

# A Latte and Some Words

Wednesday, November 14, 2012

## Mara Purl Releases Second Book in the Milford-Haven Series

I recently had a chance to talk with actress and author Mara Purl about her latest release, *Where the Heart Lives*, the second book in the Milford-Haven series. She's received rave reviews. Here's what she had to share with us:



### 1. Tell us a little bit about your series, the Milford-Haven saga.

On one level, the Milford-Haven Novels are pure escape. Get in your virtual car, drive up the virtual California coast and arrive at this gorgeous little fictional town: Main Street and its shops, cafes and art galleries; Touchstone Beach and its long blustery walks; the private art studio of Miranda Jones; the environmental offices of Samantha Hugo; the cozy Sally O'Mally's café; the romantic Michael's Restaurant with its view of the lighthouse. Lose yourself in characters' problems and leave your own behind for a while. In the process, gain perspective and feel refreshed.

On another level, the series is an invitation for a woman to get in closer touch with her own heart. The essence of the series is this: in your heart of hearts, what did you always want to do? Are you doing it yet? If you don't yet know what that might be, you start to find it with book one, *What the Heart Knows*. If you don't yet know where you truly want to live, you continue exploring with the new book, the second in the series, *Where the Heart Lives*. And there are three more books in this pentalogy that will focus on Why, When and Who.

Ultimately, the saga will contain ten novels, and at least twice that many short stories. And these can be read in order, or out of order. But I personally feel its most fun to read them in chronological order. That's how I enjoy reading books.

### 2. Tell us about some of the characters in your new release, *Where the Heart Lives*. Do you see yourself in any of them?

The story's protagonist is wildlife artist Miranda Jones, who grew up privileged and has left the comfort and connections of her San Francisco-area home and career, following her heart to the small coastal town of Milford-Haven, about four hours south, along what's called the Central Coast. It's far more rugged and undiscovered than either San Francisco to its north or Los Angeles to its south. She has two close friends who, oddly enough, don't like each other. Sally O'Mally has also followed her own heart to Milford-Haven having left the farm where she grew up in Arkansas. She's feisty, stubborn, true-blue and has a heart of gold. But she does indulge overhearing as much gossip as she can in her restaurant. Meanwhile, Samantha Hugo, who's about twenty years Miranda's senior, is an accomplished PhD environmentalist with a successful, passionate career. But she has followed her "head" to the Central Coast, and abandoned her "heart" a long time earlier. When her marriage collapsed, she gave up her son for adoption—and that now haunts her as she begins to try to find that son.

I do see myself in two of my characters in particular . . . Miranda Jones and Samantha Hugo. Both are interested in ecology and wildlife, as I am. Miranda is an artist, and so am I, though my art is in writing, theatre and music, where Miranda's is in fine art. Samantha, who's in a more mature chapter of life, has reached a point where she's connecting a lot of dots between her inner and outer worlds. She's dealing with personal issues, but also with global ones, realizing that every personal breakthrough is also in some ways a global one. She realizes how very connected we truly are to the world around us.

### 3. How did you get interested in the area you are writing about?

It all started when I was invited to spend a summer performing in Cambria, California. The play was Gardner McKay's *Sea Marks* and my co-star and I both felt so passionate about this play that we were honored to accept this job. We were at a precious jewel box of a theatre, the Pewter Plough Playhouse, which at that time was starting to attract audiences from San Francisco and L.A. Though we performed in the evenings, during the days I began to explore life in that part of the world and became intrigued by the eclectic groups of people who live there, and the fact that there seemed to be a lot of artists and craftsmen on one hand, but also developers and builders on the other hand. I also got fascinated by life in a small town, having grown up in a huge city. It struck me as a wonderful framework for storytelling. Characters began to arise in my imagination and pretty soon I found myself writing this story. It wouldn't leave me alone . . . and still won't! And I still adore the Central Coast. I'm so excited that the last stop on my current book tour will actually be in Cambria . . . where the whole story began!

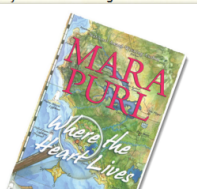
### 4. What places did you visit on your *Where the Heart Lives* book tour?

This has been the most extraordinary book tour ever, so far. It was really a "concept" tour, in that the book and the book tour were connected at the core.

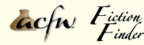
The map of the California tour closely resembles the book cover of *Where the Heart Lives*! And we decided to focus on only independent bookstores for this whole tour, which I am so enjoying. I love indie bookstores and respect their booksellers, who know their customers, and know what books they're likely to enjoy. The tour included stops in Malibu, Ventura, Santa Barbara, Solvang, Menlo Park (near San Francisco) and Cambria. In addition, the tour included a huge loop through Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona with stops in Taos, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Sedona, Prescott, and Phoenix. What a joy to connect with readers in so many locations! And what's so exciting is that even after the physical tour concludes, the blog tour will continue and I'll be blogging about all these stops along the way. It may actually take me through the end of the year before I complete the blogs, because so many interesting things are happening along the way!

### 5. Tell us a little bit about you, and some of your favorite things to do.

By now I'm sure you can guess that one of my favorite things to do is spend time in Cambria, Morro Bay, Santa Barbara and other locations along the Central Coast. These are places that truly feed my soul. I love being there alone on my writing getaways, and I also love sharing them with my family. I also enjoy exploring cities. I grew up in Tokyo, which I love; my husband and I adore hiking up and down the amazing neighborhoods of San Francisco. I enjoy special regions of Los



Julie Pollitt



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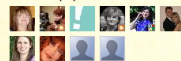
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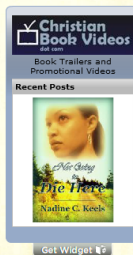
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Angeles like Little Tokyo with its multicultural delights, Malibu with its coastal pageantry and sense of community, and Hollywood, with its rich history. Add to the list of favorite cities New York and Paris. Of course, I love to read! I love theatre and film. And my husband and I dance the Argentine tango.

#### 6. What is your favorite part of writing? What is your least favorite part of writing?

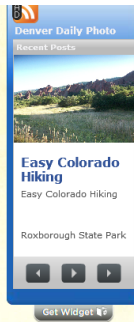
There's really no "least favorite" part of writing itself. But what is sometimes challenging is the degree of time and focus it requires, and how that impacts the other parts of my life. As I work my way into a novel, I tend to get more and more absorbed in the task, and in the fictional world and all its possibilities. I write longer and longer hours and begin neglecting other things, like walking, exercising, cooking, seeing friends. . . . I don't ignore my husband, but even he begins to feel I might fall through the rabbit hole! So the challenge for me is maintaining balance. I've made a life-long practice of hiking and walking. My best friend Erin Gray and I used to hike almost every morning before beginning work on the non-fiction book we co-wrote. My husband and I often start our mornings with a hike. And enjoy long walks in the mountains and hills, and along the ocean. Not only is it good for the body, it's good for the soul. To put it in Milford-Haven terms, it's good for both head and heart.

Thanks so much for sharing with us! We look forward to reading *Where the Heart Lives*. You can visit Mara at [www.marapuri.com](http://www.marapuri.com)

Be sure to head over to her website, [www.marapuri.com](http://www.marapuri.com), to download a FREE copy of her book, *When Whales Watch*.

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