

DOUBLE THE BOOKS

DOUBLE THE BOOKS



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"SMALL
CHANGES,

WILL RISE A BIG
TIDAL WAVE"

-UNKNOWN



STAY QUEER

Pride Queer



love.

TRANS

♥ EXIST LOUDLY ♥



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J. A. L. Solski (JALS), a genderfluid pansexual, has a passionate interest in fictional worlds. They are an indie-publishing author, life-long artist, and long-time alpha reader. Their brain is always buzzing with ideas, they cannot seem to sit still, and their tea is always cold.

@JALSOLSKI

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FANTASY & SCI-FI

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MAGICAL QUEER ROMANCE THAT WILL STEAL YOUR HEART WITH

A.D. ARMISTEAD & AUSTIN DANIEL



ADARMISTEADWRITES



AUSTINDANIELWRITES

SHARE WITH US WHAT SPIRITS AND SUNFLOWERS IS ABOUT.

Armistead: Spirits is, above all else, about grief and love. One of the main characters, Adrian, has recently lost his husband. It doesn't particularly help the grieving process that Adrian is a medium/necromancer who expects to be able to speak to his husband. On one of his many lonely sojourns to the cemetery, he meets a single father named Lucas and Lucas' daughter, Tula, draws them both together. Ultimately, we wanted the story to feel relatively soft and cozy, even though it's about traumatic situations. It's been described by reviewers as "like poetry" and "gentle and delicate" and that was really what we were going for!

HOW DID THIS STORY COME ABOUT?

Austin: We actually were just playing with different ways to develop a couple of characters for some AU fanfiction and they took on a life and world of their own, getting farther and farther from the starting point until we had to step back and go: nope. This is its own thing now.

Armistead: It's hard to remember back, because we started this project several years ago. I think I had the idea of a romance sparking in a cemetery and it took off from there! The series has really grown into a world of its own intrigue and I'm excited to share it!

WHAT IS THE CO-WRITING PROCESS LIKE FOR YOU TWO?

Austin: Usually one of us has a spark of an idea about a plot or a scene, and then we talk about how we might want to develop it. Then we split the main protagonists up between us and each of us really gets into that person's head/experience, and then we see where the characters take us and what they tell us about the world they inhabit.

Armistead: We write each chapter together in a collaborative document so that we can see what the other is writing in real time. I think it helps the dialogue really flow.

A wooden sign with the words "HUMANS ALL THE SAME" written in colorful, hand-painted letters. The sign is mounted on a wooden post. Below the sign, there are various colorful flowers and plants, including purple, yellow, and pink blooms.

HUMANS
ALL THE SAME

IF YOU COULD HAVE ANY MAGICAL POWERS WHAT WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Austin: I would want to be able to talk to plants, honestly? It doesn't sound like the most exciting thing, but I think about how they're the oldest living things on the planet and imagine all the things they might know if they were able to communicate that. Also, it would be nice to help me keep my houseplants happy.

Armistead: Teleportation for sure! I spend a good chunk of my time traveling, both for work and for fun. There are so many magical places I'd like to visit and I have severe motion sickness with any type of transportation, so avoiding the actual travel piece would be amazing.

I LOVE YOUR BOOK COVER. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

Austin: Working with Daria, our artist, was a really illuminating process. She is so talented and watching her sketch out an image based on what we're talking about is like a magic show. My personal favorite is a little snippet of a shadowy statue in the background behind the gate that is probably quite difficult to spot; it looks like a grim reaper in the mist and it makes me happy.

Armistead: I've been working with Daria on personal projects since 2019 and I was so happy to be the one to commission her first book illustration! She really knocked it out of the park with this one. I love the moody lighting and the mausoleum in the background of the cover. I also adore the way the Adrian and Lucas are looking at each other; I think she captured their characters extremely well.

“ FIND INSPIRATION FOR ONE WHILE WORKING ON ANOTHER ”

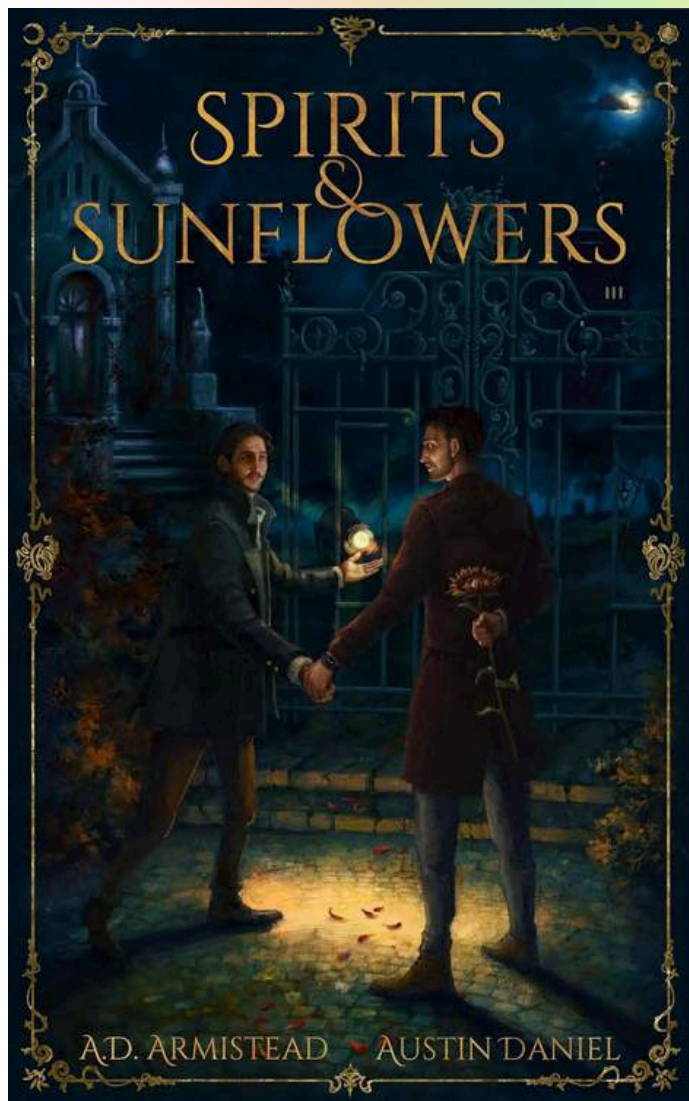
WHAT DO YOU DO TO RECHARGE CREATIVELY?

Austin: I write something else. I like bouncing between multiple projects and often find inspiration for one while working on another. I also love shaking myself out of a worldview by playing different genres of video games or getting in a great D&D session.

Armistead: This is a really poignant question for me at the moment, because I'm dealing with my first ever real bout of writer's block. I think deciding to set something down and take a break entirely from writing is incredibly important at times. Writing involves so much introspection and takes up a lot of brain space, so sometimes I feel like I'm looking through a window, standing outside of my own life. I do a lot of traveling, so it was nice to just be in the world these past few weeks and start taking inspiration from the experiences I've been having.

