

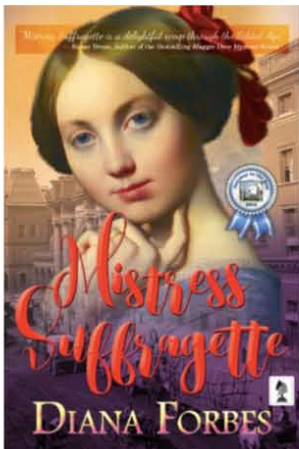
Mistress Suffragette: Exclusive Interview with Author Diana Forbes

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The Movement that Defined FASHION in America: Exclusive Interview with Author Diana Forbes Out Now:

Mistress Suffragette

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A YOUNG WOMAN WITHOUT PROSPECTS AT A BALL IN GILDED AGE NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND IS A TARGET FOR A CERTAIN KIND OF "SUITOR."

At the Memorial Day Ball during the Panic of 1893, impoverished but feisty Penelope Stanton draws the unwanted advances of a villainous millionaire banker who preys on distressed women, the incorrigible Edgar Daggars.

Over a series of encounters, he promises Penelope the financial security she craves, but at what cost?

Skilled in the art of flirtation, Edgar is not without his charms, and Penelope is attracted to him against her better judgment.

Initially, as Penelope grows into her own in the burgeoning early Women's Suffrage Movement, Edgar exerts pressure, promising to use his power and access to help her advance.

But can he be trusted, or are his words part of an elaborate mind game played between him and his wife?

During a glittering age where a woman's reputation is her most valuable possession, Penelope must decide whether to compromise her principles for love, lust, and the allure of an easier life.

Diana Forbes has single handedly captivated the historic movement in America in a way that has shaped how we live and see fashion today. In this riveting novel we get a first hand look of a time in America where trends in fashion defined how we look towards who we are as individuals. I was able to catch up with Diana in New York City where we discussed not only fashion but also her novel *Mistress Suffragette*.



Because this is a work of historical fiction how did the whole suffrage movement, particularly in women's fashion come about?

There was a movement on the hemlines of the women's suffrage movement, called The Rational Dress Movement – a push for clothes that were breathable. Corsets were often so tight that they hurt women's ability to breathe. The problem for most women at the time was that, while they agreed that traditional clothing was hard to wear (and weighty!), the alternatives were ugly. Amelia Bloomer was laughed at for trying to bring trousers into fashion. In my debut novel, *Mistress Suffragette*, I explore The Rational Dress Movement. One of the characters is for it, and the other, my protagonist, is not.

What were some of the fashion trends at the time that inspired such a huge movement in fashion and in culture?

My novel takes place in the 1890's. At the time, there was a grudging recognition of the fact that women needed to wear easier, more breathable clothing to ride bicycles. There was a push toward more athleticism. Gradually, the trousers a woman wore to pursue athletic

activities became less outrageous looking. Another huge trend was the push towards industrialization, and in particular, ready-to-wear clothing. Women started going to department stores to buy their clothes instead of having them hand crafted by dressmakers.

What was the inspiration behind *Mistress Suffragette* and how did you become an author?

I have always been a history buff, and many of my ancestors lived in America during the time period in which the novel takes place. I am lucky because my ancestors left letters and photographs, so I have a record of their stories. Two of my ancestors were tailors living in New York City. In terms of becoming an author, I wrote poems at the age of 6, a diary from the age of ten on, articles for the school newspaper from age 12 on. It's been an evolution!

Because *Mistress Suffragette* is such a well-written, thought out novel, I am curious as to how long did it take you to write it and more so to research out the facts that tie into the story line.

Thank you for the nice sentiment. From the idea through publication, the novel took me five years. I am going to tack on two additional years for the research. I read a lot of fiction that was written at the time as well as non-fiction about the time period. I visited each building that still exists in my novel. I also searched for items, such as menus, letters, and periodicals to give the story a more authentic feel.

If there is one message that you would like to share with fans of your writing and those interested in learning more about *Mistress Suffragette* what would it be and why?

The novel examines whether it's possible to be independent and in love, or if you have to sacrifice one for the other.

Do you envision *Mistress Suffragette* on film and if so who would your top three picks be to play the main character role.

Yes, I feel the book should either be a film or possibly a made-for-TV series. I would love for a young ingénue to come along and make a name for herself with this fantastic role!

What's next for your writing? Do you see a sequel in the future or will you be writing another incredible work to add to an already compelling story?

Thank you for asking. I am writing the sequel now. I love my characters, and there are some new ones in Book Two!

***Bonus Question: You live in one of the busiest cities in the world, when you aren't writing what are some of the things you enjoy doing for fun?**

I live and write in Manhattan. I love to explore the buildings where my ancestors lived, loved, survived, and thrived. Beyond that, I enjoy throwing parties, and dancing. One day I hope to master the quadrille.

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