

## *Beneath the Covers*

### **A Romance Column**

By Suzie Housley

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February 14th, cherished by some as the most romantic day of the year, is just around the corner. Do you find that you are not feeling too inspired this year? Don't fret, because everything you need (except the actual romance part!) can be found on the internet. Here are some of my favorite links that are sure to get you in the mood:

Curious about the [history of Valentine's Day](#)?

[LovingYou.com](#) serves up advice, dating guides, daily poems, free e-cards, Valentine checklist, love poll, and lots more.

Find [28 ways](#) to make your home a Valentine romantic hideaway.

How to ["Set the Mood"](#) -- ideas for creating a memorable Valentine dinner table.

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### **Writing Emotional Issues With Flawless Style - An Interview with Catherine Andorka**

For the month of February, I have selected author Catherine Andorka. Ms. Andorka has generously provided an extra copy of her book *Once Upon a Secret* to give away at the end of February. This is a new feature at *Beneath the Covers*. **The winner of February's contest is D. Guyette, CT.**



I began the interview by asking Catherine how she started on the road to becoming a published author. She explained that in 1979, she got a very memorable speeding ticket. In her opinion, it was undeserved, but she said that was another story. The poem she authored lamenting the injustice of the justice system served her well, both in the courtroom and later, when it was published in a local newspaper. She recalls handing the poem to her editor of the newspaper and watching his mouth curl into a laugh as he read it on the spot and announced that it would be published that very week. (Things were different back then.) She thought, *It's that simple, then I'll be a writer.* Little did she know. . . <G>

**Suzie Housley: Catherine, welcome to *Beneath the Covers*. I am happy to have you as my first guest for 2003. I knew from the moment I saw your advertisement for your latest release, you were an author I just had to interview. It gives me great honor to bestow the title of "Ms. February" to you.**

**SH: Could you share with us the story behind the story? In other words, how did your writing lead you to your first novel?**

*Catherine Andorka:* I was first published in 1979. I'd written a poem that was instrumental in getting me out of a speeding ticket. Quickly I branched into freelancing for newspapers and magazines. It didn't take me long to discover my real passion is

fiction.

**Once Upon a Secret** is my first published novel. The first novel I ever wrote is yet unpublished, though I might resurrect and revise it at some point. But back to your question: I wrote for the Confession Magazines (True Story, Modern Romances, True Confession, etc.) for years before I got ideas for entire books. The magazine stories didn't necessarily have romantic elements, but they were all relationship/issue oriented. I loved writing them, and it was great training for the novels to come.

**SH: What kind of reaction do people have to your writing? Do you find they have a difficult time adjusting to a less than perfect character?**

CA: The reaction to **Once Upon a Secret** has been very positive. The hero suffers from a problem that affects millions of people in this country. The issue causes him shame and embarrassment, thus the secret he's been keeping.

I see my job as an author to bring not only awareness to the reader, but resolution between the two main characters. Resolution does not always mean the problems disappear. It means the hero and heroine work through them and are either able to solve them, or learn to coexist with them in such a way that their relationship grows in a healthy manner. If I do my job well, the reader will see that true love can and will prevail through the gravest of circumstances--providing the characters are committed to making their relationship work.

Actually, it goes deeper than that, which is why I'm glad you asked this question. I love writing about people who have serious issues, and my next book is further evidence of that. The way I see it, the world is complex, full of problems and flawed people; but it's also a world filled with wonder and magic. If we can learn to embrace the wonder and create the magic that can grow despite the imperfection within our lives, we can find true happiness.

No one is perfect and no relationship is ever perfect. That's the reality of love. And life. Conversely, I understand people read romance books for the fantasy element, for the escapism. So if I can make my characters appealing despite their imperfections, or even because of them...if I can map a process for the hero and heroine to work through their issues, and their love prevails against all odds, then I've offered my readers hope for the reality of their own situations. If my audience can identify with my imperfect characters and fall in love with them, then I've succeeded in romancing the reader.

**SH: Did you find it was difficult to "sell" your book idea with publishers? If so, how did you convince them your book was worthy to be published?**

CA: Oh yes, it was VERY difficult to convince a publisher that a rock star book from a first time author would be appealing to the readers. **Once Upon a Secret** was first published in 1999 by a small company, and a limited number of copies made it into the marketplace. Nonetheless, I am grateful to that publisher for taking a chance on my story. Because of her, I had books to send to various reviewers. The response was incredibly positive. Once I obtained a Reversion of Rights from the original publisher, and when FIVE STAR came into the picture, I was able to offer them not only my manuscript, but the reviews that had already been out there. Those reviews were very helpful in convincing my current editor to buy this book.

**SH: Does your creativity express itself in ways other than writing?**

CA: I do love to cook and create new recipes. I must confine myself to gluten-free food, so it can be challenging. I also love music and used to play guitar, but any talent I might have had in that direction has gone dormant in favor of my writing.

