observe more than men, unless said men are trained in the culinary arts. It seems this speaks further to the gulf between the sexes, in which it is EXPECTED that women know of food and nourishment and the processes that bring it to fruition while men are ever on the receiving end of such ministrations

A: But isn't it also a function of the company that gathers around food? A public space--a formal luncheon, for example--has traditionally been the domain of men and as such, were used for public discussions and also for business, which haven't been associated with women until recently, at least. And if you're gathering in a restaurant for a luncheon, chances are the chef IS male and was, even during your era.<<OMG where did that come from?>>

V: Cooking as a means of subsistence is the domain of women. As a means of entertainment and public appearances, it is the domain of men. Interesting. <<winks>>I'll ponder on this in my room later.

A: <<OMG VIRGINIA WOOLF JUST MADE A JOKE!>> Make sure it's your own.

DP [Dorothy Parker]<<raises eyebrows, smirks>>Darling, it's a PARTY. Virginia might want to see someone else's room. Perhaps even mine.

A: Check before you go in. I saw Oscar Wilde dragging Henry Thoreau up the stairs earlier.

DP: <<rolls eyes>>Randy boys. Ginny, be a love...? <<holds glass up and motions toward bottle of gin on counter>>And YOU...we'll be consigning ourselves to the pool later, as soon as Ralphie gets Ernest out of it. DO plan on joining us...?

A: Um...<<fires worried glance at Virginia>>Is that a good idea?

DP: Oh, I'm fitting her with Molly Brown's life jacket. ZORA! How ARE you, darling?

Whew. It is freakin' LOUD in here...I need some air...

### **What stage of the process of creating a book is the most exciting and/or hard for you?**

*Andi:* I love it all. I'll get an idea and if it's ready to go, the muses will really bug me. I won't be able to stop thinking about writing it so I'll have to get it out. If it's not ready, it's just sort of a brain tickle and I'll know that it's gelling. The beginning is usually the most difficult because the characters and I are still setting up scenes and figuring out choreography and plot arc. We do several readings, sitting around in our directors' chairs with our scripts (which only have a few pages to 'em, since I leave lots of things open to exploration) and we'll try out the feel of the plot, the narrative, and audition new characters. Once I'm past Chapter 3, usually it just roars on out to the end. The whole process is exciting, I think, and it works for me as a writer to envision it as a collaborative venture between myself and my characters. Yeah, I know. That's weird.

### **How would you characterize your fiction?**

*Andi:* "Fluff with an edge." I mean, it's fiction that I think qualifies as pretty decent beach- or vacation-reading (she says, hoping!). It's escapist in many ways, since you're hanging out with K.C. and the gang and they banter back and forth though they also address serious subjects with each other. That's the "fluff" part. I don't think "fluff" is a bad thing with regard to fiction. There are some darn good reads out there fiction-wise that stay with me but won't ever make the Nobel circuit. And that's perfectly okay. I love escaping through a good fiction read, love a couple hours where I'm entertained and maybe laughing and crying along with the characters. I like good dialogue and tension that builds through the course of a book and yeah, I also like a romantic spark between two characters and I have no problem with leaving an ending that could indicate a serial or one that doesn't. So I write what I like to escape with. I like characters that I feel I actually could know and I hope that readers find something in my characters that resonates with

them. I hope they think: "yeah, I could totally see K.C. and Chris and Sage as real and I'd love to have a beer with them." Or whatever beverage they want.

The "edge" part...well, I hope people get a taste of New Mexico--Albuquerque in particular--which truly is a different kind of place. I hope that they get a sense of the Southwest, a sense of regional variation, and I hope they get a sense of larger issues that can affect smaller communities. I hope that they learn something about white supremacists through LoE and I hope they see how someone like K.C. conducts her research and does her investigation. Through "State," I hope readers get a sense of how Chris approaches her police work, how SHE conducts her investigations, a sense of her identity as a New Mexico Hispana, her relationships with some of her family members, and how police might build a case against a suspect. I like turning K.C. and Chris loose and watching them learn from each other and from the investigations. K.C. does get too big for her britches sometimes, but she's always willing to learn things and admit her mistakes.

Oh, and the other "edge" part is that these characters are also dealing with issues that readers might find resonate in real life. In LoE, K.C. has to deal with confronting her past with her ex, Melissa (bad break-up). She also has to confront the fact that her research into white supremacists has become very personal because Melissa's younger sister was dragged into it, as a result of some issues that readers will discover. K.C. then faces a growing attraction to someone and she's not sure what to do with that, since she's still feeling a little burned. These aren't necessarily earth-shaking issues. But they're things that you or I might have to deal with at some point, and sometimes all at once, and they can prove difficult to sort through as you're trying to figure out what the best course of action is. And it's stressful for K.C., being in close contact with her ex after three years of not speaking to each other, and having to find her ex's sister, someone whom K.C. came to think of as a younger sister. And some of these issues aren't going to be resolved in a way that brings dancing cherubs and nymphs scattering rose petals everywhere. Some aren't going to be resolved at all. At least not yet. But that's kind of like life. Sometimes things get resolved successfully, sometimes badly, and sometimes not at all. And there amidst the fluff lies an "edge." <laughs>

