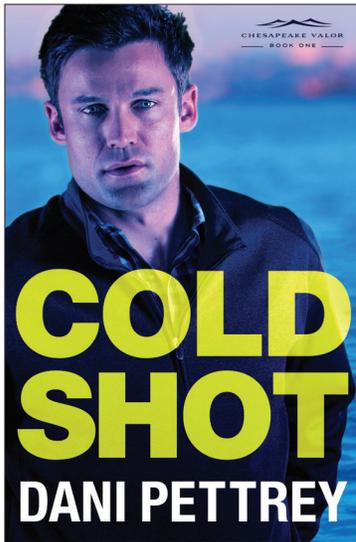




QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH DANI PETTREY



Cold Shot

CHESAPEAKE VALOR #1

by Dani Pettrey

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1. Why do you write romantic suspense?

I write romantic suspense because it incorporates so many things I love—the thrill of adventure, nail-biting suspense, the deepening of characters’ faith, and plenty of romance. I’ve been a mystery lover since I was little. Every day after school I had to watch *Scooby Doo* before I’d go out to play with my friends. There’s just something about a good mystery. Then I got hooked on Agatha Christie novels and devoured them all. I loved figuring out “*who done it.*” And, of course, I need a happy ending. Who doesn’t? Romance novels ensure a happy ending, so I combine the two and enjoy every minute of it.

2. This new series takes place in the Chesapeake Bay area. What is it like writing about an area you’ve called home for so many years?

It’s awesome. I live in such a small yet diverse and beautiful area. We head south a half an hour and we’re in Baltimore, a half hour north and we’re in farmland, a few hours east and we’re at the beach, and a few hours west and we’re in the mountains. I love living in Maryland, and along the Chesapeake Bay in particular. I’m super excited to be able to share the state I love with readers. To show them the places I enjoy grabbing a cup of coffee and where we go for a nice night out on the town. I view it as inviting readers to join my characters and me for a hometown visit.

3. How did you do research for the books in your CHESAPEAKE VALOR series?

Researching for the CHESAPEAKE VALOR series has been an absolute blast. In some ways it’s like seeing my state for the first time. When you live somewhere, you get comfortable going to the same places and you don’t always visit the tourist spots, but those spots are typically what make your state unique. I’ve taken time to visit all the places I’d bring a friend who’d never visited the area before. I’ve learned things on private tours I didn’t even know about my state. For example, did you know that Camden Yards warehouse (where the Orioles play) is the longest continuous building east of the Mississippi? If you stood it on end, it’s only five stories short of the Empire State Building. I’ve also taken time to revisit my favorite spots and places pivotal to the stories. For *Cold Shot* I visited Gettysburg, Ocean City, Baltimore, Fells Point, and St. Michael’s. Having a photographer hubby comes in very handy. I have lots of photos and video clips I’ll be sharing for readers to get a great feel for the area Griffin and Finley live in.

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4. Tell us a little about *Cold Shot*.

Griffin McCray is a park ranger at Gettysburg, having left life as a SWAT-team sniper when a case went bad. The job is mostly quiet—until the day he captures two relic hunters uncovering skeletal remains near Little Round Top. Griffin just wants the case to go away, but charming forensic anthropologist Finley Scott determines that the body is modern—a young social-justice lawyer missing since spring—and all evidence points to the work of an expert sniper. When his childhood friend, FBI agent Declan Gray takes over the case, past and present collide. Griffin soon realizes he'll need to confront some of the darkest days of his life if he—and those he cares about—are going to escape a downward spiral of murder that crosses continents.

5. What's your writing process like?

I write all my first drafts longhand. Sit me in front of a blank computer screen and I freeze. Put a pen in my hand and a fresh notebook and the words generally pour out. I think since that's the way I started writing stories, it's how I naturally write them. I can work on the computer for revisions, but the first draft always has to be longhand. It gets quite interesting when it's time to type in what I've written as I tend to write in blocks, lines, and doodles. It's like interpreting a foreign language at times, but it works for me.

I don't outline or plot my stories. I have a general sense of the main characters and a story premise, I pray and sit down and start writing. I love getting to know my characters and watch them come to life during the first draft. When I'm done it looks nothing like a polished story—rather a compilation of scenes, ideas, and notes. My second draft is where the story really takes shape. Writing this way means a lot of revisions, but it's the process that works for me.