

A romance novelist for many years, Amanda Stevens became fascinated by paranormal tales and began writing fiction about the Gothic South

# THE GRAVEYARD QUEEN

Cy-Fair author  
Amanda Stevens  
releases first book  
in new paranormal  
thriller series

*Written by Miranda Enzor  
Photography by Suzi Issa*



As fall comes to Cy-Fair, we find darkness encroaching on our days, making the nights a little longer. Leaves begin to change from bright, summery greens to bold, earthy hues of red and gold. Cold slowly creeps in, and the world begins to look more mysterious. As the world lulls itself to sleep for another year, it's the perfect time to curl up with a good mystery novel. Cy-Fair author Amanda Stevens has the perfect read for you this fall.

## A Suspenseful Series

Part paranormal thriller and part romance, Stevens' novel, *The Restorer* follows cemetery restorer Amelia Gray who sees ghosts. At the age of 9, Amelia's father teaches her four simple rules when it comes to ghosts: never acknowledge them, never stray far from hallowed ground, never associate with those who are haunted, and – most importantly – never, ever tempt fate.

After being hired to restore a cemetery on a local university campus, a body is found and Amelia is recruited by the handsome detective John Devlin to assist police in tracking down the killer. The only problem? Devlin is haunted and helping solve the murder might mean breaking her father's steadfast rules.

"I wish I could tell you the book was inspired by a visit to a creepy old cemetery or some spooky paranormal event," says Stevens. "But truth be told, I Googled unusual jobs and up popped 'cemetery restorer.' I'd just finished reading Charlaine Harris's Harper Connolly series, and I wanted to create a protagonist with a strange occupation and/or ability. My mouth literally dropped open when I saw cemetery restorer on the screen, because I knew it would be perfect for the kind of series I wanted to write."

*The Restorer* is the first book in The Graveyard Queen series, all chronicling where Amelia Gray's unusual job takes her. The series will include three books total. *The Restorer* is available now at major booksellers and will be reissued in March 2012. *The Kingdom* is set to be released in April 2012, with *The Prophet* to follow in May 2012.

## Charting a Creative Course

Writers come to their careers via a multitude of paths. Growing up, Stevens loved to read books, especially mysteries and those with fantasy elements. "My favorite book as a kid was *The Diamond in the Window* by Jane Langton," says Stevens. The book is about two children who discover a magical attic in their Concord, MA home. "I still get that book out and read it every now and then," Stevens shares. "A little later, I fell in love with Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. I also loved Elswyth Thane's Williamsburg Series, Edgar Rice Burroughs' Mars series, and lots of books by Lois Duncan, who wrote *I Know What You Did Last Summer*."

Once she was married, Stevens returned to her status as a voracious reader while her husband was away on business trips, which led to a love of romantic suspense novels. Following a move to Texas, she enrolled in an English program and was encouraged by a professor to write her first novel. "I had an English professor at Houston Community College who challenged his students to get published," she says. "This was back in the '80s when the romance genre was flourishing, and he suggested this might be a good place to break in. I decided to give it a try and ended up selling my first book."

She sold her second book shortly before having twins and took a four-year break from writing. Upon returning, she spent the next two decades writing romance novels for Silhouette and then Harlequin Intrigue before deciding to strike out on her own. Her first mainstream psychological thriller was titled *The Dollmaker*.



## ABOUT THE GRAVEYARD QUEEN SERIES

Part paranormal thriller and part romance, Stevens' novel, *The Restorer* – the first in The Graveyard Queen series – follows cemetery restorer Amelia Gray who sees ghosts. At the age of 9, Amelia's father teaches her four simple rules when it comes to ghosts: never acknowledge them, never stray far from hallowed ground, never associate with those who are haunted, and – most importantly – never, ever tempt fate.

After being hired to restore a cemetery on a local university campus, a body is found and Amelia is recruited by the handsome detective John Devlin to assist police in tracking down the killer. The only problem? Devlin is haunted and helping solve the murder might mean breaking her father's steadfast rules.

Read the first chapter of *The Restorer* online at [amandastevens.com](http://amandastevens.com).

### *The Kingdom*

Book two in the Graveyard Queen series, *The Kingdom* is set to be released in April 2012. It follows Amelia Gray as she travels to an isolated town in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains – a strange, wasting place where she's never set foot, but is inexplicably drawn to. "Think hex symbols, vortexes, and a cemetery at the bottom of a murky lake," says author Amanda Stevens. "Think *Twin Peaks*."



Two more books followed before Stevens landed on her idea for The Graveyard Queen series.

## Southern Comfort

A common theme in Stevens' novels is the South. As someone who was raised in the Ozark foothills of Arkansas and has lived in Memphis, TN and, of course, Houston, Stevens knows the area well. "It's dark and steamy and sometimes a little creepy - the perfect place for ghosts," she says. "But the South is more than a setting; it's a character. It has its own voice. It has its own moods, history, quirks, and flaws."

