

Jurassic Judgment Series Interview with Author Janice Boekhoff

What is your writing Kryptonite?

My writing Kryptonite is anything on TV. The room doesn't have to be quiet, but if the television is on, I can't write or edit at all. Even the golf channel will suddenly become fascinating and pull me out of my chapter.

Do you want each book to stand on its own or are you trying to build a body of work with connections between each book?

I generally write whatever interests me at the time, which means I write in different genres. Currently, I've written Christian suspense and science fiction. But two main threads connect all of my work: a love of science and the thrill of adventure.

What was the best money you ever spent as a writer?

My first writing conference was money well spent. The classes inspired me and meeting face to face with two agents gave me a better idea of what the writing business was like. Plus, there's something amazing about being in a room with hundreds of other people who just "get" what it's like to have voices constantly running through your head (in a non-psychopathic way).

What kind of research do you do, and how long do you spend researching before beginning a book?

I only research major plot points and locations before beginning a book, then I'll do research along the way as needed. I'm also terribly bad about making up something in the moment to keep the flow of the writing going. Most of the time it works out okay, but once in a while I have to massively change things because what I made up was completely wrong.

What's the most difficult thing about writing characters from the opposite gender?

I love the challenge of writing male characters, but it isn't always easy. The hardest part is keeping the chatter down. As a whole, men are more succinct with their sentences and don't feel the need to clarify. After the first draft is complete, I go back and edit the dialogue of my male characters to shorten it so they get to the point more quickly.

What did you edit *out* of this book?

Most of the beginning. In fact, I took out an entire five chapters before I realized that was too much. I put one scene back in for characterization and to show the aftermath of a murder. One of those deleted scenes can be found on the secret web page listed in the back of the Jurassic Judgment books.

What was your hardest scene to write?

The climax is always the hardest and most fun scene to write. It's the hardest because there is so much pressure on that scene to be the culmination of 30 chapters of struggle—to be the best scene of the novel. In my books, the climax is usually an action scene (often a death scene) and I tend to write them too fast. While editing, I have to slow down and feel every stab wound and every gash of dinosaur teeth—which also makes it the most fun to write.

What is the most difficult part of your artistic process?

I'm a stop-and-start plotter and pantsier. Strict plotters tend to work out every scene before they start to write. Pantsiers just start writing by the seat of their pants. My process is a mesh (or dare I say, mess) of the two. I start with basic plot points for 8-10 scenes to cover the whole novel. I've tried to plot more than that, but it becomes an exercise in futility—banging my head on the desk chanting "I don't know what happens next." So before I develop too deep a bruise on my forehead, I begin writing to see where the story goes. Usually, I write about a quarter of the book to get to know the characters. Just when I build momentum, I realize I'm going in an entirely different direction than my basic plotted scenes. So I plot some more before writing again. About halfway through, I can see the rest of the road ahead of me and both plotting and writing gets easier. I wish I could be a more efficient plotter, but my brain won't cooperate.

You've written in the science fiction genre and the Christian suspense genre. Do you have a preference? Is it easier to write one or the other?

I love to write any type of thrilling story. Whether it's science fiction or suspense, the adventure is what drives me to write it. That being said, I love science and will continue to write more science fiction because there's such freedom to explore ideas in that genre.

What was the inspiration for the story?

I started with the simple desire to write about dinosaurs living with people. Then, I began to wonder why anyone would want to live with the beasts at the risk to their own lives. The answer was no one, except for those who had nothing left to lose. That led me to death row inmates and all the crazy challenges that living with dinosaurs *and* convicts could present.

What is the key theme and/or message in the book?

This series is all about identity. Do your actions make up your identity? Or is it something more indeterminate, like your intentions or the convictions of your heart? I also had a great time exploring whether people are redeemable, especially those who have done awful things.

What were the key challenges you faced when writing this book? What was the highlight of writing this book?

I knew going into this that (like Jurassic Park) I would need both dinosaur and human antagonists. It was a challenge to keep those conflicts equally in front of the reader, especially since some of the antagonists survive book 1 and go on to be confronted in future books.

I've loved dinosaurs since I was a kid, so writing people interacting with dinosaurs was a true highlight for me. Plus I had such fun plotting with my kids by asking them how they would defend themselves and what would be the most gruesome ways to kill a dinosaur.

Favorite quote?

Not all those who wander are lost. —J.R.R. Tolkien

I love this quote because it gives me permission to take the path less traveled. My mind has always been prone to wandering and now I embrace it as a strength.