

Anna Abner's Interview with Katherine Ganzel

Author Bio: Katherine Ganzel is a married mother of two, who found herself with too much time on her hands when her children reached their late teens. Looking for something to do, she began writing a love story based on an idea she'd had since she was a teenager. 20 months later, she is completing the sequel to that story. Her books, *Stolen Hearts* and *Love You Forever*, have been posted on Wattpad.com, a free reading and writing website, under the user name KatherineArlene. The chapters of both books have been read over 1,000,000 times combined. She currently resides in Ann Arbor, Michigan with her husband, two daughters, three cats and two dogs.

Anna Abner: Welcome, Katherine. Let's start with what made you post your novels to Wattpad rather than an online retailer like Amazon?

Katherine Ganzel: I had never written anything before, so the idea of pursuing self-publishing never occurred to me. After working almost nonstop for 6 months, I felt I'd produced a fairly well written love story. I thought there might be a few people who would enjoy reading it as much as I did, but at the same time it was a somewhat dark story that dealt with mature subjects and I wasn't exactly comfortable having people I knew read it. My whole goal with going on Wattpad was to share it with anyone who might be interested while remaining completely anonymous.

AA: That makes perfect sense! Then, what is the best part of sharing your writing on Wattpad?

KG: The most unique part of being an author on Wattpad is the interaction you're able to have with the readers. At the end of each chapter readers can make comments on what they've read which you can reply to, as well as giving it a vote. They can also 'follow' you, which is similar to following on Twitter. That allows you to send group messages to them and they also receive notifications as soon as you upload a chapter or start a new story. Each user, whether they're a reader or author, has a profile where you can leave personal messages as well. I think it's also unique because authors can be more proactive in reaching out to readers. You can see when someone adds your book to their library or votes on a chapter which gives you the opportunity to thank them.

AA: Would you recommend Wattpad to new writers?

KG: I would definitely recommend WP for new authors! The best part for me was getting so much feedback from regular readers. First of all, just hearing they loved my story was a huge deal for me. At the same time they let me know what parts they were responding well to, and they also pointed out problems, some of which were easily fixed with editing and some were huge plot holes I had no idea existed. Since my story had a lot of mysterious elements, I was able to weave in those loose ends as I wrote the sequel. I'm extremely grateful I posted my work on Wattpad first because the story that I ended up writing was a lot different from what I intended to write. If I hadn't had that feedback from my readers it wouldn't have turned out nearly as well as it did. Wattpad is also a great place to meet other authors. It's an incredibly supportive community and I've made some really good friends there.

AA: You've mentioned how much you love music. Do you write to any specific artists or genres?

KG: I wish I could write to music but I'm one of those people who has to have silence when I'm working because I'm easily distracted. When I'm not writing, I listen to music all the time and I enjoy almost all genres but electronic dance music is what's usually playing on my iPod. Music is an incredible inspiration to me and I can point to certain scenes that were inspired or shaped by a song I heard. One of the cool things about Wattpad is the ability to add YouTube videos to your chapters. Since both my characters play the piano a lot in *Stolen Hearts*, I included a lot of piano music videos. I wrote a list of all the songs I used in the story and posted it as the last chapter so readers could make their own *Stolen Hearts* playlist.

AA: Speaking of *Stolen Hearts*, which is great by the way, do you feel like your writing is more character or plot driven?

KG: Definitely more character driven. I started *Stolen Hearts* with a basic idea, a young man, Robert, wakes up and finds he's been kidnapped and being held a prisoner with a girl, Georgie, whom he assumes is one of the kidnappers. The story that came after that, Robert coming to terms with his captivity, realizing Georgie wasn't exactly who she seemed and then falling in love with her, just flowed out of me and was driven by the choices the characters made. I had to be a lot more structured when I wrote *Love You Forever* because I needed a resolution to the story that included the answers to all the mysteries. I also used flashbacks to tell what happened after Robert was released while in the current storyline he struggles with severe depression and P.T.S.D. after what he's been through. That required me to be a lot more careful with my plotting, but even then the characters sometimes surprised me with the choices they made.

AA: When you started *Stolen Hearts* did you know it would be part of a series or did it just end up that way?

KG: When I began posting the chapters on Wattpad I didn't have an end to Robert and Georgie's story because I'd run out of ideas. It didn't seem like that big of a deal at the time because I wasn't sure anyone was going to read it. After a few months, I'd built up a fan base of regular readers and realized I better start thinking about the ending. It was clear that *Stolen Hearts* should end with Robert being taken out the prison, not knowing what was going to happen to Georgie, since the story was going to change dramatically after that. What I'd already written after Robert was released, pointed me in the direction I should take *Love You Forever* to it's final conclusion.

AA: What do you enjoy doing when you're not writing?

KG: I knit quite a bit and make my own yarn on a spinning wheel. I also enjoy doing bead work and making my own jewelry. Oh, and I love to read.

AA: What advice would you give to struggling writers just starting out?

KG: Write what you love and don't let anything take that enjoyment from you. So few authors find success and for the millions who don't, it can be terribly demoralizing. Even on Wattpad there are extremely successful authors, ones with huge fan bases and who rack up millions of reads on their stories. I realized early on I would go crazy if I spent my time worrying if I would ever be that successful. I also believe that if you love what you're writing, someone else will too. I guess you can say I'm an optimist.

AA: Are there pieces of your writing that will never see the light of day?

KG: I guess I'm lucky that I'm so new at writing there isn't too much terrible stuff lying around but I wrote a retelling of a fairy tale before *Stolen Hearts* that was pretty darn awful. No one will ever be allowed to see that.

AA: Fair enough! What can you tell us about future projects (which I'm sure are not terrible at all)?

KG: My next story has been percolating in the back of my mind for a while as I've been finishing *Love You Forever*. It will be a love story that takes place in the late 1950's and center around a girl and two boys, but it won't be a love triangle. Since it's not planned out completely, it's hard for me to talk about it in depth but it will be dark and mysterious, just the sort of thing readers of *Stolen*

Hearts will love, and I'll be posting it on Wattpad. I'm also mulling over the possibility of self-publishing *Stolen Hearts* and *Love You Forever*, but they need a lot of work before I take that next step.