

[14:50] guest-11658 entered the room
[14:50] guest-11658 changed nickname to emylss
[14:58] guest-11962 entered the room
[14:58] guest-11962 changed nickname to alaya
[14:58] booksand: greetings Alaya!
[14:58] alaya: Hi there!
[14:59] booksand: How's it going?
[14:59] alaya: Busy, but pretty good :)
[14:59] alaya: How about you?
[14:59] guest-12006 entered the room
[14:59] booksand: Good. Even better if the audience joins us. lol!
[15:00] alaya: yes, for sure
[15:02] guest-12104 entered the room
[15:02] guest-12116 entered the room
[15:02] booksand: Greetings guests! Feel free to change your names.
[15:03] booksand: I'll go ahead and get started...
[15:03] guest-12149 entered the room
[15:03] booksand: First, thanks so much to Alaya johnson for joining us today
[15:03] guest-12158 entered the room
[15:03] guest-12149 changed nickname to drensbspot
[15:03] alaya: Happy to be here!
[15:04] booksand: I'd love to know a little more about the recent Columbia grad and NYC denizen. How'd you get into writing?
[15:05] guest-12268 entered the room
[15:05] guest-12268 changed nickname to hagdaz
[15:05] alaya: I've been writing since I can remember, practically. I think I tried to write my first novel when I was seven.
[15:06] booksand: Wow, that's awesome and cute. what was it about?
[15:06] guest-12346 entered the room
[15:06] alaya: It was a mystery about a child star who crashed on a mysterious island...
[15:06] guest-12346 changed nickname to keishaeearnest
[15:06] alaya: Shades of Lost, I guess. Before its time ;)
[15:07] booksand: oh how cute, you should revisit that :)
[15:07] alaya: But I got into writing seriously when I moved to New York for college
[15:07] alaya: I'd been writing a lot of fanfic before that, but I buckled down and wrote a few full length novels
[15:07] alaya: while falling in love with the city
[15:08] booksand: what a romantic beginning
[15:09] booksand: So, how did you get into writing paranormal fiction?
[15:09] alaya: Well, I really hadn't meant to.
[15:09] alaya: My first novel was straight YA fantasy
[15:09] alaya: But I had worked in publishing when I first graduated from college and I ended up reading *a lot* of vampire novels
[15:10] booksand: Were you an editor?
[15:10] alaya: I mean, casual readers are generally aware that there's a lot of paranormal fiction out there, but in publishing it'
[15:10] alaya: I actually was an editorial assistant for the Quality Paperback Book club
[15:10] booksand: okay, very cool
[15:11] alaya: which meant that for a few years I was passingly familiar with almost every major release from the big publishers
[15:11] alaya: ...which included a whole lot of paranormal fantasy.
[15:11] booksand: oh absolutely. the market's saturated with it.
[15:11] alaya: And I guess I just started noticing how some tropes were used over and over again
[15:11] alaya: and I ended up, one day, having a huge brain storm/thought experiment
[15:12] alaya: I wondered, "if I were going to write one of these, how could I do it so it's interesting to me?"

[15:12] alaya: And suddenly I thought about the roaring twenties and New York City and social activism...

[15:12] alaya: And I had a really rough synopsis by the end of that week

[15:13] booksand: So you were really "in it".

[15:13] alaya: Yeah, definitely. I kept telling myself that I wasn't *actually* going to write the book

[15:13] alaya: I had other deadlines, but next thing I knew I was sitting in front of my computer, typing away

[15:13] booksand: Which sounds like most authors...

[15:13] alaya: Some books just want to be written :)

[15:14] booksand: Moonshine wanted to be writte. I'll gladly attest to it.

[15:14] alaya: Heh, I guess so, right? We're never happier than writing what we're not supposed to be.

[15:14] alaya: Thanks :) I'm still sort of surprised that it came out in the end. I feel like a very unlikely paranormal writer

[15:14] alaya: though it was so much fun.

[15:15] booksand: Absolutely, especially when it seems to be outside their genre. By the way, do you have a certain genre you're attached too?

[15:15] guest-12731 entered the room

[15:15] guest-12731 changed nickname to bobbycush

[15:17] alaya: Sorry, I think the chat window cut off the rest of your question...

[15:17] booksand: Sorry, do you have a certain genre you're attached to?

[15:18] alaya: Ah! I definitely do most of my work in fantasy. It's the genre that grabbed my attention as a kid, and it's never re

[15:18] alaya: But I just finished a (entirely unrelated) science fiction YA novel

[15:18] guest-12880 entered the room

[15:18] guest-12880 changed nickname to robert1353

[15:18] alaya: so I feel like I'm starting to branch out.

[15:19] booksand: I'd say so. That's interesting. You rarely see authors genre hopping much.

[15:19] booksand: However, it can be a testament to how well they actually write.

[15:20] alaya: That's true. I feel like I tend to use the same themes in my books (a lot of family stuff, relationships)

[15:20] alaya: But I guess I can start to feel bored if I'm not challenging myself in some way

[15:20] alaya: And usually your genre is your biggest comfot zone.

