

Spotlight on new author Kelley St. John

By Dianna Love Snell

Dianna: Tell us how you came up with the idea for your debut single title, GOOD GIRLS DON'T, being released December 2005 by Warner Books.

Kelley: I read an article in a newspaper about European alibi agencies and learned that they had recently started operating in the United States. That article piqued my curiosity and started a round of research in agencies that specialize in helping cheaters. I thought, *"How could someone work at a place like that?"* Obviously, the person would have to have a really good reason (Lettie does). And then I wondered, *"What would happen if that person had to lie to someone they cared about?"* Talk about a dilemma, particularly for a bad girl who wants to be good. Te-dah! GOOD GIRLS DON'T was born.

Dianna: How long did it take you to sell and what was the most difficult hurdle?

Kelley: It took thirty-six months from my first submission to "the call." When the book hits the press, it will be just under four years. You can read about my call, which involved 3-year-old chocolate, at www.kelleystjohn.com, along with the call stories of over 150 additional authors.

The most difficult hurdle was having the patience required to give editors, agents and readers the necessary time to review the book. When I put that first manuscript in the mail, I thought—okay...4 days until it hits New York; 2 weeks for the editor to read and make a decision; 6 weeks top until I've got that contract. Um-hmmm. (Anyone have ocean front property in Arizona?)

Dianna: As a prolific author, what other genres do you write and what is the status of those projects?

Kelley: Besides sexy contemporary, I also write quirky women's fiction, romantic suspense, mystery and non-fiction. The projects are at various stages of the publication process.

Dianna: What is your normal writing week like, and how has it changed since selling?

Kelley: I'm generally up at 5:00 a.m. and writing by 5:30 (coffee is a must!). I typically write six hours per day five days per week. My goal is a scene (usually a chapter) per day. My writing week hasn't changed, though instead of continually writing new books, I now devote some weeks to the revision window.

Dianna: Do you travel to many conferences and speak? What sort of promotional plan do you have?

Kelley: In the past twelve months, I've attended ten conferences/events and have given eight presentations. My publicist at Warner primarily structures the promotional plan; however, I acquired corporate sponsors to provide a boost to the planned promotions.

Dianna: Do you have a critique group? How many people read your work before the pages reach your editor?

Kelley: I'm not in a critique group. For the initial submission, two people (my agent and my husband) read my work prior to it reaching my editor. However, I go over it meticulously before submitting; I want those pages and that story as clean as possible when she has the first read. After revisions, several people

read the book before it goes back to the editor. At this point, I want it to shine like there's no tomorrow. However, even after those revisions come back, I may need a bit of editor-suggested polish. Case in point: my editor, Devi Pillai, asked me to add a prologue during round one of revisions. In round two, she decided the prologue was no longer necessary, and it didn't make the final cut. However, because I loved the prologue, she agreed to let me include a DVD-outtakes type section on my site called "The Cutting Room Floor" where the prologue, as well as other deleted scenes and the alternate ending, are available for readers.

Dianna: Tell us something about your background and how you started writing.

Kelley: I have always wanted to write and have written *something* ever since my hand could hold a pencil. I've made the statement that a day without writing would equate to a day without breathing. That's true for me. Seriously. I love to write—love it!

After college, I accepted a college counselor's advice and "followed the money" by taking a job working for NASA subcontractors instead of pursuing my dream of writing fiction. If I could do it over, I wouldn't have waited to start on the dream. But my first writing career taught me to write quickly and consistently—and to always meet deadlines. Another plus to my background is the immeasurable fountain of information I gained through the position. True, I can't write about classified material; however, I can realistically tell a story that uses my background to its fullest potential. I utilize that knowledge in my romantic suspense novels and wouldn't have been able to write that type of detail without the NASA background. As far as my background for writing the sexy, sassy contemporaries, all I can say is I know what it's like to be crazy in love, and I owe that knowledge to the sexiest Cajun on the planet.

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