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In



Finders, Seekers, Losers, Keepers, debut novelist Heather J. Rolland finds her muse: the winding roads and off-the-beaten-path restaurants in beautiful, bucolic Upstate New York. Rolland is a lifelong resident of New York's Hudson Valley and shows us rather than tells us all she knows about the terrain in this funny and adventurous new book. Below, my "Writer to Writer" interview with Heather.

JD: How long did it take you to write your novel and could you tell us a little bit about your process?

HR: *Finders, Seekers, Losers, Keepers* was an idea scrawled on a diner placemat, in red ink, folded up in my purse and carried around for two years before it actually got going as anything more than a cast of characters and a wish. When I finally was ready to sit down and write, it poured out of me.

I wrote every day, usually at night, after my daughter went to bed. I was working full time as a school social worker in two different elementary schools, but because I had been threatened with the loss of my job, I was back in graduate school full time pursuing a psychology degree. I was also a single mom, trying to hold together a relationship that demanded a lot of time and care. I wrote in spiral notebooks, and always had one with me. I wrote during my daughter's riding lessons, and sitting in the food court while she wandered around the mall. I wrote at night, at my carefully feng shui-placed writing desk, and I wrote on my lunch hour. Nine months after I started, I had a first draft.

JD: You gave birth!

HR: Yes! But, I had to set it aside, though, because I didn't have the money to publish it myself, and nowhere near enough time to court an agent and pursue the traditional route. It wasn't until I got married in 2007 that I could even begin to think about publication. It finally was the right moment in 2008.

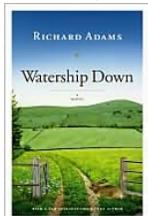
JD: What was your writing experience before and did the idea of writing a novel intimidate you?

HR: No, I wasn't intimidated by the idea of writing a novel, despite having basically zero formal creative writing experience. Amazing chutzpah? Ignorance? A bit of both, I guess. I have always written - journals, poetry, essays, bits and pieces of stories -- ever since I could hold a pen. I chose to commit to writing a novel as I had been reading up a storm with my daughter - first baby books and classics (*Little Bear* - sigh), but we got more and more sophisticated in our tastes, and more and more critical the more we read. By the time she was 12 or so, we were reading some excellent work and really getting into it. I guess it was a two-person book club. Anyway, the idea that I would write a novel was born there, with my daughter. She was a co-collaborator at the beginning - she actually created several of the characters.

JD: What writers have influenced you the most?

HR: Tough question - I can be faddish in who I read and why. I have precious little time to read - between full time employment, and managing a household full of teenagers with rich and complex lives in a world where the car is the only transportation option. I find reading time to be in direct competition for writing time, and lately, writing wins!

In general I prefer young adult fiction, and have been inspired by Dia Calhoun - I maintain that her novel *Firegold* is a perfect story. It is among the most satisfying books I have ever read. I also adore *Bambi* - the original novel by Felix Salten. I find it as rich and multilayered as *Watership Down* - another top favorite.



I also read a lot of nonfiction, including recently working through *The Tao of Physics*, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, and *Time Space and Beyond*. And, of course, I also am addicted to *Sherlock Holmes*! Complete *Sherlock Holmes*, Volume I (Barnes & Noble Classics Series)

JD: What is your favorite stage of the writing process?

HR: While I don't think I have a favorite, I can honestly say that there is no part I dread or despise! Writing *Finders, Seekers, Losers, Keepers* was an incredibly fluid process for me, start to finish. It was easy and fast. The story poured out of me. I felt like I was jogging alongside that story, panting, trying to keep up. That first draft was sheer pleasure. I definitely got high on the excitement of rushing to the page each day to release the flood gates. I wanted to spend time with those characters, I wanted to go hang out at The Eft, I wanted to hear the Gil Knight Trio on

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Unabashedly Bookish features new articles every day from the Book Clubs staff, guest authors, and friends on hot topics in the world of books, language, writing, and publishing. From trends in the publishing business to updates on genre fiction fan communities, from fun lessons on grammar to reflections on literature in our personal lives, this blog is the best source for your daily dose of all things bookish.

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A fantasy world where people's souls go down a spirit stream and end up on Earth when they

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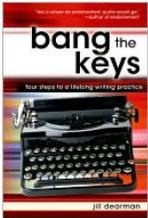
my cd player as I drove to the mall with chattering twelve year olds in the back seat. There were times during the first draft, where I would get stuck, and then I'd coach myself - "Go ahead, just write it badly, but KEEP MOVING!" And I did.

Honey Melon Fudge, the novel I am currently writing, has not been that kind of experience... It has been more of everything - more frustrating, more disappointing, more thrilling, more satisfying... I have been terribly stuck at times, and am finding that I need to dig deeper and find greater courage than Finders Seekers required. All of it is great.

