

30th Anniversary Special Interview

Cindy Rae
Fanfic Writer

1) When did you first become aware that B&B had a fandom?

In April 2013, and I was floored. I'd used my computer to search for "Beauty and the Beast" for the first time ever, and stumbled into what was for me, the Magical Land of Oz. (Or in this case, the marvelous world of the online tunnels, and fan fiction, and art.) I had no idea fan fiction existed, like it does, or that our fandom is so prolific with it, and so talented. I can't tell you whose site I first clicked into. It was probably an old Winterfest. But I followed links like a detective on a trail, and every time I found a new site which listed more links, I followed those. My computer got full of them. And my heart got very, very happy. The skill level of so many of our fan fiction authors and artists leaves me humbled, and all but gasping. They are so very, very talented.

2) Why did you decide to write fanfic?

I don't know that it was a "decision." (Since to me, that implies some sort of well crafted plan, and this definitely wasn't one of those.) I think it was more of an impulse, and a fairly terrified one, at that. After reading so much treasure all year, February 2014 came around and I very shyly sent something small in for Winterfest. It wasn't very good, but again, it made me very happy to do it. It was my first Winterfest, and I had an amazing time. People still cared about this show! The tunnels lived! Could there be anything better than that? I knew I couldn't just "take" without trying to "give" something. So I did. Very nervously.

3) What character(s) do you enjoy writing about the most?

The one I'm exploring at the time. That answer isn't meant as a dodge, and I

dearly love Vincent, both his light and dark side. But when I'm writing from Joe's point of view, or the story is about him, that's who I like, that's whose head I'm trying to get into. Cathy, Elliot, Mary, Rolley, Devin, even John Pater. I want to dive in there, kick things around, and see what is going on with these amazing people, and figure out what motivates them, and what's about to change them. (Because in a good story, you just know something is going to.)

While we see them doing something, on the screen, they're thinking about something. Might be the same thing they're doing, might be very different. But they're thinking it. I like fanfics best which explore that, the ones that let me in and let me see just what it is that character is thinking, while he's taking an action. It's a very intimate thing to do. So, the character I'm writing about right now is always my favorite.

Then next week comes, and it's someone else.

4) Do you prefer long stories or short ones?

The latter when I want a quick kiss. The former when I want something more. What I really prefer, long or short, is the feeling that I'm "there" with the characters. Writing fan fiction gives me a very "immersive" sensation. I really feel like I'm "down in the tunnels, and running through them". Long or short, a lot of BatB fan fiction authors convey that sensation very well, and as a reader, that's a joy. For me, a piece doesn't have to be "long" or "short." It just has to be done with heart. BatB authors do this marvelously. They care about these characters. That shines through. A piece doesn't even have to be perfectly written. It just has to take me where the author wanted me to go. I've seen 100 word tidbits that do that. And multi-chapter epics. All are treasures, to me.

5) Do you feel you have more stories in you yet to write?

Yes. Many more. And they won't all necessarily be good, and they won't all necessarily be offered for public consumption, but they'll get written. It's fine with me if stuff lives on my hard drive, and a lot does, for various reasons.

I remember being very tickled when I thought I had a "new idea" and wrote about it, then found out later that it kind of had gotten done to death. So, those things are still in there, in my computer. Often, other things join them, and also often, things get offered up to everyone, for this reason or that one. They're all meant as gifts from the heart. But yes, there's always more to be written. Many people in the fandom inspire that, and I certainly have them to thank for it. I don't think creativity exists very well, in a vacuum.

My favorite sentence to type when I'm discussing BatB online with others is "Thank you for making me think!" (Because they've said something, or proposed something I'd never considered. And now I have to go think about it. and test its veracity, in my little brain. And if I have to think about it, I'm probably going to start writing about it, and... voila'. Something ends up existing that didn't, a few weeks ago.)

Or someone will show me a piece of art, and I'll think, "There's got to be a story about that!" Or a song will come on, and it will put me in a certain mood, and the words start to flow. We all inspire each other. The gift of that is everywhere. Watch the episodes, and realize you just saw something you'd missed, before. Or track a scene just watching Vincent's reaction to what's being said, then write about what he's thinking. I love episode expansions, and variations on those. I love figuring out what happened to characters like Lucy, or Eric, or Tom, or Grace. Inspiration abounds.

6) What aspect of the B&B fantasy world intrigues you most?

