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Christie Craig - from dyslexic to humorous romantic suspense writer extraordinaire

 5 comments



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by Teri Thackston, [Houston Romance Novels Examiner](#)

Houston area writer Christie Craig is a true working-writer success story. Dyslexic from childhood, she has built an amazing career as a writer, speaker and teacher. Her stories are filled with romance of course, but also a generous helping of humor, action and suspense.

When did you decide you wanted to tell stories for a living?

"I sort of knew I was good at telling tales early on. I remember being four, Mom was on her clean-plate kick and I convinced her that I'd taken a liking to all the veggies she loaded on my plate. Of course, she found my hiding spot behind the refrigerator after about a week when it started growing moldy and aromatic.

In all seriousness, I've always had an imagination and would create stories in my head. Coming up with them was easy, but writing them never felt possible. I was 23 years old, had a tenth grade education, and was a mother of one, when my new husband pressured me into answering the question: What do you want to do for the rest of your life? I told him the whacky ambition of writing all the crazy stories in my head. His encouragement, and probably just verbalizing my goal, was my first step to making my dreams come true."

How difficult was it for a kid with dyslexia to grow into a successful romance novelist?

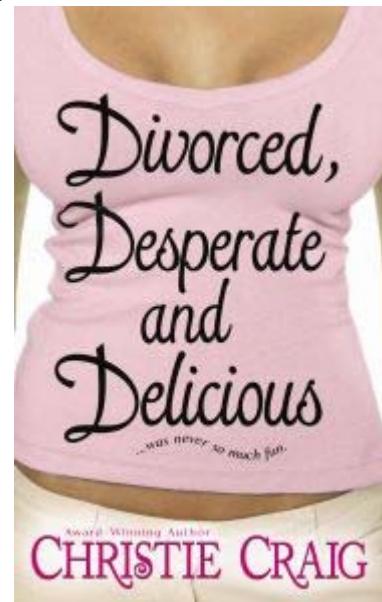
"You know, I seriously believe that I succeeded in this very hard business not in spite of the dyslexia, but in part because of it. Nothing came easy for me, and I didn't expect writing to be any different. So the most needed tool to make it in this business I already had tucked inside my pocket. And that tool was perseverance. So what if I got 10,000 rejections, maybe the next one wouldn't be a rejection.

The second way this whacky wiring in my head helped me was that dyslexics have a knack of being intuitive. We pick up on people's emotions. Sort of how a blind person learns to hear things that normal people don't hear, a dyslexic person reads emotions, body language, and the tone of one's voice. So I could easily tap into human emotions, add my imagination and—bingo—I had some talent to help me along.

Oh sure, I leave out words when I write: so, to, the, an, and. I also get things backwards sometimes. And I know how to spell, but that doesn't mean I do it when I write. My first drafts are seriously littered with mistakes. I can even misspell words that I know how to spell. Like the word "writer". I can read "righter" and when proofing it, not catch the misspelling. Specialists say it's because I hear the words when I read and proof my work, and it sounds right so my mind doesn't catch it. And my mind adds the missing words, so I don't catch them either."

That sounds tough. How do you manage to find a correct those kinds of errors?

"I've learned that if I can distance myself from my work for several weeks, I catch a lot more. And my storytelling abilities are more on the mark, so I help other writers with their stories and they help me find my typos. It's a win/win, you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours, kind of business."



After years of trying and getting so close, you finally sold 4 books in a single day. Tell us about that.

"Well, I actually sold a novel in '94 and was unable to sell the second. But I had found I also had a knack of writing creative essays. So I started working for magazines. When my precious daughter started college and the university had the nerve to think they needed to be paid for teaching such a fabulous child, I had to start bringing in a lot more money. I knew I couldn't continue to pursue novel writing and make the income I needed. So I pushed fiction to the back burner and worked solely for the magazine market. My daughter graduated six years later with two degrees and I graduated with over 3000 national magazine credits. And the university didn't feel bad about taking every dime of the profits, either."

