

First off, thanks so much for joining us for an up-close and personal interview for TeensReadToo.com! My name is Jen, and I'll be your server toda...oh, wait, wrong job! Anyway, thanks so much for taking time out of your writing schedule—which I'm sure is busy!—and answering a few questions for your readers and fans.

Let's get some of the typical interview questions out of the way first. When did you first know that you wanted to be a writer?

As long as I can remember. It's definitely always been my passion – I was trying to write Regency romances from the age of 11. I really hope I never find those old notebooks because I'd be quite embarrassed to read them now. For some reason, I was obsessed with counting how many words I'd written and I would write in a big notebook and count the words in every single line – that sounds so OCD, doesn't it? But I always assumed that I would end up being a writer, and earn my living at it, which shows either an amazing amount of self-confidence or self-delusion. I never seriously considered that I'd have any other career.

Can you tell us a little bit about your road to publishing?

I entered a competition to find a new female crime writer, and though I didn't win, one of the judges was a literary agent and asked to read the full m/s of the book (I'd submitted sample chapters). She gave me good notes, but didn't end up representing me. Still, her notes enabled me to cut the book and sharpen the plot, and I then sent it off to a girl I'd been at university with, who was working as an editor. My book, *Dead White Female*, was her first purchase – and the first book in my Sam Jones series. She paid me practically nothing, but having a publishing deal enabled me to get an agent, which was a huge step too. I was part of a writers' group for a couple of years, too, which I would recommend to everyone as it really helped develop my writing.

Tell us a little bit about either your latest or upcoming release. If you could only tell your readers one thing about the story that had to convince us to buy the book, what would it be?

Well, it's called *KISSES AND LIES*, and the short answer is that there are two gorgeous boys in it, which for me is always enough reason to read a book! The longer one is that there's lots of twists and turns, and the mystery at the end of my first book, *KISS ME KILL ME*, gets resolved in this sequel. Scarlett, the heroine, has to travel to Scotland to search for clues to the mystery of Dan's death and there's a historic castle, crumbling ruins, and a very unexpected person waiting for her... it's quite dark but also very romantic.

What, or who, has been the greatest inspiration for your stories?

Me - in the sense that I tell stories that I myself would want to read. I have to really care about a story to be interested enough to spend the time spinning it out and writing it down. And then, I get inspiration from all sorts of places – *KISS ME KILL ME*, the first Scarlett Wakefield book, came from an article in the Canadian press about a girl who kissed her boyfriend and he dropped dead – they thought it was because he had a nut allergy and she had eaten peanuts. Though that turned out to be a wrong assumption, I and my editor

thought it would make a fantastic premise for a mystery novel. I'm also allergic to nuts myself, though much less so than Dan in KISS ME KILL ME, so it's something I know quite a lot about! I decided I wanted this to be the heroine's first kiss, because that would make it even more important to her to find out how Dan really died, and whether she was responsible. So that was my initial impetus for the book, and the series, because I wanted the mystery of Dan's death to be complicated enough to have to run over more than one book.

Let's hear about your family, who I'm sure are thrilled to have a published author among them!

Yes, though when my younger sister was reading my Sam Jones adult mystery series, she'd always get me and Sam confused and say things like "when you did this", meaning Sam, which was a bit too close for comfort for me, as Sam can be very badly-behaved at times! My husband's incredibly supportive of my writing and my gay best friend is curled up in an armchair right now by the fire, reading a proof copy of KISSES AND LIES. Everyone round me is very good at understanding that being a writer means being unavailable at times because you're so deep in your own world. And my husband is also very good at making me nice strong cappuccinos in the morning and then leaving me alone to write.

Now for some fun facts. What's your greatest comfort food?

PASTA! I love carbs but sadly don't have the metabolism to stuff them down without putting on weight, so I have to work out a lot to enjoy my favourite foods! I'm definitely a savoury, rather than sweet, person when it comes to my tastes – I'd always pick a bowl of pasta with cheese over ice-cream, for instance.

What are the first three things you do when you wake up in the morning?

