



The Seattle area is home to many talented people, among them author **Kate Christie**. She has published two novels to date, *Solstice* and *Leaving L.A.*, with a couple more in the works. Christie grew up in Southwest Michigan, "studied women in a major way" at Smith College and then ended up here in the Pacific Northwest where she attended grad school. She and her wife Kris decided to stay and make Washington their home and have added to their family recently with a beautiful baby girl. Recently, Christie was kind enough to sit down and answer some questions I had for her about her life and career.

You grew up in Michigan and attended college in Massachusetts. What brought you to Washington State?

You know, I moved to Seattle sight unseen after college based on a gut feeling. I'd heard that the Pacific Northwest was beautiful with mountains and lakes and ocean views, and after living in heavily paved London and New York my first year out of school, I was ready for a green city. That's why when my girlfriend of the time and I were crossing Eastern Washington's high desert landscape and saw a sign for Seattle only 100-plus miles away, we started to worry. But then I-90 crested the spine of the Cascade Mountains and dropped down into Western Washington, and we heaved a sigh of relief at the sight of water and greenery on all sides. I felt at home here immediately. I've heard a lot of Michiganders say the same thing.

How did you come to start writing?

I wrote my first collection of short stories in fifth grade, about a clumsy, literate, crime-fighting dog I called the "Dogged Crusader," and was hooked. I turned to novels the summer before my junior year of high school when I was required to wear rather unattractive head gear for my braces, 24/7. Too embarrassed to venture beyond my driveway, I holed up in the den and churned out four hundred pages of a science fiction novel, "Future Run," about a teen-aged girl who travels a hundred years back in time from 2085 to escape a global war. Who knows-without braces, I may never have been bit by the novel-writing bug! But probably I would have. I think I was born a writer, just like I was born a lesbian.

Who and/or what inspires you as a writer?

Hmm, inspiration-are you asking about a muse? Because I'd have to say I'm muse-free. I'm lucky enough to be one of those people for whom writing comes easily and is mostly pain-free, process-wise. I've always loved Ray Bradbury's work, and early on I read an essay where he said he aims for a thousand words a day, every day. I've made that my goal, too, and while I don't always reach it-living my life is important to me, too, and not only because it allows me to continue developing writing material-I am happiest when I'm consistently productive. When I can't find the time or energy to write

for days or weeks at a time, I get grouchy and generally unpleasant. So making the time to write is good for me and my loved ones, as my wife will attest.

Your first two books have been lesbian romances. Do you plan to continue in that genre or would you like to write in other genres as well in the future?

I like writing romances because I'm a romantic at heart. I also see writing lesbian love stories as a consciously political act-the love that dare not speak its name takes center stage in gay and lesbian romance novels, which explore the many facets of the part of queer life that is most denigrated by the dominant culture. That said, I also write other kinds of stories. Currently I'm looking for a publisher for a novel I wrote a few years ago, *Family Jewels*, a family drama about the fractured relationship between a twenty-something lesbian and her conservative father. I'm also two-thirds of the way through a new book that, while a love story, probably isn't a traditional lesbian romance, either. Rather than conforming my writing to a single genre, I try to write the stories I feel compelled to tell, with the awareness that some novels might be more difficult to find an audience for than others.

How do you feel about doing public readings? And what does it feel like to sign your books for people?

I've only done one reading so far, last year just after the release of *Solstice*, my first novel. I loved it! I was excessively nervous ahead of time, of course, but once I got up there and started reading my prepared materials, I settled in. My favorite was the question and answer session afterward. I was lucky enough to have a crowd of interested readers and writers, and a lengthy conversation about fiction writing and publishing developed organically after the reading. Plus the signing part-I felt a little self-conscious at first, but that quickly gave way to how freakin' cool it was that people, some of them strangers, wanted to buy my book and get it signed! The entire experience made me feel like a "real writer" possibly even more than when I received my first box of author's copies.

I understand you recently became a mother! How has that changed your life and affected your writing?

As a mother yourself, I imagine you know all about the sleep deprivation and mind-blowing joy and utter terror that follows the addition of a newborn to the family. In my case, I also went back to work nearly full-time about a month before our daughter was born, so I'm juggling that as well. I won't pretend my writing routine hasn't suffered. It definitely has. But mainly I feel like I'm in a time of flux, a period of growth that's percolating somewhere in my subconscious. I'm still interested in writing about the old stories I've always been drawn to, but I also feel my mind and heart expanding to encompass more. Of course, that might just be the psychedelic effects of persistent sleep deprivation talking.

What are three things people would be surprised to learn about you?

Hmm, tough one. I usually feel like I'm an open book, if you'll pardon the literary reference. Let's see: (1) I studied the violin from ages 7 to 16 and still play occasionally, much to my dogs' dismay; (2) as a young teenager, I was addicted to Harlequin romances; and (3) I once sold stuffed animals door-to-door in London. Long story...

Can you tell me a little about your newest novel?

Beautiful Game, the novel due out in July, is another love story, this time featuring two college athletes at a fictional university in San Diego. Cam Wallace is a happily out lesbian soccer player on scholarship, while Jess Maxwell is an All-American tennis player who only seems to have room in her life for sport and school. The novel follows Cam and Jess through the year that changes everything. I'm also at work on a new novel that has all of my favorite themes-love, illness, death-along with a slightly more complex plot than any I've tried before. As I mentioned before, I'm two-thirds of the way through now, and am hoping to find time to finish it before summer!

Where and when can people see you in person for a reading or a book signing?

I'm in talks with Village Books, my favorite independent bookstore in Bellingham, WA, where I went to grad school, for a reading this summer in August. Other than that, with the new job and baby, I haven't spent a whole lot of time thinking about promotion. Someday I would like to road trip from Seattle to L.A., with stops for readings-and redwoods-along the way. I'll keep you posted!



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