

Terri Breneman
By
Moondancer Drake & DK Ward

Terri was born and raised in a suburb of Kansas City (on the Kansas side). Her parents, products of the depression, taught her the value of a dollar and instilled a good work ethic. Her dad passed thirteen years ago and she still misses him dearly. Her mother still lives in the same home. She has an older sister who disowned her many years ago.

She started her college career at the University of Kansas, but graduated from Pittsburg State University (Kansas) with a degree in Psychology and Sociology. She received a Master's degree in Counseling from Boston University while living overseas in Germany. Her J.D. is from St. Louis University.

She ended up in St. Louis because her ex was stationed there a hundred years ago, and goes on to say, "I just never left. Since my job is here, my partner and I have made it our home, at least for now."

Terri is the author of *Anticipation*. Her newest novel *Borderline*, the second book in the Toni Baston series, is available for [ordering now!](#)

Moon: So, who is Terri Breneman?

Terri: Hmm. The author of the Toni Barston series? But seriously, I'm an incredibly fortunate person who lives with my partner and our three cats. During the day I work as a research and writing attorney in St. Louis.

Moon: It seems I've been seeing a lot of lawyers taking up writing lately. What made you chose that particular career path, and how do you feel your day time job affects your work as a writer?

Terri: Well, I'm definitely not a traditional attorney. In fact, I'm not a traditional anything! Prior to law school I worked as a psychotherapist specializing in adolescents and personality disorders. I always had a passion for justice, so my hope was to blend the two careers. Now I spend my days writing appellate briefs and petitions for certiorari for the Supreme Court in an attempt to keep the scales of justice balanced. In my office, all of our clients are indigent and the disparity between rich and poor keeps me motivated.

Also, I can wear jeans every day.

Ha! Now to your question. How does my day job affect my work as a writer? Not much so far. I work on the federal level so I don't run into the types of crimes that Toni Barston does (at least not until book 4). And since I work Monday through Friday, I usually only work on my novels on the weekends. The two are incredibly separate in my world.

DK: Do you still counsel?

Terri: Not professionally, no. I use those skills in helping other attorneys understand different mental illnesses in our clients (and other attorneys!) If you can understand where someone is coming from, it makes it a little easier to communicate with them.

DK: Ever miss it? And does the personality disorders differ from child to adult?

Terri: I miss talking about these things, not the counseling. Usually personality disorders aren't diagnosed in children because their personality is still changing. By adolescence... it's usually pretty obvious. I actually had the opportunity to work with a multiple for a year... (although it is now called dissociative disorder). It was a fascinating and sad time. I learned a lot about how powerful the mind can be.

DK: Back to writing. You said you write during the weekends. How does that go? Do you have a favorite room or spot you make yours while you write?

Terri: I have a wonderful chair in the living room that reclines and I use a laptop. I almost always have on either the television (sports) or music. I use the music to set the mood in my writing. I'm not very musically literate (ha) but my partner (her name is Cat by the way) knows every song ever sang. I can tell her what kind of mood I'm looking for and she knows just what I need. She also puts everything on my ipod.

DK: Do you feel the setting of a story is important?

Terri: The setting is sometimes very important, physical setting I mean. The music helps put me in the correct mood for the character... usually Toni. The right music can take me back to a place in time that matches my character. It makes it a little easier.

Moon: What sort of research did you do to write these books?

Terri: I did work in state law for a year, so I had some background. I am fortunate in that several of the trial attorneys in my office have boatloads of experience in state law and are always willing to answer my questions. Every jurisdiction handles cases a little differently, so I just blended what I knew with advice from others. And part of my job title now is "research" so I look everywhere for info. I'm also lucky that two of our investigators here are ex-cops and one was a weapons expert in the Marines.

DK: Were there things you discovered in your research that surprised you?

Terri: YES! I found out how to make chloroform on the internet. That was scary.

Moon: So, besides the fact you and Toni are both lawyers, how similar are you and she?

Terri: Well, we're both attorneys and we both used to be psychotherapists. I guess like most writers, a little bit of me is in every character. You'd have to ask my partner what other similarities we have because I usually don't notice. The only other shared trait I can think of is our love for Mr. Rupert.

Moon: Mr Rubert? Your Cat right? I take it he makes a guest appearance in your books?

Terri: Yes. Mr. Rupert is Toni's companion. He weighs in at about twenty pounds, but he isn't fat, just big boned. He's quite the hero in Anticipation. My own buddy, Rupert Eugene, was a tad bit bigger. He lived a long life but passed a few years ago. He is still missed dearly.

Moon: What a great way to remember a special companion, as a character in your novels.

DK: I thought adding the cat was a great idea. Tell us about your other two cats. Will we see them in future books?

Terri: Actually, it would be our other "3" cats. Mr. Rupert Eugene passed a few years ago when he was 18 years old. We still have 3 cats. The oldest is Dexter Bartholomew and he's 10 years old. He rarely goes by that name... we call him Little Stuff, or Stuffy. He makes an appearance in the third book, Compulsion. He's a little guy with a big personality.

