



The first time I met Jaymi Elford she was reading tarot cards at a local wine bar. She sat perched in the corner with her electronic candle and shuffled her cards to get people's attention. My husband and I found ourselves hanging out in her corner of the bar talking tarot and other assorted topics. Besides being an excellent tarot card reader, Jaymi is a freelance writer, editor and fire dancer. To find out more about Jaymi, click on www.shadesofmaybe.com

1. The Guardian was inspired by Elmore Leonard's 10 Rules of Writing and asked prominent authors like Neil Gaiman and Margaret Atwood their advice on writing do's and don'ts. What is your Top 5 List?

Good question.

1. Don't stifle your creativity. Allow your mind to latch onto the crazy ideas and run with them until you feel satisfied. Brainstorming can provide you with a lot of good seed ideas! Just loosen up and go wild.
2. Writers write. So put your butt in the chair and write every day.
3. When writing the first draft, don't allow your inner editor to correct everything you do. Just get the first draft done from start to finish. Most writers stop before they write, so giving yourself permission to get the first draft done (as messy and sloppy as can be) will help push you to the end.
4. Give yourself space before editing. It could take a day, or a few years but you want to forget all that you wrote so you can see the piece with fresh eyes before reworking your masterpiece.
5. Have fun! Enjoy working on your projects and remember to take time to admire your successes. When I finish each project and when it gets published I always take time to show the final product to friends and family. It shows them what I've been up to and it makes me feel proud to see another piece done.



2. Out of all your projects and published work what makes you most proud?

I think I'm most proud of my story "A Thin Line, Between" in Ravens in the Library. I love that the editors asked me personally for this story and that it sits in a volume alongside many of my favorite and most inspiring authors, including Neil Gaiman, Charles deLint, and Holly Black. Plus, the proceeds went to help out a very creative musician and a good friend, SJ Tucker.

3. You are a writer, tarot reader and fire spinner – how does all of this make you more creative?

My creativity thrives on rotating projects. Exploring various projects that involve different aspects of my life and art helps me to grow as an artist. Writing helps me become a better storyteller, while reading tarot helps improve my connection to symbolism and the intuitive arts; and fire spinning helps my coordination and dancing skills.

I also have multiple projects going on at the same time. This way, when I hit a snag in one project, I can move onto the next item on the list and move forward on that.



4. What is a fire spinner?

A fire spinner swings 2-inch balls of Kevlar wicking that have been dipped in white gasoline, and then set on fire. These balls are attached to a chain and leather finger straps and is called poi. I've been spinning fire poi for seven years now and I love performing for friends and family. I've always been drawn to fire and nothing compares to the sound of the poi wooshing around my body as I swing them in geometric patterns.

5. What's the best writing advice you've been given?

I can't recall what the BEST writing advice I've been given. But the funniest advice came from Connie Willis. She visited Denver's Tattered Cover during the Say Nothing of the Dog book tour and when I asked her for writing advice, she replied, "Stop! Don't do it. Run away." Obviously, I didn't take that advice.



6. What book (or books) on writing and creativity do you reference often?

I reference Karen Elizabeth Gordon's *The Deluxe Transitive Vampire* and *The New Well-Tempered Sentence* for grammar and punctuation. I reference Stephen King's *On Writing*, and the *Write Great Fiction* series regularly for the various fiction aspects.



7. How do you keep your mind fresh?

There are two things I do to keep my mind fresh: I exercise daily which helps my mind and body stay in shape. I get so many new ideas while I'm riding my bike or running it's great. I love reading and often go explore bookstores. The smell of books, feeling the electricity of all those authors being housed in one place, and knowing that my name has appeared on the shelves calms me when I feel down on myself and drives me to keep writing and pushing on with my own work.



8. On your website you mention sushi is the perfect food. Why?

What's not to love? Sushi has fish and nori in it and the combination is tasty. Sushi is good brain food and in their bite-sized portions, they're great for a balanced meal. If I could afford it, I'd be at the sushi go rounds every day!