“ WRITING INVOLVES SO MUCH INTROSPECTION AND TAKES UP A LOT OF BRAIN SPACE ”





Adrian Sharp can speak with the dead, but only when they choose to listen.

Devastated by the recent death of his husband, Adrian has been relying upon his necromantic gifts to try and bridge the gap between the living and the dead, feeling more and more like a ghost himself with each failure.

After a young girl named Tula with an uncanny ability approaches Adrian on a visit to the cemetery, he begins to hope that the husband he lost may still be within reach. Over time, he falls into an easy friendship with Tula's father, Lucas Halpern. As Adrian is drawn into the orbit of the handsome, mysterious single father, Adrian begins to emerge from his grief, wondering whether it's possible to find love again.

Together, in a contemporary world laced with magic, Adrian embarks on a journey in recovering from loss, building trust, and finding love and family where they are least expected.

Spirits & Sunflowers is the first book in the Maligned Magic series, a group of cozy queer romances set in an alternate version of our world. There, magic is tightly regulated by a distant and inflexible organization. All stories can be read as standalone novels, but benefit from reading the previous books in the series in order.



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◆ **PRIDE** ◆

Queer slow-burn fantasy romance, grief, and the beauty that life has.

Going in I knew this book dealt with grief, moving on, with a dash of fantasy. I loved this world. The magic is so interesting, how magic is looked at in this world, and how it affects everyday lives. The two main male characters, Adrian and Lucas, took a little bit to warm up to me but Tula stole my heart right from the start. Adrian and Lucas's relationship is very slow but adorable. Right away you are rooting for them, as the story goes on and their relationship grows, blooms and we get to see more depth. Magic and the magical setting were pretty interesting, telepathic, necromancy, and talking to the dead. The world looks down on people with magic so to see and learn about that really helped flush out the characters and the world.

A.D. Armistead & Austin Daniel are both talented writers. You can't tell that this is written by two people, everything flows and works so well together. There are a few content and themes so if you need warnings please look them up.

A cozy queer fantasy about grief, a single father, and magic all wrapped around an adorable romance.



STACEY *interview* WILLIS



STACEYASHLEY_WILLIS



CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT ASHES TO ASHES?

Ashes to Ashes is a Contemporary YA Paranormal Queer Romance following the dreaded return of Alexander Grahams to their home town. All is not as it seems – there are demonic and supernatural forces at play. Alexander reluctantly investigates with the reformed bully Louise Barnes, but finds that their resolve to stay away from the person with the most secrets – Shane Hyde – crumbles with their every venture closer. Shane himself hides a monster beneath his skin, and struggles to stay away from Alexander too...though his reasons are far more protective. This book began long ago in 2016 or so and had quite a few drafts and title revisions. It's been a long and incredible journey to get to this stage, and I couldn't be more pleased with my Young Adult debut.

WHO IS A SIDE CHARACTER FROM, ASHES TO ASHES, THAT YOU ADORE?

This book has a plethora of notable side characters, but I have a soft spot for Donatello Ricci, the childhood friend of one of the three main characters, Louise Barnes. You don't get to learn too much about Donatello aside from his rather standoffish personality, but he's really stuck with me and I can't help but build an entire backstory for him.

I SAW ON YOUR INSTAGRAM THAT ASHES TO ASHES IS BECOMING AN AUDIOBOOK. CAN YOU TELL US HOW THE PROCESS OF THAT IS GOING?

The audiobook as of now is in its final check stages and is due for June 2024. It's quite time consuming to listen and mark down revisions in half-an-hour long files, but the end product is going to be completely worth it. My narrator is putting their heart and soul into it, and I can't wait for it to go live once we're ready.

I READ ON YOUR WEBSITE THAT YOU HAVE SHARED STORIES ON WATTPAD. CAN YOU SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM USING THAT PLATFORM TO HELP YOUR WRITING CAREER?

I actually started writing on sites such as these since I was a young teenager. My friend introduced it to me as she knew I loved to read and had been scribbling down my own ideas for a while. I started off with various fanfiction and even gained some notoriety – but it all started to click in place when I realised in 2015 that I wanted to write my own full length novels. I wrote my entire debut on Wattpad (Daughter of Fire from The Gods of the Court Beneath) and discovered that it was truly beneficial to have readers give feedback in those early stages. As professionals gather and recruit beta readers, Wattpad works the same way for me. There's a beautiful sense of community on Wattpad in particular as well – I've made some of my greatest friends on there, too.

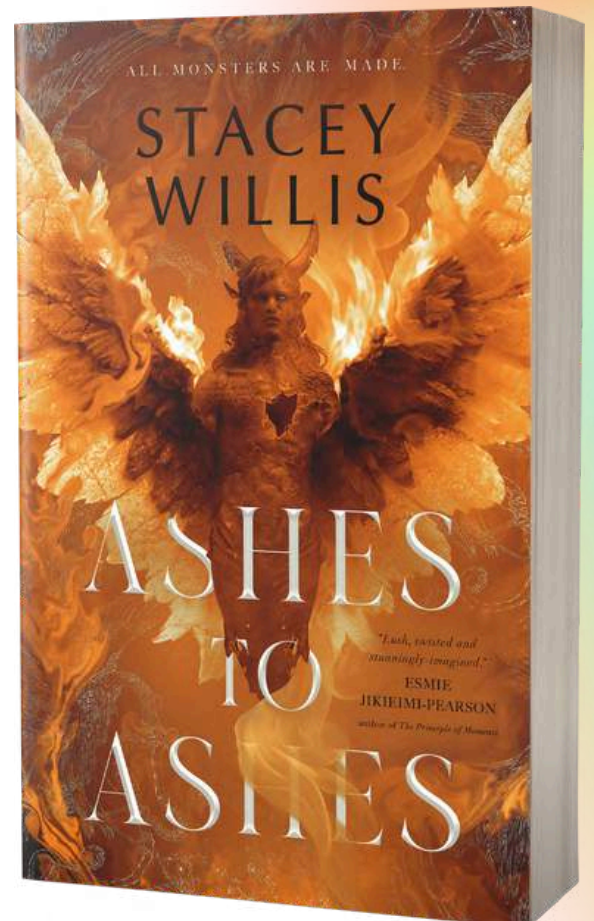
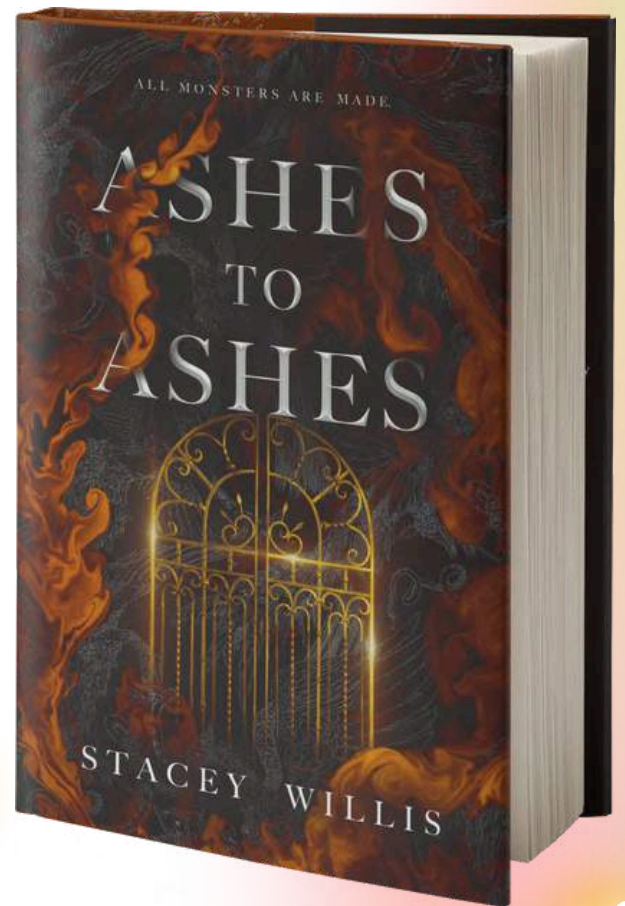
YOU WRITE YA, NA, AND ADULT FICTION. IS THERE ONE THAT IS MORE FUN TO WRITE THAN THE OTHERS?