Go back to sleep, wake up again, drink coffee, go to the computer to start writing. That's four, actually....

If I came to your house and looked in your closet/attic/basement, what's the one thing that would surprise me the most?

Erm, that's a really embarrassing question! I'm going to go with my wig collection...

Everyone asks the question about "if you could be a tree, which tree would you be?" so I want to know: If you could be a color, which color would it be, and why?

Violet. I love the name, and it's a really beautiful, bright, stunning colour. You can't ignore violet!

Who is your favorite cartoon character?

Wonder Woman.

Which cartoon character is most like you?

Okay, I asked around for this one. My friend Marie says Pebbles, from the Flintstones. My husband, very annoyingly, said Donald Duck because I quack away all the time. And my gay best friend said Belle from Beauty And The Beast because I always have my nose in a book, and I have big brown eyes and chestnut curls. But he adds that I don't look good in yellow, so the resemblance isn't perfect...

If you could beam yourself to anywhere in the world ("Beam me up, Scotty!"), during any time in history, where and when would it be—and why?

I'd probably go back to the Regency period, because I'm obsessed with Jane Austen. I wrote a non-fiction dating guide, called Jane Austen's Guide To Dating, which really works – it's how I found my husband! So I think I'd go back to her time, take her a copy of my book and ask her if she thinks I've done her justice. I'd love to meet her. But generally, I wouldn't want to go back in time because it was so much harder to be a woman then. You had much less freedom, hardly any rights, you could barely go for a walk by yourself. I might be interested in going two hundred years into the future to see if we really do have tons of space travel...

So what's your favorite type of music to listen to? Favorite musical artists? Do you listen to music while you're writing?

I'm currently obsessed with the Kings of Leon's new album and I also like the Twilight soundtrack a lot. I like all sorts of pop stuff – Pink's new album is great – and for working out I like very fast dancey stuff like, well, Pink. I also love sentimental country, like Carrie Underwood, Sugarland, Taylor Swift. I know it's not fashionable but I've made my peace with not having remotely hip tastes in music. If I had to pick one favourite band, it would definitely be Depeche Mode. And no, I don't usually listen to music while I'm writing – the words distract me.

Do you have any favorite T.V. shows? Movies you watch over and over again? What was the last movie you saw at the theater?

I'm obsessed by Law and Order – the original and best. SVU is okay, but is getting really gruesome and bizarre, and in Criminal Intent they're all overacting and the stories are basic. I love Dexter, Burn Notice and The Closer as well – they're all very cleverly-told and have great senses of humour. The last movie I saw in the theatre was Quantum of Solace – very disappointing. It's ridiculous to have a Bond villain who's just a skinny European woopsie in a floral shirt (and I say that as someone many of whose friends are skinny European woopsies in floral shirts).

You have the chance to give one piece of advice to your teen readers. What would it be?

Only one?? Help! Um, YOU'RE NOT FAT. REALLY. YOU ARE NORMAL. I spent all my teen

years and a lot of my twenties convinced I was clinically obese and I look back at pictures of a perfectly normal girl who should just have put on a bikini and gone to the beach more. EVERYONE'S tummy sticks out when you sit down. Also: find a gay best friend who will tell you that you resemble Belle from Beauty and the Beast, rather than a husband who will tell you that you're Donald Duck. Sigh.

One last question. What stories can we look forward to from you in the future?

Ooh, lots! I'm writing the third Scarlett Wakefield book, KISS IN THE DARK, at the moment – it'll come out in January 2010. And I've just finished a bonkbuster- that's what in England we call a big beach read of a book with lots of sex, shopping and intrigue – it's called DIVAS and it comes out in the UK in August under the name Rebecca Chance. Its heroines are a spoilt beautiful heiress and a blonde pole dancer and they have to team up to retrieve their inheritances from their nemesis, an evil stepmother with cold Siberian-husky-blue eyes. It's a ton of fun.

Again, thanks so much for joining us at TeensReadToo.com!

Thank you, Jen, you've been a great server. Now can I have another plate of pasta, please?