
~ 5 QUESTIONS ~

with

ERIN HORTLE

of earth shattering importance

1. If you could take one book to a deserted island, what would it be?

I'm finding this question rather difficult to answer, perhaps because I don't know any of the particularities of said island and my relationship to it. For instance, how long is my stay? If it's just for an afternoon, I'd take Ben Lerner's *1040*, a book I've been meaning to finish since January, but for whatever reason, can't quite find the time. If I'm staying for longer, perhaps I should take something like *War and Peace*—a book I (apparently) should have read, but let's be honest, when else will I? But wait a minute, what are the circumstances of my being on this island? Am I stranded? Did trauma play a role? How am I holding up? Perhaps I need a comfort read, a veritable paper cuddle. *The Chronicles of Narnia*? Anything and everything written by Roald Dahl? I'm just not sure.

2. What is your writing space?

I've recently started living in (I hesitate to say "moved to"

because it's not quite an all-of-the-time arrangement) a shed on Bruny Island. All things considered, it's a rather luxurious shed: wood fire, running water (not hot; wouldn't want to spoil ourselves, would we?), glimpses of the channel through papery peppermint bush. Most importantly, we have the most charismatic myrtle table. A friend of my father's gave me the wood and my partner's uncle leant us both his workshop and expertise when we were building it. So, as a piece of furniture, it's rather sentimental: it's the table love built (*cringes*). But, the magic is in the wood itself. It's old, rotten in parts, full of borer holes. Its grain, its texture, its flaws—hundreds of years in the making—sing when the table is oiled. Like characters from some primal language, they tell a story; they're traces of the tree's life. This is where I write, mostly.

3. If you are in a writing rut, how do you get yourself out of it?

I tend to vomit words on the page, and then go for a surf/run/walk. I find it's best to get some kind of idea down and then let it percolate whilst I'm doing something else. Often, that first idea is edited out, but it gets the ball rolling.

4. Pen, pencil, computer, typewriter, lipstick on a mirror - what is your preferred tool of trade?

Computer. I write every sentence about twenty times before it's right. If I used a pencil, I would chew through too many rubbers. Ditto pen and whiteout.

5. If the world was going to end in a week and you had to choose between a small remote island or a metropolis to live out your last days, which would you choose?

I'd go the island, any day. I'm not really a city person. When I was 18 and trying to decide which uni to go to (ANU, Melbourne or UTas?) I went camping in New Zealand. We mooched around the coasts of both islands, mostly in search of waves and I found that whenever we drove into a city, my heart sank a little. It was when we were on the coast—mountains at our backs, liquid horizons in front of us, not another person in sight—that I felt most at home. I decided to study at UTas; Hobart's easy to escape. I figure the same sort of logic would serve me well in this scenario.

~ About the author ~

Erin Hortle sometimes wonders if she is perhaps too Tasmanian,

but not in the inbred way. It's because, despite the fact she's lived there all her life, she knows that she'll never be able to leave.

You see, she learnt to write by tracing her pen over the silhouettes of the mountains and the contours of the coast and one day, when she was out hunting for a story, the hem of her skirt got trapped under a dolerite pillar, and well—it'd be a shame to ruin a good frock, wouldn't it?

You can read her story, *That's What Happens When You Let Mad Bastards Have Guns* in **Islands and Cities: A Collection of Short Stories from Tasmania and London**

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