[15:20] booksand: Exactly

[15:21] booksand: After reading Moonshine, I can't imagine your writing being boring.

[15:21] alaya: Thanks! I figure that as long as *I'm* interested in my books, there's a good chance my readers will be, too.

[15:21] booksand: So, you wrote a synopsis in a week for Moonshine

[15:22] alaya: Yep. I wrote a quickie back-of-the-book-blurb that afternoon. Once I had Zephyr and Amir in my head, the rest just kin

[15:22] booksand: what was the rest of that process like?

[15:22] alaya: itself

[15:22] alaya: Well, there's the rub. Writing is always a lot harder than the planning

[15:22] alaya: My finished book was pretty drastically different from my initial outline

[15:23] alaya: I had this moment halfway through the book when I was looking through my notes and feeling like something was off

[15:23] booksand: So your book was speaking back to you, eh?

[15:23] alaya: And it occurred to me in a bit of a Eureka moment that I could have one character be responsible for a certain major

[15:23] alaya: the story

[15:23] guest-13062 entered the room

[15:23] alaya: Yeah, I guess so. I don't "talk to my characters" in any kind of literal way like some writers do

[15:24] alaya: But I definitely get blocked when I get this generally unspecific feeling

that things aren't working

[15:24] guest-13062 changed nickname to synolve

[15:24] alaya: then I usually take a very long bath and try to figure out what's wrong

[15:24] booksand: ahhh, the good ol' soak in the tub to clear the mind...

[15:25] guest-13156 entered the room

[15:25] alaya: I have always found water to be one of my greatest writerly tools, after, you know, a computer :)

[15:25] guest-13156 changed nickname to lynn

[15:25] guest-13205 entered the room

[15:25] guest-13205 changed nickname to synolve

[15:26] guest-13208 entered the room

[15:26] booksand: now let's talk a bit about the characters of Moonshine

[15:26] alaya: Sure.

[15:27] guest-13258 entered the room

[15:27] booksand: Where did the glorious Amir come from? He's, uh, kinda dreamy.

[15:27] booksand: lol!

[15:27] alaya: Heh, I'm glad you think so! I've actually had some very mixed reactions about him

[15:27] alaya: Basically I have a thing for anti-heroes

[15:27] alaya: I even kind of like Heathcliff! Though my sister finds this appalling.

[15:28] guest-13297 entered the room

[15:28] booksand: We must have a thing for the forboding and dangerous types. ;)

[15:28] guest-13297 changed nickname to miltonwcraft

[15:28] alaya: I'm definitely the kind of girl who liked Spike over Angel, etc., and when I was coming up with someone to match Ze

[15:28] guest-13315 entered the room

[15:28] guest-13315 changed nickname to walleye5

[15:28] alaya: I naturally went to that tradition, I think

[15:28] alaya: But Amir also grew with the story

[15:29] alaya: I love dialogue and banter. First, because it's fun to write and second because you can learn a lot about your character

[15:29] alaya: I definitely learned a lot about Amir by having him flirt and fight with Zephyr

[15:29] booksand: Yes! Amir is quite snarky and flirtatious

[15:30] alaya: I don't think I could write the strong and silent type.

[15:30] alaya: I like talking too much!

[15:30] booksand: And Zephyr is a joy. A feminist, vampire suffragette, social activist, etc....

[15:31] alaya: She was the catalyst for the whole book.

[15:31] booksand: Was she the first character to "come to you"?

[15:31] alaya: When I started writing this, I just wanted a character who would, for once, stand up and say that, well, vampires are

[15:31] alaya: She definitely was. I always figured that if *one* vampire could be good, then why is it okay for vampire hunter he

[15:32] alaya: to kill all the ones they're not in love with?

[15:32] booksand: the part after vampires are was cut off.

[15:32] alaya: vampire hunter heroines to kill all the ones they're not in love with?

[15:32] alaya: sorry!

[15:33] booksand: no prob.

[15:33] alaya: I mean, I have different worldbuilding, but probably the seed was just wanting to have vampires who weren't automat

[15:33] alaya: but a society who still treated them like they were

[15:34] booksand: Was this a critique on race in any way?

[15:34] alaya: Definitely!

[15:34] booksand: Thought so!

[15:34] alaya: Part of the reason I liked the 20s was because it put a lot of issues of social justice very starkly

[15:34] booksand: Yes!

[15:34] alaya: There were immigrants, racial minorities, women's issues, all bubbling up in social movements

[15:35] alaya: And to me, adding vampires (and other supernatural creatures) to the mix just helped bring those out even more

[15:35] alaya: I wanted both aspects to comment on each other, if you know what I mean.

[15:35] booksand: What better place than the cauldron of social issues than NYC and throw vamps in the mix!

[15:36] booksand: That's what makes this not part of the saturation of vampire novels out

[15:36] booksand: A vampire novel with a conscience

[15:37] alaya: That was my hope! I had to start with a heroine with a conscience. And for all that Zephyr can be a little overzealous

[15:37] alaya: I just wanted her to come from a different place than your average paranormal romance heroine

[15:37] booksand: And she does!