After writing romance novels for so many years, Stevens says she decided to write what she loved to read: modern-day Gothic stories. She explains them as, "Mysteries with elements of romance and the paranormal. And I've always loved ghost stories."

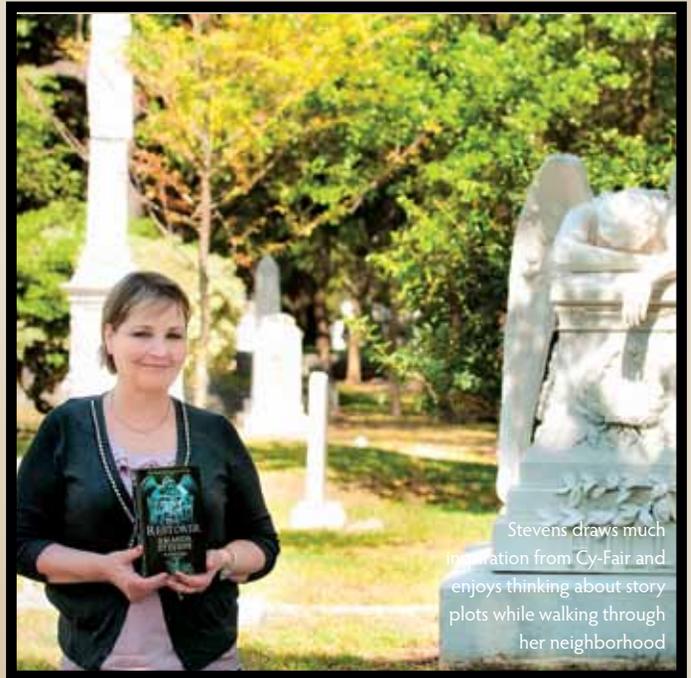
While Cy-Fair might not be defined as the Gothic South by most residents, Stevens' neck of the woods provides her with plenty of inspiration. "We bought a house [in Cy-Fair] 17 years ago and have been here ever since," she says. "It's a great place to raise kids. I love taking 'think' walks in my neighborhood. It's very small and secluded with lots of trees and gardens and cats."

## Writing Her Own Story

Not every day is a walk in the park, though. For all the fun that comes with writing, it's still a job and has its hard moments. For Stevens, deadlines are by far the most difficult part of writing. "It can get really stressful," she shares. "My favorite part is the idea stage, when I can unleash my imagination without worrying about contracts, deadlines, or logic."

For aspiring Cy-Fair writers, Stevens encourages them to write and read as much as possible. "Read, read, read!" she advises, adding, "And write every single day, even if it's only a page or two." CFM

MIRANDA ENZOR is editorial coordinator for Cy-Fair Magazine and loves nothing more than spending the afternoon with a good book.



Stevens draws much inspiration from Cy-Fair and enjoys thinking about story plots while walking through her neighborhood

An advertisement for BARKS 5TH AVENUE. At the top, the logo features a large red number '5' with 'BARKS' and 'AVENUE' in red text on either side, set against a black silhouette of a city skyline. Below the logo, the website 'barks5thave.com' and address '10620 FM 1960 W Houston 281-970-2284' are listed. The main text reads 'CY-FAIR'S TRAINING &amp; NATURAL PET FOOD HEADQUARTERS'. A smiling dog with a red patterned bandana is featured on the left. To the right of the dog, it says 'BUILDING A WELL BALANCED DOG = TRAINING, NUTRITION &amp; SOCIALIZATION'. A large offer states '20% OFF ANY SERVICE' with a note '\*RESTRICTION APPLY: NOT TO EXCEED MORE THAN \$50'. Logos for Nature's Variety, Smart Chews, and Purina are shown at the bottom, along with the text 'AND MANY MORE'. The bottom of the ad lists 'BOARDING | GROOMING | DAY CARE'. A vertical copyright notice on the right edge reads '© 2011 Cy-Fair Magazine'.

An advertisement for THE VITELLI LAW FIRM. The top section has a dark red background with the firm's name in white serif font. Below this, a list of legal services is provided: Family Law, Divorce, Modification, Adoption, Enforcement, Paternity, Criminal Law, Misdemeanors, DWI, Tickets, Mediation, and Wills / Trusts. The location is listed as 'Harris County, Montgomery County, and Fort Bend'. A photograph of Sherea Vitelli, a blonde woman in a black suit and red scarf, is shown on the right side. Her name and title, 'Sherea Vitelli Attorney and Mediator', are written in a cursive font over the photo. At the bottom, the address '12010 Fullers Grant Court, Cypress, Texas' and phone number '281-898-0941' are listed, along with email 'sherea@vitellilawfirm.com' and websites 'vitellilawfirm.com' and 'www.bridgelandlawyer.com'. A vertical copyright notice on the right edge reads '©2010 Cy-Fair Magazine'.