



WRITER of the Month



Kris Tualla

This month, Celtic Hearts Romance Writers member Kris Tualla discusses her career.

Please start off by telling us about yourself; where you were born, where you are now.

KRIS: I am a midwestern gal, transplanted by choice to Phoenix. I have been quite happily baking here in the desert since 1975.

Is there anything about your life that would surprise most people?

KRIS: I am a retired high school teacher, but not of English or History. Considering I'm now a writer and my passion is historical fiction, this surprises most people.

Please tell us about the stories you write.

KRIS: How much space do you have? All of my heroes – and one heroine, so far – are members of the fictional Hansen family of Arendal, Norway. Different generations, different continents, the same Viking blood. This gives my books a common thread, while at the same time allowing me the freedom to explore any time or location from 1354 in Scotland to 1840 on the Santa Fe Trail!

What do you think is the key to a memorable romantic story?

KRIS: Characters that are real, believable, and relatable. They have to be written in such a way that their conflicts are deep enough that readers give a hoot what happens to them.

Where do you get your story ideas?

KRIS: My characters begin to grow in my mind. I keep writing until they are satisfied with the telling.

Which of your stories has been your favorite to write?

KRIS: That's a hard one. Probably my 17th-century deaf private investigator. He'll be the last one out of the chute; early 2012 it looks like. I know a little ASL (American Sign Language) but when I think about how he communicates I am so drawn into HIS language that the ASL fades away.

Which character have you had the most fun creating?

KRIS: Him. The detective.

Which character have you had the hardest time creating?

KRIS: The hero who is NOT a Hansen (it's HER in that story).

Do you believe a writer should follow the current market trend in order to make a sale?

KRIS: I began with American historicals and Norse heroes. So, no. I am following a different publishing path as a result of being rejected because – and I quote - “Publishers like their boxes.”

How many hours a week do you spend writing?

KRIS: I spend 60-70 hours a week on my career as a whole. This includes writing, editing & promotion. I am an Authorpreneur.

What are some of the ups and downs you have encountered before becoming published?

KRIS: Constant rejection – coupled with praise of my writing – because I don't fit the kilt/duke historical boxes. I'll be using one rejection as a cover quote. Seriously.

The announcement by Dorchester that it will concentrate only on e-publishing in the future is one sign of the e-book “revolution.” Have your stories been published in e-book form?

KRIS: Yes. I uploaded them myself, for free, on Kindle and Smashwords. It has very lucrative potential. B&N's Nook keeps emailing me; but they don't seem to have gotten their PubIt option up and running yet.

Comments were made after the RWA 2010 conference that e-authors and readers don't make connections through book signings. As an author, how do you feel about that? As a reader?

KRIS: RWA has their collective head in the sand. E-authors should either have POD copies available to sign, OR they can sign postcards of covers. I don't see this as a problem IF the signing is adequately managed.

Suggestions were made that e-authors could sign postcards with a photo of the cover on one side and a discount coupon on the other or that the e-books could be produced as CDs and authors could sign those covers. Do you have suggestions to bridge the gap between e-author and e-reader?

KRIS: As an avid e-READER (I love my Kindle!) I understand that this the way of the future. I'm good with that. We just need to think differently and find what works. Bookmarks obviously won't.

It has been suggested also that e-published authors might ask their publishers to increase their participation in future RWA conferences. How do you feel about that suggestion?

KRIS: GREAT! But RWA needs to wake up and smell the e-ink. They are still focusing ALL of their energies on publishing avenues that are disappearing.

What is the downside if e-publishers do not participate in RWA conferences?

KRIS: The downside will be for RWA. Authors will switch to RT, RomCon, or other venues/organizations that recognize alternative publishing options.

If, as has been suggested, brick&mortar bookstores will decrease to a negligible number by the end of 2012, what other promotional opportunities would you suggest for writers?

KRIS: Don't wait until 2012! Authors should already be grabbing opportunities! My new blog series on being an Authorpreneur is tackling EXACTLY that issue: <http://kristualla.wordpress.com/>

Some of our members have expressed concern over an emerging gap between readers who can afford e-readers and books and those who cannot afford the technology.

KRIS: E-readers now cost less than many cell phones - and books can be read on many cell-phones. Renting the device isn't cost-effective. If someone wants to read, they will find a way. If they don't, they won't.

Have you considered self-publishing? If so, why?

KRIS: Yes – I am INDEPENDENTLY publishing a trilogy this fall with my agent's permission. Meanwhile, two REQUESTED manuscripts are languishing at four traditional publishers and have been there for several months. Isn't the "why" obvious?

What challenges do you face in your writing endeavors?

KRIS: Writing outside of the box – and doing so on purpose – has thrown up a few roadblocks.

What's next for you?

KRIS: If I don't hear back from the publishers after a year, I'll withdraw the manuscripts, release my agent, and continue on my own path. Successfully.

Where can readers find you?

KRIS: <http://www.KrisTualla.com>
<http://www.GoodnightPublishing.com>