I am self-published, which I confess as if it were some shameful secret, but I have been delighted by the positive reception Finders, Seekers has earned. Every negative prediction about self-publishing has been untrue for me - book stores have been welcoming (at least re: doing readings and events), I have been able to garner a few reviews, and each time I have put myself out there and asked - the answer has been yes. I will definitely self publish Honey Melon Fudge - my experience has been that positive.

JD: Thanks, Heather! And folks, for info on this author's upcoming readings go to: <http://www.heatherrolland.com>
So what do you say, writers? Is there an environment you'd love to capture on the page? And to self-publish or go the traditional route? Weigh in! And for more writerly tips, exercises and chat, please visit my website: <http://www.bangthekeys.com>

And check out my new book for writers,



Bang the Keys. I'll be teaching at <http://www.riversedgewriters.com> in the Catskill Mountains of Upstate New York this weekend where Heather will be joining the class (and that includes her characters too).

Happy hiking and happy writing!

And finally:

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link at the top of any page on BN.com. Once you have a BN.com account and are signed into that, you'll need to click the Sign In link on the Book Clubs (it's below the image of a bookshelf). Again, this club is called Unabashedly Bookish. Any problem - try the Help board.

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by [Zoola](#) on 07-22-2009 01:43 PM

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Thanks for another great interview. It is always fascinating to read about the different ways in which people find inspiration, create time to work, and get their completed work out there.

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by [BigPoppa](#) on 07-22-2009 01:50 PM

Options

Great interview -- congratulations to both of you on your new books! Having grown up in the Hudson Valley myself, I am well-versed in its many charms and its vast potential for literary exploration. And as a new parent and writer, I also appreciate the constant struggle of trying to find time to write and to read. There was a short phase after my baby was born when I could read short stories while holding her on my lap, but that soon came to an end (though just last night I was able to read her the introduction to Reginald Shepherd's "Lyric Postmodernisms" -- along with Margaret Wise Brown's "The Big Red Barn" -- while putting her to bed). Kudos to Ms. Rolland for eking out drafts while juggling her numerous responsibilities, and thanks for sharing these inspiring words.

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by [BLOGGER Jill_Dearman](#) on 07-22-2009 02:45 PM

Options

Thanks Big Poppa (wow, I've always wanted to say that!) So fascinating how reading to children influences so many writer/parents' lives. thanks for this. Jill

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by [Heather_Rolland](#) on 07-22-2009 08:31 PM

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die. Sound familiar? <http://bit.ly/4FuJdG> about 23 hours ago

Stop by and chat with Debbie Macomber. <http://bit.ly/sgTVQ1> day ago

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Thank you, Jill, for the opportunity to be a part of this community!

Not much is more exciting and inspiring to me than to catch a glimpse of my work as seen through someone else's eyes. Perspective is everything... getting the chance to stand back and view Finders Seekers from a new vantage point is invaluable.

It only gets better - getting FSLK out into the world, and now in the final stages of completing the first draft of Honey Melon Fudge (my second novel) - I can safely say that I am loving this busy, intense, writerly life. It does get a little nuts, but my almost 15 year old daughter has started work on her own project, and to hope/believe that I have inspired her to go for it feels superb.

Gotta run 😊
Heather

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by [starscream](#) on 07-22-2009 09:13 PM

Options

This interview, I felt, focused on all the key points that curious readers would have asked and had very satisfying answers. Heather is a wonderful writer and proved that in Finders, Seekers, Losers, Keepers and in this interview. Great job Heather and I hope the next book is just as good.

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by [Shotmonster](#) on 07-22-2009 09:14 PM

Options

Another inspiring interview, especially the "just sit down and get it done any way you can" aspect. Seeing the complications Heather was presented with in finding time to write a novel might make a lot of us realize just how good we have it.

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by [DeborahTaylor](#) on 07-22-2009 09:17 PM

Options

Great interview! I really enjoy it when the setting of a novel becomes one of its characters. Places have lives and stories of their own. I look forward to reading Finders, Seekers, Losers, Keepers.

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by [flammeus](#) on 07-22-2009 10:21 PM

Options

Wonderful interview. Ms. Dearman gives us so much more than a bio and quick synopsis. We get the flavor of the novel along with an intimate glimpse into its creation and creator. Ms Rolland clearly has a passion for writing that is compelling and inspiring. In fact, a visit to her website invites you in to the Finders, Seekers, losers, Keepers world in a most engaging way. The first chapter is available as a teaser and I noted that she is doing a reading in New Paltz, NY on August 1st. I plan on getting my copy signed there.

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by [EddeeK](#) on 07-23-2009 07:57 AM

Options

Thanks for a great interview that makes me want to read this book! And I especially appreciate the advice: "Go ahead, just write it badly, but KEEP MOVING!" -- so true, and I need to be reminded often!

Cheers.

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