### **Did you need to do any extra research for your books?**

*Andi:* Heck, yeah! I find what I need either on my bookshelves here at home, in my file cabinets, available online or in a library, or I'll ask people. For the book I'm writing now (NM 3 I'm calling it until it lets me know what its name is), I contacted the Office of the Medical Investigator in Albuquerque because I needed to know what procedure they use when retrieving a non-Indian body from Indian land. Federal and state jurisdiction apply to a certain extent, as does the jurisdiction of the closest non-Indian police, and Indian land is under federal jurisdiction when it comes to homicides, but local tribal police also have certain jurisdiction and I wanted to make sure that I got it right. I knew some aspects of this, since I have done a citizens' police academy in Albuquerque and I did have colleagues in NM who are Indian (as in Native American) from a variety of places in the country, and through conversations with them and my own work in history, I am aware of legal jurisdiction and the ways that the U.S. government and local and state governments have dealt with Indian land--and most of the time, it hasn't been in favor of those Indian peoples--so I wasn't entirely blind to what goes on, but I just wanted to make sure I was accurate.

### **Did you collect anything as a child?**

*Andi:* Dang right I did. Stones, bones, and "treasures." The latter included any interesting object I found on my many meanderings. I always had all kinds of stuff in my pockets as a kid. All kinds of rocks, small bones (I grew up in a rural area), bits of glass or metal that I found. I'm all about "found objects." To this day, I really like art that incorporates "found objects."

### **What is your proudest possession?**

*Andi:* My education and the skills I've learned along the way. I worked really, really hard to finish the degrees I did and to become the person I am. That said, I never would have done it had I not had the childhood I did. My parents encouraged me to constantly explore and constantly challenge myself. I was instilled with a lifelong passion to learn the moment I came into this world and I think it's largely because of my parents. And thinking about it (oh, no! SHE'S THINKING AGAIN!), it's not like I feel that I "own" or "possess" my education or the things that I learn. I mean, it's part of me and it's uniquely my style, but I'm all about sharing the love and I try to share the information I accumulate and use what I know to help others and teach them how to do things, as well. And now for a rousing chorus of "We Are the World..."

### **What do you think is your best work?**

*Andi:* I can't really answer that definitively. I don't think in terms of either/or, after all. I like a lot of things about different projects I work on. I like the relationships K.C. has with Chris and Sage in "Land of Entrapment." I like the relationship Chris has with HER love interest in "State of Denial" and the way that Chris tracks the suspect and interacts with her cop partner. And I love writing about New Mexico. And I liked Aidan O'Brien's explorations with Anne Sullivan in "The Kindness of Strangers." Plus, I just really liked writing about Butte in that piece.

I think of everything I write as a draft. Even the published stuff is a draft of sorts because I might read it a few months down the line and think: "dang. Why didn't I do THIS here?" My perspective is always changing and once something's written, it's static in a sense. Once it's published, it's frozen in a particular time and context. So everything is actually a draft. Now, I'm very proud of a lot of the things I write and there are things I'm satisfied with and glad to have written. I LOVE writing and I LOVE meeting my characters and watching a story unfold. And the more I write, the more I hope that the best is yet to come.<VBG>

### **Is there a message in your books you want your readers to know?**

*Andi:* Wait...isn't that a Police song? Oh, no. That's "Message in a Bottle." Sure. It's whatever a reader wants it to be. I'm trying to capture moments in time, slices of life, as my characters might experience them. It's not always "happy happy joy joy" in their lives. But it's not always grinding, unforgiving, tragic angst, either. It's just life as they live it and try to muddle through. There'll be good times, there'll be bad times. That's just how life is. There are also a variety of people in my characters' lives. All different walks of life, ethnicities, religious backgrounds, ages, nationalities, races, whatever. Because that's how most of us live. We have lots of different people in our lives, coming and going, expressing and depressing, doing the things that people do. Obviously, parts of ME are in my books and stories, since I wrote them, and my take on things are invariably layered in there, but I try to make reactions and actions true to characters' personalities as I've envisioned them. I may not particularly LIKE some of my characters, but usually, there are reasons that people behave the way they do and though it might not justify some of the things they do, at least it can explain them. Life and people are complicated and can't be shoved into ready-made boxes most of the time. Oh, and it's a good thing to have lots of different people and perspectives in your life. Keeps you on your toes. And I'm all about dancing.<g>

### **Has your writing or a storyline ever overwhelmed you?**

*Andi:* Sometimes a storyline will get a little tangled and I'll have to step back and do some fixin'. But other than that, not really.

### **If you had a Magic Carpet, where would you go?**

*Andi:* YOUR HOUSE! WOOOOOOO!!! It's magic, right? So it would know where your house is.