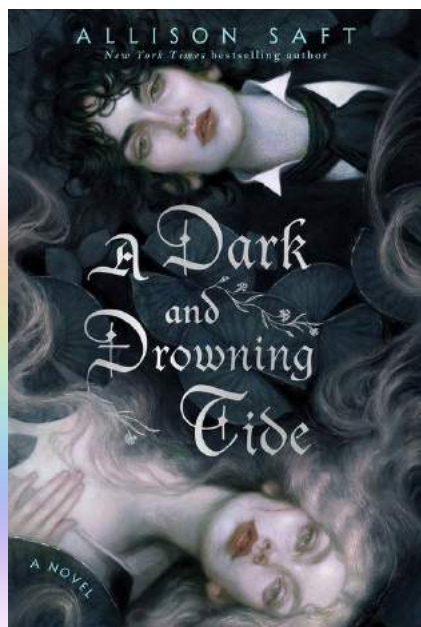
Despite each of these genres having the word 'adult' in them, they couldn't be more different. Each represents a different stage in development and life, and it can be hard at times to discern what can be put in which. I've learned over the years how to stick to the target audience, and found that New Adult is the most fun to write. As it suggests, it's mainly for the 18 to 25 age bracket and there's so much you can do with that important part of a person's life, dreams, decisions and prospects. I suppose it also helps that I for the moment, fall into this category too.

“
THERE'S A BEAUTIFUL
SENSE OF
COMMUNITY ON
WATTPAD
”

YOUR COVER IS STUNNING. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

There are actually two different covers for Ashes to Ashes – hardcover and paperback. Originally I hadn't planned to do it that way but I had two distinct ideas for a cover and I simply couldn't choose. So I looked at some trends and figured out which design would suit which format, and ended up with what you can find today. I love both of them, but my favourite element has to be the silver birds of prey pattern which can be found on both and ties them together. I also really like how Shane came out on the paperback – it was difficult to mould all of the parts into that form, but very worth it.





Lorelei Kaskel, a folklorist with a quick temper and an even quicker wit, is on an expedition with six eccentric nobles in search of a fabled spring. The magical spring promises untold power, which the king wants to harness to secure his reign of the embattled country of Brunnestaad. Lorelei is determined to use this opportunity to prove herself and make her wildest, most impossible dream come to become a naturalist, able to travel freely to lands she's only ever read about.

The expedition gets off to a harrowing start when its leader—Lorelei's beloved mentor—is murdered in her quarters aboard their ship. The suspects are her five remaining expedition mates, each with their own motive. The only person Lorelei knows must be innocent is her longtime academic rival, the insufferably gallant and maddeningly beautiful Sylvia von Wolff. Now in charge of the expedition, Lorelei must find the spring before the murderer strikes again—and a coup begins in earnest.

But there are other dangers lurking in the forests that rearrange themselves at night, rivers with slumbering dragons waiting beneath the water, and shapeshifting beasts out for blood. As Lorelei and Sylvia grudgingly work together to uncover the truth—and resist their growing feelings for one another—they discover that their professor had secrets of her own. Secrets that make Lorelei question whether justice is worth pursuing, or if this kingdom is worth saving at all.

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BLURBB



REVIEW

An academic rival turned into solving a murder in a thrilling sapphic fantasy.

I like going into books only knowing a little bit so knowing that they were academic rivals who must work together to solve a murder was enough for me to want to give this a read and I'm glad I did, it was just a fun read.

There wasn't anything that strongly surprised me but for me, this book is more about the relationship between Lorelei and Sylvia and them learning to work together and falling in love. It is a very slow burn, the witt and banters will keep you reading.

I did enjoy the ship setting, stories set at sea always draw me. And I know I keep coming back to that word fun, but that is what this book is; fun, queer, fantasy, romance, it's a good book for a rainy summer day. It's not a crazy epic, heavy fantasy read. It's easy to get lost in, it's fun!

I've read one other book by Allison Saft, *A Fragile Enchantment*, and enjoyed that one; gave it a four. However, this one is Allison's debut in adult fantasy and I must say, there were a few scenes that read and felt like YA romance. So a bit off balanced. I do have to say that the writing style has a folk vibe to it.

Folklore atmosphere in this adult fantasy of a sapphic slow-burn academic rivals.



In a world where Saints are monsters and Wonderland is the dark forest where they lurk, it's been five years since young witches and lovers Caro Rabbit and Iccadora Alice Sickle were both sentenced to that forest for a crime they didn't commit—and four years since they shattered one another's hearts, each willing to sacrifice the other for a chance at freedom.

Now, Caro is a successful royal Saint-harvester, living the high life in the glittering capital and pretending not to know of the twisted monster experiments that her beloved Red Queen hides deep in the bowels of the palace. But for Icca, the memory of Caro's betrayal has hardened her from timid girl to ruthless hunter. A hunter who will stop at nothing to exact her vengeance: On Caro. On the queen. On the throne itself.

But there's a secret about the Saints the Queen's been guarding, and a volatile magic at play even more dangerous to Icca and Caro than they are to each other...

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BLURBB



REVIEW

YA queer horror of enemies to lovers, in a twisted Wonderland.

In this lush world, we are following Caro and Iccadora who were accused of a crime neither of them committed. What would each do for freedom?

I can see why so people may not like this but for me it was just for me. I love weird, odd, creepy horror, It has a twisted Wonderland feel to it; a forest of monsters, volatile magic, the danger around each corner. You never know what is going to happen, or what you are going to see!

The writing was the best part of this book for me. The uneasy, creepiness of it mixed with the romance is well balanced. The description is beautifully written. This YA is on the heavy side and deals with topics like loss, body horror, and other stuff so please look up content warnings if needed.

Korean-inspired, YA queer horror, of what danger, secrets, and romance these two women must fight for what they really want.





