

INDIE WRITERS REVIEW

AUTHOR INTERVIEW WITH

Pamela Morris

1. PLEASE PROVIDE A BRIEF INTRODUCTION, INCLUDING YOUR NAME, THE GENRE(S) YOU WRITE IN, PREVIOUS WORK AND WHERE YOU ARE BASED.

Hello from the Finger Lakes Region of Upstate New York. No, we don't have skyscrapers here, a traffic jam usually means you're stuck behind a slow-moving manure spreader, and I can't remember the last time I heard about a mugging in the news. I'm Pamela Morris and I write Horror that leans more towards psychological or thriller than slasher. One of my first short stories was about a haunted well called The Strange Well. I was ten or eleven when I wrote it and still have the original hand-written copy. My first two novels, Secrets of the Scarecrow Moon and That's What Shadows Are Made Of combine Horror and Murder-Mystery. I've also written a set of coming-of-age books titled The Witch's Backbone. These four books are collectively known as The Barnesville Chronicles and are set in the fictionalized version of my hometown and are pretty close to being YA. No Rest For The Wicked and Dark Hollow Road have much darker and more mature adult themes and contents. Before all of these, I was an erotica writer. It was a lot of fun, but my childhood dream was to write creepy, spooky books inspired by my love of Horror movies. I made the change in 2011, though the erotica titles are still very much available for those interested and adventurous - and two of the erotica characters decided to join me in the Horror realm.



2. WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS / PIECES OF WRITING ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF, AND WHY?

I think *Dark Hollow Road* because of the subject matter – physical, mental, and sexual abuse. I had a reader contact me privately asking if the book was based on personal experience. He was impressed with the emotional realism of what I'd written and a bit hesitant to ask, but he just had to know. The answer is, "No, it's not." *Dark Hollow Road* is also written half in first person and half in third. The odd-numbered chapters tell the story of Mary Alice Brown and her very troubled life from 1948 to the mid-1970s. The even-numbered chapters are contemporary and deal with a lesbian couple and their young son as the events of Mary's life reach out and influence theirs. It was challenging and very rewarding to write, which is why I'm probably most proud of what I accomplished with it.

3. HOW LONG ON AVERAGE DOES IT TAKE YOU TO WRITE A BOOK?

About a year from the moment I sit down and type that first word to finishing the last. Beyond that it takes 3-6 months to get edits and proofreading done, Beta readers responses, more edits and re-writes by me based on what they have to say, then off to an editor, more changes based on what's suggested from them. Cover concepts and designs are being worked on during this time, too, and with ANY luck at all – something is finalized by the time editing has driven me mad and I'm sick of the story to the point I never want to read it again.

4. WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF YOUR ARTISTIC PROCESS?

Lately, just feeling like writing at all! Winter is generally a very slow writing season for me. My Muse seems to think she needs a winter holiday break or something. Otherwise, because I'm still working a 40 hour a week job, coinciding having time to write and actually feeling like writing is often quite a struggle. I need quiet, alone time to be truly productive. That doesn't happen a lot so it slows the process

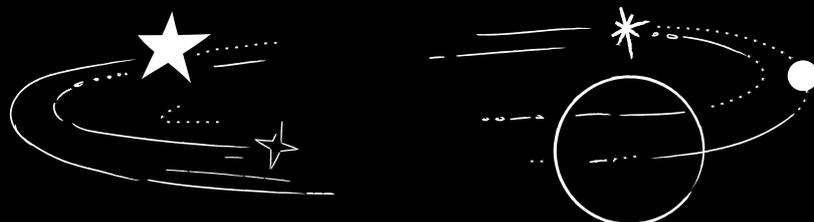
down tremendously in winter when I can't sit outside with the laptop. I'm much more distracted inside for a variety of reasons. Strangely enough - I've done some of my best spooky writing sitting in the sun on my back deck. I think it's because I'm so much more relaxed out there.