Recently he took on the neighbor's 150 pound Lab...and the Lab ran away with his tail between his legs! Stuffy is a rescue cat with a two inch tail. It had been amputated before we got him.

Next oldest is Felix T. He's also a rescue. He's got huge paws and has long black hair. He was feral when we rescued him and at 6 years, he still runs away fast if we startle him. His nickname is wheels and he's a sweetheart.

The youngest is Sam I Am. My partner rescued him and his siblings when they were 3 days old. The mother had been hit by a car and she brought her kittens to our door before she died. My partner has a reputation in the animal world as being a helper. I think even the squirrels in the neighborhood see her coming and line up for food! Anyway, Sam is now about 20 pounds and is the biggest baby you've ever seen. He loves to be held and follows my partner from room to room. She's his mother for sure.

Moon: When did you first know you wanted to write?

Terri: I've always enjoyed writing. I was one of those scary kids in school who said "Oooh... I GET to write a paper?" I even kept a journal on a Big Chief pad. Too bad I didn't keep those! Ha.

As for writing novels, it has always been in the back of my mind as something I'd love to do. I started Anticipation in my last year of law school. I wrote about 50 pages then put it

away for several years. I'm not quite sure what prompted me to bring it out again. That was my first stab at fiction.

DK: Besides writing briefs, petitions and fiction, do you dabble in anything else? Say, poetry or song writing?

Terri: Nope. Crossword puzzles, that's about it.

Moon: Do you have any future writing projects you'd like to talk about? Things you would like to try or are doing now?

Terri: The third book in the Toni Barston series (Compulsion) is with my editor right now. And might I add that Christi Cassidy is a FABULOUS editor. She's taught me a lot. Anyway, I've just started on book four. I think I've written eight sentences, so I'm well on my way!

As for other projects, I'm planning a time travel mystery. It's very complex and right now I've got more questions than answers, but I'm very excited about this project.

Moon: Sounds like you have reason to be excited.

DK: Did you have any input in the editing process?

Terri: My editor, Christi Cassidy, has been wonderful. She's worked on all three of my books. My first attempt must have been a nightmare for her. I had no idea what "point of view" was. She talked to me on the phone for a bit and hand wrote tons of notes in the margins. I made the changes she suggested and I'm thrilled with the outcome. In the second book there weren't quite as many marks, but still a TON! Seems all the rules of writing hadn't sunk in my head. I've never taken a writing class, so I'm still learning. I usually take about 95% of the suggestions.

DK: Was the whole publishing experience as positive?

Terri: I feel very fortunate that I've been published and continue to be published. It's a dream come true.

DK: What made you decide on "Time travel"?

Terri: I've always been fascinated by time travel. All those questions about what would happen if you altered something personal... interfered too much. It's like a giant puzzle to me and I love puzzles.

DK: Me too. Do you believe ours is merely one of many universes out there? And that it might be possible, one day, to alter them?

Terri: I don't believe that Earth is the only place that has folks living. And I don't believe that time is linear.

DK: What are your favorite time travel movies/television shows?

Terri: I read a great time travel mystery back in the 1980s, but for the life of me I can't remember the name. We just watched the new show Journeyman and it seems to have a lot of possibilities.

DK: Is there one book that stands out in your mind, which you believe, best represents lesbians?

Terri: Not at all. We are all so very different.

DK: Great answer. You say on your website "My partner and I are very spiritual". Would you go into more detail about that?

Terri: Yes, Cat and I are very spiritual. We believe we are souls first, who happen to be wearing earth suits and attending earth school to learn. We talk for hours about the bigger picture and how amazing this life is. Although we don't belong to an organized religion, we put God first in our lives.

We are also very involved in the world of mediumship.

DK: Where did you meet and how long have you been together?

Terri: We met online...believe it or not. That was many years ago and we were both with other people. We became great friends, but never told each other that we were about to break up with our current partners. That happened at about the same time. I'm sure people thought we ended our relationships to be with each other, but that wasn't what happened. We were both poor as dirt, so we shared an apartment and eventually.... well, we saw the light. It's been about 12 years now.

DK: Have you traveled much?

Terri: Not as much as I would like. I lived in Germany for a couple years. I've been to California several times and last year I went to P-Town for the first time. It was absolutely beautiful. We're thinking we'd like to eventually move in that direction.

Okay, before we go, what advice would you give to new writers?

Terri: Wow. That's a tough one. I suppose I'd encourage people to write for themselves and tell the story that they want to tell. And, of course, to NEVER give up.

And thanks, Moondancer and Deven for this opportunity. It has been a total blast and I actually learned some things. I felt a lot of good energy from both of you. Positive energy and good vibes are essential in my world.

Hey, it was a great time for us too. We wish you and your partner wellness and happiness, and look forward to a future of great things from you. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us, and we urge folks to stop by [Bella Books](#) or [Terri's MySpace page](#) and check out Terri's novels. We all need some excitement and mystery in our lives.