

**Monday, February 25, 2008**

**[Emily Bryan, on Staying Published](#)**

Posted by Colleen Thompson at [7:49 AM](#)



A "release mate" of mine from Dorchester Publishing (our books often come out during the same month), Diana Groe, has a brand new historical romance, [Distracting the Duchess](#), coming out this week under the pen name Emily Bryan. I spent some time recently talking to her about the reasons for the name change.

Diana Groe's inventive, intelligent historical romances, [MAIDENSONG](#), [ERINSONG](#) & [SILK DREAMS](#) (all published by Dorchester) were almost universally well received by reviewers. ERINSONG even earned one of those exceedingly rare [Desert Isle Keeper](#) designations from All About Romance. The translation rights have sold to Germany, The Netherlands, and Italy. SILK DREAMS even hit a best seller list for Siren Books in Australia.

Unfortunately, in the US market, for some reason, these "out of the box" viking stories did not sell as well as hoped. Diana/Emily explains: "My agent says it's because the historical market is so skewed to Regency England. My mother thinks it was because my covers were not 'clinches.' My husband says it's because my heroes were all Norwegian (like him!) I'm not sure why it happened, but I can only say how grateful I am for my editor, Leah Hultenschmidt, who stuck with me despite the numbers."

**BtO:** When did you decide it was time to make a change?

**Diana/Emily:** I had written 3 meaty, dramatic epics and was ready to try my hand at something lighter. I was already kicking around the ideas that became [DISTRACTING THE DUCHESS](#) even before Leah called me with the news that SILK DREAMS did not get the "buy in" from booksellers she'd hoped. I still had another title left on my 2 book contract, but I was afraid that in the light of the disappointing buy in, Dorchester might decide to let the 2nd one go. I pitched the DUCHESS to Leah and she agreed that it was time for something different. She gave me the green light to try to write DISTRACTING

THE DUCHESS but since it was such a departure from my previous titles, it would have to come out under a different pen name.

**BtO:** How did you choose what to write next?

**Diana/Emily:** With fear and trembling and a sick feeling in my gut. I'd just been told my writing career was veering off course before it even got off the ground and I chose this moment in time to try to write something funny. Sheesh! Plus, I had no idea how difficult comedy is to pull off. I was working 40 hours a week at my day job, writing frantically nights and weekends. But I took a deep breath. I had terrific support from my husband (the man cleaned the house and did the laundry so I could write all day on Saturdays. Now that's my idea of a hero!) I decided whatever else happened, I was going to have fun writing.

So I did. I made my heroine outrageous for her time period. (A widowed duchess who paints nudes!) I made my hero over-the-top sexy. (An accidental nude model with nothing to hide, except the fact that he's Her Majesty's spy!) Whatever it took to turn my story into a thrill ride, that's the direction the plot took. I finished writing it in record time. The result was *DISTRACTING THE DUCHESS*, a story RT BookReviews calls "a sexy, fast-paced romp!"

I guess desperation works.

**BtO:** Or maybe it's "letting yourself go" and having fun with the writing!

Though all of your Diana Groe books have been wonderfully reviewed, *Distracting the Duchess* is off to a stellar start.

**Diana/Emily:** Yes, even though it won't be in stores till Feb 28th, the signs are good. *DISTRACTING THE DUCHESS* is the first of my titles to receive a Publishers Weekly review! (BtO note: And a good one!) Kind of the gold standard in the biz. The buy in has been strong and--here's the best part--the *DUCHESS* will be sold in Wal-Mart! Now you have to understand that most of my extended family lives in small midwestern towns for whom Wal-Mart IS the only bookstore. Since none of my Diana Groe books were sold in Wal-Mart, some of them still don't really believe I'm published. Of course, since *DISTRACTING THE DUCHESS* is going out under my new moniker, Emily Bryan, a few of them probably still won't believe it!

**BtO:** Welcome to the wonderful world of relatives! :) So, did starting anew make a difference in your writing process?

**Diana/Emily:** I do more pre-work than I used to. I plot more heavily ahead of time, but I'm freer to deviate if I discover something in the process of writing my characters. I've never had the luxury of waiting for the muse. I've always been a fierce devotee of writing whether I feel like it or not. Now that I'm writing light-hearted, fun and ('scuse me while I blush!) sexier stories, I almost always feel like writing.

**BtO:** Have there been any benefits that you've seen to getting a do-over?

**Diana/Emily:** I've really been blessed by my editor's willingness to take another chance on me. Even though we live or die by the numbers, Leah is a genuine person who's committed to my growth as a writer.

Any time we re-invent ourselves, growth is inevitable. I'm happy to report that I have two more Emily Bryan books on the way, PLEASURING THE PIRATE in August (in time to be your release mate again, Colleen! We can be beach reads together!) and VEXING THE VISCOUNT for spring of 09. Another incredible blessing is that the day job is gone. Now I'm a full-time writer.

**BtO:** That's fantastic! Congratulations!

**Diana/Emily:** Thanks. Of course, this means my husband no longer cleans the house or does the laundry, but it's a sacrifice Emily Bryan is willing to make.

But I have to confess that part of me is hoping that readers who like my Emily Bryan books will look for my Diana Groe stories, too. And for those of you who enjoyed my Vikings, please give my Victorians a try. They aren't the usual suspects. Light or dark, serious or silly, we need both to stay balanced. I hope Diana Groe and Emily Bryan will both find a home on lots of readers' keeper shelves.

**BtO:** Do you have any advice for writers facing adversity?

**Diana/Emily:** I first met NYTimes Bestseller Bobbi Smith in May 2006 when MAIDENSONG first hit the shelves. She gave me some advice that has stuck with me.

"Stay published."

**BtO:** Great advice. People underestimate how very, very important that is. And how difficult.

**Diana/Emily:** I was green enough at the time not to realize how profound this statement was. But if you're building a writing career, the goal is to always have another book coming. To do that, you need to keep writing. Everyday. Whether you feel like it or not. I've dashed a few paragraphs in the car before my workday began and I've written on an envelope at my grandmother's hospital bedside while she slept. As writers, we need to be able to slip into that vivid dream that is our fictional world. Especially when we're facing adversity.

Surround yourself with people who build you up. Find critique partners you trust. Have a plan. but don't be afraid to try something totally new. You never know when you're going to find the joy you started writing for in the first place. Please stop by my websites (yeah, I've got 2 of them!) [www.dianagroe.com](http://www.dianagroe.com) and [www.emilybryan.com](http://www.emilybryan.com). There's usually a contest going and check out my Writer's Corner!

Thanks, Colleen, for the opportunity to talk with your readers. You rock!

BtO: Thanks for joining us, Diana/Emily, and for having the courage to talk about what all too often is publishing's "dirty little secret." As we've discussed here on previous posts, there are many, many authors who have flourished in their second or third (or more) tries as publishing success. "Adapt or die" isn't just a Darwinism, it's a reality in any business.

I can't wait to read your new book!

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