The same one that irritates me. Dark Vincent. On the one hand, the notion that Vincent was somehow mentally 'unstable' bothers me. On the other, the notion that, as Cathy says, "there are dark places in all of us " gives him a depth of character you can play with for hours, and it lends nuance to the kind, thoughtful being we see. Those nuances bear watching, and exploring. Dichotomy is always a marvelous thing to write about. It's a wonderful trait for a character to have.

7) Have you written other fiction, or any non-fiction?

Non fiction, yes. I used to cover the stock market in the 1990's, for CBS Marketwatch. Though there are plenty of people who would tell you that was fiction, too, considering. (Smile) I'd never written any fiction for online consumption until BatB came unexpectedly into my life, though like all writers, writing was a skill I'd used to one degree or another, all my life. To this day, this is the only fandom I've ever written for. I doubt that will ever change.

8) What person do you prefer to write in (i.e. first, second, third)?

I think they all have their power to intrigue. And the word "I" (the first person viewpoint) is a powerful one, from a perspective point of view. The sentence "I fell in love with Catherine" is much stronger than "Vincent fell in love with Catherine." The prologue to the show is delivered in Vincent's first person perspective.

Having said that, I usually write in the third person perspective. It's the easier way to keep multiple characters interacting with each other without being confusing. And part of the incredible fun about writing about BatB is seeing what happens, in those interactions, and with those relationships. When we watch a TV show, we're usually in that 'third person' viewpoint. Writing fan fic seems to lend itself to that, naturally.

9) What do you wish they had explored (or explored more) in the series?

Every relationship in the show. Vincent's with Catherine, and Vincent with Devin. Jacob with Margaret, and Mary, and Vincent, and Peter Alcott, and all his little charges, and friends, Below. Cathy with not just Vincent, but with her father, her boss, and her friends. More about her exes, and how those impacted her, and how they happened, at all. All our characters when they were young, were teenagers, and all of them as they grew. What were their great loves, and great losses? What do they consider their most noble moment, regardless of whether we consider it that one, or not? When and where did they feel they failed, most thoroughly? Why did they do and say the things they did?

Jacob failed to acknowledge his own son, Devin, for years. There's a story there, and it's a "relationship story." A much larger one than the one we got served. And that's the tip of the iceberg, for what goes on in all these incredible relationships. I want to know what both Vincent and Catherine were doing, thinking, and feeling, in the time they were apart, in the pilot. I want to know those same things in the time it takes her to climb up her ladder, after the scene in the rain, in Chamber Music. I want someone to film those scenes, even as I like just imagining them.

10) What aspect of the series do you like least?

Cathy's death. It's not that I hated S3 for being there. (I don't. Some of Ron Perlman's best acting is in that season.) It's that I felt that the unspoken contract between the show's creators and its audience had been violated, and probably in one of the most torturous ways possible, emotionally speaking. The series that begins with "Once Upon a Time" has an unwritten obligation to end with "And they lived Happily ever after." Fantasy does this with almost soothing regularity. That's part of what makes it 'fantasy'. It's okay if there are serious bumps along the way. But the outcome is almost a given.

For various real life reasons, this one didn't do that. I'll read any season, and any rating, (happily) because I love the show. I've seen wonderful, well written characterizations of Diana, out there, and those deserve all the praise and attention they're due. She's an intricate character to write for. She's intuitive,

vulnerable, and sharp. There are worse characters to wrap your pen around.

But my heart hurts to know that (as a premise, since it became a part of the show) Vincent found love, and then lost it, horribly. That Cathy took a chance on re-inventing herself, and ultimately, was murdered for it. With hindsight a 20/20 thing, I think I'd rather they'd simply recast the role of Catherine, and taken it from there. Even if the show had still lasted only 12 more episodes, it would have maintained its original premise, and its "urban fairy tale" quality.

Having said that, the real aspect that I liked the least was that it ever ended at all, or that it ended with the number of episodes that it did. Double that number, then add some more for good measure, and I'm perhaps a bit happier. There was so much more that could have been explored. Nowadays, a series that knows it's going to end, (even if it's on the ratings chopping block), can do that with a decent series wrap up. I'd like to have had that, in some fashion.

Which is why I bless all the fan fiction writers and artists who came before me, as well as those who are still coming, to this day. They DID "keep the show going" and added years worth of "episodes" to the mix. They DO "keep the series alive" for all of us. I thank those people more than I can ever say, and to everyone who encourages them, gives them a place to publish, or just plain writes them a note of encouragement, thank you, as well. You all do more good than you know. It's become almost trite to keep saying "We keep the dream alive for each other." But we do.

No matter where you are in your own fairy tale, I wish you love ~ Cindy