**SH: Do you see a pattern developing among fellow authors who are bending their writing to what is the "hot" theme of the month? If so, what are your feelings towards this approach to success?**

CA: Hmm...I think that depends on whether or not the "hot theme" is a good match for the author's writing style and interest level. The tried and true themes of cowboys, babies and brides continue to attract readers. As long as that's the case, I assume publishers will still be soliciting and buying those books. But I am elated to see so many new lines opening up to accommodate a broader range of tastes and age groups. As far as I'm concerned, if authors are writing the books of their hearts, and they can convince publishers there is far-reaching audience appeal, they should go for it. It's what I did.  
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**SH: What kind of books do you find yourself reading? Who are your favorite authors?**

CA: You're going to get me in trouble here, since so many of my friends are writers, whose books I enjoy and treasure. I read self-help books, books on the writing trade, and of course, fiction. In terms of romance fiction, I prefer the contemporary genre. (Does anyone not love Jennifer Crusie?) Though I will get sucked right into a historical, if it's well written.

**SH: Do you find anything difficult in the writing process and if so, what?**

CA: You've zeroed right in on my current dilemma, which is plotting and creating a great synopsis. I always know the beginning and the end. But that middle takes a lot of effort to keep it from sagging.

**SH: Do you have other books planned? Where do you plan to go from here?**

CA: As a matter of fact, I have a completed book that is in the hands of my newly acquired agent. It's still a trip for me to say I have an agent, and I think she's wonderful. I have also started a third book. It's a "Chick Lit" that may get put on the back burner for a fourth idea that I've also begun to plot. As for the long-term future, who knows? I'm open to ideas, and we'll just have to see.

**SH: What mistakes have you encountered as a writer, and what advice can you**

### **pass on to someone who is aspiring to enter the field?**

CA: The biggest mistake is quitting too soon. I always talk about the importance of tenacity in reaching your goals, be it writing or any other goal. I truly believe that if you keep writing and perfecting your craft, eventually you will sell. So, hang in there!

Someone once told me, "Write what you know." It's not bad advice, but I would improve on that by saying, "Write about that which you want to know." Write about what interests you, because if you're bored, you will bore your reader. On the other hand, if your journey of discovery and research is exciting, your enthusiasm will be conveyed in your writing.

### **SH: I have a deep desire to break into the writing world. What advice can you give me to turn my dream into a reality?**

CA: Probably the best advice I can offer is to pick a subject that excites you, something that incites your passion. Then create characters who are equally exciting. Could you fall in love with your hero? Could you be best friends with your heroine? After that, start writing!

### **SH: Do you have any other thoughts that you would like to share with us?**

CA: There's been lots of talk about the benefits of large critique groups. While they can be useful, I prefer to rely on a few select people whose opinions I trust. For me, "too many cooks really can spoil the broth" and make it difficult for me to decide what has merit and what does not. Even then, I only ask for help when I'm having trouble solving a particular problem. I weigh advice carefully, and tend to trust my own instincts over anyone else's. But it's a fine line between being prideful and being wrong.

### **SH: How can fans contact you?**

CA: Oh, please do! I love to hear from my readers. Go to my [website](#) and say hello. I'll look forward to your visit.

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## **Review**



**Once Upon a Secret**  
By Catherine Andorka  
Five Star - November 2002  
ISBN: 0786246014 - Hardback

Contemporary Romance

[Buy a Copy](#)

[Read an Excerpt](#)

**Reviewed by Suzie Housley**

After the death of her parents, Dr. Tori Glenn assumed the responsibility of caring for her younger brother Kevin. She instilled in him the high educational standards her parents would have expected if they had lived. She is very proud of his latest accomplishment of winning the statewide contest for young journalists. His prize included an interview with famous rock star Brad Daniels. Although a rock star with the reputation "Rock Music's Sexiest Bad Boy" is not the type of ideal role model she would have picked to influence her brother, she still shows her support by accompanying him to the concert and interview. Upon meeting Brad, she is surprised that he is nothing like she had envisioned him; his kindness to her and her brother is very heart-warming.

Brad Daniels was on top of his career as one of rock's leading male vocalists. He felt that he had the world at his fingertips—but something was missing that would make his life complete. When a hand injury from an eager fan threatens to cancel the concert, it steps Dr. Tori Glenn to the rescue. Tori is a Chiropractor who has come to his concert with her younger brother, who is scheduled to do a backstage interview with him. Her kind and compassionate nature appeals to his baser senses. Could she be what his life is lacking? Will he be able to convince her that his lifestyle and image is nothing like the tabloids have fabricated?

Catherine Andorka is the type of author you know you are going to enjoy within minutes of reading the first few pages of her latest novel. It is rare to find an author with talent and ambition to write "outside the box" themes that bring to light characters who are facing very real and emotional issues. From the moment I first read the blurb of **Once Upon a Secret**, I knew this was a novel and author I must track down. I am pleased that I listened to my sixth sense, for it has led me to not only a book to treasure, but an author whom I feel is one of the most talented in the industry. Her flawless writing style is to be admired and commended.

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