



An Interview with Serene Wyatt

Children's Book Illustrator

As Interviewed by Anna Johnson

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At what age did you become interested in art?

I've always been interested in art! And not just drawing, but also sewing, sculpting, and painting were always enjoyable forms of art for me.



Ellie the Wiener Dog!

Did you always know you wanted to pursue being an artist?

When I was in preschool, I did one of those “what I want to be when I grow up” assignments and said my life goal was to live on a mountain. I don't think I really picked up artist as a career choice until after high school. Maybe one day I can become a mountain-dwelling artist and combine my childhood dreams with my current career!

What does your illustration process look like?

Your pretty standard thumbnails/sketches, then ink and flat color, then adding the shading/lighting overtop. I create from start to finish using my computer and electronic sketchpad.

How long did it take you to finish this book, and will you work on the entire Ellie series?

This book took a long time! There was a lot of settling down to do with the project—I had to get to know Ellie (and Kim) and create Ellie's entire doggie world. I'll be doing the rest of the series, though, for sure, and it should be a more efficient process now.

What are the challenges of illustrating Ellie? What comes easy to you?

That wiener dog body is a challenge, especially because she is such an animated character with so many expressions and movements. Illustrating Ellie as a balance of caricature while staying true to the breed also took time to get right. I've always loved drawing dogs, though, so Ellie came alive naturally to a large degree.

How did you come to illustrate this book, and the series?

I received a message from Kim about the possibility of this book. She contacted me a couple of years back. When we spoke I was excited about the project, so Kim and I worked together to come up with some illustration ideas and it's been one wild wiener dog ride ever since!

What artists inspired you, and has your style evolved in a way that might be a nod back to those artists?

I know most artists would cringe at this little secret, but I used to love Chris Hart's How to Draw (dogs/puppies/wolves). This book had a big influence on me as a child. Nowadays, many animation artists are great inspirations, including Glen Keane, Andreas Deja, and Milt Kahl.

Do you have a dog?

NOPE. I am in a constant state of puppy fever, but no room for a dog at the moment. Just a cat, rat, mouse, and two ball pythons for me!

What were you like as a child – cheeky and fun, quiet and introverted? How did you relate to Ellie the Wiener Dog?

I've been described as having an overactive imagination as a kid, although that sounds like any kid to me, but I think I've settled nicely into an introvert's lifestyle. As far as relating to Ellie goes, I think her cheeky attitude while dealing with everyday struggles and, of course, her love of food makes me (and hopefully anyone reading her books) feel like she's a character they can relate to.

More on Serene and Ellie

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