

A BSB Interview With KI Thompson

by Connie Ward, Bold Strokes Books Publicist/Author Liaison

September 1, 2007

What made you decide to become a fiction writer?

It was a fluke, really. My partner dared me to submit a short story for Radclyffe's Authors' Challenge on the Yahoo Radclyffe Writing Group. Instead of posting the short story online, Rad published it in *Erotic Interludes 2*. I never had a dream to become a writer, yet reflecting back, I've always played make-believe. I had a very active imagination as a child, and even now I love a good story.

What type of stories do you write? And why?

Obviously I love historical novels, especially about the Civil War, which has been a passion of mine all my life. I love the formality of language and manners, and the suppression of sexuality in the Victorian era—very erotic.

What do your family/friends think about your writing?

My sister is a big supporter who can't wait to read *House of Clouds*. The same goes for my friends, whom I'll send copies to as soon as it comes out. Only a few people have read it so far, and that includes the BSB proofreaders. I wanted it to be completely finished before anyone else read it.

Where do you get your ideas?

I've always wanted to write about the Civil War—to portray the great human tragedy as well as delve into its impact on the lives of everyday Americans. It was such a powerful event in our nation's history and lends itself so dramatically to fictional accounts that the story practically wrote itself. No one is more surprised than I am that I've become a published author. Who knew?

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

An idea takes shape, usually centered around a specific event or time, and the characters emerge out of that event. I know the beginning, middle, and end, but the details of the journey occur as I write. I plan some of the events in the story whereas others arrive spontaneously, and quite by surprise. It's really a lot of fun when that happens.

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What makes *House of Clouds* special to you?

It was a great opportunity to use all this knowledge of the Civil War that I've accumulated over the years. I had always thought it was just a passion and pastime, useful only on episodes of *Jeopardy*. Also, it is my first novel, and the first one is always special. And finally, I love everything about this book: the story, the characters, the history. It's a story I could go on writing forever, but thank goodness it's finally gone to print.

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

I think a little bit of me is in both my main characters in *House of Clouds*, but not a lot. I admire the strength of the northern character's convictions, while I understand the southern character's doubt in her beliefs. Since a lot of my characters in the novel are real people, they don't represent anyone but themselves. A few of my secondary characters remind me of some people I know, but very loosely.

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

Without sounding like I'm sucking up, I have to say Radclyffe has definitely inspired me the most and is my favorite author. Her books are always well written, interesting stories. I've never been disappointed in anything she's written. She is the target we all aim for.

Do you have any suggestions for new writers?

As a new writer myself, I think it's a bit premature for me to give advice. But if you're serious about writing, learn as much as you can from your editor and from as many writers as possible by reading their works. And just as in anything else, practice makes perfect.

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

As I write this, I have just returned from the 145th anniversary reenactment of the Second Battle of Manassas in northern Virginia. The heat index made it about 103 today, so you can imagine how particularly miserable it was to be outdoors. I felt especially sorry for the soldiers who were in wool uniforms, marching about the fields, firing muskets and cannon. Being there was a lot of fun. Living in the DC area, I enjoy being surrounded by all this history. I get to indulge my passion for it whenever I want.



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