

Author Bio



A Paranormal Romance and Urban Fantasy author, **Kharma Kelley** has always been enamored with all things that go "bump in the night". She truly believes that finding humanity and beauty in some of the most seemingly unconventional places is part of the romantic psyche to her. Her work has been featured on Cosmopolitan.com and has won several peer awards with her action-packed, steamy prose. A big fan of the Big Easy, Kharma tends to weave her proud Cajun heritage and values into her books. She enjoys reading other urban fantasy and romance novels and playing Minecraft in her spare time.

Tall, Dark & Deadly is the first book of her "Agents of The Bureau" series.

She frequents Wattpad (which she refers to as a story "incubator") often and beta tests her new story ideas there as well as provide guidance and critiques to aspiring authors. She's a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) advocate and blogger in both the tech and literary industry. She is featured in *Austin Woman Magazine* for her thought leadership regarding building inclusive environments in the workplace.

Her works are often compared to Laurell K. Hamilton, Sherrilyn Kenyon, Gena Showalter, Kresley Cole and the late great author L.A. Banks.

Quote from Kharma Kelley on writing Paranormal Romance & Urban Fantasy:

"There's something intriguing about strong women finding love in all the "wrong" places in the world of fantasy. Of angels, demons, ghosts, werewolves and your occasional blood sucker, all these paranormal metaphors are catalysts of what humans are and crave most...that we're all different, beautiful and a little bit weird--and just want someone to love us for who we are."

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Author Q&A

Can you tell us a little about yourself and your background?

Sure! I was born and raised in Port Arthur, Texas to a pair of Cajun parents. I was a Tomboy growing up, despite my Dad trying so hard to keep me a lady. Now my husband still fights that battle. I've been writing fiction since I was 13 and after my much older friend smuggled me some romance books, I was smitten. I fell in love with romance and urban fantasies and it keeps me plenty busy. I venture into many genres of fiction, but I always come back to paranormal romance. It seems to be my cornerstone.

What inspired you to write?

I've always enjoyed writing, but I think it was my brother that continued to inspire me to keep writing. We both were big movie buffs and loved creating dialogue, so we both got into screenwriting. Mark continued on that path, but I kept exploring writing in different styles of fiction. I remember telling him that I was a bit embarrassed to write romance because so many people looked down on it. He told me to forget what others think and to just write for myself because I enjoy it. After that discussion, I wrote what I enjoyed and never looked back.

Care to tell us more about Tall, Dark, & Deadly, your first foray into the paranormal romance genre?

Yasss! It's so funny it turned into a full length novel! When I first started "Tall, Dark & Deadly", I wanted to make a short story. I've always found making short stories challenging because I always end up fleshing it out more and more until it turns into a full length. I had written my first draft of my other book, "Selenium Night", but wasn't ready to publish it. I wanted to write something short and sweet--a "friends turn lovers" story with different characters--but not another full length book. My rationale was to make a fun short story in the same vein of urban fantasy/paranormal romance to put out to the masses to see how people would like my style and storylines. Only then, would I have decided to be brave enough to put my full length novel out there. (Laughs) Well, that was blown away after I decided to write it on Wattpad. Turned out, writing the story through the app forced me to think big picture and for the first time, really help me understand how to pace my story and keep my little audience engaged. Thanks to the readers on Wattpad, the story became something bigger than I ever hoped for. It was amazing, so I just ran with it. Chloe and Ethan were too fun to turn away and I'm glad I didn't.

Tall, Dark, & Deadly is the first in your Agents of The Bureau series. Do you have this series planned out? If so, can you give us some teasers as to what the series has in store?

