

Quote

"**Because** what **you're feeling now, is** the **unstoppable force**

Which **means I've got to move.**" Imagine You & Me

Erin Dutton: The effortless interview by DK Ward

Erin was born and raised in Upstate New York. Nine years ago, she moved to Nashville, Tennessee. She is the author of Sequestered Hearts from Bold Strokes Books. She has a short story selection in Erotic Interludes 5: Road Games. And her next book Fully Involved is due to be released in December 2007.

From the first e-mail, I liked Erin's easygoing personality, and I believe that is why this interview is one of my favorites so far. Erin and I literally fell right into this interview before I had a chance to even begin my research.

At the beginning, I was not familiar with her work yet, but I will confess, after I was done chatting with her, I knew she would be one of the authors I added to my favorites list, and I'll tell you, it's not an easy list to get on.

I hope you enjoy this interview as much as I had.

Who is Erin Dutton?

Erin: That's kind of a fluid concept. For various reasons, the past year has brought great change. Interesting phrase "great change," we don't often think of change as positive. But really many of them have been--great, that is. I've made a conscious effort to challenge myself. And I'm still getting used to the idea that "author" is now part of my definition.

Change yourself? Would you elaborate more on that?

Erin: To challenge myself. I feel I had gotten to a point of complacency. I was content with the status-quo. But when, during some personal issues, I started writing again I promised myself that when I completed a full-length manuscript I would submit it and see what happened. That was the beginning. Since then I've made a conscious effort to do things I wouldn't normally do.

And I think my writing has paralleled that because it's all new. Now, I've written several manuscripts, been edited for the first time, and gone through the entire process through to holding my book in my hand. It's amazing!

Congratulations to you! So, are there any manuscripts pre the 'new you'? And how do you feel about your writing now and then?

Erin: Well, I don't know about new me. It's really more like me-in-progress. I took quite a long break from all things creative, so we'd have to go back some time to find writing from then. I definitely think I'm improving more and more, and hope to continue to see that happen. I look back fondly on the things I wrote in my younger days. They certainly reflect a different time in my life, but it's all part of the journey, right?

Indeed. Tell us about your first published book. From thought process to printed copy in your hand.

Erin: Sequestered Hearts is a romantic tale of learning to love and trust. Cori Saxton is a rising artist and socialite who has basically gone into seclusion. Journalist Bennett McClain is assigned to get the story behind her disappearance.

The idea started as a couple of images in my head. They eventually became the scenes that give us our first glimpse at the protagonists. I don't normally do any intensive planning, and I definitely don't outline (bad grade school memories, don't ask). So I just began writing. There was quite a bit of research that went into the actual reason for Cori's seclusion, but I'm not giving that away here.

After I'd completed a draft I sent it off to BSB and we began the editing process. Which was a huge learning experience for me, and quite enjoyable. I started working on the draft of my second book while editing the first and I'm finding that schedule works out quite well for me. Having a working draft going gives me someplace to pour the creative energy that editing churns up while I'm in between editing cycles.

I'm sure everyone says this, but it's really true, that moment when you first open up that box and the book is finally in your hands is incredible. I had seen Sheri's awesome cover, but in real life it's even more breathtaking than on a computer screen. And, now, having read the finished hard copy, I'm so happy with the way the book turned out.

That does sound ideal. I'm curious; do you have any little quirks when you write? Any rituals? Do you draw up character sketches, write about a past prior to their appearance in the book to have a reference from?

Erin: Dang, don't let me make it sound too easy. It's definitely been a ton of work, but worth it.

No quirks or rituals to speak of, unless you count my complete lack of them. I can write anywhere, the more distractions the better actually. I like to have the television on while I'm writing. I'm not really a huge sports fan, but I find that having sports on the TV is perfect-not engaging enough to keep my attention for extended periods but just interesting enough. Football, women's basketball...right now it's golf. But I have to draw the line at women's beach volleyball that's too distracting :)

Since joining Bold Strokes I've been writing proposals for future work as each new project comes up. This does include a character study and I find that it is very helpful. It's fairly in depth, including their past, their family relationships, education, romantic relationship history, close friendships, and any other pertinent events/history that has shaped who they are.

Also when things are flowing along with the manuscript, I'll sometimes start writing my characters in different scenes which may or may not make it in the book. This serves a dual purpose, it keeps me in a creative mindset and it allows me to watch them interact without having to worry about how it relates to the structure of the entire work. I can just see them in a single scene.

That's a wonderful idea. I may have to add that to my arsenal of writing techniques. This brings me right into the next question. If you were overcome by the spirit of another writer, who would you want it to be and why?

Erin: What a great question! And tough to choose just one. Right now my answer is [Jeffery Deaver](#). I've just finished The Cold Moon so he's foremost on my mind. The level of organization and planning in his work amazes me. I think I've yet to finish one of his books having figured it all out before he chose to reveal it.

But honestly, I have so many favorites for different reasons. Obviously since so far my books have been romances I'd love to steal a bit of mojo from Radclyffe or Nora Roberts.

What types of stories won't we see from you?

Erin: I don't know that there's a type of story I wouldn't try if the mood strikes. Now whether that attempt would ever see the light of day depends on the quality of the end result. I can't really see myself writing a mystery. I love to read them, but my mind just doesn't usually go there when I'm writing.

What's your favorite quote?

Erin: There's a [line in the movie](#) "Imagine You & Me," it goes like this: "Because what you're feeling now, is the unstoppable force. Which means that I've got to move." It refers to an earlier line involving the immovable object meeting the unstoppable force. I love the imagery of Love as an unstoppable force. It's so romantic.

