1. **When did you first realize that you wanted to be a writer/ a storyteller?**

When I experienced great stories as a kid. I think we are all wired for story, but maybe some of us are wired to experience them more deeply than others--sort of the way maths can “speak” to some, but not to others. (With regard to maths, I am one of the “others”; it might as well be binary code to me, or the sound a fax machine makes.) But stories resonate deeply with me. And with a *very* good story, I become one of the strings of the instrument, so it thrums through my whole being.

Also, part of the experience of reading a good story is the deep immersion and concentration of the act. It’s a form of meditation, a loss of self in something greater. There is peace in that, for me, and it also happens for me in writing.

1. **What inspires you to write?**

What inspires me to write is the question, “What if…?”

What if there was a world where…

What if there was a girl who…

And what if something horrible happened to her and she had to…

Those questions summon visions of people and places and troubles and the story starts to coalesce around them. As I write, more “What ifs” emerge and add to the story, and it takes on a life of its own.

1. **How did you come up with the idea for your current story?**

Stephen King talks about stories beginning at the moment he sees a specific character and setting in his mind. He then gives the character a problem, and watches her spring to action to fix the problem. From then on out it’s like following a string through long grass—never sure where it’s going, but pretty sure of the direction.

That’s the way I experience writing. For *The Jack of Souls*, I saw a young man on the edge of a frontier, stuck in a place he didn’t want to be. I saw a girl who ran to the frontier to escape a bad place.

I knew I wanted them together, but I also knew they were very different from each other. He is a trickster rogue. She is an honorable warrior with a desire to become the Queen’s first female knight. So something greater than themselves had to unite them.

For that I imagined they were both devoted to their queen, who I imagined like Shakespeare’s Queen Elizabeth—alone, resented by many who wanted a warlike king on the throne. Like Elizabeth, this queen teeters on the brink of civil and foreign war.

When her enemies invade the frontier with a plot to unseat her, the rogue and knight must unite in her defense, or lose everything they ever loved.

Plus, I love Shakespeare, so I wove in a romantic subplot from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream.*☺

From there on out, it became a matter of following the string through the grass.

1. **Is there some stories tucked away in some drawer that was written before and never saw the light of the day?**

Yes. It’s a middle-grade fantasy called, *Dragon Bait.* It was good enough for two separate agents to accept and shop around, but they never could sell it.

1. **Tell us about your writing process.**

I tend to begin by revising what I last wrote, and that gets the creative juices flowing for new composition/helps me pick up the string where I left off.

1. **What is your favorite scene in the book? Why?**

The opening scene.

Harric’s mother cursed him to die on his nineteenth birthday. When the story begins, she is dead and gone, and Harric has a day to live; in an hour, he’ll host his own wake. Most of the frontier town will be there, including many who simply want a share of his loot when he dies.

Caris, his knight friend, is new to town and didn’t know his mother, so she doesn’t even believe there is a curse. Nevertheless, she agrees to be his body guard to keep the beggars away while he writes his will.

1. **Did any of your characters inherit some of your own quirks?**

Yes. I am a rule-bender, rule-tester, like Harric.

I also remember what it was like to be young and idealistic, like Caris.

1. **What is your most interesting writing quirk?**

My face takes on villainous intensity when I write a wicked character. My kids tell me so.

1. **What is your usual writing routine?**

I must be truly alone without interruption. Deep immersion is important. I tend to write in the morning, after a cup of coffee and an hour or so of puttering (also alone). Then I dive in and don’t come up for four hours, sometimes six. It’s bliss.

1. **Do you read? Who are your favourite authors and how have they influenced your writing style?**

Lois McMaster Bujold’s *Curse of Chalion* series is magnificent. She has such a deft and subtle understanding of human relationship interactions, which she captures in subtly handled prose. I read her work over and over and study how she does it.

George R.R. Martin’s *A Game of Thrones* has had a big impact on the genre (and me) with his realism and strict departure from the classical “white wizards and dark lords” of *The* Lord of the *Rings.* “There are no dark lords,” Martin once said. “We are all gray lords.” I think he’s right about that, so I try to give all my characters light and dark streaks. Even the most irredeemable madmen have some small streak of lightness. It makes us have to think a bit, wrestle with hard questions.

1. **What is the best piece of advice you have received, as a writer, till date?**

Read a lot. Write a lot.

1. **What is the best piece of advice you would give to someone that wants to get into writing?**

Write a lot. Keep a journal no one has to see. Don’t worry about sharing it with anyone. It’s your place to be messy and just write. Eventually, write things you want to share with other writers of your level and experience. Then find a good writers critique circle that is run well by an experienced moderator/leader who keeps the norms carefully.

Don’t take yourself too seriously.

1. **What would be the Dream Cast for you book if it was to be turned into a movie?**

Ron Perlman as Sir Willard

Rhonda Rousey (an athelete) as Caris

The young cricketer from Lagan as Harric

1. **If you were to be stranded on the famous deserted island, what three things would you carry?**

Food, water, waterproof solar-powered long distance radio transmitter. (Is that cheating?)

1. **How do you spend your free time? Do you have a favorite place to go and unwind?**

I like to read in silence. Or go for a walk with a cigar and a friend. Or run.

1. **Can you share with us something off your bucket list?**

I want to visit India.

1. **Tell us three fun facts about yourself.**

I once backpacked around central and east Africa with some friends.

I was a tour guide in the American and Canadian and Mexican West, also in Britain.

I went to graduate school in England to study Shakespeare.

1. **What do you have in store next for your readers?**

Books 2 and 3 in the series! *The Knave of Souls* is coming out in August, and *The Prince of Souls* is coming out in December of 2015.

1. **Is there anything else you’d like to share with your readers?**

Thanks for reading! ☺