Yassss! I do. You will get a nice intro into this universe and the many different supernatural beings that exist with the first book, but as the series go on, readers will delve deeper and start to realize that there's lots of drama there (haha!) When you have creatures this old and conflicted, there's bound to be some predicaments, especially when they are running around falling in love. There's creatures from different cultures and backgrounds who will be featured: Shifters, Souleekers, Vampires, Maneaters, and Tengu demons. Leto's story, "Nocturnally Yours" will be the next book due to the large reader demand and it is going to be an

action-packed, steamy ride. You'll learn more about the world of the Fae along with a deeper look at the different factions of supes and why the Bureau is so important.

What is the genre?

It's a Paranormal Romance with strong Urban Fantasy elements.

What draws you to this genre?

Oh my gosh, I LOVE world building! There's some amazing authors out there who possess such a beautiful imagination to create entire worlds that readers can wrap themselves in. As an avid reader of the genre I could always appreciate the level of dedication it takes for an author to spin up a new reality for us to enjoy. Urban Fantasy is just so much fun and my generation was inundated with it growing up with "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" and "Angel." That's why I just had to mention Buffy in the book regardless of how dated it made the book feel. I wanted to pay homage :) I know this generation is all about "The Vampire Diaries" (which has become my guilty pleasure), but when I started falling in love with writing and reading paranormal romance/urban fantasy, it was all about Miss kickass Buffy!

But seriously, I love spooky things and creatures finding love. There's something intriguing about strong women finding love in all the "wrong" places in the world of fantasy. Of angels, demons, ghosts, werewolves and your occasional blood sucker, all these paranormal metaphors are catalysts of what humans are and crave most...that we're all different, beautiful and a little bit weird--and just want someone to love us for who we are.

How did you develop your plot and your characters?

I'm a recovering pantsier, so I actually started with the character development. I knew I wanted a strong female character who was far from perfect. I wanted her to have a past where she was a bad guy and collide with a goody two-shoes. One of the themes in the story is redemption and that's what Chloe wants. She wants people to trust her. That's pretty hard though when you come out of incarceration and everyone is judging you. You may have served your time, but the judgement never really stops. That kinda adversity can do two things: it can force you to shut down and give up or it can fire you up and make you prove to the world you don't need their approval and get on with your life. Chloe obviously took the latter.

It also doesn't help that she's a vampire-human hybrid. In that world, she's actually the freak. She doesn't belong and anytime you feel that level of exclusion from society, it's gonna drive a bigger wedge between you and what society thinks. I think Chloe's a badass because she's got so much working against her, but still she doesn't let it break her. She's my hero.

On the flip side, I probably didn't imagine her hero, Ethan, such a prim and proper authority figure at first. He kinda developed that way organically. Because Chloe is so out there and gung-ho, it would've been absolute chaos without giving her some sort of an anchor. I needed a sage mentor for her. Someone who was wiser, older and on some level relate to Chloe and accept her for who she is. Ethan has seen so much and been around for so long, nothing should really amaze him. But somehow, something possesses him to take a chance on a hybrid ex-con and bring her on his team. So either he was bored or saw something in Chloe that he hadn't seen before :)

In developing the plot, I kept thinking about interviews I watched and read about street gangs and small time criminals when they get out on parole. You aren't supposed to connect with any felons per your parole release.

You have a list of rules long as your arm to obey or else you go back in. It had me thinking about the gang Chloe ran with. The ones that got away would still be up to their hell-raising ways, while she was forced to walk the straight and narrow. So I thought, “Okay, I have to get the Boyettes to do something foul and in doing so, Chloe will already raise suspicions because it’s sadly ‘guilt by association’.” She’ll have to prove her loyalty to the The Bureau and Ethan. What the Boyettes are up to can destroy and unravel a lot for not just The Bureau, but the world, so it’s game on to retrieve the box!

What inspired your protagonist?

