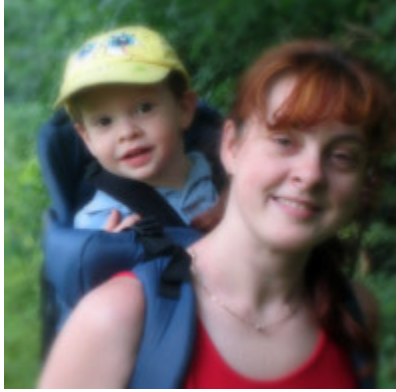


A DIVA'S CHRONICLES...



HOW HIGH SHALL WE SET THE BAR THIS WEEK, MS. HART?

by Dayna Hart

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I was talking with one of my friends this week, and she asked me why I always feel like such a failure. And rather than brush her off, I really and truly thought about it.

I can pinpoint it, actually – to one article I read, once, about a woman whose name I don't remember (but I will google it for you, dear readers: Clare Asquith). The gist of the article was this: Mother of five pens book about Shakespeare's probable political and religious leanings.

I remember the image painted by the writer of that article (which Google hasn't turned up for me) of this woman, children milling about her, writing notes on a pad of paper at the dinner table with one bub propped on her hip. (Not to mention reading and rereading Shakespeare when she had the time (ha!) in order to confirm her hunches about his political symbolism.)

The overwhelming image was one of chaos, but chaos she controlled – like wind in a windsock, she was channelling everyone and everything where it needed to go.

My life is...not so in control. Chaos, I've got. I just don't have the whole 'eye of the storm' calm going on. It's just chaos.

And when I hold myself up to this image of Clare I have in my head – I'm a failure. Every. Single. Time.

Of course, it's only in my mind. This image of Clare, I mean. I'm sure she burnt the pot roast once in a while. Maybe raised her voice a time or two when she didn't really mean to. I bet she even found herself crying into her pillow, wondering what the heck she was trying to do. These are not the images I see when I imagine her, though. They're definitely not the ones I'd want people to associate with me when reading my own books. Not good PR, I suppose.

As writers were told not to compare ourselves to others. "Don't measure your wordcount by someone else's." "Your sales will be different." Even when we find a plot or idea very similar to our own, we're told "You'll do it differently!"

At least, we're told that until the first time we get That Form: the one which asks you for a comparative title so they can say things like "If you liked so-and-so, you'll like Dayna Hart's books." And they want big, recognisable names for the comparison. "If you liked Tolkien, but wanted more sex, Dayna Hart might be the writer for you." Yeah. No pressure.

The point, really, is that being a writer isn't easy for anyone. Whether it is a student, someone with a full time Evil Day Job, a SAHM, or a working mom – it's hard to be a writer. It's hard to try to balance the voices in our head (which often come with film reel) and the very real voices in our life demanding our attention. It's hard to explain to those people who share our lives about how compelling it is to sit and story weave, hour after countless hour.

It's a lot easier, however, once we stop trying to compare ourselves to the image of someone – anyone, even Clare Asquith – in our minds, who can do it all. I'd almost post a photo of my house....laundry spilling over in the laundry room, home renovations half-finished in two rooms, and dishes piled on the counter...however, I've been advised against it – it isn't good PR.

Besides, my children (faces freshly scrubbed, in pristine pajamas) are tucked into their beds (made with sheets fresh off the line). My husband is working overtime, and is therefore not sitting (neglected) by my side, which means it is time for me to churn out today's four thousand words before I go to bed at the reasonable hour of ten 'o' clock.

About DANA HART

Dayna Hart is a reader, writer, and mother of four. (all boys). She has grass stains on the knees of her jeans, holes in her sweatshirts, and a closet full of pristine (as in never-been-worn) shoes to appease her inner fashionista. She writes stories about magic and love, which she has begun to believe are the very same thing.

For more about her, visit her online home at <http://www.daynahart.com>