

INTERVIEW WITH JEFF RIVERA

Dara Girard



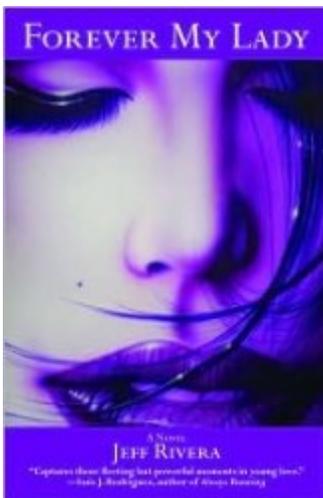
Jeff Rivera is a story about inspiration, perseverance and drive. Once homeless, he is now an award-winning author with a contract from a New York publisher. Presently promoting his novel, [*Forever My Lady*](#), he took the time to stop by and talk about his book and his writing career.

1. Why did you decide to write romance?

It comes naturally to me because I love love. I love being in love and looking into someone eyes and knowing they're yours. I love being there for them no matter what they're going through and them being there for me too. When I looked back at the list of books I plan to write they all have that sort of romantic element to them, all of them.

2. Why did you choose to self-publish and how did you market your book?

I chose to self-publish because I didn't want to experience rejection and I wanted total control over what direction the story went. I promoted the book online mostly, that meant being an active part of message boards/forums. That meant at times spamming the world, but mostly it meant allowing people to spread the word for me, that came back to writing the best story I possibly could.



3. Would you encourage other authors to self-publish? Why or why not?

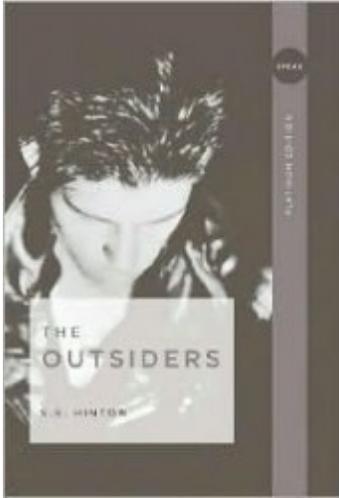
I don't think it's necessarily the best route but it's definitely one alternative. There's lots of advantages like control over your story and the way you promote it, and there's no red tape or "Mommy" to ask for permission about things. No one is telling you what you can and cannot do and giving their "expert" opinion when they're just as clueless as the next person. Haha! But being with a major house is amazing too because you have a team of people that are there to help you and they want you to be successful. I have some great people at Grand Central that are such a blessing in my life.

4. What was your journey to getting published by Grand Central Publishing?

It meant me promoting the self-published version so much that I had a significant enough audience that they'd even take me seriously. It happened to be great timing because the editor at the time who acquired it was looking for Latino-themed stories. I saw an ad on MarcelaLandres.com and that's when I decided what the heck, it doesn't hurt. I thought well, you never know what could happen ... and here I am!

5. When you were homeless did you ever imagine you'd one day be published by Grand Central?

Not at all. Writing a novel was in the back of my mind but no more than the average person who thinks "Wouldn't it be nice to get a book published?" I did go to the library every day to get out of the car we were living in and the library was as it had been for most of my life as a child, a safe-haven an escape. No, most of the time we were preoccupied wondering how we were going to get out of our situation.



6. What book(s) have contributed to your writing success?

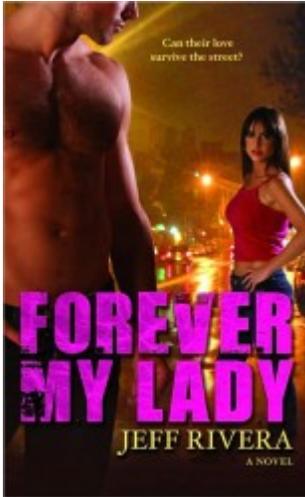
The books that contributed to my success mostly are the ones that my third and fourth grade teachers at David Hill Elementary used to read to us like: *Where the Red Fern Grows*, *Summer of the Monkeys* and *The Outsiders*. Those books stimulated a part of me and made me start thinking seriously about being a storyteller of some kind. I thought it would be as a screenplay writer but I found that writing novels is definitely my calling.

7. Who has been a support on your writing journey? How?

I think the fans of the self-published version were the biggest support. They're the ones that kept sending me encouraging emails about how much *Forever My Lady* moved them. So, when I wasn't feeling up to par that's what kept me going. And my agent at the time, Jenoyne Adams was incredibly supportive when I was feeling low (which didn't happen often) but when I was feeling down she was there for me.

8. How did you feel when you won the Mahogany Media Award for *Forever My Lady*?

I was shocked because I didn't even know I was nominated, to be honest. It's so nice to be recognized because as a writer you spend so much time worrying if people will understand you and connect with your story.



9. What is it about *Forever My Lady* that you think has struck a chord?

I think people are really connected to the thought of first love. We all have experienced it on some level. Someone who we feel like we cannot imagine life without. It's funny when I look back now at my journal when I was in high school the people that I had a crush on, I don't even remember who some of them are! Haha! But you know there are those that will always be in my heart and I wonder whatever happened to them.

10. What advice can you give aspiring authors?

I would say write what you're most passionate about but choose a genre that sells well. That just takes a little research on publishersmarketplace.com. Then turn that genre on it's head, do something a little different with it to give it that extra spin and spice.

It's been a pleasure speaking with you.

Thanks for the interview, Dara!

You can find out more about Jeff on his website www.JeffRivera.com. And find out more about his book on his website, [online bookstores](#) and bookstores all across the country.

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