

Q & A with *KenKarta: Battle of the Onoxmon* author Alison Kartevold

Is writing a book something you've always wanted to do?

Being a journalist, the concept of writing a book was not completely foreign to me. But honestly, given my background, I assumed that if I did write one it would be none fiction. Not a fantasy novel for tweens and teens. If it wasn't for my daughters and their incredibly vivid imaginations, this book would not exist.

So, how did this book come about then?

It all started one night when my daughter awoke from a bad dream. She crawled in bed with me and asked me to tell her a story so she could clear her head. Half asleep, I babbled on about a young girl and her talking horse named Dalminyo (has it happened, it looked a lot like one she'd just ridden on a visit to Idaho). There was a growling sound in the dark, and I told her she had to get past the evil monster Dale-K (who was really my snoring husband, Dale, sleeping next to me) to save her sister. I described her and Dalminyo running through a field of red flowers (a scene depicted in a large canvas I painted that hangs in our living room). And that's how the adventure continued until she fell asleep.

To my surprise, the next morning Veronica asked if I could write the story down so that we would never forget. And could we please put all of our family in the tale, as they all live so far away and we rarely get to see them. Of course, Scooby, our cairn terrier couldn't be left out, and when my youngest daughter, Sophia, heard what was up, she declared that any story we wrote would need to have a purple cheetah, fairies and dragons in it. So, it was at their command that I began folding both the familiar and fanciful into the story. That was the fall of 2006.

A lot has changed since then, but that's how it started.

2006, and KenKarta is now just being launched in 2011, isn't that a long time to write a book?

No, not really, not to write it and get published as a first time author, especially if that is not your only job. You see, in the beginning this wasn't meant to be a book. It was just a fun thing I did with my kids. Once or twice a month we'd sit around the living room brainstorming, just letting our imaginations run wild. Veronica is great at storylines and Sophia comes up with fantastic names. I was always inspired by how creative they were, so no matter how outlandish a suggestion might first seem I'd try to think of a way to fold it into our story line. Originally this was just their personalized fairy tale and I just worked on it sporadically when they prompted me.

So when did you decide it could be something more?

I first started to wonder after I read some of the early pages to Sophia's classmates. I was only suppose to read for about ten minutes, but the teacher and kids got so caught up in the story that I accidentally read clear through their music period. This enthusiastic reaction, from kids that weren't involved in creating the story, really made me start to think that our little fairy tale might have a broader appeal than I initially thought.

Is it strange to have fictional characters named after you and your family members?

Frankly, yes! It does feel a bit odd. I can tell you that my husband had no desire to have an alter ego in another world. However, I don't think he'd really mind if he could be a king in ours. And at one point Veronica was worried she might get unwanted attention about the things her alter ego did in the world of Tiers. So yes, once we knew the book would be published there were multiple discussions on whether or not we should change the names. Ultimately though, we felt that to change the names would be to change its soul. At its heart KenKarta will always be a story I wrote for just my kids. The fact that others can now enjoy it too is a bonus.

Is it tough to be a first time author?

I found the creative process to be really fun and exhilarating! The fact that I got to share that experience with my kids made it something I will always treasure.

My education began once I decided to approach KenKarta as a book. That's when I found out how much I had to learn, and how much work there was ahead of me.

The publishing industry is changing rapidly and can be tough to navigate even for experienced authors. So to go it alone without inside contacts can be daunting. It is defiantly not for the meek, but if you are driven and have a thick skin there are rewards out there.

Would you write another book?

Absolutely! The knowledge I've gained through this initial process would make it much easier to go through it a second time. Besides, the girls have been pestering me to start writing the next adventure about KenKarta for more than a year. We have the main characters and plot line already laid out, but I refused to start actually putting it down on paper until the first book was done. As soon as KenKarta: Battle of the Onoxmon is launched, I guess all I'll have to do is find the time to sit down and write what happens next.