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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2012

CHARISMA MEDIA TOUR STOP: WHERE THE HEART LIVES BY MARA PURL

View MaraPurl-WhereTheHeartLives-10-2012.jpg in slide show

I recently had a chance to interview Mara Purl, best-selling and national award-winning author of *What the Heart Knows*, book one of The Milford-Haven novels. Her new book, *Where the Heart Lives*, book 2 of The Milford-Haven novels is out now.

The Novice Christian (TNC): First of all, let me say how excited I was to see that there was a sequel as I was left wanting to know what happened with all of the characters! What inspired you to create a story with this cast of characters? Are they based on real people in your life or are they totally fictional?

Mara Purl (MP): And first, let me thank you for reading book one and getting "hooked" on the characters! And yes, not only is there a sequel, which will answer *some* of your questions; this is a true series. The Milford-Haven Novels are based on my radio drama *Milford-Haven U.S.A.*, which was a serial drama. Like all true soap-operas, it had a continuing story never really designed to end. But don't worry! As I adapt the radio drama into novels, there *will* be an actual conclusion. We've all noticed how popular trilogies are these days. Well, I'm doing something a little different . . . I'm writing a pentalogy. So the key questions about who-done-it (the murder mystery) and who-does-she-really-love (the protagonist) *will* be fully answered by the end of book five.

My inspiration for the cast of characters does come partly from my own life, and partly from my imagination. The protagonist Miranda Jones is somewhat autobiographical. Though she's a painter and I'm not, I am also an actor and musician, so the artist-life is what I've always lived. But in addition, her wander-lust comes partly from an extraordinary travel-writer friend with whom I grew up in Tokyo, for whom the character is named; her painter's eye comes partly from my college roommate, a painter and art teacher; and her scrupulous technique comes from a lot of research and some wonderful guidance from the painter who now creates the original watercolors for my book covers.

Some of the other major characters were originally created for the actors who portrayed them in the radio show, and I tuned in to their vocal rhythms and range, then wrote parts I thought would interest and challenge them. Each of them brought so much to the show! And in many ways, they're still with me as I write the characters.

Ultimately, the full characters really do come from my imagination. But because I'm fascinated by human behavior—by the choices we make, the fears that arise, the qualities we summon to meet our challenges—most of the time writing feels more like listening than creating. I try to get out of the way and let the *truth* of the moment emerge.

TNC: I find that when I'm inspired to write it is because of recurring themes I observe in my life or dreams that I have. What is it that gets your creative juices flowing?

MP: I'm right with you when it comes to recurring themes! Sometimes I look for them; sometimes they seem to tap me on the shoulder, or maybe even slap me in the face. Where I look for them is below the surface. And, as many of my readers have commented, my stories are layered. On one level, for example, this new book *Where the Heart Lives* is an escape to a lovely trip around southern California. Miranda drives south from Milford-Haven all the way to Palos Verdes, a gorgeous peninsula in Los Angeles famous for its lighthouse, wildlife and coastal scenery. Then she goes into the heart of the city to go to a major rock concert at the Hollywood Bowl; then she travels all the way into the Mojave Desert to visit a feline wildlife preserve. It's perfectly fine if readers just want to enjoy the "scenery" as it were.

But beneath the surface, what are the themes? This book is all about maps—not just literally, but figuratively as well. Where are we on our own mental map? How can we stay on the professional map while managing to feed the soul? How can we re-map our emotional life? The more I considered this "map" theme, the more I learned. And as I wrote, I placed "dots" on the story's map—like clues for hidden treasures—ready for readers to discover.

As for dreams, that is such a rich source that I'll be dealing with it in a future novel!

TNC: Do you find that your screenwriting career has helped you to write novels?

MP: Absolutely, I often share during my presentations and talks that I did things "backwards." Most writers do a novel first, *then* adapt it for screen. I went the *other* way. I grew up in a theatre family, was performing in plays by the time I could walk, played a regular character in a drama series as a pre-teen, and later played a recurring role on *Days of Our*

*As for me and my house,
we will serve the Lord.*
~ Joshua 24:15

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Melissa

Pearland, Texas, United States

I asked Jesus into my heart on February 5, 2012 which was the best decision that I've ever made!

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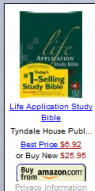
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BLOGGING FOR BOOKS



Lives. So the most natural form of writing for me was dialogue. Early drafts of my first novel was, in fact, *mostly* dialogue! I had to learn a lot before I mastered narrative voice. I'm still grateful dialogue comes as naturally as it does. I want to be sure the reader can *hear* my character's voices.

The other great thing I learned from writing for film and television is the importance of visuals. It's important to me that my reader can *see* exactly where the action is taking place. Particularly in my genre, women's fiction, rich visual detail is important.

TNC: Who are your favorite authors?

MP: Jane Austen, who created the first true "inner voice" in fiction; Charles Dickens, the master of serial story-telling; Lady Murasaki, who penned the world's first novel, *Tale of Genji*. In terms of contemporaries, I have many favorites! And I try to arrange to do joint book events with as many of them as possible.

TNC: Do you have any advice for the aspiring writer?

MP: I am so fortunate to have had several extraordinary mentors, and I still try to heed their advice. One mentor was Louis L'Amour, and one big piece of advice from him was to write consistently, even write almost constantly.

From both Louis and from James Michener, for whom I apprenticed in college, I learned the importance of research, which is the entire foundation of all my novels.

From my own experience, I'd recommend a writer begin by looking for what I call a "gap"—a zone as yet undiscovered by other writers. Tony Hillerman writes about the Navajo; Linda Fairstein writes about the New York City District Attorney's office; I write about California's Central Coast. Choose a location and/or a topic about which you feel passionate and are likely never to get bored.

Then . . . start writing and keep the flow going. Put in the hours. That's the only path to mastery.

There you have it, dear readers! I truly enjoyed this interview as Mara Purl is a pleasure to work with and has some awesome advice for us aspiring writers! Plus, if you haven't read her books yet, you need to check them out! I had the opportunity to read *Where the Heart Lives* and was hooked. I am ready for Book 3!

[View MaraPurl-WhenWhalesWatch-FrontCover-sw.jpg in slide show](#)

As part of her blog tour, Mara has offered each of you a chance to read her short story, *Where Whales Watch*, which is the prequel to *Where the Heart Lives*. It's free and can be accessed by going to her website, <http://marapurl.com/2012blog/>. Just enter your email and access to the story is yours!

Also, make sure you go to her blog <http://marapurl.wordpress.com/> and check out her creation, the Double Blog Tour. You will get to read my interview with Mara on MY blog and her interview with me (Yep, I'm answering the questions this time!) on HER blog on the same day, November 5th, which is my tour stop date. Check it out!

This has been fun! Thank you for such a pleasant experience, Mara! I'm really looking forward to reading your next book!

Disclaimer: I received a free copy of the ebook, *Where the Heart Lives*, in exchange for my participation in the tour. This book tour is brought to you by Charisma Media.

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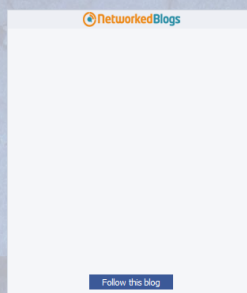
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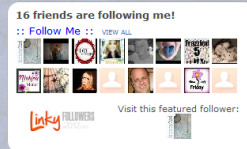


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