

# The Librarian's Tale: From reader to YA author

By JENNIFER COSTLEY

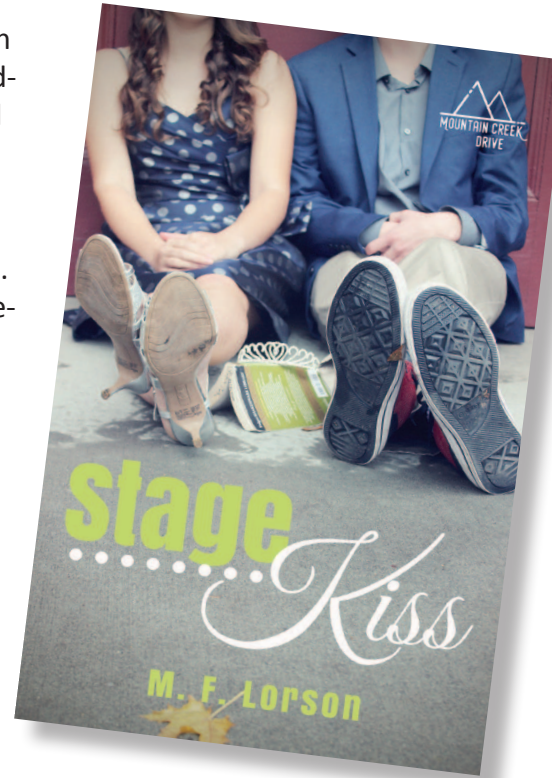
Five years ago when I got my master's degree in library science (that is a real thing, by the way) my father told me he was proud — but he always thought that I would write a book. I didn't tell him at the time but inside I was screaming, "Me, too!"

I never regretted going to library school or the career that I ended up with, but as time passed I did begin to regret never finishing a story. In November 2016 the library hosted a series of programs for National Novel Writing Month ... NaNo WriMo, for short. I decided to take an old project and finish it as a way of participating with our patrons. That project became my first book: "Delinquent."

I uploaded "Delinquent" to Ama-

zon on Jan. 3, 2017, under the pen name M.F. Lorson. My dad's grandmother was a writer and I wanted to pay tribute by using her name. The book reads like a first book; you needn't look too hard to find grammatical errors and plot holes. But it also gave me confidence. Because despite its shortfalls people bought it, reviewed it, and for the most part the reviews have been favorable. Save for that random one-star review. (I'm looking at you, mean guy from the UK!)

My second book, "The Hunter's Daughter," is better. I submitted it to three small presses last summer and was pleased when one requested a full copy of the manuscript. They didn't end up publishing the book but the fact that they wanted to look at it



at all encouraged me. I uploaded "The Hunter's Daughter" on July 17, the week before my daughter was born, and then watched my Amazon sales dashboard slowly bump along as I waited in the hospital for her arrival. I'd like to tell you it's a best seller but it's not. However, in the six months it has been out in the world it has sold 200 copies and that excites me.

Both of those books were launched quietly from my home. Because I used a pseudonym, many of my friends, co-workers and acquaintances weren't aware that I was writing at all. My third book, however, has changed that.

While on maternity leave I met two young adult authors through a Facebook group for writers. We liked one another on a personal level. We liked one another on a writing level and we were all three hungry for a new project. After many online conversations and Skype meetings we opted to col-

laborate on a three-book series set during our own high school years, in which we would share the same world and characters but each author our own book.

"Stage Kiss" is book one of that series. The story, which takes place in a fictional town in Colorado, is a throwback to 2002 when cell phones were a luxury and every Friday night was spent on the sidelines at the high school football game. Readers my own age can wax nostalgic over the pop culture references while today's teens will appreciate the growing romance between quintessential "It Girl" Erin and quirky theatre kid Peter.

Because the success of books two and three are contingent upon book one's appeal, I've had to step outside of my comfort zone and tell the world I'm writing. I've been busy scheduling readings in area libraries (La Grande, Hermiston and Pendleton), arranging for bookstagrammers to post cleverly arranged pictures of the paperback with props that fit the story, asking other authors in my genre to tell their readers about the title, and sending monthly author newsletters to my small but growing list of subscribers.

I don't know that I'll ever sell enough books to quit my day job or even that I would want to. But right now when I glance at the Young Adult section in our library and see Lorson on the spine of a book, I feel pretty good about where I'm at.

*Jennifer Costley is Assistant Director and Youth Services Librarian at the Pendleton Library. On Feb. 22 at 6 p.m. the library will host a reading from her current novel.*

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