5. WHAT WAS YOUR HARDEST SCENE TO WRITE?

Can't tell this in too much detail as it will give away major plot twists, but I have had to kill off a favorite character or two over the years. In one instance it was an erotica character. In the course of communicating with my publisher, she told me the person editing the book came to her literally in tears over one such death. "How could she do that?" But, the deaths of important characters is sometimes necessary to show that anything goes and anything can happen. It ups the ante on the plot and puts the reader a bit on edge. When writing the scene, I was bawling my eyes out and trying to focus on the screen. It was terrible, but powerful

6. DO YOU READ YOUR BOOK REVIEWS? HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH BAD OR GOOD ONES?

Unfortunately, I haven't gotten a lot of reviews - certainly not as many as I'd like. There haven't been any that were truly horrible, but the ones that did contain negative comments were also done constructively, which I find very helpful. I know everyone isn't going to like what I write and that's fine. Not everyone likes King or Koontz or Rice, either. It's part of the game. I focus on the positive and try and learn from the negative.



7. WHAT KIND OF RESEARCH DO YOU DO, AND HOW LONG DO YOU SPEND RESEARCHING BEFORE BEGINNING A BOOK?

That depends on the book and I usually research as I go along, not before I begin. For *The Barnesville Chronicles* I did a fair amount of research into non-Salem instances of witchcraft trials that occurred in the United States. I found the Connecticut Witchcraft Trials. It would be from this group of unlucky individuals that I'd beget the founders of Barnesville. From 2004-2010 I was a U.S. Civil War reenactor and used the research I'd been doing for that as background for the main characters in my erotica trilogy. A lot of that research involved dates and locations of battles in Virginia as well as a few key real life players including Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson and a lot of medical and undertaking practices of the time. These two characters, Beau and Lucy, would go on to reappear in *No Rest For The Wicked* as ghosts. My love for early American history influences most everything I write. I draw up fictional family trees, look at maps, street views, aerial views, or buildings that might pertain to the story. I want the stories to come across as real, something that - under the umbrella as horror and the supernatural - readers can relate to, and so put them into as authentic a setting as I can possibly create.

8. WHAT DOES LITERARY SUCCESS LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

Being able to improve my current standard of living with my writing work alone would be the ultimate success. I'd have my own private writing office instead of a desk in the corner of the living room or a shared spare bedroom. Improving the lives of others would be the next step. Home means a lot to me, a safe and comfortable place to live. In my head is a list of friends I'd love to be able to give a significant amount of money to. Two of them could really use bigger homes without all the maintenance issues their current ones have. To be able to go to each of them and say, "What (and where) would be your dream home? Let's make

that happen,” would bring me joy beyond words. I’ve often doodled plans for a self-sustaining off-grid village for the homeless in which each person would have their one tiny house. I’d love to be able to afford to make that into a real thing.

9. HOW MANY UNPUBLISHED AND HALF-FINISHED BOOKS DO YOU HAVE?

Oh, dear. Too many. My very first novel was an epic Fantasy called *The Pride*. It’s complete, but has only been read by a handful of people. In the back of my mind it still lingers, waiting to be scrutinized and re-written should I ever find the time. I wrote three novellas which have now become obsolete because they carried the Beau and Lucy characters into the realm of vampires. Another book in *The Barnesville Chronicles* went off on a tangent from which I’ve yet to dive back into and try to untangle. A SciFi-Horror novel made it about 10-20K before I got bogged down. Lastly – I’m working slowly on re-writing an erotica into something that’s a lot less erotic and a lot more Horror. It was the last erotica I wrote and I was never really happy with it. So, what’s that? Six. If you don’t count the current book in the editing stages and the most recent WIP

10. WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE UNDER-APPRECIATED NOVEL

Hm. Older Horror fans appreciate it, but in the wake of all these new adaptations of novels, the younger crowd often expresses a HUGE disappointment when they actually sit down and read Shirley Jackson’s “*The Haunting of Hill House*”. The original movie from 1963 does it justice, but the 1999 remake, simply called “*The Haunting*”, was absolutely dreadful. And the recent Netflix series – which should have been titled something like “*The Children of Hill House*”, is so unlike the book, they simply don’t know what to make of it. Jackson’s writing can be difficult to read at times. She has such a unique literary voice, which is what, to me,

makes her so great. She's not trying to be anyone else but herself.