Chloe is beautifully human. She’s flawed and hopeful and wants to be accepted. However, she’s also a “bad girl.” She’s tough and has this tenacity to her that makes the story work. When I thought about the ideal heroine for this book, I pictured her sitting in a jail cell, having this feeling of regret and resentment. She made some mistakes, and she sat back and let things happen instead of speaking up. Lots of us have experienced that kind of regret. It’s pretty character-forming, you know--having to live with a mistake where you are almost certain wouldn’t have happened if you’d just stepped up and said/done something. It doesn’t make you horrible, it just makes you human. So when I thought of a heroine, I wanted her to be someone who was destined to set things right.

What inspired your antagonist?

I’m a bit obsessed with villains who are a bit sociopathic. I’ve always read about the kinda gangs that were in the streets in New York at the turn of the century and there were some seriously bad guys. Twisted, hard-nosed guys that got away with a lot of wickedness. Inspiration to have a gang of brothers, the Boyettes, came from reading about the gangs like The Dead Rabbits and the Bowery Boys. Alistair is taunting and cruel, but he loves his brothers. He believes in family, but above all he’s territorial and isn’t afraid to shock. He and his brothers didn’t get enough love before they turned and it spoiled them for all eternity.

What was the hardest part to write in the book?

The action! Don’t get me wrong I LOVE action! It’s not a shock that it found its way into my Paranormal Romance books. But, I wasn’t used to writing action in my style. I had to find my own rhythm and educate myself a LOT on realistic fighting as well as how to actually write action that wasn’t so technical it was boring or so abstract readers couldn’t visualize. That part was really tough.

What was your favourite part of your book to write?

It would have to be the mellow downtime in the story where Chloe and Ethan get to connect. The story is so fast paced, I welcomed the time where they could stop for a minute and get to know each other better. Ethan is so closed and reserved, it’s very hard to figure out what he’s thinking, at least from Chloe’s POV. When they calm down and talk, it’s downright touching and often hilarious.

Are you a full time or a part time writer? If part time, what do you do besides write?

When I’m not writing, I lead a team of fantastic techies at an Austin-based software company. I love doing anything creative, so if I’m not writing, I’m painting, reading, drawing, knitting--you name it! It all fights the dreaded writer’s block!

Who would you say are your favourite authors?

I'm always on the lookout for the new and rising authors, but Gena Showalter writes some sizzling paranormal romance! Sherrilyn Kenyon's magnum opus of world building keeps me inspired and giddy. Kresley Cole makes me need a glass of ice water nearby to read her work and L.A. Banks is reigning champ on urban fantasy with her "Vampire Huntress" Series. The writing world continues to miss her imagination and craft.

Do you have any desire to work in any other genres?

OMG Definitely! I have several story plots queued up in the realms of New Adult Romance, Science-fiction Romance and my most exciting idea falls under Historical-Paranormal Romance :) I've have a supernatural western I'm itching to write, so rest assured, I don't plan on slowing down anytime soon and there's a lot in the romance genre to get into.

What future projects do you have planned?

"Nocturnally Yours" is currently in the works and will be slated for late spring along with my 1st installment of a wolf shifter romance series titled "Selenium Night". The world centers around two factions of feuding shifter creatures (Aristans & Thesians) called "Shadowshifters". It's all about sexy, weapon-wielding, motorcycle riding werewolves! Woot! There will also be a vampire/demon romance coming in the summer!

What is your preferred method for readers to get in touch with you and your books?

Feel free to stalk me on Facebook or Twitter as I hang on those a lot. Readers can always email me--I'll always respond :)

Do you have any advice for aspiring authors?

Two words: just write! Doesn't matter how rough it comes out, if you feel it sucks. Just write it! Let your imagination run wild and let your writing make it's own path. Remember, you can always go back and tweak it. I just have one published book under my belt and I don't plan on stopping there. The best thing a writer can do to hone their craft is practice and that only happens by writing. So stop finding excuses and write everyday. Things will get better. Just write!

