

A Bestseller Spills Her Secrets

WITH MORE THAN 50 bestsellers to her name, Jayne Ann Krentz knows a thing or two about romantic suspense. And she's back with one of her most suspenseful novels yet, ***Secret Sisters*** (Berkley), out this month.

What steered you to romantic suspense instead of traditional thrillers? My books have certainly become more complex and more suspense-oriented, but it's the way the characters react to the danger that fascinates me. At the core of my stories there is always an exploration of what it means to be a family and/or a community and what it means to keep secrets. And there is always the

issue of trust. These are the themes that compel me as a writer. *Secret Sisters* is a good example. This story is where I've been headed as a writer for a while — and now I'm there. I love this feeling.

***Secret Sisters* had some real twists that I didn't see coming. When you're writing a story like this, how early in the writing do you know all those twists and turns yourself?** I am always surprised by the final twists and turns of a story. I write on the edge of my seat. It's nerve-wracking, but it's the only way I can do it.

The mystery in this story spans decades. Did the

long timespan make it harder or easier to craft the conflict? For me, writing is all about discovering secrets — and the most interesting secrets are those kept by families. So, yes, the longer timespan is useful in some ways. But I'm not fussy. A good secret works, regardless of the timespan.

Have you ever learned anything from the villains you write? Do they have any skills or ideas that you'd like to steal — to use for good and not evil, of course? The interesting things about villains are their motivations and the lengths they'll go to protect their secrets — not their skill set.



If you were one of your romantic suspense heroines, what sort of shenanigans would you get up to? Would you be able to take on your adversaries? Me? Nope, I doubt if I'd survive one of my own plots. But that's why I love writing so much. I get to do all the stuff that might get me killed in real life.

— Jennifer Peters

For more, visit JayneAnnKrentz.com

Holding Readers Close

MEGAN HART TREATS readers to a sensual yet serious story with this month's ***Hold Me Close*** (Mira). We asked the author to fill us in on Effie and Heath's journey, which began under an atypical, frightening circumstance: their abduction by the same man.

Throughout the novel, Effie asks Heath to hold her close, yet continually pushes him away. What points in their relationship are most frustrating and most rewarding to you? The frustration with Effie's reluctance to accept Heath's love for her felt valid to me, based on what they'd been through, even though, as the author, I could say, "It's all going to work out," and she really should've been better about it. But then there wouldn't have been much of a story to read! The end of *Hold Me Close* was personally rewarding for me; one, because I finished a book that turned out so much better than I'd even hoped, but also because of

how Effie and Heath find their way to each other.

Elisabeth and Will of *Tear You Apart* aren't your only artists: Effie is also quite creative. What is it about the art field that you're drawn to when writing erotica? I've wondered the same thing. Maybe it's because I can't draw or paint at all, or because I have a complicated relationship with "art." I love art, but I'm also very hard on what I consider "art." Elisabeth in *Tear You Apart* works with art but can't make it. Effie, on the other hand, paints and draws and sketches and lives her art. When I'm writing, I try to give my characters backstory and reasons for why they do what they do, and part of whatever career they've chosen is often linked to who they are inside. Ultimately, even though I know it's rare for people to make a living with their creative passions, I do, so sometimes, I let my characters be successful with theirs, too!



Staind, John Legend and Barenaked Ladies were on your shuffle while writing *Hold Me Close*. What song — from your playlist or otherwise — best describes Effie and Heath's relationship? Asking me to pick just one song isn't fair! There are always so many. For Effie and Heath, though, "Landline" by Greg Laswell featuring Ingrid Michaelson might be the best one. Or it could be "Beautiful With You" by Halestorm. Or "Hurt Makes It Beautiful" by Hugo. Or "Without You" by Jason Marns. Yeah, definitely that one ...

— Danielle Valente

For more, visit MeganHart.com