

Spotlight on Silhouette Associate Senior Editor **Patience Smith** By Dianna Love Snell

Dianna: Please tell us how long you've been with Harlequin and about your new position at Silhouette Intimate Moments.

Patience: I've been with Harlequin since December 1997. During my time, I have worked on all the Silhouette lines, Continuities, Harlequin Historicals and Intrigue and Steeple Hill. I am absolutely thrilled to be the Associate Senior Editor of Silhouette Intimate Moments.

Dianna: Besides good writing, what do you want to see in future stories for SIM?

Patience: Thanks to Leslie Wainger's sharp eye for talent, SIM has a stellar group of authors that knows what makes a good story. I would like to continue to acquire new authors for the line and nurture our relationship with current SIM authors. For the future, I want to see stories that start off with a bang and keep me wanting to turn the pages. A SIM has to be a larger-than-life, roller coaster ride, with strong, loveable characters. SIM is a great line because it can offer a variety of elements – paranormal, traditional themes in romance, legal thrillers, gritty emotional journeys, and all kinds of suspense. It's difficult to pin down a typical IM premise, except to note that the stories feature characters who go on an adventure.

Dianna: SIM has been described as one of the most mainstream lines. It launched the careers of some best selling authors. If HQN and MIRA are vehicles for keeping best sellers in house, will we see SIM authors crossing over with these imprints?

Patience: Of course, this is determined on a case by case basis. Some authors want to move on to write single title books and will do so, some love the parameters of category romance, some write both.

Dianna: What stories do you not want to receive as SIM submissions?

Patience: In a nutshell, I want to receive submissions where the story begins on the first page and keeps me reading. If the writing drags, I won't care if all the other elements are in place (i.e. plot, character development, suitability to SIM).

Dianna: Are there still spots for a new author at SIM and what suggestions can you give an unpublished writer hoping to join this line?

Patience: There are definitely spots for a new author in SIM. Unpublished writers should study the line, have someone else read their work before submitting, rewrite, submit the project and immediately begin another book. And most importantly, never give up!

Dianna: What do you believe is often overlooked or not understood by writers wanting to publish with Harlequin and specifically Silhouette Intimate Moments?

Patience: There are a few issues that are overlooked by writers wanting to publish with Harlequin and Silhouette Intimate Moments. 1. That because we publish so many books, we have a factory-like mentality and aren't committed to creativity. This couldn't be further from the truth. The editors are devoted to finding entertaining—and innovative—stories and highly creative writers. We love a challenge from a fabulous writer and are committed to cultivating talent. 2. We encourage writers to write a story they are passionate about. We want writers to write because they love the process and

not because they *have* to publish (though, this is nice, too). 3. One misconception is that SIM only offers suspense. About 75% of our books have suspense. The other 25% offer another kind of rollicking emotional journey. So, SIM stories don't have to be just about detectives chasing down a serial killer. One can have a larger-than-life roller-coaster ride just getting to and from work.

Dianna: What are your favorite hooks and plot lines? What do you find most attractive in a hero (non-physical) and sympathetic in a heroine? What do you read on vacation?

Patience: I like just about any hook and premise as long as it's well developed. I'm more about the quality of writing and solid characters. What I find most attractive in a hero and heroine: I like characters with real flaws (and not that they are too giving to others) as well as strengths. I can't identify with perfect characters. We all mess up royally at least a few times in our lives! When I'm out of the office, I read a variety of genres. Right now, I'm reading a biography on Virginia Woolf and when I want to play, I read Sark.

Dianna: Please tell us about your background.

Patience: With my background, one might wonder how I wound up at Harlequin. I spent much of my childhood in France, then to Connecticut for high school, Ohio for college and New Mexico for my stint as a high school French and Latin teacher. While baking in the hot Southwestern sun, I got a master's degree at University of New Mexico, taught little kids about acting and theater, did calligraphy professionally, gave self-defense lessons to teenage girls, chaperoned proms and sat in coffee shops, staring at the Sandia Mountains. Because I was working on an especially depressing topic for my master's thesis (the narration of female trauma in Emile Zola's novels), I read romance novels to boost my spirits. And what a boost, since it made me study the genre and decide against becoming an unemployed academic. I soon realized I had to get into publishing, so I came to New York. And voila, here I am.

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