Excerpt from *Tall, Dark, & Deadly*

Chloë felt the thousand little tingles on her flesh dissipate as the fading subsided and found herself in a small loft condo. She reluctantly unlocked her arms from around Ethan as his hands slowly slid from around her waist. As Chloë looked around, she noticed steel shades that were pulled down in a beautiful, sleek living room with a sofa, an ottoman, and a quaint coffee table. The walls were a deep gray with a few paintings from Dali scattered about.

"Where are we? This isn't your place."

Ethan took off his coat and laid it on the arm of the sofa. "Actually, this is my place," he said. "One of them at least."

Chloë pointed at one of the paintings. "You like Dali?"

Ethan looked at the painting of Dali's *The Sandman* and smiled. "Yes. I enjoy surrealism. I find it very...dreamlike."

Chloë turned to look at him. "How many homes do you have?"

Ethan looked around, turning on more lights. "Enough. I've lived a long time and all over the world, Chloë. I have a few places to call home when I get bored or need some space. Some are known to the Bureau, some of them are not. It comes in handy when I need to be off the grid. No one knows about this particular safe house." He met her eyes. "Except you."

Chloë gave him a soft smile as she took off her jacket, laying it on top of his. "I feel mighty privileged. Are we still in New Orleans or are we in Bora Bora? Please say Bora Bora."

Ethan smiled. "No, sorry, but we're still in the New Orleans area. We can stay here until we're ready to intercept the Woe. The Bureau is probably running full force by now, so it's good we're off the streets. We need to stay that way."

Chloë nodded. "Agreed. Also, this is much better than the digs we would've had rooming with Keturah. She owns a string of apartments in Metairie, but they could use some upkeep. She's not much on maintenance on stuff outside of Pale Riders."

The mention of her Souleseeker acquaintance piqued his interest. "How did you and Keturah become friends? Seems like a rather odd kinship. A Souleseeker and a vampire going shoe shopping?" To him, it sounded a lot like a bad parlor joke.

"Hey, there's nothing odd about going shoe shopping, Ethan." She smirked to compliment her sarcasm. "How dare you."

Ethan scoffed and simply returned a smirk of his own. "You know what I meant."

Chloë shrugged. "Keturah doesn't see me as a vampire. In fact, she's always just been fascinated by what I am and decided long ago not to judge or label it. We don't know how we work, we just do. Like a lion befriending a gazelle. It's odd, but somehow it works. During those dark days when I was alone and saw the streets as hunger and survival, it was she who found me. She gave me work in her revues, helped me understand what I was. In hindsight, I should have never left from under her wing, no pun intended. If I hadn't, maybe I wouldn't have found the Boyettes." She eyed him curiously. "Why do you ask?"

"I found it interesting, that's all," Ethan said, walking past her to the kitchen. He kept remembering her tenderness and concern for Keturah, seeing her nurture with a warm heart. There was a selflessness to Chloë that drew him in. Even with her determination to help Bethany, a woman she didn't even know, she hadn't cared that the woman had betrayed her. She'd just wanted her to be okay. He was right that Chloë was so much more than what she seemed to others. "To your point, like seeing a lion befriend a gazelle."

Chloë nodded. "True. But wouldn't people say the same about your camaraderie with Leto? A vampire and Faery sprite working together seems just as odd. I know Leto isn't much on vampires." She paused. "Or maybe she isn't much on me."

Ethan groaned. "Most likely a little of both." He thought about Leto's run-in with vampire years ago when he'd found her. He knew she despised them with good reason, though she would never let it interfere with her job. Leto knew that Ethan wasn't like other vampires, and, like Keturah, Leto didn't judge what he was. "Like you said, we don't know how exactly it works. Just does. Still, it's impressive to see you with a Soulseeker friend. I didn't know much about your time before you met the Boyettes."

"Well, hate to surprise you, boss, but not everything about me is detailed, neatly in my dossier at the Bureau." Her voice wickered with arrogance. "I am still capable of a few secrets that your boys in black didn't scrape up."

"Well, I wouldn't fault them too much. Perhaps it was hidden in the Bible-length epic that is your criminal record."

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