

# **A BSB Interview With Rebecca S. Buck**

by Connie Ward, Bold Strokes Books Consulting Publicist

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

I never made a decision, it was just something I always wanted to do. I've loved literature my whole life, and trying to write my own fiction was simply a natural extension of that. I think reading is one of the greatest pleasures. Some books have meant the world to me and I wanted to create my own. I spend a lot of time in my own imagination and it was hard for that not to overflow into writing. The only reasons I didn't try to become a writer were the dire warnings of rejection letters and people telling me how hard it would be to find a publisher. I decided in the end that I'd just write and worry about that later. Thankfully I was lucky enough to find BSB!

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

I write two types of stories, contemporary and historical, and somehow I usually find a way to weave them together. In my modern stories it is important to me that my characters are people you could meet in real life. They have flaws, they have worries, and they're not perfect. At the same time, I want to write positive stories of adversity overcome and where love really can conquer all. I write stories I would like to read.

My historical stories are inspired first and foremost by my love of history. I am absolutely fascinated by it. I'm especially passionate about the history of real people, which is so often overshadowed by great events. History isn't just populated by shadows and statistics; these people were human beings just like us, who lived and loved. In my stories I try to breathe life into the images we all have of the past.

I often combine contemporary and historical narratives, as I do in Truths, because I like to feel as though we are all part of a continuum of humanity. We don't live in isolation and we are all a product of what happened in our ancestors' lives. This is even more important to me as a lesbian—people have felt the same emotions and desires as I do for centuries, but they are necessarily invisible to history and literature. I'm one of the lucky ones, to be able to live and write openly. Intertwining the historical and modern stories together is an acknowledgement of this fact.

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

To begin with they mostly thought I was being unrealistic. You hear about so many hopeful writers who never find a publisher. Though they were never so blunt, I don't think they truly believed I would be one of the lucky ones, so most of them moderated their enthusiasm to protect me from disappointment. Since I found BSB, they've been more supportive, but it is hard for them because I'm quite private about my writing. Most of them have no idea what to expect from Truths. I look forward very much to hearing their thoughts after they read it! As the release date approaches, I'm finding people are getting more excited about knowing a "real writer." I still find their excitement a little surreal.

-continue page 2-



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**Page 2**

## **What makes *Truths* special to you?**

Obviously *Truths* being my first published work makes it hugely special. It's the fulfilment of a lifelong ambition. In addition, there are aspects of it that I simply had to write. It's not autobiographical, but some of the emotions expressed are things I was very driven to put into words. The first draft of the book just spilled out of me during a few intense weeks at my computer. That such an outpouring is worthy enough to be shared with BSB's discerning readers makes it seem magical to me.

Oh, and I'm also shamelessly using the novel to prove to everyone who doubted me that I can write after all!

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

The first thing I do is write down, as coherently as possible, all of the snippets of ideas I have in my head, before I forget them. I have a few potential novels that never got any further than this stage. In the process of doing this, I find the characters growing into real people and the story taking shape almost without me realising it. So then I write down all the additional ideas I've had. The next step is getting to know my characters. I write a profile for each one, including their name, the basics of their appearance, and their personality. Sometimes they're nothing like I thought they would be! Then I write very simple bullet points of where I want my story to go and set to work to write it. Very often I find that I deviate a long way from my initial plan; in the end I just write. But I have to plan enough to clarify everything and focus my thoughts before I begin.

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

I'm nothing like my characters, but there is necessarily a lot of my emotional self in them. The dominant plot of *Truths* is written from Jen's point of view. When you write in first person it's hard not to enrich the character with aspects of yourself. But she's also very different from me in all sorts of important ways. I don't really base my characters on people I know, though I might use a mannerism or an aspect of their appearance, if it is especially striking. I don't just do this with people I know; I sometimes use a celebrity's haircut, or sense of style, or way of walking or whatever. But even when they have some components of real people in them, my characters are entirely fictional. I actually love creating them and would feel limited if I was too influenced by making them reflect me or the people I know.

## **Where do you get your ideas?**

From everywhere and anywhere! I can find inspiration in the strangest places. Sometimes it's a line in a song that expresses a particular emotion. It can be an object that makes me ponder who it belonged to and what that person's story was. A particular place can trigger me to imagine what could happen there, between what sort of characters. Some ideas just come to me from out of the ether, with no apparent source. My head is swimming with ideas, stubs of potential stories, and half-imagined characters and scenes. To make a coherent novel I figure out which ones work together and then flesh them out and find the connections.

-continue page 3-

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Page 3

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

I have to say that as a student of and lover of literature, I'm inspired by a huge range of authors of all sexualities. I'm in awe of most books I read. Until quite recently, I didn't actively seek out lesbian authors, but one of my favorites is Sarah Waters. I love her attention to historical detail and the way in which she handles the complexities of structure. Reading *Tipping the Velvet* was somewhat of a watershed in my life, and I adore the unusual structure of *The Night Watch*.

**Do you have any suggestions for new writers?**

It's been said many times before, but if you want to write then just write. It doesn't have to be every day, or with any particular focus, but don't let moments of inspiration pass you by. Don't let anyone put you off; have faith in your own words and your ability to use them. There are no rules to being a writer.

From an entirely practical point of view, it is important that your characters are strong and coherent. You have to know them better than your readers ever will. And it can help you to attract a publisher's attention if you know who your audience is—who will want to read your book. But don't ever let the practical considerations smother your inspiration. Eventually, and with a little bit of luck, the artistic and practical aspects of writing merge. That's when you have a book that will work!

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

Ha, I write for fun! I honestly do. But other than writing I love to read and have even been known to read quite academic works of literary criticism or history for my own amusement. I listen to a lot of music, usually turned up pretty loud. I like to travel and have spent quite a lot of time in Europe, where I especially love to explore cities. Budapest is my current favorite, having overtaken Munich in my affections quite recently. If I can find a willing partner I like to play tennis, but sadly this is infrequent. To me, one of the greatest pleasures in life is coffee and cake with friends. Oh yes, I like cake a lot. I don't lead a massively busy life, but I'm never bored, even when I'm actively doing nothing at all!



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