

Special Interview

Jacqui Armitage [writing as J.A Clarke]

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

Very soon after it started over here in the UK in 1989, and because of my experience in other fandom, was asked by Gwen Lord, to help run Helpers Network UK; so started the fandom in the UK and gradually building up the contacts in the US, found the fandom network out there and we all worked together to build it; gradually bringing in Europe, and the Asia-Pacific. We started out with a simple 6 page newsletter for the first issue, but then it just grew and grew; and then within a year, we started producing fanzines, with our first being in early 1990.

2) Why did you decide to write fanfic?

I just love writing, and I wrote quite a lot of Star Trek [original series mainly] stories before becoming involved in BATB. It's nice to share your thoughts with other like-minded fans, and it's a creative release that is appreciated by people. It brings us all together, and allows those fans who don't write, to enjoy more stories about the programme they love.

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

Top of my list to write about is Elliot Burch. I find him fascinating [not only because he is devastatingly handsome!!] but because he is such a complex character; all those shades of grey; you're never quite sure which direction he is going to go in. Sometimes you could almost hate him, and then suddenly you love him again!! Apart from his shady business deals, is the love triangle, a great thing to explore, and his involvement with Vincent.

Second is the Vincent/Catherine relationship, which again can be quite complicated; and opens up all sorts of possibilities – like frustration on Catherine's part; Vincent's stubbornness, the development of their relationship etc etc etc.

4) Do you prefer long stories or short ones?

I like both, but the long ones allow you to get your teeth right into them; more character development if you want to. I'm quite a quick reader, so it's nice to have something long that will last me a couple of days. I have also written short and long; but my latter work has been long; now currently being over 100,000 words.

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

Oh yes! I've actually gotten back into writing again, since I was made redundant, so have had time to write again. Finished off a Star Trek novel that a friend and I started writing back in the 1980s, and am currently trying to finish a 'birth of Elliot Burch' novella that I started back in the mid-1990s, after a long conversation with Edward Albert about his character; and the facts that Elliot divulged within the series.

The novella is based on the character development we discussed and our ideas of how Stosh Kazmarek invented Elliot.

There are a few others in the pipeline as well, but currently trying to finish the birth of Elliot one at present, in honour of Edward Albert.

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

The struggle between below and above; the interaction, and the relationships.

Situations that threaten; or the development of characters. Good vs evil. I also admit to liking a well-written adult story as well.

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

Have been published in Star Trek fan fiction, as that is my other major love [was a Star Trek fan first]; I've also had some non-fiction published in Starburst and a couple of other magazines; but nothing recently. Currently working on a medieval novel – another one started many years ago, which I was writing for Edward, and currently studying how to write screenplays. Also fancy trying my hand at a Mills and Boons (romance similar to Harlequin) novel!!

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

Mainly third, but do write in first person as well. Depends on what I'm trying to convey within the story, so sometimes, only need it from one character's perspective so I can write first; other times I need multiple angles, so write in third.

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

If the series hadn't been cancelled, would loved to have seen how the relationship between Vincent and Elliot developed, because he didn't die in Beggar's Comet. Having lost his entire fortune, thanks to Gabriel, it would have been interesting to see how Elliot would have come back... how knowing Vincent and the world below would influence what he did going forward; would Elliot had gone to live below initially? How could – and would – he help the world below?

I also think Paracelsus was worth a further look as well. Perhaps more on the history between father and him and what turned him.... Flash backs or a couple of episodes where we are back in time. Plus, the creation of below.

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

I think the series got too dark in a way; but it did have to develop. I didn't like them killing Catherine off. It lost its romanticism, especially in the final series. It was the romance [and the fact that Edward Albert was guest starring in it] that attracted me to it in the first place. It was a shame Linda wanted out, as there was a lot more to come in it.