

## Jennifer Platte

Romance novels are not the typical selection of an average seventh grader for recreational reading. However I was never an average anything. It was in the seventh grade that I picked up my first romance novel, called *Playing with Fire* and read it cover to cover in under a day. I was hooked from that point forward. I started checking out romance novels from libraries and reading them while in class- you can imagine the looks that I received as a seventh grader reading Harlequin!

As I got older and earned my own money I began to buy the romance novels that I enjoyed. Garage sales and used book stores are where I picked up most of my collection. I have searched far and wide in order to find the latest and greatest romance novels. My collection today amounts to over 1,200 romance novels, mostly Harlequin. I have copies of books from Harlequin Superromance, Presents, American Romance, Blaze, Temptation, Historical, Intrigue, Romance, and Silhouette Desire and Special Edition, Bombshell, Duets, Flipside and also some books from MIRA and LUNA. I also am avidly searching for the books that I am missing from some of the exiting series that I already own.

I have read a majority of the romance novels that I own, and some I've even read twice. However, I need to be prompted with not only the title of the book but also the names of the characters in order to remember the details of the book. I also have a typed list or a library catalog if you will, of most of the books that I own. I would have a list of all of the books that I own, but I have been adding to my collection since I have been at MSU and have been unable to catalog the new additions.

My collection is important to me. Though many people think that romance novels are mindless books that one can just sit down read, I have learned a great number of things from the characters in romance novels, mostly little details and snippets of facts that most people wouldn't care to know, but I like to know everything. For instance, did you know that people who handle falcons refer to all falcons as 'she' regardless of their gender? I know that, and I learned it in a romance novel. The reason that I greedily snatched up any and all romance novels that I could find through the years is because of the knowledge held within the books. It is knowledge that cannot be found in many other places and if it was found somewhere else it wouldn't have the unforgettable story to go along with it.

My collection, though stretching over 1,200 novels, is far from complete. Harlequin releases a large amount of books every month, and I have to keep up with that and collect the books that I am missing from previous years. It is quite a task, but someone has to do it, so why not me?