[15:37] alaya: (Who are often very vindictive and judgmental, for some reason)

[15:38] booksand: Ok, we've got about 20 mins left, so I'll let any guests ask a few questions

[15:38] booksand: any questions?

[15:39] keishaeearnest: No questions but, I'm really enjoying the chat. I can't wait to read the book!

[15:39] alaya: Thanks!

[15:39] booksand: Well get it and spread the word. :)

[15:40] keishaeearnest: I will!

[15:40] alaya: Out of curiosity, are you a big paranormal reader?

[15:40] drensbspot: I have a question, Alaya, did you find it difficult to promote this type of book to publishers?

[15:40] alaya: Hmm...

[15:40] booksand: I'll let Dren go first

[15:41] alaya: I had a very interesting rejection letter right before I sold the novel

[15:41] drensbspot: can you share the experience?

[15:41] alaya: Basically, it said that "these sorts" of novels are "generally set in the present or near future" and suggested that if I want to sell it, I should include Amir's POV and try to make it a romance novel

[15:42] alaya: Which seemed to me to be a real indication of how codified the paranormal market has gotten

[15:42] alaya: That was from a traditional publisher of paranormals. On the other hand, the next day St. Martin's made their offer

[15:42] alaya: So I think that with writing, the best rule is that as long as you find an editor who really gets you, you can write

[15:43] drensbspot: wow that's awesome! It does seem St. Martin's is more progressive

[15:43] alaya: Sometimes that can be hard, but editors are a smart well-read bunch, and they're not always looking for something *e

[15:43] alaya: like what's come before

[15:43] booksand: my thoughts exactly, drensbspot

[15:43] alaya: Yeah, Thomas Dunne is a very cool, eclectic publisher

[15:43] alaya: I was really lucky to land there.

[15:43] drensbspot: was it hard to find an editor?

[15:44] alaya: Honestly, I sold the book in three months, which is not very long at all, considering.

[15:44] alaya: I know people who've had books on submission for a year.

[15:44] drensbspot: ok SUPER WOW!!

[15:44] booksand: That is phenomenal, Alaya!

[15:44] keishaeearnest: Very impressive.

[15:45] alaya: :) it felt longer at the time.

[15:45] drensbspot: now I REALLY need to get my hands on your book :)

[15:45] booksand: Oh I'm sure
[15:45] alaya: All writers have to learn to wait, but we all secretly long for instant gratification
[15:45] drensbspot: Will you be doing any physical tours for the book?
[15:46] alaya: I'm planning a few science fiction/fantasy type conventions, but no big book tours as of yet
[15:46] alaya: Though that might change, who knows
[15:47] drensbspot: Well I'll be on the lookout :)
[15:47] booksand: to answer your last question Alaya, no I don't read much para fic
[15:48] booksand: i think that really adds to my level of gushiness over it.
[15:48] alaya: Yeah, I hadn't really either before my crash course in publishing
[15:48] alaya: It's funny how many ideas you can get by deciding you want to do something better
[15:48] booksand: i have some preconceived notions about it and you smashed them
[15:48] alaya: That's good!
[15:49] booksand: any other questions?
[15:49] keishaeearnest: Where can we buy the book?
[15:49] alaya: Amazon, pretty much any bookstores, at this point
[15:50] alaya: It's in the fantasy section of Borders, and the general fiction section of B&N
[15:50] keishaeearnest: Got it. Great job ladies!
[15:50] guest-14276 entered the room
[15:50] booksand: Well I have one final question. what's next?
[15:50] drensbspot: Oh I have one question
[15:51] drensbspot: opps sorry..
[15:51] booksand: go ahead drensbspot
[15:51] drensbspot: Ok the for your book... they're displaying it in the "general fiction"?
[15:51] drensbspot: rather than AA Fiction?
[15:53] alaya: Well, only Borders has an AA section
[15:53] alaya: But shelving in the chains can get very murky and bureaucratic
[15:53] alaya: It kind of depends on who in their structure decides to buy the book.
[15:53] drensbspot: Ok I think it's great for it to be mixed in.
[15:53] drensbspot: a lot of good work is overlooked because it's shoved into the dark back reaches of a shelf
[15:53] alaya: Oh, definitely. That's just happened with my first novel, so I know all about that issue.
[15:54] drensbspot: Ok I'm done :)
[15:54] alaya: Thanks, drenbspot!
[15:54] drensbspot: No thank YOU! and Booksand this is great!
[15:57] booksand: sorry having tech difficulties
[16:19] booksand: I'm still here :)
[16:19] alaya: No problem.
[16:19] guest-14741 entered the room
[16:19] alaya: Hmm, well it seems like we're just about done, anyway.
[16:19] alaya: Anyone else have one last question?
[16:19] alaya: Well then, thanks for coming :) If you decide to read Moonshine, I hope you like it!