

Interview with Liza Treviño

What is *All That Glitters: A tale of Sex, Drugs and Hollywood Dreams* about, and what compelled you to write it?

LT: All That Glitters is a women's fiction novel that has glamour, Hollywood and some romance mixed in for good measure. I've always been a reader and a writer, since I was a kid. I loved – love – all kinds of genres: horror, suspense, romance, but Jackie Collins, in particular, always held a special place in my heart. I adore her work and all Hollywood fiction. I gobbled it up when I was a teenager. Eventually, I was re-reading one of my favourites of hers while I was in grad school in Los Angeles, and it hit me. Where is a Latina Lucky Santangelo? I wanted to read about a badass character like Lucky Santangelo, but I wanted her to be Latina. And that's how it started for me. I began thinking about the popular stories I liked to read and decided I was going to create those kinds of stories but put a Latina at the center of the action. That's definitely something I wanted to read. I couldn't find it, so I started writing

What is your book about?

LT: It follows the rags-to-riches Hollywood journey of a creative, ambitious, street smart and gorgeous Latina who sets her sights on making it big in Hollywood as a writer and film director in the 1980s.

What themes do you explore in *All That Glitters*?

LT: I set out to write about relationships. There are three key relationships in the book, and each of the relationship highlights different but complimentary themes that overlap. Themes that include the redemptive nature of loyalty and friendship, the destructive power of giving into your worst impulses, facing your demons, learning to love yourself, self-acceptance and trust. But, I'm most intrigued by the idea of free will vs. fate. Do we have free will or are things set before we even take our first breath? How in control are we of our life journeys? Is there some pre-determined destination that all of our little, everyday decisions ultimately leads us? Or, is it all just chaos? And, if it is chaos, then how do we account for certain repetitions in life? I suppose I'm quite taken with that theme because I see it played out and the questions come up again and again in different stories I've written. And, to all of this, I'd say that the themes became apparent after I wrote the story.

Why do you write?

LT: Because my head would explode if I didn't.

How picky are you with language?

LT: It depends. If I'm in first-draft-writing mode, I'm not too picky with the word choice. For me, it's more about getting the action or scene out of my head and onto the page. During this phase, I try not to re-read sentences or paragraphs at all and just move forward. It's a method I've developed in order to finish the story. It's definitely not for everyone. Then,

when I go to my revision stage, that's when the word choices matter. A lot. Since I write the draft in almost a trance like, determined goal-oriented state, reading through it for the first time actually does yield surprises. Then the revisions come. That's when I hone my word choices and descriptions. It's sort of like sculpting. First you mine the quarry of marble or whatever – to me that's the first draft. Then you take the chisel and start chipping, contouring and etching the finer points to get the image or figure you want – that's the revision process.

When you write, do you sometimes feel as though you were being manipulated from afar?

LT: No doubt about it. I know it's happening because I'll go back and read passages and have the weirdest feeling of wondering, 'who wrote that?'

What is your worst time as a writer?

LT: Just before starting a new story or project. I get racked with insecurity that I've forgotten how to write.

Your best?

LT: When you finish and the ending feels right. It literally feels like a weight has lifted and the story is out of me and into the world. And, the satisfaction that I did it.

What's the happiest moment you've lived as an author?

LT: Putting my first novel on my bookshelf.

Are the stories you create connected with you in some way?

LT: Very connected to me, but not in a literal way. I write stories that I want to read. And those are stories that feature Latina heroines who are complicated, fierce, nasty, wise, petulant and maybe unlikeable. These are women who you root for and are in the center of the action across genres. I grew up as a bourgie Mexican-American in San Antonio, Texas, who never needed or learned Spanish, was more into Duran Duran and Madonna than Menudo. So, when I read Robert Ludlum, Stephen King or Jackie Collins, I identified with those stories and wanted those kinds of adventures than, say an Isabel Allende or Sandra Cisneros story. So, I'm writing Latina characters who know they're different and Other, but don't necessarily think of themselves as apart from dominant American society.

What was the craziest or insane thing that happened to you in the book publishing process?

The purely capricious whim of gatekeeping editors. Example. Same pitch, same manuscript, one editor turned me down, telling me they were looking for projects with a stronger commercial hook that could move to a series. A second editor turned me down – same pitch, same manuscript – telling me the project was too commercial.

What is one thing you'd like to jump on the rooftop and scream about?

That Latinas read!!!! They are a large, lucrative and untapped book market. Also, they want all kinds of stories – romance, family dramas, horror, westerns, all of it! My inspiration for writing this particular story and for creating Alexandria Moreno was that I wanted to read about someone like her. I didn't see why characters like her weren't all over the place, and I just hadn't found them yet. When I didn't find what I was looking for, that's when I decided to start writing. And now, it exists.

It's been a long journey to get All That Glitters published. The best thing is that this book and its main character, Alexandria Moreno, now live beyond my imagination. Alex is out in the world for anybody and everyone who's looking for a Latina anti-heroine to find. That's definitely the best part of this entire process.

What's the best advice you can give to aspiring authors?

LT: Don't give up. If you have a story you believe in and are passionate about, keep writing and finish that project. It will find its audience.

Do you have a website or blog where readers can find out more about you and your work?

LT: Yes, at lizatrevino.com, you can learn more about All That Glitters and find my blogs that provide resources for Latino writers as well as 'updates' on a Brown Girl's Burden, my 'spirited' Latina's Guide to Assimilation and Rebellion.

Author Bio:

Liza Treviño hails from Texas, spending many of her formative years on the I-35 corridor of San Antonio, Austin and Dallas. In pursuit of adventure and a Ph.D., Liza moved to Los Angeles where she compiled a collection of short-term, low-level Hollywood jobs like script girl, producer assistant and production assistant. Her time as a Hollywood Jane-of-all-trades gave her an insider's view to a world most only see from the outside, providing the inspiration for creating a new breed of Latina heroine.

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