

An Interview with Realm Lovejoy

Reasons I love the internet: THE PEOPLE ON IT! They're so incredibly cool, I don't even know how the internet hasn't exploded yet. Surely all the coolness must compromise its infrastructure, or something? I think about this a lot. Especially when I meet a cool new person.

Recently, I met a *very* cool new person and I want to tell you about her. Her name is [Realm Lovejoy](#), a talented 24-year-old author/illustrator who grew up in Japan before moving to the United States. Does her name sound familiar to you? It should! I've [talked about her before](#) and oh, she did this AMAZING portrait of Regina Afton, the protagonist of *Some Girls Are*, which totally freaked me out when I saw it because it is EXACTLY how Regina looks:



It has been my desktop for ages now. Her [series of author interviews](#) with accompanying illustrations is one of my favourite thing on the internets right now and if you haven't checked it out, you need to do that.

So the nice thing about meeting cool new people is they are so cool you want to tell the world about them and they are so cool that when you say something like, "CAN I INTERVIEW YOU FOR MY BLOG PLEAAASSEEE," really begging-like they *don't* back away from you slowly! They agree!

So with that said, I am so, so excited to present to you...



AN INTERVIEW WITH REALM LOVEJOY

I love 'tell us how you got here,' stories. Can you tell us how your passion for writing and art led you to secure the representation of a stellar literary agent?

As a kid, I was always writing and drawing the stories that'd pop into my head. I was fascinated with all different mediums of storytelling. Sometimes I would write a book, other times design a video game on paper, storyboard a movie, or draw comics. I knew I could always write a book--I just needed a pen or a computer, but the CG industry would require the use of more complicated tools. I chose to hone in on that to expand my storytelling tool-sets and grow as an artist. I went to school at DigiPen Institute of Technology, and then got a job at Valve--an amazing video game company I am working at full-time. I finally felt that I had a firm footing in what I wanted to do. During my spare time, I began working on a novel, taking all the pearls I've gained and applying it to CLAN--my first illustrated novel.

I queried agents, got rejections, and after a while, I decided to put my strength to use. I made a self-addressed, stamped postcard with my painting of my characters at the back and sent it with the queries. Soon, I caught Joanna Stampfel-Volpe's interest. She requested a full and offered me representation after she read CLAN.

The journey sounds simple when I summarize it like that, but there were many hurdles along the way. Number one rule: Never give up.

That is definitely the first rule, I totally agree. And congrats on representation! What are you working on right now?

Loads of stuff! I'm on the second submission for CLAN and gearing up to do the second draft of my second book. (Which is unrelated to the CLAN-iverse and also illustrated.) Blog-wise, I am still working on author interviews.

What inspired Clan?

It was one of those random thoughts you have while staring at the ceiling. I was thinking about CG films and how low budget it would be to duplicate one character for the whole movie cast. The idea seemed crazy, but it interested me when I began brainstorming about how the society would work, how characters would develop, and the conflicts that could happen. Pretty soon, I was writing about it...and became completely obsessed.



Courtney's note: are these not amazing? W-O-W.

That is awesome. You grew up in Japan and lived in Washington (awesomeness). How has this influenced or informed your work?

Japan and America has most of my favorite comics, movies, art, and games. I grew up with the best stuff! Both countries are good at different aspects of stories and HUGE in the industries I'm interested in. I merge both the Japanese and American style into my art and storytelling. I love them both and wouldn't choose one or the other. Being from both worlds also helped me understand my characters who are often from two worlds as well.

What are your writing and illustrating processes like?

For writing, my first goal is to entertain myself--which is no easy task. I am the pickiest reader and movie-watcher there is! I try to think about what's challenging, crazy, frightening, and wonderful to me. I want to be a little scared when I write and be unsure of the outcome, challenged by my characters, and in love with the world. It's not simple, but that's how I start writing. I get the theme down first, and then pick out my characters and setting to best suit the core story. The characters usually come to life pretty fast once they're placed. They interact and the book unfolds--as long as I let go and let 'em do their thing.

For illustrations, first I get a picture in my mind...and then I try to capture it. I pick a theme to make the style, symbol, mood, and palette go together--very similar to my writing. I research as necessary, pick a composition, sketch it out, do line-work, add colors, and then do the finishing effects. The feeling of discovering my vision is important for every piece.

Whether it's writing or drawing, emotion is the most important response to seek from the audience and what makes an impression.

Very well said. I was especially nodding my head to this part, "I want to be a little scared when I write and be unsure of the outcome, challenged by my characters, and in love with the world." Yes! In six words or less, how would you describe your style?

Down to Earth

Win. In the last month you have opened your blog to authors and agents, doing awesome interviews with them and providing accompanying illustrations. The results have been absolutely fantastic (when I saw your interpretation of Regina, I swear my heart stopped, it was so *her*)! How has the experience been for you? Has it been challenging or surprising?

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I started the interview series because I really wanted to reach out, get to know other authors, and to help them. I thought drawing for them would be fun too and I'd gain practice as an illustrator for other books. I didn't expect it to be so well received! The art takes an hour of my time - sometimes two - so it's not difficult. Although I ponder about author expectations, for the most part, I haven't had any trouble connecting with the authors and his/her vision. It's been so great drawing in different styles and reading author responses. I met a ton of fabulous authors...like Courtney! (She rocks like woah!) *Courtney: aw! ~*~*

The illustrations and interviews are fantastic. What could you draw over and over and over again and never get tired of?

Faces! The eyes alone can tell so much story--even if it's the most neutral expression. Sometimes, that can be the most fascinating of all expressions. I love playing with the shadows and lights, trying to capture a subtle mood. One spot of light in the eyes can change everything.

What's a favorite recent read of yours?

This isn't a surprising answer since it's practically everyone's favorite but...[Hunger Games!](#) It contain a lot of things I believe in about storytelling: revolving around a single theme, having narration that's to the point, and doing something different.

Great pick! And where can we find you on the internets?

www.realmlovejoy.com! I also have a blog called [The Blog Realm](#). I'm on Twitter as [realmlovejoy](#). Basically, if you Google Realm Lovejoy, you'll get me since there aren't too many people named that. ;)

Thank you, Realm, for an awesome interview! And for all you guys reading this, bookmark her sites and remember that name: Realm Lovejoy. A talent like that is ONE TO WATCH and one I'm already watching!

Realm RULES!