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*This Mother's Day, I'm Grateful My Mom
Helped Me Build My Erotica Business*

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Quartz | By Vickie Elmer

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QUARTZ

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Patty Marks has yet to read a single book written by her daughter, which is kind of weird considering Marks is the CEO of the company publishing all of them.

Then again, Tina Engler—the president and chief strategy officer of [Ellora's Cave](#), and author of 58 out of 5,000 titles—is writing erotica.

“It’s a comfort level for her. That way she knows she can really fully express herself,” says Marks.

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Her daughter’s take: “When I’m writing, I pretend that nobody I know, no priest or anyone else, will be reading it. Otherwise if I don’t, I become inhibited.”

And these books are anything but. Ellora’s Cave combines romance novels with erotica and depicts graphic sexual relationships. Engler, a single mom with a degree in psychology, launched the company in 2000 when she was living with her mother in Akron, Ohio. She wrote the first books, then gradually commissioned authors.

Her mom had worked in administrative and financial jobs at a college and some businesses, so she started helping her daughter track royalty payments. “I set her up on spreadsheets. I was behind the scenes,” Marks says. “I was thinking I hope she makes enough at this to move out and support her kids.”

As the business grew, Engler quickly saw she needed her mom’s business expertise and financial background, so asked her to come in as CEO in 2003. Back then, revenues were \$1.3 million. Last year, they soared to \$15 million.

This Mother's Day weekend, the duo plan to go shopping to help furnish a new home Engler just purchased in Southern California. Ellora's Cave is moving into calendars, a radio show and soon perhaps a reality television series. "That's the most pressing project we're working on," said Engler. "It's a natural extension."

Their books have been translated into nine languages, including Spanish, Tagalog Russian Japanese and German. The company has developed an imprint for men more focused on sexual adventures and "men's desires" and and one called Blush with "a little more romance, a little less sex."

Engler writes under the name, Jaid Black, and her titles include Enslaved, God of Fire and Notorious, which features a black-and-white photo of her grandmother on the cover. Today, Ellora's Cave sends monthly royalty checks to more than 800 authors.

Both businesswomen share a sense that they're promoting and celebrating "women's sexuality." But like their book genres, they have distinctly different styles.

"I'm the one with the head in the clouds, she's the one who reigns me back in," said Engler, who is an only child. "For the most part I'm shoot from the hip and my mom's very logical and looks at little details like, 'Do we have the money for it?'"

In a separate interview with Quartz, Marks admits she's more level-headed: "We have one of the most functional dysfunctional co-dependencies. I'm trying to protect her from any little thing that could upset her. ... I've learned not to be so protective on the business part, not to overrule her as a mother."

They're not the only mother-daughter team in the romance and erotica business. At least one other writes books for Ellora's Cave and several show up at the annual romance writers convention.

When she's not working, Marks favors Stephen King, Dean Koonz and John Grisham, with an occasional romance thrown in. Her favorite: The Stand by Stephen King. "The erotica I read is more for business," she says.

Engler's favorites include Ravished by Amanda Quick and the New Species series by Laurann Dohner, published by Ellora's Cave. "I cried when her book hit the New York Times bestsellers list," she said. "It was such a win for all of us. ... She's a million dollar woman now."

So are Engler and Marks. To borrow one of Jaid Black's titles, it's an all-around Conquest indeed.

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