J.A.VODVARKA



interview



JAVODVARKAWRITES

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT UNWORTHY?

Unworthy is an adult epic fantasy book with sapphic flair. It's about a magickless woman who is part of a system that only allows those with magick to be a part of it—so you can imagine the imposter syndrome she has and the derision she's received from her peers. When she's finally asked to do something that will earn her a seat at the table, she runs head-first into danger, secrets, and feelings for the fugitive she's meant to capture. Does she do as she's asked and finally receive her recognition, or stick to her strong sense of honor.

HOW DID THIS IDEA OF THIS EPIC FANTASY WITH SAPPHIC ENEMIES TO LOVERS?

Enemies to lovers is my all-time favorite trope. I will likely not be able to write a book without some form of it! The idea for this book, and the series really, came from a scene that popped into my head years back—what if someone was forced to do something unthinkable to the person they care about the most? I couldn't fit the scene into Unworthy because I needed to build the character relationships up to make it really heart-wrenching.

Then tension and angst enemies to lovers contains is delicious, and it's fun to explore just how those characters fall for one another and become each other's "north star."



It became sapphic as my own personal journey in life changed. I came out as bi with a homoromantic bent very late in life and I wanted to explore sapphic relationships and love the more I thought about where I wanted the trilogy to go. The books got more queer as I did, I suppose you could say.

WHAT ARE THE THEMES YOU WANTED TO EXPLORE IN YOUR BOOK?

The overarching themes in Unworthy and the whole Blacksea Odyssey trilogy boils down to: "when we save others, we save ourselves." I really wanted to write a book that had hope and heroism at the center of it, so I do catalog it as noblebright fantasy. In Unworthy, the specific theme revolves around overcoming the doubts you have about yourself and your abilities. But it also addresses the conflict of having to choose between your heart's desire or sticking to your personal code of honor. If the thing you've always wanted—the thing that will prove your worth to others—is right there in front of you, what would make you turn away from that path?

YOUR COVER IS BREATHTAKING, LOVE THE DRAMA OF IT! WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

Thank you! My favorite part is hard to pin down because my artist, Chris Yarbrough, did such a great job. I love the expression on Nyssa's face. Yes, she's a "strong female character," but I've tried to imbue her with vulnerability and let her show fear. I also love the subtle elements Chris added. It was his idea to do the shadowy tentacles in the background, which is a nod to Nyssa's sigil of the Kraken. And there's one easter egg in there that I think most people might miss, but I love the little detail as a wink to readers who catch it after finishing the book.

WHAT PART OF YOUR BOOK DO YOU THINK MAKES IT A GOOD CHOICE FOR BOOK CLUBS TO DISCUSS?

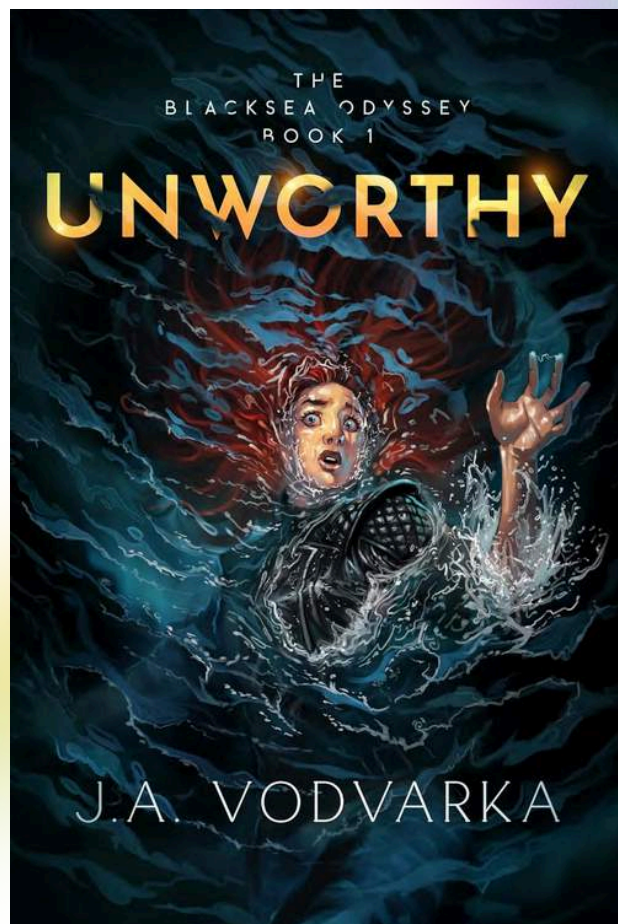
Unworthy is a good choice for folks looking for epic fantasy that strays from the beaten path. It's set in a modernesque world where magick powers technology. I think I've approached writing queer characters with a "normalized" lens, so there will be no coming out stories or homophobia in my books—queer characters exist and no one blinks an eye. I think taking that approach is refreshing for a lot of readers, especially queer readers who want positive representation. I'm also writing noblebright fantasy, giving people stories where the heroes win at the end of the day. Yes, they go through some dark, trying times, but ultimately, it comes back around to my main series theme: when we save others, we save ourselves. The relationships my characters have—romantic, familial, friendship—provide the driving force to what keeps my characters fighting the good fight.



Capture one harmless fugitive. What could go wrong? Nyssa Blacksea is eager to silence her doubters. The only warrior in her guild without magick, she's forced to rely solely on her martial arts mastery, unwavering confidence, and charisma. When given the chance to hunt down a mysterious woman named Quinn, and earn the coveted title of Ashcloak, Nyssa seizes the opportunity. Track down a fugitive? An easy task.

There's just one problem—Quinn isn't receptive to Nyssa's charms and refuses to go down without a fight. Dangerous secrets swirl around Quinn and a treacherous guild leader, rattling Nyssa's faith in the very system that raised her.

Though troubled by the sinking feeling she's not meant to survive the mission, Nyssa confronts the dangers awaiting her, clashing with pirates, assassins, and undead horrors. Duty pulls her in one direction, but a strange, undeniable spark of connection draws her towards Quinn. With only her heart and code of honor to guide her, Nyssa risks death to stay true to herself.



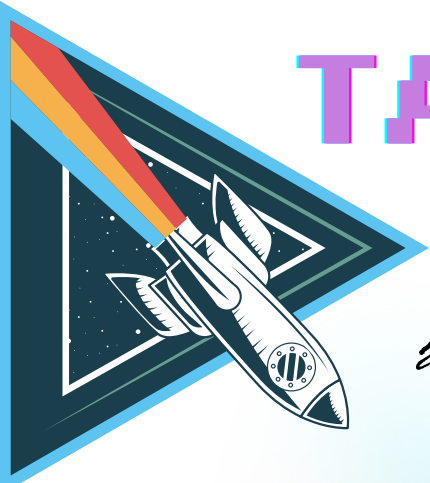
An adult sapphic enemies to lovers fantasy of women finding one's strength.

