

# A BSB Interview With Diane and Jacob Anderson-Minshall

by Connie Ward, Bold Strokes Books Publicist/Author Liaison

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## What made you decide to become a fiction writer?

**J:** I don't remember when I "decided" to become a fiction writer. It happened sometime before I graduated high school and was probably the result of my addiction to reading (furthered by the fact my parents gave up television when I was seven and we moved to a small farm). I wrote my first novel my freshman year of college. During the next five years I spit out the beginnings of another four or five novels. I would write everywhere. I wrote one story while working as a cashier in a convenience store. I wrote each day on what I had available—usually the backs of cigarette cartons that I took home and sorted the pieces like cards to play with the order of the story. More recently, it was four years ago when I was injured on my ranger job and unable to get off the floor that I started writing fiction again. Diane and I found out about the National Novel Writers Month and accepted the challenge to write a 50,000 word novel in thirty days. The story we wrote that November became *Blind Curves*.

**D:** I have always believed that journalism is just literature in a hurry. As someone who has been writing professionally since she was in junior high school, our mysteries seem a natural extension of that work and my interest in true crime. With both of us writing since we were in our teens, it's been a rather circuitous route back to where we started.

## What type of stories do you write? And why?

**D:** Individually we are drawn to writing very different stories. Jake tends to naturally lean toward literary fiction that examines themes like gender, war, bloodlines, and fate, while I love creative non-fiction, true crime, and popular-culture stories. But together we write mystery thrillers with queer characters, which are engaging and hopefully challenging to lovers of the genre.

**J:** In the case of the Blind Eye Detective series, we started from an appreciation of wounded detectives (blind, crazy, etc.). We were interested in an ensemble cast—which in some ways gave each of us different characters to bring out and play with. With disability being so much on my mind it isn't surprising that two of our main characters are differently abled. When one of our characters comes out as transgender and transitions (later in the series), we have the opportunity to examine the sometime contentious intersections of transgender and lesbian/gay communities. (Another theme not surprising, since I transitioned three years ago).

-continue page 2-



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Page 2

## What do your family/friends think about your writing?

**D:** They haven't seen any of our works of fiction. After years of being written about in our (especially mine) non-fiction, we think they will be delighted that in *Blind Curves* our characters are at least veiled—even if just thinly—portrayals of family and friends.

**J:** My mom and old sister are both unpublished writers so they are both thrilled and irritated that I not only have a book but an entire series in the works.

## Where do you get your ideas?

**J:** Everywhere, especially real life. TV shows, movies, Discovery channel, *Forensic Files*...

**D:** As most people can eventually tell, we are just working out our issues through our stories.

**J:** This is especially true when we are writing murder mysteries. Anyone who has ever wronged or slighted one of us in any way, watch out; you may just be the next corpse in a *Blind Eye* book.

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

**J:** Although neither one of us is good with outlining (in school I had to write my whole paper and then go back and create an outline) we do get together and talk about what is going to happen. We agree on the “bones” of the story, the key elements like who gets killed and how. Sometimes we know who the killer is before we write; other times it becomes clear in the process. Then we just write and find out what is going to happen.

**D:** We take turns writing because we're both more skilled in different areas and with different characters' voices. Whoever has the book at any point can basically hijack it. Whoever is working on the book that day has the ability to take the story in a completely different direction, and it will usually be accepted as *the* storyline.

## What makes *Blind Curves* special to you?

**D:** *Blind Curves* is special because it's our first book with Bold Strokes, and the first in a series and (hopefully) a long relationship with our publisher, editors, and readers. In this book we tackled things that we wanted to tackle, and each of us brought a little of ourselves to the book in a way that I think can only happen once.

**J:** This is my first published book, both of our first fiction and the first of us working together. I think our characters are very special, and not just because they have elements of us in them. I just don't know a lot of books with blind Asian-American lesbians as main characters. A fair amount of the story is set in and around the preserves of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space—my employer when I was an open space ranger.

-continue page 3-

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Page 3

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

**D:** A whole bunch but don't tell our attorneys.

**J:** The main characters all have elements of one or the other of us, as well as other people we know. Some characters are drawn from one friend while others are an amalgam. And we have borrowed a few names here and there.

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

**D:** Val McDermid, Jaye Maiman, Pat Welch, Victoria Redmond, Dorthy Allison, Joan Nestle. Our favorite series, *Wire in the Blood*, is based on Val's books. Other influential authors include Judy Blume and Erica Jong.

**J:** Lee Lynch, Sarah Dreher (Stoner McTavish mysteries), Jaye Maiman, Shelia Ortiz (*Faultline*), Val McDermid (*Wire in the Blood!*), Les Feinberg (*Stone Butch Blues*).

## Do you have any suggestions for new writers?

**D:** Write constantly, write what you know, research what you don't. Don't let anyone else tell you what it means to be a writer. Don't waste time in writers' groups and getting feedback or reading about how to write—just do it. Read what you love and what you want to write like. Read and write voraciously. Write instead of spending all your time talking about writing, reading about writing, and listening to others talking about writing. Get used to living off \$20,000 a year.

**J:** Get to know someone in the business. Submit to magazines and regional papers. Somewhere out there is an editor desperate for something to fill their space with. Why shouldn't it be your work?

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

**J:** What do you mean when we're not writing? We're always writing. We write for work. We write for fun. We read for work. We occasionally read for fun.

**D:** We answer questions about writing. We watch movies about gruesome homicides and read about horrible causes of death, and watch television shows about deranged and psychopathic killers.



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