

*Once Upon A Romance Interview  
With  
Sarah Reinke*

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**It was my pleasure to interview up and coming author Sarah Reinke. She's published a fantasy novel with a novel of ancient Greece on the way, and a historical romance in the works. I had a good time trying to learn Sarah's varying thought processes. Read on to see what I did learn.**

**Connie:** Hello, Sara! I'm glad you could be here with me and share some of your thoughts concerning writing and life in general. First would you tell us something about yourself and what you're working on now?

**Sara:** I was born in Massachussetts, but raised in Kentucky, so I'm pretty much a Bluegrass girl. I live in Louisville, home of the Slugger baseball bat and the Kentucky Derby. I've been writing ever since I could toddle upright and being an author is what I have always wanted to do with my life. At the moment, I have several works in progress: for starters, a historical romance I'm trying to wrap up and a non-romance historical set during the Byzantine Empire. Although I have also had another book in the Chronicles of **Tiralainn** fantasy series underway since last year, over this past weekend, I had an idea for another fantasy I am working to outline, this one unrelated to the **Tiralainn** books.



**Connie:** Wow, you're a very busy author, Sara, historical, romance, fantasy. Tell me about your love for each genre. What is it about each that you have a desire to write in these different, but compatible genres?

**Sara:** Working on the **Tiralainn** series really cemented my interest in history. I have aspired to base the cultures and races in the **Tiralainn** books on actual, historical societies. Doing so required a lot of research before writing the books actually began, and along the way, I found that I really enjoyed that research. In school, I'd never been

particularly fond of history, but I've discovered that when I approach it with the frame of mind of an author, not a student, it's so much more fascinating. I've come to appreciate that our world is rich with stories from throughout our history, and all of them are ripe for the telling. As for romance, it has always been a central theme in a lot of the books I write. The key to any good piece of fiction is to draw the reader into your world and to make them care about your characters. I think that readers can truly identify with deep, emotional bonds between characters, and especially romantic love.

**Connie:** A great way to look at history and research; from the direction of an author vs. student. I'd imagine you'd see so many things in a new perspective.

Tell me about the choice to write *Book Of Days* in 3rd person and *The Spartan And The Fox* in 1st person. Did you want to convey a different tone for each book?

**Sara:** *Book Of Days* is a story about multiple characters, and in particular, those most involved with the central pair, Qynh and Trejaeran, who are brother and sister. They're orphaned in the story, and raised apart, so their surrogate families, and the friends they make throughout the course of the book are very important to them. I felt it was crucial to incorporate not just their points of view into the story, but those of the characters who become, in many ways, their "families" during the course of the book.

In *The Spartan And The Fox*, I was telling a more singular story: that of one young man, a Spartiate named Eris. In ancient Sparta, a boy's training to become a warrior began at a very young and tender age. He was taken from his family and brought to the wilds to learn the ways of warfare. He lived a segregated existence until reaching young adulthood. Because of this harsh indoctrination, and because so many of the practices and methods of ancient Spartans along this path have been misunderstood and misinterpreted throughout history, I felt utilizing the first person point of view was the most immediate, accurate and powerful means of presenting this story.

**Connie:** Your writing seems to be very crisp and clear, very visual. Also not a lot of unnecessary word usage for filler. Has this come natural to you or has that come with time and experience? Has your experience in Public Relations and journalism been a big factor in this?

**Sara:** It's funny you commend me on this. Upon its original completion, *Book Of Days* was five times as long as the final, published version. I meant originally for it to be a multivolume series, although that proved impossible to market to publishers. I learned to self-edit, whittling *Book Of Days* down to three volumes and then to two, and eventually, with practice and discipline, to the single volume

released through Double Dragon Publishing's Dragon Tooth Fantasy imprint. It took a lot of work on my part, but the process instilled in me some excellent skills as both a writer and an editor that I still employ today.

As for the visual writing style, I like trying to give my reader an idea of the world around them without bogging them down with overly flowery language. I carry this with me from my experience as a journalist. I also probably learned that lesson from a good friend, who writes flash fiction, and with whom less is always more. My personal philosophy is that you can paint a vivid and poignant picture and give your reader's mind's-eye a clear view of your world, your characters and their conflicts and plights, without huge words, clunky sentences and over-used adjectives.

**Connie:** Wow, to have cut so much but have been able to leave in what you wanted to convey...well that sounds like a lot of patience and dedication given to you work, your craft.

You've got more MS finished than the ones in print, Sara. Have they found homes yet with any publishers or are they out, waiting to catch the attentions of an editor?

**Sara:** Sometimes it just takes awhile to find the right fits for your work, especially if you write different genres, as I do. I'm satisfied that at last, I've found the right "niche" for all of my manuscripts. I just received an offer from Medallion Press to publish a historical romance, which is just fabulous, because the genre is a specialty for them. I adore RockWay Press and its founder, publisher Sherri Szeman, who has been a mentor, friend, confidant and goddess to me. I could not have found a more perfectly suited home for *The Spartan And The Fox*. And Double Dragon Publishing has proven a wonderful outlet for my speculative fiction. In addition to my Chronicles of Tiralainn books (*Book of Days* and its sequel, *Book of Thieves*, which is currently under contract with their Dragon Tooth Fantasy imprint), Double Dragon just contracted my science fiction thriller called *Tethers*. They're a great company; Lazette Gifford and Deron Douglas have been amazingly supportive and encouraging all along. I wouldn't trade my publishing experiences with any of these companies for anything.

**Connie:** Again, wow! Congratulations! All the different genres you've been able to sell. You must have some sort of process. Would you let us in on it? You're going to start a new book. In what order do you do things? Do you have an idea already formed? Do you pick the names first? Do you pick a WIP title first? Plot?