We meet Nyssa who's really to show her doubters that she's just as good as the other warriors in her guild who have magick. Forced to rely on her martial arts. So when given the chance to hunt mysterious women and earn the title Ashcloak, she'll take the opportunity.

This is action-packed! From pirates, and assassins, to undead horrors. There's a slow-burn sapphic romance. It's an enemy to lovers, it's filled with wit, banter, and will they won't they that will keep you wounding and wanting them to be together. This book is hard to put down, you just need to know what will happen next. This is told from multiple points of view, I enjoyed both, but there are a few times when the book switches POV in the middle of a chapter I know that bothers some, but that didn't bother me while reading this,

J.A. does an amazing job of being a character-driven and plot-driven story; it's so well-balanced. The drama, intense, battle, and fighting scenes will grip you, holding your breath as things unfold. I loved the world and setting, it's an arcanepunk inspired. The world-building is flawless as I never felt confused or lost. Themes of found family, underdog, strong female, etc. Please look up content warnings if you are a reader who needs them. Swashbuckling adventure of an adult fantasy of conflict, warriors, and an enemy to lovers, slow burn sapphic romance.





TAKING UP SPACE: IN SCIENCE FICTION

by

JILL N DAVIES



JILLNDAVIES_BOOKS



It's 2024 and we're still talking about the gender gap in STEM (which isn't even a complete discussion since, in 2024 the gender gap in STEM is being reported along the binary). It makes me wonder how the women and non-male science fiction writers in the 1970's boom of feminist science fiction would feel about how things are going, but mostly it makes me think about how essential access to science fiction with good representation is.

Having grown up on a steady literary diet of genetic mutation, alien planets, technological revolt and climate disaster, it's no wonder I started my adult life in the STEM industry. Given that in all the stories I was consuming I never quite saw myself clearly represented, it's also no wonder that I never found my place in those worlds. I was, most often, the imagined quirky side character to the main character's adventure and thus, a self inserted fictional element to an already fictional story.

We have heard before that diverse voices have always existed within science fiction and it's true. There are plenty of women and non-male writers in the science fiction journals of the 1930's and 1940's, but where did they go? Why was there a movement to erase the contribution of non-conservative white men within the science fiction genre? How did those editors find themselves in the position to attempt to erase those voices?

People like Lisa Yaszek have dedicated their academic studies to answering these questions, but I'm here to talk about the impact of this cultural phenomenon.


Where are the diverse voices in science fiction?

The short answer is they're there, and have always been, but the broader discussion needs to be how badly we need them, and creating access to those works and for new voices to be included in the genre, following in the trail hard working authors have already begun blazing.

Scholarly articles have dubbed Science fiction the "literature of ideas." How appropriate of a designation for such a forward-facing genre. We tend to think of the central themes of science fiction being the exploration of the consequences of scientific, technological, and evolutionary innovations, but historically the genre dives much deeper. Science fiction often uses science, technology and alternative worlds to study social, political and interpersonal themes that help shape the future.

Science fiction material explores important themes like class divides, oppression, environmental impacts and technological developments through creative and futuristic worldbuilding. Though it has historically been done through a very male, very cis-het lens, there is now, more than ever, opportunity and means for other voices to take the stage and expand our minds, making the genre critically important.

A 2018 study demonstrated that the consumption of science fiction literature directly correlated to being able to relate to scientific ideas, meaning that readers of science fiction are more able to be and feel successful when learning and mastering scientific concepts. Juxtaposing this assessment against the state of the STEM field makes it incredibly clear that catering an entire genre to one audience has had an impact on who might be interested in a career in science.



That same study showed that the consumption of science fiction correlated to an increase in openness to new ideas. A 2022 report in psychology and education demonstrates that children who read science fiction become better adjusted, more empathetic and socially-aware adults.

Combining this information with the self-reported prevalence of frequent and avid readers getting started on their science fiction journey before the age of 15, we can see an incredible need for representation within the genre, both for individuals who want to see themselves in stories and for people who need to see a world that includes people who aren't like them.


There are a lot of queer authors already setting the tone in science fiction, and that tone varies wildly from righteous rage, as we see in Xiran Jay Zhao's *Iron Widow* and Tlotlo Tsamaase's *Womb City* to cozy narratives like Valerie Valdes' *Chilling Effect* and the sweeping, abstract beauty of *This is How You Lose the Time War*. The best part about these stories is the space for queer voices to find their platform and become the literary capsule for progress and belonging and a reminder that you don't have to reinvent the world to be represented or belong.

For avid fantasy readers looking for an entry point into science fiction, I have good news: the vast majority of science fiction works have crossover elements into fantasy (and vice versa). In fact, there is so much overlap between science fiction and fantasy, that the majority of categorization is inclusive of both. Obviously some works skew more scientific and others more magical, but it can be helpful to start at the midpoint. This *Gilded Abyss* by Rebecca Thorne, is a sapphic thriller about an undersea ship running on advanced technology based on a mysterious substance and the consequences therein. *A Circle of Stars* by Craig Montgomery takes an incredibly scientific approach to a western-zodiac based magical system used by a society that transports people from Earth to the moon of a distant planet creating a very fun "gays in space," vibe. Or literally any book by Octavia E. Butler, who was paving the way for queer, BIPOC voices speaking on change, hope, and a better future before most of us were born.

Diverse science fiction is good for everyone and queer voices have a unique place among them, continuing to pave the way for a more accessible, empathetic, and accepting world. Wherever you start, and whatever your current relationship with science fiction, it's not too late to find your place among the stars. I, for one, am thrilled to find my space in the world of science fiction.

Jill N Davies (she/they) is an analytical chemist turned science educator turned science fiction author who believes art imitates life and life imitates art. Jill's debut series, *The Kara Mason Story*, includes two books so far: *Due North* and *Into the Deadlands*. While removed from the bigger world these days, Jill still believes it's of critical importance that people have the opportunity to see themselves in literature and that literature can change the world.

bio



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THE POWER OF FANTASY

NICO

SILVER

interview



NICOSILVERBOOKS



CAN YOU SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU WRITE?

I write mostly queer urban fantasy, urban fantasy romance, and romantic fantasy/fantasy romance with a hefty dose of smut. When I say “mostly queer,” I mean that most of my main characters fit under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella in at least one way. My Fictive Kin urban fantasy series is bi4bi, for example, and one of my UF romances is gay (the other features a straight relationship). My fantasy romance has a MM main couple, with lots of other queer characters (some of whom will be getting their own series or standalone spin-offs eventually).

I started writing urban fantasy because it was what I was mostly reading and I wanted to see what I could do with it. I didn't deliberately set out to write queer stories, though, it just sort of happened that those were the characters who showed up to have their stories told. Three Realms, Nine Monarchs (of which A Vision of Air is book one) happened when I'd been reading some really engaging romantasy and thought maybe I should try one. And then Fionn and Kiernan popped into my head and off we went.



WHAT IS A VISION OF AIR ABOUT?