Saw it, loved it, own it! Great quote, I'll add it to your interview page.

Erin: The writing on that movie was brilliant. Now that I think about it, there are a few great lines there. "We're going to fall madly in bed." "Fuck me if I'm wrong, but I think you want to kiss me." Okay, they're not as romantic as my first choice, but clever just the same.

Do you ever think you'll write a screenplay?

Erin: Maybe someday. It's not something I'm planning at the moment, but I like to try new things, so if the inspiration was there I would give it a shot.

Dog or cat person?

Erin: Definitely dog. At night while I'm sitting on the couch writing my Australian Shepherd comes over and lays his head on my knee like whatever I'm doing can't possibly be more important than giving him some attention. How can you not love that?

Only one dog?

Erin: Actually I have two dogs. The other is a cocker spaniel. But my aussie is a bit more needy so he's the one that's always at my side.

You're from upstate NY, have you ever considered moving back?

Erin: Oh man, that's one of my constant struggles. I have considered it many times over the years. My family is all still in NY so there's definitely a pull to return. There is some beautiful country up there and they have four actual seasons.

But I've been in TN for nearly ten years now and I've grown to love it here too. Moving back is not something I would ever rule out, but the time would have to be right.

Have you traveled much? And does any one location inspire you to write more than another?

Erin: I've traveled a little, just in the U.S. and Canada. My first book is set in part very close to where I grew up. It just had the feel I was going for, Cori was running away from her life and she wanted to go someplace totally removed from her social circle and her growing fame. You really don't get much further removed than Upstate NY.

I think there's a lot of inspiration to be found in that part of the country. It's close to the Adirondack Mountains and they're just gorgeous. I mentioned the change of the seasons and it really is more pronounced than anywhere I've been. The Fall leaves are spectacular, Winter is crisp, with actual snow on the ground (we don't get that in TN) and wind that whips through even the heaviest parka, and you can actually smell Spring, it's an earthy, moist, muddy scent. Summer isn't as distinctive. I actually prefer Summer in TN. But NY gets my 75% of my vote, that's not bad, is it?

Not bad at all. I attended collage in upstate NY. It was absolutely wonderful. Now I think I'll rush out and buy your first book, Sequestered Hearts, just for a chance to experience its beauty again.

Has there ever been a movie adaptation of one of your favorite books? If not, which book would you like to see made into a movie and why?

Erin: Actually, I had just finished reading Eragon a few months before the movie came out. And I was severely disappointed. The book was so much better. I could rave about that book for hours and it's not the type of thing I normally go for. I'm so glad I gave it a chance.

How much of Erin is in her books? Do you ever relate specific character traits to your own?

Erin: I don't consciously include any of myself. The characters are like a vision in my head so they are kind of already separate people to me. Even on the rare occasion when I write in first person, it's as if I'm seeing things through someone else's eyes.

The few short stories that were truly me have never been made public. However, if you'll indulge me in a little tease...someplace in a future book there's a character who shares one of my flaws.

How very wicked of you to taunt us in this manner. Will you be doing a book every year?

Erin: I've got Fully Involved coming up in December, I'm currently working on another romance that will come out sometime in 2008. Beyond that, I definitely want to keep writing and I would love to keep my current pace. But I won't force things just for the sake of keeping pace...so I guess my answer is: We'll see.

Do you feel any pressure now to "produce"?

Erin: Any pressure I feel is internal and it's not about producing just anything. Once I've started on a story I want to keep going.

Do you still write poetry? Will you ever publish your older works?

Erin: Um, no. And probably not. I don't write poetry right now. I'm trying to express myself in a lot of ways and right now I prefer short stories when I need distraction from book stuff.

I don't think I'll ever publish my older works. So far (knocking on wood) there've been no shortage of new ideas and I'm having so much fun exploring them.

What about posting to your website? I'm sure your fans would love the idea.

Erin: Honestly, I've learned so much just in the editing I've done on these first two books that I feel like it would take considerable time to get any of the older stuff ready to post on the website. I would like to continue to post some of my short stories there, though.

How did your short story for the Road Games anthology come to be published?

Erin: "Two Under Par" was an idea that I had been playing with for a bit. It just worked out that it fit for the topic of Road Games.

If you could be one of these people, who and why? George Bush. Jackie Warner (from Bravos Workout), or Santa Clause?

Erin: Well, since I have little interest in actually being in politics, I'm going to go with Santa Clause. Really, flying reindeer...it's a no-brainer.

What is truly the one thing you want your readers to get from your books?

Erin: It's so simple, but I want them to be entertained. When I read a good book, I'm so totally into the story that I want to finish it in one sitting, and if I don't then I think about it at odd moments during the day. Or if it's really good I'll dream about the characters. I would love to create stories that just for however long it takes to read them, bring the reader into the story.

I absolutely hate having to wrap up this interview. On a brighter note, there's always the possibility of another one this December when your next book is released :) I thank you again, Erin, for taking time to chat.

Is there anything you'd like to leave us with? Quotes of inspiration? Things we may not know about Erin Dutton?

Erin: Thank you so much, it was quite an enjoyable interview. As for quotes of inspiration and such, nothing really comes to mind. I would say just be open, inspiration can come in the strangest places and you don't want to miss it. I was driving to work today and a sign on the side of a truck started the thread of a story spinning in my head. Something so simple and it's too early to tell what fruit it will bear, but who knows, it could be one of my novels one day.