

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALYSON NOËL

Where did you get your inspiration to write *Evermore*?

Grief—pure and simple. A few years ago I lost three people I loved in five months, and shortly after that I nearly lost my husband to leukemia (he's in full remission now!). Experiencing that sort of intense grief and fear got me thinking a lot about life and death, mortality and immortality, the bonds that tie us even after a loved one is gone, and how our youth-loving culture sort of seeks physical immortality by trying to remain youthful-looking for as long as we can—and yet, what would happen if we really could achieve it? What would it mean for us, our loved ones, society in general? And since I've been interested in all things paranormal since I was a kid, Ever and Damen's story seemed like the perfect vehicle to explore all of those themes.

Authors often put a little bit of themselves into the characters they create—do you have anything in common with Ever?

Oh, definitely! Even though I'm not blond (well, not naturally!) or blue-eyed, or sixteen, or psychic, we both know what it's like to lose the people you love, how lost and empty you can feel until you learn to live around it. Also, I can totally relate to how she feels like such an outsider at school. I never really felt like I fitted in at my high school either.

Damen is an amazing character—is he based on a real person?

Actually, a lot of Damen's character traits and talents are based on my husband, who is so good at so many things I often tease him that he's a secret immortal!

Who is your favorite character in *Evermore*, and would you want to know them in real life?

Riley is my favorite character. She was just so fun to write she actually ended up getting way more page time than I originally planned! And yes, I'd love to know her in real life—she's sweet, funny, playful, and has a great sense of humor, which is something that goes a long way with me. But she also has that edge of sadness, having lost the thing she wanted most—the chance to be a teenager—the chance to turn thirteen. I had such empathy for all that she'd lost, and I can't wait to reprise her again when she gets her own series!

Did you always want to be a writer?

The moment I finished reading Judy Blume's *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret* back in sixth grade, I knew I wanted to be a writer too. I'd always been an avid reader, but Judy Blume's books were the first I'd read that addressed the kind of issues I could relate to, and I knew someday I wanted to write like that too.

So I started writing really dreadful poetry in junior high, and short stories in high school, but mostly I just talked about writing, until the tragic events of 9/11, when I was working

as a flight attendant in New York City and thought a career change might be in order! That's when I dusted off a short story I'd written long ago, and turned it into what ultimately became my debut novel, *Faking 19*.

How many books have you written? And which is your favorite?

At the moment, I'm working on the fourth book in The Immortals series, which is actually my eleventh novel to date. As for a favorite, well, they're all like children to me, so it's impossible to choose, but if pressed I'd have to say my debut novel, *Faking 19*, because seeing it on the bookstore shelves was a realization of a dream come true!

How long did it take you to write *Evermore*?

Much longer than usual! I started *Evermore* back when I was working on my sixth novel, *Saving Zoë*, and I revisited it from time to time while writing *Cruel Summer* (novel number 7). But it wasn't until I was ready to give it my full attention that the story really started to come together, and from that point on, it was just a few months until it was finished.

Evermore is the first book in The Immortals series—how many books are there going to be?

There will be six books in total, and Riley (Ever's ghostly sister) will be getting her own series too!

What's your writing routine?

I try to write every day. I start each morning answering emails, posting blogs and Twitters, and checking in on my bulletin board and social-networking sites, and once that's complete I revisit whatever I wrote the day before, editing as I go, and then I get on to writing the new stuff. I have a minimum word count in mind that I always strive to reach, but usually I'm so immersed in the work, I easily exceed it. I pretty much do this seven days a week, but I love my job, so I really don't mind it!

Who are your favorite authors?

Oh, this question is always a tough one, mostly because I have so many it's impossible to list them all, but a small sample list would include: Nick Hornby, J. D. Salinger, Daphne du Maurier, Judy Blume, the Brontë sisters, Truman Capote, Jeffrey Eugenides, Dennis Lehane, Stephen King, S. E. Hinton . . . it's a very long list!

What's your favorite film?

American Beauty. I love every single thing about it.

If *Evermore* was made into a film, which actors would you want to play Ever and Damen?

Well, it's funny, because on the one hand I'm such a visual writer and can see my characters so clearly I often feel like I'm merely transcribing the movie I watch in my head—and yet,

on the other hand, because I know them so well, it's hard for me to cast them with real live actors in mind. Though a few readers have mentioned Ben Barnes for Damen, and I must say, after Googling him I've found him to be suitably dreamy!

What's the best thing about being a writer?

It's a tie between the sweatpants and the slippers I get to wear to work each day!

But seriously, it's the readers. Their emails, letters, messages, and artwork never fail to make my day! I have the best readers ever!