A Vision of Air is an epic fantasy romance about finding out what your place in the world is or could be. One of the main characters is a healer-seer who has been cloistered in an abbey his whole life, convinced his visions are useless. One day a fey warrior tries to break into the abbey and is terribly injured and Fionn is tasked with keeping him alive—only Kiernan turns out to be someone Fionn has been having visions of his whole life.

The more time the two spend together, the more they come to realize that the things they assumed were true might not be, and they decide they want to work together to make the world better. They also fall in love, despite the fact that one of them (Fionn) is forbidden from forming relationships outside his own people, and the other (Kiernan) is subject to his Queen's choice of partner for him.

YOU'VE WRITTEN MANY BOOKS. IF YOU COULD TAKE TWO CHARACTERS FROM TWO DIFFERENT BOOKS AND WRITE A SHORT STORY ABOUT THEM WHAT TWO CHARACTERS WOULD YOU PICK AND WHY?

That's a hard one! But I'd kind of like to see if Bjarni (the werewolf love interest from Heart of Outcasts) and Kiernan (the fey prince from A Vision of Air) would become friends or kill each other. They're so similar in a lot of ways that I think they would hate each other—they would probably see in each other all the things they dislike in themselves. Of course, those two books are set in completely different universes which will never cross over.

I READ ON YOUR WEBSITE THAT YOU ENJOY USED BOOKSTORES. WHAT HAS BEEN A FIND THAT YOU HAVE COME BY IN A USED BOOKSTORE THAT SURPRISED YOU?

I can't really think of anything specific, but there's a definite thrill when you find a nice copy of something you've been looking for for ages. Every now and then I come across a signed book, and that's really exciting, even if it's personalized to someone else. One of my favourite things is when someone has left a bookmark from a bookstore somewhere I've never been tucked inside. I have a huge collection of bookstore bookmarks, many of them from far-off places. It always makes me wonder how that book came to travel from there to wherever I am when I find it.



“FANTASY LETS US EXPLORE REAL-WORLD
TOPICS IN A METAPHORICAL WAY...”

WHAT DRIVES YOU TO WRITE FANTASY?

I've been a fantasy reader my whole life. I'll read just about any genre, but my favourite books are almost all fantasy, and they're the ones I re-read. I used to read *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Chronicles of Narnia* almost yearly, so that kind of worldbuilding has become pretty solidly ingrained in my brain.

I also like how fantasy lets us explore real-world topics in a metaphorical way when those things might be too painful to look at in real life. And it's also very nice to be able to create a (mostly) homonormative/transnormative world where people can be who they are and love who they love.

YOUR COVER IS BEAUTIFUL. WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR BOOK COVER?

Sometimes I wonder if my cover is quite right for the genre. I'm a huge fan of illustrated covers myself, but I've seen a lot of discourse about how really spicy books (which mine are) shouldn't have "cartoon" or illustrated covers because it makes them look too much like YA. And I understand the point, but I really like being able to see my characters, and a naked man chest cover really wouldn't do that.

Despite that, I am really proud of the cover of *A Vision of Air*. It's my own work (under my art pseudonym Nik Sylvan), and I think I was really able to capture what my two characters look like. Also, it's pretty.



A sinister magical plot could destroy order in the Nine Monarchies. Foiling that plot could destroy something even more precious.

The only seer born to the bird folk in seven generations, Fionn has spent his entire life in an impenetrable, remote abbey, learning to control his visions and to heal the sick. He has never met his parents, has never even seen another of his people, and has never known anything beyond the strict order within the abbey walls.

When Kiernan, the half-human son of the forest Sidhe, is sent on a secret mission to the abbey, he finds himself trapped within the walls. He is blinded, weakened, and stripped of his magic—and forced to rely on seer-healer Fionn for everything. To the Sidhe, the bird folk are lesser beings, thought to be barbaric and barely civilized. But Kier doesn't know Fionn is one of them, and he finds himself attracted to the gentle young man he can't even see.

When Kier remembers his mission to foil a plot that threatens both his life and Fionn's, he has to choose: save the young man he is coming to care about, or carry out the vital mission he was sent for, even if it means losing Fionn.

g

IN

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BLURB

A queer fantasy of characters going on a journey of self-discovery.

Queer fantasy, yes, please! Queer Fantasy is probably my favorite to read. Fionn spent his entire life in the remote abbey. He meets Kiernan who is on a secret mission and the drama unfolds!

This book starts slow and as it goes on the faster the plot begins to unfold.

The more I read the more I enjoyed this book, it did take me a little to get into the story but it might have been me, thing as life has been crazy. But once I settled in I liked it.

I kinda wish there was more about the abbey, the history, and things like that. A little more world-building. Nicole does a great job at building characters, and this is a very character-driven story. There are complex relationships self-discovery and magic.

This is an adult fantasy so there are some heavy topics to if that is something you need please be warned. The magic of being oneself blooms in a story of action, drama, and romance.

FEARLESS



COZY, FANTASY, & WRITING

with **TESS CARLETTA**  TESS.CARLETTA

PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT KIT & BASIE IS ABOUT.

Kit and Basie is about a Basie Yeats, an immortal man living in small town Pennsylvania, who has to figure out where he belongs after his mother passes away unexpectedly. He sells his house to Kit Elliot, an outsider from the city looking to settle down. In his grief, Basie is desperate to leave his hometown, but there's something about Kit that keeps him from leaving.



YOUR BOOK HAS A TOUCH OF MAGIC IN IT. CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHAT KIND OF MAGIC CAN BE FOUND IN YOUR WORLD?

The magic in Kit & Basie falls a little more on the magical realism side of fantasy than the swords and dragons we're used to. This means that magic exists a world that looks like ours, but it's not the focus of the story. It's just another element of the world and the characters. I went this route because I've always found small towns innately magical on their own. There's something about the way small town people sow love and community into the essence of their land that allows you to feel it when you visit. Adding literal magic to Long Lily (my fictional Pennsylvania town) was my way of letting that inexplicable magic not only exist for real, but also be a character in and of itself. Readers will notice in Kit & Basie, as well as the subsequent Long Lily books, that each member of the town has just a sprinkle of magic in their life. For Basie and his family, that's immortality. For the other families, you'll just have to wait and see! :)

YOU HAVE AN ETSY THAT'S FILLED WITH ADORABLE STUFF BOOKPLATE, PRINTS, STICKERS, ETC. WHAT DREW YOU TO HAVE A ETSY SHOP AND WHAT IS ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE ITEMS FROM YOUR SHOP?

Thank you! Last summer, I hosted a Kickstarter to help fund the publication of the book. I made all sorts of cute merch to send off as a reward and thank you to my backers. Because I had to order most of the items while the Kickstarter was still happening, I didn't know how much of everything I would need, and I got waaay too much of everything. But I was able to take that overstock and start an Etsy store with it! I

actually got the idea from Sarah Whalen, who runs a stellar Etsy store herself. She gave me a lot of feedback and advice while I was getting started.

My favorite item is the annotated hardcover copy of Kit & Basie because each one is different and individualized to whoever orders it, depending on what they're most interested in knowing! The runner up is the book overlays. They're just so pretty in the book!



