

A Diva's Chronicles...



WHO I AM

by Jennifer Bianco

June 2009 :: Issue 11

How many times have you wondered exactly what *voice* means and how you go about finding yours? Most writers who respond to this question say, "I can't put my finger on it, but I know it when I see it." Unfortunately, they're accurate. It's what makes one writer's villain wield a subcompact Glock 36 and another a Conair curling iron. Used correctly, both can be deadly. But still, knowing this didn't help me in figuring out what *voice* meant.

I grew up in a "scary" family. We loved to scare one another. I believe I was 10 when my mother and aunt took my cousin and I to see *The Exorcist* in the theatres. I have very fond memories of my aunt and I going to another's aunt's house at night. We'd rattle her doorknob, bang on her windows (why the police weren't called I don't know) and sneak inside, hiding under her bed—only to jump out at just the right time. This was our fun!

When I dreamt of being a writer, it naturally involved creating books of suspense and horror. I love being scared. It only seemed fitting that I'd return the delight. And dark romantic suspense was exactly what I started writing 4 years ago when I decided to take this career seriously.

Dead bodies, serial killers, bloody footprints...

Those words inspired me, thrilled me. They were a part of me.

Little did I know...

Two years into my chosen path, I signed up to be an apprentice in Romance Divas' Mentor Program, and I lucked out when my mentor was Gemma Halliday. She worked with me on my very flat manuscript and taught this newbie all about show vs. tell. Her book, *Spying in High Heels*, was the first chick lit novel I'd ever read. Gemma has a powerful voice. One that didn't leave me once I put the book down. Then, solely as a joke, I penned my first chick lit.

Suddenly people were saying what a great voice *I* had.

Excuse me?

I wasn't funny and I didn't do "fluffy" stories of *shopping, clothing and stilettos*. I don't even like any of those things. I'm dark and twisty. But I couldn't ignore the comments and the new confidence it gave me. For the next two years, I struggled with the choice of what to write. I still yearned to write dark and scary, yet another part of me was suddenly attracted to those bright girly covers.

I received a lot of advice from fellow writers. Some said to go ahead and write what was easier. I didn't want the easy route. I wanted my passion. I tried to ignore this newfound voice and focused on my dark writing. But for reasons I couldn't understand at the time, my second novel was another chick lit. This one received a full request from an editor at Pocket books (still waiting with abated breath). In hindsight, it was all so obvious, but not to this stubborn woman. I would prove to myself I could write dark and would teach myself to write it well. I'm hard working, determined and ambitious.

While working on a supernatural thriller, I grew slightly depressed and somewhat angry. The words became forced, and the entire task left me very unsatisfied. I continued writing, believing all I needed was practice. I could make it sparkle in the editing stage, surely. However, it was during these edits that it dawned on me.

It wasn't about what was easy or what *could be* learned. It was about my natural voice. Writing chick lit wasn't simply easy. The dialogue, the internal monologue and even some of the actions were how I personally spoke and behaved in life. By denying this, I wasn't being true to myself. I was trying to change my voice to become something I thought was sexy and exciting—something that thrilled me but wasn't natural to me. As a parent, I've spent so many years showing and telling my kids to be themselves, not to listen to peer pressure and that as long as they remain true to who they are, they'd be much better off. And here I was ready to do the exact opposite for myself. All of this hit me one day and I knew I had to let go of the passion and embrace my natural talent.

It's now been two months since I've made this decision. I still write about dead bodies and bloody footprints but in a fun tone. It's amazing how clear the difference is between my dark and light work. Those first two years I used to fret over how flat and boring my writing sounded. I hoped I only needed to gain experience. I hadn't realized I was simply writing in the wrong genre and POV.

I'll never stop loving horror and thrillers, and now my daughter's old enough for me to hide in a darkened room or closet and fly out at the right moment, but I'm also excited about this other me. The one who's found a new passion and loves



Dead bodies, Gucci handbags and bloody Manolo Blahnik prints.

About JENNIFER BIANCO:

Prior to living her dream life, Jennifer worked in retail, food service, life insurance (yes, she actually received an income reading death certificates) and medical billing. She's written articles for a medical billing site's newsletter and edited articles, manuscripts and copy for print and websites.

Now, she continues editing, spends her days homeschooling her two children and creates light, fun and hopefully funny mysteries of desperation, love and secrets. In her spare time, she enjoys singing (sometimes off-key and usually the wrong words), cooking, playing games and being goofy with her kids.

Originally from Long Island, NY, Jennifer currently resides in Western Massachusetts with her children, the love of her life and a gray-striped kitty.

For more on Jennifer, visit <http://www.jenniferbianco.com>