11. WHAT WAS THE BEST MONEY YOU EVER SPENT AS A WRITER? (E.G. SOFTWARE, SELF-HELP BOOKS, MARKETING BOOKS ETC.)

I've spent SO much money on this gig that's a super hard question to answer. The best money put out (almost with the largest bite of the budget) is probably physical copies of the books I take with me to signings and the cost of the website. Both run into the hundreds of dollars every year. The website has helped so much with general publicity, getting people to visit and read the blogs and getting to know me a bit better. One of the first questions I get asked is, "Do you have a website?" It's great that I can say yes to that and be proud of what's there. Being as you can't do book signings without actual books, getting physical copies is a must. It's also the most satisfying part of being a writer. Talking to people, sharing my love of Horror, telling them about the inspirations behind the stories, and best of all - having repeat customers year after year. Selling one book to a person is great, but to have that same person come back and buy the newest book - yeah, that's the very best part.

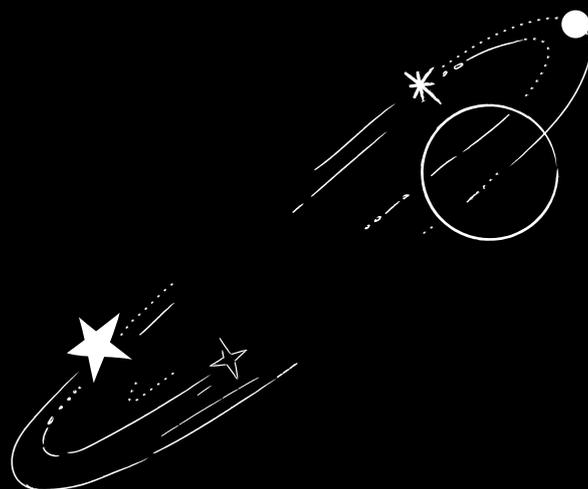
12. DO YOU WANT EACH BOOK TO STAND ON ITS OWN, OR ARE YOU TRYING TO BUILD A BODY OF WORK WITH CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EACH BOOK?

Both. Obviously, The Barnesville Chronicles are all going to be connected in one way or another. However, other than The Witch's Backbone set, they can all be read independently from each other without a problem. The other books all stand alone, but the astute readers are also going to find some sort of connection between them in at least one other book. That link may be found in a single paragraph - as a passing thought or bit of background - it may be a moment or location in a character's life. It may

have something to do with family lineage. In *The Inheritance*, not yet released as of this interview, the main characters are bikers who just happen to have met the two main character from *No Rest For The Wicked* at the motorcycle rally in Sturgis, South Dakota. That and they both live in haunted houses are the only connections. Nothing in the plot has to do with them knowing each other than that touchstone of information.

13. WHAT ARE COMMON TRAPS FOR ASPIRING WRITERS?

Believing their book is going to be accepted instantly by a big name publisher and they'll be rolling in the royalty dough in no time at all. Don't fall into this trap. It will destroy you if you let it. Write anyway, knowing that you are walking into a jungle of snares, hidden pits, and deadfalls - not to mention poisonous critters and ones with sharp teeth. They aren't necessarily out to get you, but they will stand in your way. Be prepared to sneak around a bit and bide your time - all while surviving and writing despite the odds. Do the best you can and accept that your best is probably not going to be good enough for the majority of the folks out there and don't give up just because not everyone loves you. My first novel was published in 2006 and I'm still working on getting myself known and making a profit. Do it for the love of the art and maybe, just maybe, you'll find success.



14. WHAT'S THE MOST DIFFICULT THING ABOUT WRITING CHARACTERS FROM THE OPPOSITE SEX?

My male characters tend to be a bit rougher, meaner, and more narcissistic than the men I actually have in my life, which is unfortunate. Either that, or their personalities come across as weaker than I'd like. I'd like to have more stable, positive male role models in my work. My father has always been one of my biggest cheerleaders, especially when it comes to my writing. I'd like to create a character more like him – someone who's encouraging and hard-working and helpful when the going gets tough. Not sure why I have such a hard time creating fictional, gentle men like that. I'm hoping the next book will feature a young father like that, a man who will do what it takes to protect his children instead of focusing so much on the mother and her Mama Bear instincts. My husband has remarked how I usually write from the woman's point of view, to which I reply, that's because I am one and know more how a woman might think and react to situations