WHEN SOMEONE ASKS FOR WRITING ADVICE, WHAT IS YOUR GO TO TIP?

For developing the writing process itself, prioritize routine and discipline so that working on your book becomes embedded into your daily life. While drafting, make the most interesting choice that best serves the story. Strangely, making very specific choices for everything in your book allows it to feel more personal, more real, and more interesting.

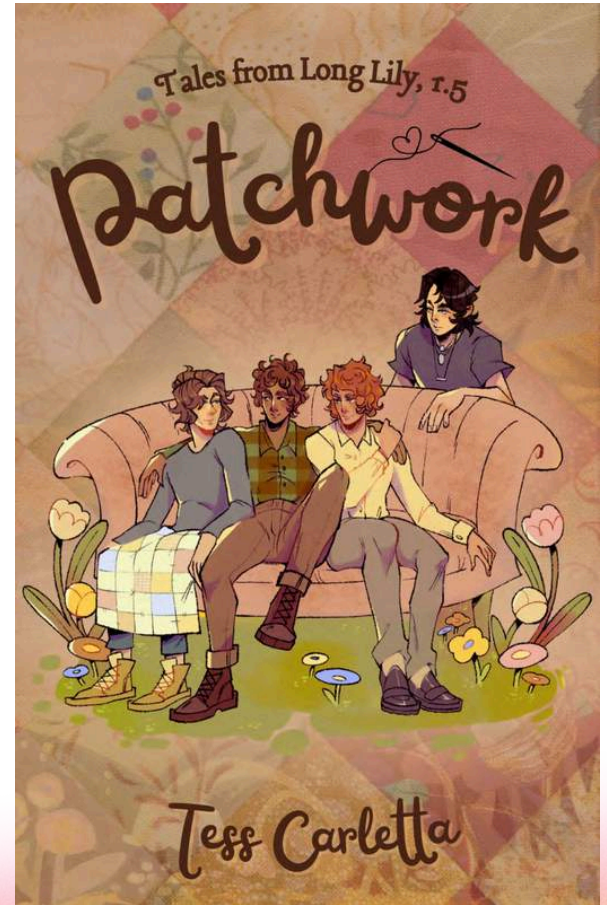
WHAT IS YOUR NEXT BOOK THAT IS COMING OUT
AND WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT IT?

My next book is something very different from K&B. It's a romantasy that features a plant-based magic system, forbidden love, found family, and lots of twists and turns. It's much higher stakes and higher conflict than K&B, and definitely doesn't constitute as cozy. I've been having the most fun writing about the found family aspect. There is something to be said about folks choosing each other—even when it seems they shouldn't, even when it's hard.

YOUR COVERS ARE ADORABLE! WHAT
IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR
COVER?

Thank you, I love them! My favorite part of my Long Lily covers is that they're illustrated by my best friend of over a decade. It was really important to me to have her involved in the process. Her "children's book illustrator" style ended up matching the cozy feeling of K&B and, in my humble opinion, has made the book really recognizable.

REVIEW IN
THE NEXT
ISSUE!



“SPECIFIC CHOICES FOR EVERYTHING
IN YOUR BOOK ALLOWS IT TO FEEL
MORE PERSONAL”





CAN YOU SHARE WITH US WHAT A KISS OF THE SIREN'S SONG IS ABOUT?

A Kiss of the Siren's Song is a sapphic fantasy romance inspired by Anne Bonny and Mary Read. Some have referred to it as a "bingeable queer Pirates of the Caribbean." In general, A Kiss of the Siren's Song is about understanding yourself, your motives, your passions and your goals. It invites you on an epic journey about revenge, lies, hidden identities, ulterior motives, mysteries, magic, and making mistakes, all while highlighting the importance of comradery, relationships and self-awareness. A Kiss of the Siren's Song features a thief who stole the wrong thing from the wrong person at the wrong time, and a pirate who has been planning to avenge her father for a decade. The two meet in a twist of fate aboard the Vindicta and find that they might just be the only two people left who can challenge their evil captain and save the world from his nefarious plot.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE ABOUT SAPPHIC PIRATES?

A lot of the popular fantasy romance novels are cisgender-hetero-normative, meaning they primarily feature cisgender characters in heterosexual relationships. If there are any queer characters or relationships, a lot of them are stereotyped and/or used as B-plot material. I wanted to write a book that broke this mold. A Kiss of the Siren's Song has an entirely queer cast, set in a queer-normative world. Yes, that means that even the villain isn't queer-phobic. While Anne Bonny and Mary Read inspired the sapphic relationship and hidden identities in this novel, the true push I needed came from a friend of mine, Cathrine Swift. I had sent her a video on October 30, 2022, saying she should write a sapphic pirate novel, except I was the one who had a ton of ideas flowing from it. At the end of the conversation, she told me that I should write the book. So I did. In many ways, A Kiss of the Siren's Song is the book I wish I had an opportunity to read as a new adult just beginning to understand and embrace their queerness. I hope it can be that for others.

YOUR BOOK, A KISS OF THE SIREN'S SONG, HAS TWO DIFFERENT KINDS OF MAGIC SYSTEMS. IF YOU HAVE TO PICK ONE FOR YOURSELF TO HAVE, WHAT ONE WOULD YOU WANT AND WHY?

I would definitely choose the sorcery magic system. Being born with and evolving powers over time would be undoubtedly convenient, but, and perhaps it's because I'm a scientist myself, I love the idea of understanding how things work. The sorcery system in A Kiss of the Siren's Song is more thoroughly explained in the second book, but it is primarily physiological and psychological magic. Exploring how our minds and bodies are connected both within ourselves and to each other was a fascinating philosophical experiment while writing, and I'm excited to dive into it further.

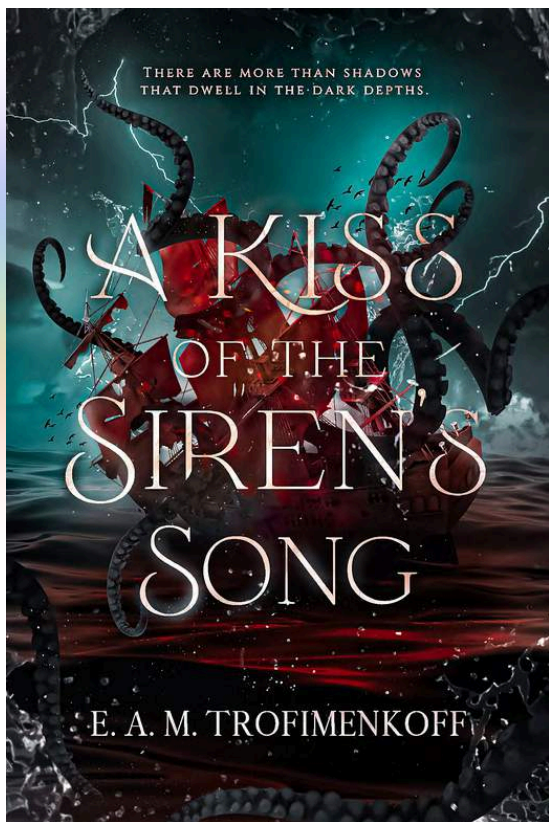


YOUR COVER IS BREATHTAKING. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

Thank you! The cover is STUNNING, and I'm so fortunate to have worked with Jules (@coversbyjule.s on instagram) on it. It was actually a pre-made cover she posted, and I was lucky enough to spot it at the right time! My favourite part is that the cover is actually a visual metaphor. I won't spoil it, but there are so many features that highlight very specific and important events that happen within the pages.