She walked across the stage to get her diploma in May of 2002. In June, I had an idea for a novel. I cut back on writing freelance and started back on fiction. I wrote book after book. I submitted and got rejection after rejection, but I didn't give up. Late 2006, I had eight completed novels and six proposals written. I had managed to snag an agent, and was entering—and winning—fiction contests. After winning another contest with several of my books, my agent called. In her New York accent she asked, "Are you sitting down?" My southern-drawl of an answer came quick. 'No, but I've worked my dad-blasted tail off and I can take this news standing up. I've sold a book, haven't I?' When she quickly answered, 'No,' my heart dropped. Then she said, 'You haven't sold a book. You sold four.' Of course, then I had to sit down!"

That's an amazing accomplishment. So far your most recently published books are all romantic suspense with a touch of humor. Is there another subgenre of romance that you'd like to write?

"Well, just one little correction. To say my books are touched with humor is sort of like saying someone is a little bit pregnant. Yes, I have my serious moments, but humor drives my books. I've been compared by many reviewers to Janet Evanovich. And I'm tickled pink to be anywhere near a sentence with her name in it. My book Weddings Can Be Murder is about . . . well, my nervous puker of a heroine meets my sympathy puker of a hero. Of course, there are other things going on, like a murder and a wedding, which gives my heroine a lot to be nervous about. I know, it sounds crazy but puking is funny. That book has just been nominated by Romantic Times for its Reviewer's Choice Award as one of the best romantic suspense of 2008. The fact that I'm in the running with five New York Times best-selling authors is an honor so huge that it curls my toes.

I come from an Alabama family who viewed life through humor. It's how we dealt with good times and bad. Will I ever write darker books, where humor isn't a main character? Maybe. I can be pretty scary at times, too, but I think my humor will always be present in my voice."

Who are your favorite authors and what is it that really strikes you about their work?

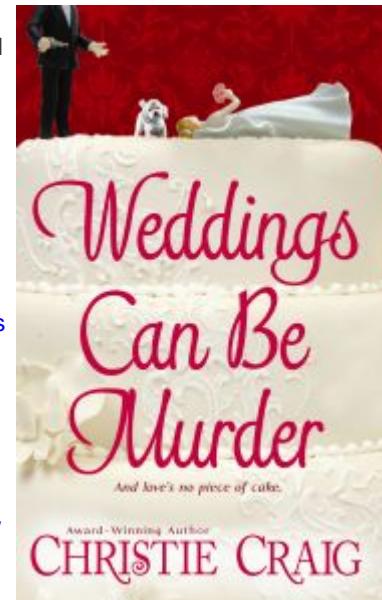
"This is a hard question. I read across the board: fiction, nonfiction, and skip around in genres, too. I'm a big believer in the fact that you can never stop learning. I think it's Murphy's Law that if a person thinks they know it all, then "IT" changes. So I read a lot of how-to write books, so I can continue to grow as a writer. As for fiction, I'll admit I love romance most of all. I gotta have the happily ever after ending. And I love to

laugh. So I'm a big fan of Rachael Gibson and Jennifer Cruise. But then I also read the darker stuff. I just finished reading Sharie Kohler's Kiss of a Dark Moon and Kim Lenox's Night Falls Darkly. I enjoy Colleen Thompson's dark suspenses. And yes, these are local authors and I'm sucking up, but it's no lie that their work intrigues me.

What makes a book work for me are the characters. If I fall in love with the hero and heroine—even if they are puking—a reader has me hooked."

Do you have any advice for other writers?

"Never, never, ever, ever give up. Keep working at it.



Keep learning, keep improving your craft. Writing is my passion, and if it is yours, then quitting isn't an option. You write on blind faith like I did for years. You never know when that call will come in."

Do you have anything specific that you want to say to your readers?

"I hope my zany, humorous tales of romance, of suspense, and of life at its wackiest offers them a little escapism from the everyday stress. Laughter is not only needed in these bad economic times, it helps us stay healthy. Did you know that laughing a hundred times is equivalent to being on a rowing machine for ten minutes? But mostly, I want to say thank you! Without the readers, a writer couldn't make it."

Find out more about Christie on her website at www.christie-craig.com or read more about her humorous home and work life at <http://killerfictionwriters.blogspot.com>. Christie posts there every Tuesday.

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