



Flying Pen Press is pleased to present an interview with Kirsten Beyer, author of “Widow’s Weeds” from [Space Grunts: Full-Throttle Space Tales #3](#). Kirsten is the author of the last ever *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* book, *One Thing or Your Mother*, the *Star Trek™ : Voyager* novel *String Theory: Fusion*, and the *Alias APO* novel *Once Lost*. She also contributed the short story “Isabo’s Shirt” to the *Star Trek: Voyager—Distant Shores* anthology. Her next additions to the *Star Trek: Voyager* universe is *Full Circle*, to be followed by a second novel in October 2009. She currently lives in Los Angeles with her husband, David, and a very fat cat named Owen.

How did you get involved with *Space Grunts*?

The editor, Dayton Ward, sent out an email outlining the submission guidelines and the request immediately sparked a story idea. For me, that’s rare. So despite the fact that my plate was annoying full, I decided to try and write it. Now, I’m awfully glad I did.

What angle did you explore on the theme of soldiers in space in your story, “Widow’s Weeds”?

My understanding was that we were going for gritty and real, but that didn’t simply include the battlefield. I was interested in a moment by moment story of a young widow who is not actually who we think she is. I could see the emotional journey clearly but wasn’t sure how I was going to get to the ending I had in mind until I started writing.

Where do you get your story ideas?

I have no idea and it’s my understanding that if we press too hard for answers to questions like these, whoever it is that actually sends them will get very angry and stop sharing them with us. So I never ask. I just say “thank you” when they come and go on and do my bit which is essentially writing them down.

What do you see as some of the advantages of the short story format over longer fiction formats, such as novels?

I don’t know that there are any. I find short stories...this is my second published one...much harder than novels. Okay, they take less time overall, but they take a lot more time per paragraph and page than a novel. It’s almost like poetry. I tend to weigh and measure every word and phrase in a short story in a way I’m less worried about in a novel. So far, I’ve also ended up doing more drafts and revisions of my short stories than my longer works. Clearly, there is something wrong with me.

Did you choose to write, or did writing choose you?

It most definitely chose me and I have yet to forgive it.

My writing partner and I actually have this pet theory that how we played as children can indicate what we might end up doing as adults. I ended up playing with my dolls for thousands of hours. And I don’t mean playing. I mean imagining vast and complicated stories, setting them to music on my little plastic record player, and replaying them over and over again until I was satisfied with every Barbie’s journey and the ultimate resolution. And I wasn’t so much outside the story, like God, manipulating each character. I tended to play from a single character’s point of view and then shift that when I needed to. We think this is why I’m more comfortable in a limited omniscient POV where as my partner, who enjoyed standing outside the story is more drawn toward an omniscient one.

I realize now that even then I was writing. I just wasn’t putting it on paper.

(As I said, clearly there is something wrong with me.)

What is the best writing advice you've ever received?

It's from Anne Lamott and it's basically the ability to give yourself permission to write a shitty first draft. For a lot of my life, I tended to be a perfectionist. But when it comes to writing the hardest and best thing to learn was that perfection never comes and what you end up with only gets really good if you understand from the get-go that you're going to have to work through a number of drafts. Once in a great while, lightning strikes, but more often than not, it's a daily slog. And on those days when nothing sounds good at all, it's terribly encouraging to remember that what is in front of me is my shitty first draft and that's okay. This is how I avoid writer's block. Or setting my laptop on fire. I always know that especially at the beginning, it's going to suck and that way I get to be pleasantly surprised if it doesn't.

What can readers expect from you next?

My next *Star Trek: Voyager* novel, *Unworthy*, is coming out in October of 2009. After that, I'm working on my first original novel, but I have no idea if or when that will be in any condition to share with the public.