

Author Island Interviews



Marcia James' Interview

Marcia James writes hot, humorous romances and finished in eleven Romance Writers of America contests before selling her first comic romantic suspense, *At Her Command*. Her latest release is *Sex and the Single Therapist*, a comic romantic mystery. In her eclectic career, she has shot submarine training videos, organized celebrity-filled nonprofit events and had her wedding covered by *People Magazine*. In addition to writing fiction, Marcia presents author promotion workshops. After years of dealing with such sexy topics as how to safely install traffic lights, she is enjoying “researching” and plotting her novels' steamy love scenes with her husband and hero of many years.

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Please tell us about your current release.

Sex and the Single Therapist is the first in my "Dr. Ally Skye, Sex Therapist" comic romantic mystery series. Ally, with her Las Vegas insider friends, helps her homicide detective boyfriend solve crimes in Sin City -- much to his dismay. This series features an amateur sleuth, cute dogs, and a sexy romance.

Here's the book blurb:

***Sex and the Single Therapist* blurb:**

A crime of passion...

To clear an innocent friend, sex therapist Dr. Ally Skye investigates a patient's murder. Soon she's trading heated words and hot kisses with a sexy cop. Can this free-spirited amateur sleuth and her Vegas insiders solve the crime before the killer targets her?

A sexy complication...

Cynical homicide detective Zack Crawford has the murder to solve. The last thing he needs is a red-hot sex therapist who haunts his dreams. Ally is trouble and, given her job and his luck, she'd probably grade his performance in bed.

A dynamic duo...

Zack and Ally form an uneasy and sexually charged alliance. Murderers, extortionists and psychos are no match for these reluctant partners. Crime-solving was never this sexy or this fun!

What drew you to the subject of *Sex and the Single Therapist*?

I have a sense of humor that's been described as "offbeat." ;-). And the premise of the series appealed to my slightly bent funny bone. The idea of a female sex therapist/amateur sleuth offers lots of comic possibilities, especially if the homicide detective hero is a "meat-and-potatoes" guy sexually (read "prude"), who's not too keen on the heroine's profession. Ally's specialized knowledge, however, proves useful to the police when they're trying to solve sex-driven crimes. I had a great time writing about these two very different characters who are drawn together by murder and an inconvenient -- put powerful -- attraction.

How did you research *Sex and the Single Therapist*?

The series is set in Las Vegas, which is known for its widely available legal and illegal sexual offerings. Ally could solve a sex-related murder a day and probably not run out of different kinky crimes for years. Researching sex in "Sin City" has been interesting, but it's also led me to some pretty disturbing websites. I'd say the toughest part of the research is the crime scene and forensic procedures. I don't go into graphic detail about the murders in my books, however. The series is a comic one that is closer to cozy mysteries than to thrillers...IF cozy mysteries had lots of love scenes in them. ;-)

Is there anything your *Sex and the Single Therapist* hero or heroine would do that you wouldn't?

Ally teaches yoga, and I flunked out of my yoga course because I can't sit cross-legged due to a screwy left knee. My hero, Zack Crawford, attends autopsies, and I'm so squeamish about blood and such that I don't even watch TV crime shows -- except for Castle because the gore is kept at a minimum and it stars Nathan Fillion. Yum!

What did you enjoy most about writing *Sex and the Single Therapist*?

I enjoy putting my characters into situations where they are "fish out of water." In this series, my prudish detective hero is uncomfortable being attracted to a woman he first mistook for a sex trade worker. As their relationship progresses, Zack's worried she'll expect more from him than "vanilla sex." When Ally jokingly offers to put an ice cube on his male G-spot, he tells her the only way he'd agree is if his G-spot was on his tongue and the ice was in a glass of Scotch. He eventually discovers that lovemaking can be playful and even funny. Ally has a good time "loosening up" Zack a little. ;-)

What was your favorite scene to write in this book?

Zack and Ally's first love scene was my favorite, although their first kiss scene runs a close second. I LOVE writing love scenes. The characters are so emotional and vulnerable that first time especially, and their physical love can often trigger a realization that their hearts are also involved. Love scenes are a big payoff for romance readers, of which I am one.

Do you have a favorite secondary character in *Sex and the Single Therapist*?

I'm very fond of Leslie Kerns, the book's secondary heroine. She's from the South and has many quirky sayings, such as "Just because a cat has kittens in an oven, it doesn't make them biscuits." and "Don't pee down my back and tell me it's raining." I had a lot of fun researching "Southern-speak". Of course, all of my four-legged characters were fun to write, too -- especially Marty, the canine shedding machine.

What are you currently working on?

I'm writing the next book in the "Dr. Ally Skye, Sex Therapist" series: *Death and the Double Entendre*. Someone is murdering the clients of a sex phone service, and Ally consults with the Las Vegas Police Department on the case, much to her detective boyfriend's concern.

Then I'm revising my first manuscript, a comic romantic mystery set at a clothing-optional Caribbean resort.

Do you play music when you write, or do you have to have quiet?

I don't play music while I write because I hear music in words -- cadence, alliteration, rhymes, etc. But I sometimes listen to a specific song to get into a certain frame of mind before writing a scene.

What do you think readers like the most about your books?

My writer's "voice" is humorous, so all of my books and novellas have a mix of comic and sexy elements. My work is definitely R-rated, but the love scenes are romantic as well as detailed. My heroes and heroines are monogamous but adventuresome. I enjoy reading the erotic romances written by my author friends, but I don't use words in my love scenes that I might call a driver who cuts me off in traffic. ;-)

Where do you write?

I have a home office where I do the majority of my work on my desktop computer. The office is filled with too many files, books, and stuffed dogs (because all of my books feature 4-legged characters). But the office is still a cozy "writer's cave." If I go outside on a pretty day -- or when I'm on the road -- I work on my netbook. And if I'm stuck in a doctor's office waiting room, I write long-hand in a print notebook.

What advice would you give new writers?

As important as it is to learn the craft of fiction writing, it's equally important to learn the business side of publishing -- and to do so simultaneously. For example, I teach author promotion workshops, and I see how unprepared most new authors are when it comes

to promoting their brand and their books. There is so much an author can do before getting "The Call" to learn about marketing and to establish his or her pen name.

If you could choose an animal for an avatar, what animal would it be and why?

I do have an animal as an avatar and as a mascot/logo: a Chinese crested hairless dog. I dreamed up a tiny, goofy-looking "crestie" named Smokey as the unlikely undercover drug-sniffing dog in *At Her Command*, my first novel. He was so popular -- and the perfect foil for the big Alpha hero -- that I've included cresties in all of my stories since. 100% of the pets in my books are adopted from shelters or saved from the streets, and I support animal causes. So my crestie logo is a sign that I'm pro-animal, as well as a way to let pet-loving readers know they will always find dogs in my books.