



Saralee Etter

So charming and disarming...It's alarming!

A New Home for the Traditional Regency

An Interview by Jacki Bentley

Note: This article was first published in the August 2007 edition of Write from the Heart, the monthly newsletter of the Central Ohio Fiction Writers

Jacki Bentley: Saralee, congratulations on your book contract for your traditional Regency romance novel. I'm a huge fan of Regency romances but find less of them in my "To Be Read" pile these days. I understand you beat those odds and found a publisher for your story. **Tell us about the new and exciting home you found for your traditional Regency romance.**

Saralee Etter: Cerridwen Press (www.cerridwenpress.com) is publishing my first novel, A LIMITED ENGAGEMENT, as part of *Cotillion*, their new line of traditional Regency romances in the spirit of Georgette Heyer's enduring classics.

Growing up, I devoured all of Heyer's novels—I loved the strong and appealing heroines, the lighthearted adventures, the focus on the manners and customs of the era, all of which provided such a perfect setting for a story with lots of emotion and love, but no obvious sex. These are sweet stories that are suitable for readers of any age.

I'm so glad Cerridwen decided to publish traditional Regency romances, because I've truly missed them. By starting with an e-book format, which is less costly for the publisher, I think they've found the key to bringing them back for the readers that love them. After a few months, the books are published in paperback format. And these *Cotillion* stories have received great reviews, too—they are all love stories that leave you with a smile and a sigh.

JB: Where and when can your book can be found?

SE: A LIMITED ENGAGEMENT (ISBN 978-141991-159-0) will be released Aug. 2, 2007 and will be available on the *Cotillion* page of the Cerridwen Press website (http://www.cerridwenpress.com/BookList_cotillion.asp?Category=RomReg). Once you're on the *Cotillion* page, all you have to do is click on the thumbnail of the cover to read an excerpt and buy the book.

JB: We'd love to hear a bit about your story.

SE: In A LIMITED ENGAGEMENT, Miranda expected to make her debut at Almack's, but when her father's death left her penniless, she chose to become an actress at her brother-in-law Edward's theater instead. When Edward was arrested for debts he didn't know he owed, Miranda and her sister Mary had to find a way to free him, or lose everything.

Lord Justin Devereux needed a fiancée--in a hurry! Trouble was, he didn't want to get married. His solution: hire an actress who could act the part of his betrothed at a crucial family dinner party. Showing that he was ready to settle down would convince his relatives to give him control of his inheritance. Then he could accomplish his dream of buying land in the country, and living far away from the brittle, unsatisfying London social scene.

But when Justin hired Miranda, neither of them expected to fall in love...

Saralee Etter talks to Jacki Bentley about a new home for Regency romances

JB: Your premise sounds really good! What do you feel is special about your publisher, Cerridwen Press?

SE: Cerridwen Press, which was begun about two years ago, is the mainstream fiction arm of Ellora's Cave Publishing Inc (ECPI). I'm sure most romance readers are familiar with Ellora's Cave, the well-established and highly successful online publisher of erotic romance (romantica) novels. Since its inception, Cerridwen Press has published more than 100 novels of all genres, including mystery, comedy, SF, paranormal and, of course, mainstream romance.

JB: I hear wonderful things about CP and EC from their authors. Has your publisher treated you well so far?

SE: Oh, yes! Everyone at CP has been so kind and willing to answer my newbie questions. Since ECPI does all their work online, I've been able to learn the ropes just by asking in an email. And believe me, I've pestered nearly everyone there—from my editor, Carole Genz, who is so patient and thorough and just great to work with; to Laura Garcia and Susan Edwards in the publicity department, who have answered all my publicity questions with good humor and understanding; to the art department, which translated my rambling and contradictory requests into a lovely cover; and publisher Raelene Gorlinsky herself, who early on took the time to walk me through some of the basics of the publishing world.

JB: I know CP is a publisher in the business to sell e-books first, that market is their first love, but do they offer print books as well for their authors? And if so, where can they be found?

SE: After an initial period of being available exclusively as ebooks, the Cerridwen Press titles are published as trade paperbacks that can be purchased in regular brick-and-mortar bookstores like Borders Books. Also, since the print books are available through many of the standard book warehouses, readers can order their favorite titles through any bookstore, I believe.

I especially like the cover art for the Cotillion line of books. They all have this distinctive pink ruffle across the top, and the artwork often is based on actual oil paintings of the Regency period. I think it's a very elegant and luxurious look, so appropriate for these stories.

JB: And do you mind if I ask, what are your plans to promote your book?

SE: Like most authors nowadays, I have a website (www.saraleeetter.com) a blog (<http://www.saraleeetter.com/blog.html>), and a MySpace page (www.myspace.com/saraleeetter). A few local newspapers seem interested in doing profiles of me. I was the featured guest in an online live chat at Author Apprentices (www.authorapprentices.com), where I talked about writing a great query letter. Also, luckily for me, Cerridwen's publicity mavens are arranging for reviews of my book, as they do for all Cerridwen titles. On my own, I've asked for the reviewers at Wantz Upon a Time (www.wantzuponatime.com) to review my book, and even asked some friends and fellow writers to read my book and give me a comment or two. Phew! There's so much to do, and I still have so much to learn.

J.B: Right, absolutely so much to do for a new author. Now for a couple of more personal questions: How did you get "the call" (or "the email," as the case might be)?

SE: The book that was to become A LIMITED ENGAGEMENT was originally set in 1750, during the reign of George II. Not exactly the right time period—there was still the entire reign of George III to get through before the Regency began! But since Cerridwen's Call for Submissions mentioned that they were looking for books set in the Regency or Georgian periods, I figured I'd send it in on the chance they would be interested.

Saralee Etter talks to Jacki Bentley about a new home for Regency romances

The editor, Carole Genz, liked the story, but explained that they were really looking for books set during the Regency era, give or take a few years—not 60 years. She invited me to rewrite the novel and resubmit it. So I did!

The second version was in the right time period, and this time Carole was very encouraging. It took one more overhaul of the story to make it just right, then finally my story was ready—and it sold. So when the offer was finally made, it wasn't a surprise. I'd been working on the book for a long time, and getting closer to publication with each revision.

JB: Wow, interesting, I applaud your flexibility. Did you mention in your query letter that you edit the newsletter for your local RWA chapter? Did you find the experience helpful to the aspiring author at all? If so, in what way?

SE: Actually, I don't remember if I did or not. <blushing> But being my chapter's newsletter editor has had many benefits: It got me more involved in my chapter, and I got to know other authors both aspiring and published. I got to attend our chapter's annual conference for free, which was an awesome opportunity to meet agents and editors.

But most importantly, when I took on the role of newsletter editor, I truly began to think of myself as a serious writer. Since I was gathering information about people who took their writing seriously, I began to believe that I could do the same. Writing wasn't just a hobby to me anymore. I made a commitment to developing my career as a novelist, to learning the business and moving forward toward my goals.

JB: Great answer. What did you do to celebrate the marvelous accomplishment of your first sale?

SE: My husband took me out to dinner! He has been genuinely happy for me. He's not the kind of guy who would actually read a romance novel, but he still supports whatever I want to do. I'm lucky to have him in my life.

JB: How lovely, support is indeed so important. I'm sure I speak for Central Ohio Fiction Writers in wishing you the best for continued success and many more books to come.

Jacki Bentley writes award-winning e-books for NewConceptsPublishing.com. She is a member of Central Ohio Fiction Writers and Futuristic, Fantasy and Paranormal chapters of RWA. Visit her at www.jackibentley.com