

I grew up on a variety of dirt roads in the wilds of Colorado, relying on fantasy and imagination to pass the time, along with outings to smell tree bark, climb rocks and wander, lonely as a cloud, along the dirt roads, getting rocks in my shoes and communing with the deer. It was a simple, beautiful place to grow up, but with only 3 students in my class from kindergarten through 2nd grade, something was needed to pass the time, and my imagination was supplemented by voracious reading habits. From a very young age I was drawn to crime fiction, most likely because I thought Perry Mason was God. No, not a god, but God himself. No flowing robes and long white beard for the younger me, when I said my nightly prayers, it was Perry Mason who appeared in my thoughts.

Twisted.

And that's the best word to describe me. My novels are dark and thrilling, full of cops and killers and things that go bump in the night. Which is wrong on many levels, since I grew up reading lovely books pilfered from my parents' bookshelves. Poetry and romance and science fiction. But along the way to those formative teenage years, I found John Grisham and Patricia Cornwell and James Patterson, and a certain bloodlust was born.

My life altered in unimaginable ways when I was 14 and my parents moved me from the backwoods of Colorado to Washington, D.C. Not having to drive 30 miles to the nearest store was only one of many culture shocks. I attended Langley High School in McLean, Virginia, where I didn't fit in at all, but was surrounded by wonderful friends and teachers anyway. I went on to graduate from Randolph-Macon Woman's College with a double major in Politics and English Creative Writing and a minor in Economics. I thought I'd go on to earn an MFA, but my thesis advisor wouldn't write a recommendation, declaring in hushed tones that I wasn't good enough a writer to ever be published.

Ha! Showed her.

But at the time, her words cut like a knife through my budding artist's soul, so I quit writing and went into politics. And thank goodness I did, because I used my meager writing skills to get into George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management, and on the first night, a really cute boy walked in. His name was Randy, he was from Nashville, Tennessee, and the next night, when he kissed me for the first time, I knew I was in love. Capital *L* love.

Everything happens for a reason.

Fast-forward through a succession of incredibly cool jobs including working in the Executive Office of the President in the Office of Science and Technology Policy, (yep, The White House) and being a dogsbody/speechwriter to the Secretary of Commerce. I went on to work for my father's alma mater, Lockheed Martin, and started a love-hate relationship with marketing.

I married the cute boy on a warm summer day, and after a few years in the D.C. rat race, he decided he wanted to go home. So we settled in Nashville. The perfect mix of city and country, because remember, at heart I am a country mouse.

And of course I couldn't find a job. And then my cat died. And just as I was thinking maybe Nashville wasn't such a great idea, another kitten came into my life. A sick kitten, who needed treatment to live. We named her Jade, and I ended up working for the vet who saved her life. But that job wasn't a good match, and as I was getting ready to quit, I hurt my back and needed surgery to fix it.

And guess what happened then?

I found a writer by the name of John Sandford. Three books into his Prey series, I was bubbling over with ideas. And realized I wanted to be a writer again.

Eight years after that ill-fated conversation with my thesis advisor, I dipped my toe back into the creative waters. In college my advisors used to hate my work, saying about my stories, and I quote, "...it reads too much like B-Grade detective fiction." So that's where I focused my

efforts, because one person's "B-Grade detective fiction" is another's Hitchcock, Hemingway, Du Maurier, Nabokov, Connolly, Sandford, Child, Gerritsen, Gardner, Spindler, Kava, Abbott, Flynn, Coben...

Many novels later, I still live in Nashville, which I adore, with my husband of many years, whom I also adore, with the ghost of the kitten who set me on the path to becoming a writer again. I answer the call of the Muse daily, and am thrilled that I can share my crazy little inventions with you.