

A BSB Interview With JLee Meyer

by Connie Ward, Bold Strokes Books Publicist/Author Liaison

October 1, 2006

What made you decide to become a fiction writer?

It started as a challenge. I'd gotten all the education I needed and I wanted to write a good lesbian book. The first thing I found out was it isn't as easy as it might sound. But, as I did with pursuing my doctorate, I gave myself permission to quit if it got too hard or I lost interest. I just kept going, begging here and there for help, writing, figuring out plots, and I loved it! I still do.

What type of stories do you write? And why?

I write romances and action/adventure/romances. I write what I enjoy reading, and, to my surprise, I want romance to always be included. I want the girl to get the girl and have a little adventure and intrigue along the way. I also want the reader to have a bit of fun, too, so I try to use humor where it fits. I think *Forever Found* has elements of all but is primarily a romance. *First Instinct* has quite a bit of adventure in addition to the romance.

What do your family/friends think about your writing?

The feedback from my friends has been very positive. My straight friends were great, mostly referring to parts that didn't have a lot of sex, but my lesbian friends really enjoyed all of it. My partner Cheryl has been my biggest fan from the beginning, and thus far she's loved everything I've written.

Where do you get your ideas?

Anyplace and everywhere. The newspaper, something I hear on the news. I see an interesting person on a plane, and my mind always tries to put a story to the face. A word. It has to intrigue me, make me ask questions. Then I can research or get distracted, but flights of fancy are easy for me.

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

I tend to just write. The muse is there and I go with it. I have a general idea of where to go, but that can change as I reread. It has to make sense. The editors at BSB hold my nose to the grindstone as far as continuity and believability, and I appreciate it! I will shoot ideas around with my partner, take a walk, mull things over. I'm not a linear thinker.

What makes *Forever Found* special to you?

Forever Found is my firstborn so it will always hold a special place in my heart. I learned so much so quickly during the editing process. It opened up the joy of working with BSB, and I couldn't have had a better experience. For all of that, I am grateful to *Forever Found*. Through that book I was introduced to Rad and BSB and a new chapter in my own life. Plus, I really like the story, and readers seem to also. I hope they enjoy *First Instinct* as much. It is my partner's favorite.

-continue page 2-



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Page 2

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

I spent a lot of time developing the characters to stand on their own. I don't really see a whole lot of one person or another in them. I guess I put myself in there somehow, but I hope not very much.

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

That is a tough one. It's a combination of writers over the years. I remember finding and reading *Kinflicks* by Lisa Alther and loving it. *Rubyfruit Jungle* by Rita Mae Brown, and, of course, *Curious Wine* by Katherine Forrest. I wanted to read books about lesbians that had a good ending! Then Kallmaker and then Radclyffe and I was hooked! So thank you to all of them.

Do you have any suggestions for new writers?

Keep writing. Don't read and reread it to death. Write what you like to read and make it better with beta readers or an editor. Take their advice but make the book your own. Your voice must always be what readers hear.

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

Let's see. We enjoy the outdoors, like panning for gold in the Sierras and taking the dog with us to the beach or the mountains. We like going to chocolate factories such as Scharffenberger in Berkeley. My partner loves her sports car, and we like to drive the back roads of Northern California, which sometimes leads us to staying in haunted B & B's—not my favorite thing. The newest fun thing for us is meeting and getting to know the authors and staff of BSB and the wonderful readers that make writing lesbian fiction worthwhile. Book signings are a blast, and seeing these new friends in various locations has been such a treat!