**Sara:** I just went through this over the weekend, in fact. LOL. I get a very, very, very basic idea; a general premise that makes the little muse stir in her hamster wheel up in my head and say, "You know, I

could do something with this." I then visualize the characters involved in the most basic sense of them. Once I know the generalities of who they are and what I want or need them to do in the story to suit that general premise, I build the story from there. I used to just begin writing from that point, letting the story unfold on its own. It allowed for a lot of spontaneity, but also made for a lot of editing once the manuscript was completed. I try to outline my books as thoroughly as possible before I begin writing them now. It keeps me more on track, with less self-editing in the end, and less changes as I go along. I'm free, of course, to divert from the outline, but having even that simple structure helps a lot.

**Connie:** Sounds like a good process. And what about the research process? Obviously as it's a fantasy there are elements to the world and society that you create, but what's next in your research (if you do any)? Do you implement facts from the time era you chose?



**Sara:** I definitely implement facts from the time eras I choose. I generally spend anywhere from one to three months researching for my books, and sometimes even more. As a reader, as well as writer of historical fiction, I despise seeing obvious mistakes in other examples of the genre. It's usually little things that you know the writer could have caught on their own had they simply done even the most basic of researching. I would feel uncomfortable writing something, especially a strictly historical novel, without having my facts straight, my research complete and in order. I feel like those sloppy mistakes cheat the reader. Fortunately, with a fantasy, that's not nearly as critical, because you're building your own world, so you can "bend" the historical rules as much or little as you like.

**Connie:** On behalf of us readers, thank you for being so thorough and conscientious.

What solid advice could you give an aspiring author other than the commonplace phrases such as; it's a tough business, or just stick with it?

**Sara:** Learn to self-edit. Learn to put aside your ego, pick up a red pen and approach your work as a reader, not a writer. Don't just go through your manuscript once or twice; make it a progression, and each time you review and revise, make it tighter, more concise. Make it better.

And don't give up on your dream. Find the avenues of pursuit that work best for you and follow them whole-heartedly. Become publishing savvy. Use internet tools like Preditors & Editors to find

small, independent publishers you can trust. Network, network, network. Listen and learn from other authors. Email the authors you're reading and pick their brains, see if they'll give you advice. Soak it up like a sponge. Never give up and never stop learning.

**Connie:** Love that advice. Thank you! I hope aspiring authors out there will take it to heart.

What have you found to be both the best and worst parts of being an author?

**Sara:** I have to write. I would as soon cut off my hand as not write. That has proven to be both the best and worst parts. I can't leave home without my laptop. I'm always thinking up new story ideas, or working on my manuscripts in progress, even if it's only in my head. I have always had this desire, this maddening, wonderful, infuriating urge to write, and I'll probably be dreaming and typing up stories until the day I die.

**Connie:** I hope the urge stays with you, Sara, for a long time.

The time's flown by, Sara. It's time to shift into another gear to get to know you better...What do you think is the best invention since "sliced bread"?

**Sara:** Laptop computers.

**Connie:** No hesitation there, Sara! 

You're going to a costume ball. Who/what will you/your husband go as? Why did you pick those costumes?

**Sara:** Costumes from the 18th century, the sort they wear in the movie, **Dangerous Liaisons**. I think those fashions are probably some of the most extraordinary ever invented or donned. I have always had a particular fondness for men's clothing from that period. People dressed and preened like little peacocks, and even though their clothes must have been dreadfully uncomfortable, they still carried themselves with such elegance and grace. I would like to pretend they would have that effect on me. And my husband looks handsome in anything; in a tailored justicoat, breeches, starched hose and waistcoat, I'd probably swoon!

**Connie:** Sounds like the thought of him dressed in 18th century clothes has you in a near swoon!

Who's the most romantic singer to you? Why?

**Sara:** At the moment, Christ Martin, from Coldplay, and his song, "Fix You." It's my understanding he wrote the song for his wife, Gwyneth Paltrow, after her father died. He sings that he will try to fix her, meaning her pain, and I just think that is the most beautiful, endearing, touching, romantic sentiment I have ever heard.

**Connie:** What is one thing/something pampering you like to do for yourself?

**Sara:** Go to the movies, eat a large popcorn with butter and not worry about any ill effects on my jean size, at least while I'm lost in the movie.

**Connie:** Fair enough!

All of us have different qualities or traits. Sometimes we're drawn to someone, or click with someone because of our similarities or differences. What qualities do you admire most in a person?

**Sara:** Sensibility, stability, strength, dependability, quirkiness.

**Connie:** A great place to say thank you for a wonderful interview, Sara. Before we say good-bye is there anything I've forgotten to ask that you'd like the readers and fans to know?

**Sara:** I'd love to invite everyone to check out my website at [www.tiralainn.com](http://www.tiralainn.com). I keep a running blog there, plus post excerpts from *Book of Days*, *The Spartan and the Fox* and other upcoming titles. I also have a Yahoo group: [groups.yahoo.com/group/tiralainn](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/tiralainn), and everyone's invited to join! I post lots of members-only goodies here, including excerpts and deleted scenes from my books. Plus I love hosting contests, and being a member of my forum is the only way you can be entered to win some great prizes!

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Thanks, Sara! I enjoyed our visit very much!

*Book Of Days* is a current release by Double Dragon e-Books.

**For those of you who would like more information about Sara Reinke, please take a moment to visit her Website [www.tiralainn.com](http://www.tiralainn.com).**

**Comment or respond** to Sara's interview and we'll post your comments below!

Top  
Author's Interviews

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