

## Zita Law

It's a bit of a surprise that Zita Law, 37, is still writing ghost stories. She's been in Hong Kong since 1996 and has spent much of her time writing for the local press. She's also a regular columnist for a local magazine and has written several books. She's also a regular columnist for a local magazine and has written several books. She's also a regular columnist for a local magazine and has written several books.

**The Chinese-language author started out writing ghost stories but her passion is New Age romance. She tells David Evans about the pressure on Deep Snow – her pen-name – to keep coming up with the goods.**



My name is a book of my short stories, but that wasn't successful. I was very young and inexperienced, but I also had a full-time job. I worked as a staff writer for a magazine before I went into public relations. It was tough at the beginning because I was working during the day and at night, I'd go home and write stories.

I became a full-time writer in 1998 after I started to make some good money writing for local newspapers. I was always a writer, I just didn't dare give up my full-time job. At that time, I was writing a daily column for the *Oriental Daily News*, the *Sunday* and the *Hong Kong Economic Times*.

Today, I just write a daily column for the *Sun* and a weekly column in *Taiwan's Apple Daily*. The daily column is me expressing my viewpoint about relationships. I write book critiques for the weekly column and I'm an agony aunt for local website *she.com*.

I've got under the pen-name Deep Snow. When I was working for the magazine, I was writing ghost stories and they wanted me to have a pen-name. I gave them three choices from me and the editor liked Deep Snow, so I think I wrote 'horror stories' because that's what my boss demanded. The ghost stories were very popular. I get letters from readers saying I had a talent for writing horror, but my real passion is romance.

"I'll work on my novel about 5pm, when I'll stop for tea – usually take-out again. Then I'll watch some TV, relax a little, then start my daily columns. I work four days a week.

I use free time for the novels because it's just what I'm used to. I can connect better emotionally when I'm writing with my hand. For the newspaper columns, I use the computer. I'll finish writing columns after an hour, around 5pm, then back to the news for about two hours. I have dinner around 8pm, some stir-fry vegetables, chicken or steamed fish.

I've written about 80 books and they're sold in Hong Kong, mainland China, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore. In 2003, my book *Fairy Shop Number 8* was made into a television drama in Taiwan. Since then, it's sold over 800,000 copies around Asia.

The book is about exchanging something with the devil. There are many stories like this, where you try to get a fair deal with the devil. I set it in a pawn shop because it needed to be workable. The pawn shop doesn't want your property, it wants your youth, luck, love or heart in exchange for a wish. It seems like a fair deal but these things never work out.

At night, I'll watch a DVD. I love *The Twilight Zone*. I'm currently watching *Separate Menaces* (that doesn't help with my writing) and *Love Sex and the City* – that helps because it's about relationships. I'll go to bed around 2am.

I'm just about to start the sequel to *Four Hundred Years of Goddess* and it'll be published in July. It took me five months to write. The sequel didn't go as well as I'd only got about three months to write the new book, it'll be a lot shorter. My publisher told me I should be writing four a year, but he knows I can't do what he says because I never stick to the schedule for my books. My books are usually 400 pages, which is a lot of Chinese characters. I complete two to books a year, which isn't really good enough. I'm a commercial writer and a commercial writer in Hong Kong should write more.

When I'm searching for an idea, I'll sit for days with a piece of paper and a pencil just thinking. When I get an idea, I'll write the plot down in about 10 pages so I have all my key conversations, everything very detailed. Then I'll write the novel according to that plot.

I'll start the sequel next week, so this week I'll just be busy on the side and think, I love my job. I think I'm very lucky. **22**

**64** I get up at 11am, read the papers and have a light lunch (not some take-away) or I'll make some noodles in the kitchen. There might even be some leftovers from the night before. Then I'll check for e-mails from readers and answer any questions that have been posted on my website. I get about 10 e-mails a day from readers. That takes me to about 5pm, when I'll sit down and write.

I've done romance novels with some New Age elements. Some people say I'm like *Outlander* (Jane Yolen), but her books are very dark and gothic. I add a spiritual element to my books so you can learn things about yourself from them.

I write in a corner of my living room facing the window and a view of the harbour. I love this corner. I sit in an intricate fitted custom-made at a workshop in Hong Kong. The fabric is silk and the grid is a picture of George Washington pointing to his wife in the garden of his family's plantation. The table is a 19th-century console. The large single vase to put ornaments on. It's narrow but I think it makes a good writing desk. The bookshelves are unique and so is the chandelier. They don't really help me write. I just love antique furniture and history.

I've just finished my latest book, called *The Goddess Sans*. It's set in ancient Egypt, around 1500BC, and it's about how a girl turns into a goddess. The previous book I wrote was published last summer. That was about searching for a real man and was called *Four Hundred Years of Goddess*. My last book, *Wind*, about 10 per cent of my readers are women. I have quite a fan mail base, which is pretty good for a female writer.

I left Hong Kong (mainland) in the 1990s but I'm not telling you the year because you'll work out how old I am. Let's just say I'm over 30. I studied world history but wanted to be a writer from the age of 12. I published my first book at 23 – it was a story of love between two university students. I wrote other stories when I was at university and they were published in local magazines.