Heh! Barring that, I'd go to Ireland then Africa...hell, I'd do a world tour. Then off to Pern. Because I always wanted to Impress a dragon and be a dragonrider. Bronze dragon. Not just ANY dragon. A bronze. Of course, all the Anne McCaffrey fans are now going to kick my butt because "girls aren't supposed to Impress bronzes." Well, in MY reality, it'll happen. Oh, and then I'd want to go to every cool planet my fave writers think up.

**Okay, I admit, I'm not really a fan of sci-fi novels, and I had to ask my friend (who adores Anne) what all that "bronze dragon" stuff meant lol So, from what I understand, the Bronze Dragon makes the choice and that would indeed ruffle feathers. I take it you like to shake things up? Or is that just in fantasy?**

*Andi:* It's just...I don't really think of it as "shaking things up." I think of it as expanding boundaries. After all, the only limits of our imagination are those we ourselves put on it. Let me continue with the McCaffrey example here. With regard to sci fi--like any genre, it's a product of its historical context and of the writer's background. McCaffrey started writing the Pern books in 1968--that's when the first was published, based on a Hugo-winning novella. She herself was actually fairly conservative and "traditional" and was when she wrote the books, which are pretty strict heterosexual gender role kinds of books with a few strong female characters, but nobody in Pern as McCaffrey wrote it strayed from the heterosexual imperative. What's intriguing is if you look at fanfic and gaming sites devoted to Pern, there's generally some friction between some who want to remain "true" to McCaffrey's vision and insist that Pern is homophobic and therefore, there aren't any gay people anywhere and others who, products of THEIR upbringings and changing historical contexts, think that's not accurate. I'm of the latter school. Every human culture has people who don't express a heterosexual imperative and who don't fit prescribed gender roles. McCaffrey's Pern settlers came from Earth (according to her), so it makes little sense that there wouldn't be gay people. But I digress. Anyway--and here's my point, finally!--because I didn't really grow up in the context McCaffrey did, I of course challenge things and re-think them in ways that fit MY worldview, which I work to expand all the time. Which was why, when I was growing up and reading things like the Pern books, I always changed them in my mind to include women whose primary affections were directed toward other women. I just figured McCaffrey hadn't considered that possibility and well, if I could envision MYSELF in that world, why should I not envision other kinds of stories there, as well? So I did. And I still do. McCaffrey herself had very strict rules about fanfic with regard to Pern; that was her prerogative, given that she created it. And I do respect that. However, I can still expand boundaries in my head and maybe in the privacy of my own hard drive...I'm just sayin'.

Anybody who writes GLBTQ fiction is automatically shaking things up. I'm proud to be part of that tradition and I have lots of role models who were much braver than I, like Ann Bannon or James Baldwin, who wrote it when it was downright dangerous to write it (not to mention the publishers who actually published it!). They blazed trails and left them for others to see and follow and maybe create more trails. In some places in the world, it's STILL dangerous to write it. I'm fortunate to be where I am, because I can write it and I have options to get it published and have it reach a larger audience. The web, too, is an amazing tool to expand boundaries. So...do I shake things up? I guess so. Some people say I have a problem with authority. I'd argue that I actually have a problem with misguided and inappropriate authority. <g> And I have a problem with stilted, rigid, thinking in which people say: "well, it's not done that way." How come? "Because it's not." That right there is an invitation to a challenge from yours truly. After all, one of the reasons I learned to play drums was because one of my male classmates in high school said girls couldn't be drummers. Holy crap. And this was the early 1980s! So damn right I learned how to drum! I just like to think for myself and to consider many different approaches to things. If that makes me someone who "shakes things up," then I guess I am. Now I'm off to fight Thread with my bronze! WOOO! (the McCaffrey folks will get that one, D...<g>)

**Andi, I don't think I've ever laughed so hard, or contemplated ideas and ideals as much as during this interview, and I can truthfully say it's been really fun chatting with you. I made a new friend and favorite new author (to add to my growing list). I'd like to thank you for**

**letting me pick at your brain these past few weeks. Also, good luck with your NaNo! Is there anything you'd like to leave us with today?**

*Andi:* D, I'm so bummed this is done! What a total blast I've had! WOW! I'm on your list???? Holy sacred shelves, Batman! That's so cool! Thanks for the NaNo wishes. I'm proud to say I got my 50K words in and now I'm trying to finish this pup out. Another 30K-40K words, I'm thinkin'. Let's see. Something to leave y'all with. Hmm. Buy my stuff! Oh, wait. That's SO crass! Pimp City over here. Sorry. To y'all out there, no matter your gigs, live your truth, but not to the exclusion of possibility. And share the love. The world needs a hell of a lot more of that. Thanks a ton, Deven. You are totally the bomb. Good luck with queergirltalk and your art and your writing and whatever else. And leave your back door open--I'm not really good yet at steering this magic carpet and I don't want to bust anything off its hinges. ;-)

peace!

--a