

THE *Princess* IN BLACK

A Conversation with Shannon and Dean Hale

SHANNON: This book started one day when our daughter Maggie was pointing out the different colors on her butterfly skirt and saying, “Pink is a girl color, and purple, and yellow. But not black.”

I said, “Girls can wear black. And what about Batgirl?”

Maggie said, “Princesses don’t wear black.”

Immediately I began to think up a princess who did wear black. A superhero perhaps, working hard to keep her kingdom free of monsters while maintaining a secret identity.



DEAN: That conversation got the gears going in the Shannon Hale Creative Apparatus, and I’m fairly certain you came to me with 99 percent of the idea and the plots for three books before I even knew you were thinking about it. You probably asked me to collaborate only because monsters are a big part of the series, and I would have felt wronged if you proceeded to write tales about my people without involving me.

SHANNON: I do think it’s telling that when our toddler twins play the Princess in Black, they naturally identify you as the enemy they stop from eating the goat herd and chase back to Monster Land.

DEAN: It is in my nature to try to get people’s goats. Just as it is in yours to prance about in tiaras and chiffon.



SHANNON: I never prance! I saunter. So, I remember that first day, I became instantly so consumed with the idea for the story that I couldn’t think of anything else. I probably made pretty miserable company.

DEAN: You probably did. But I’m sure it was that special kind of happy miserable that I enjoy sharing with you. I honestly don’t remember anything until we got to the carnivorous bunny horde.

SHANNON: Yes, yes, that was your brilliant idea that became everyone’s favorite thing about this series — you don’t have to brag. But the bunny horde isn’t in book 1, so don’t give away any spoilers.

DEAN: The princess dies in the end. Oh, wait, this was supposed to be spoiler-free.

SHANNON: What’s your favorite part of these books? I mean, besides getting to work with me.

DEAN: Getting to work with you.

SHANNON: I love you too.

DEAN: Hey, you said no spoilers.



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