I READ THAT YOU HAVE ANOTHER BOOK RELEASING SEPTEMBER 25, CALLED YOU AND I COLLIDE, CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT THAT BOOK?

You and I Collide is unsurprisingly also a queer-normative romance novel. It features a neurodivergent nonbinary highschool chemistry teacher named L, and a soft cinnamon roll, tattooed and pierced MMC named Ashe who loves anime and baking. In an experiment for L to completely accept and experience the feeling of joy without waiting for the other shoe to drop, they make a childhood bucket list outlining things they enjoyed or would have enjoyed as a kid. Scared to do it on their own, they invite Ashe along, and the two of them go on a journey of self-exploration and self-love in this small town, friends-to-lovers contemporary romance.



The Kraken's Fang is all that stands between Drakkon Stormson, Captain of the Vindicta, and his reign over the seas. When a professional thief strikes the wrong target, she is forced to flee land, unknowingly returning to her home at sea. Aboard the Vindicta, she meets a sailor hell-bent on avenging her father. Together, they uncover Drakkon's unrelenting plot to secure the sea's most formidable weapon. In a race against otherworldly forces, two unlikely heroines must embrace who they truly are and learn to trust each other, or risk the fate of the world.



So I don't do this often. I tend to hit my reads in time but this issue is over 145 pages so I did run out of time to read this. I am going to tell you how it's going and then in the next issue 61 the summer issue there will be a full review so E.A.M. Trofimenkoff will get to be in two issues of Double the Books! If you like this idea and would like to see more 'currently reading', let me know this is fun?

My thoughts: I'm about 35% in when writing this and I have to say I am enjoying this. I do love long, slow, adventure-packed fantasy and then you add in the fact that this is queer and I am eating it up like sweets. I have a soft spot for lovely sapphic and pirates so having them mix is making for a fun read. I've been having some chilly summer days and this book is perfect. I can not wait to finish this and see how everything unfolds and plays out.



TATIANA OBEY

@OBEYTHEAUTHOR



interview



OBEYTHEAUTHOR

PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT SISTAH SAMURAI IS ABOUT.

Sistah Samurai is just trying to run her errands, eat her ramen, and get home. Unfortunately, there are all of these demons that keep getting in her way. She is not the one. Not today. Sistah Samurai is an anime-inspired action fantasy novella that features an older badass FMC and two swords named, Fuck Around and Find Out.



HOW DID THIS IDEA COME TO YOU?

The first seed of this story came to me when an image of a Black lady samurai popped into my head one day. I knew I needed to tell her story. What started as a short story became a novella.

What began as fun way to write a Black action heroine became a love letter to all of my Black girl nerds.



YOUR COVER IS BEAUTIFUL. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

My favorite part is definitely how the main character is depicted on the cover. I asked the cover artist to give me both graceful and badass, and he DELIVERED!

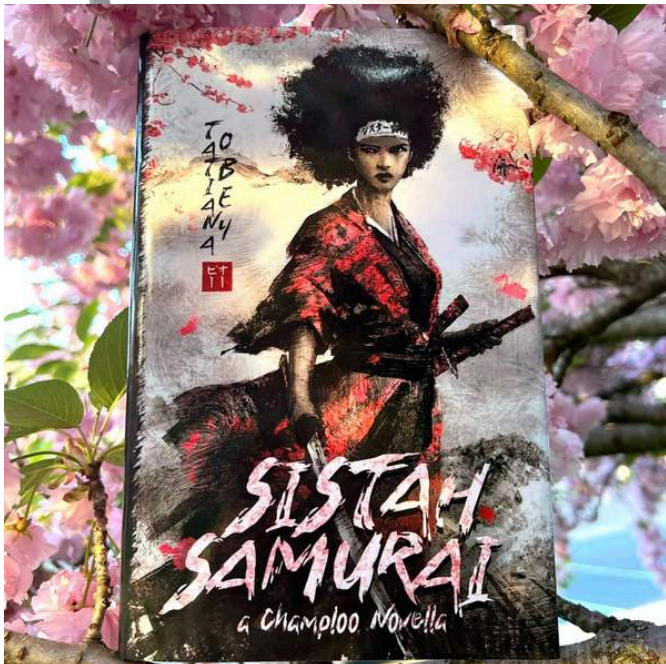


WHAT DO YOU WANT READERS TO TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR BOOK?

I have been overwhelmed by the positive responses from many of my readers and I am glad that many can relate to it, but ultimately, I wrote this book for Black women. By the end of the book, I want them to feel seen, to feel cherished, and to feel loved.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE SETTING PLAY IN YOUR BOOK, AND WHY DID YOU CHOOSE IT?

I wanted to showcase Black American culture in a fantastical setting. I was immediately reminded of one of my favorite anime, Afro Samurai, which also features a Black samurai in a Japan-inspired setting with technological and cultural anachronisms. I built my setting using that world as inspiration.



REVIEW IN NEXT ISSUE!

KAITLYN

KAITLYN.SWANSON.AUTHOR



interview

SWANSON



KAITLYN.SWANSON.AUTHOR



PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT QUEEN OF BLOOD AND STARDUST IS ABOUT.

At it's core Queen of Blood and Stardust is a healing journey for the main female character, Lennox Adair. Two years ago, her parents and brother were murdered by vampires, leaving her High Queen of her continent, a role she was never supposed to inherit. Naturally, she told a vendetta against vampires, so she's unamused when she has to work with Luka Rossi, a vampire and heir to the Blood Court throne in order to avoid an arranged marriage.

Lennox hates Luka from the moment she lays eyes on him, Luka however is nothing but intrigued by the High Queen. But Lennox quickly realizes that the vampire prince is the least of her worries when an ancient rebel vampire group resurfaces—threatening to destroy everything Lennox has worked so hard to protect.

As Lennox agrees to put aside her grievances and work with Luka, she begins to realize that he might be the farthest thing from her enemy. And you know what they say, there's a thin line between love and hate.

WHAT DREW YOU TO WRITE ABOUT VAMPIRES AND ROYALS?

Funny thing is, I was never a vampire girl when they first became popular. Back when everyone was obsessed with Twilight I was very anti-vampire for several years for no good reason. Little did I know I'd end up writing a vampire romance. When I first started reading fantasy, the From Blood and Ash series by Jenifer L. Armentrout was one of the first series I fell into. I loved the different spin on vampires, especially there being the more traditional vampires and then the vampires in more of the Fae sense with canines instead of fangs. That series is what initially sparked my interest in vampires and beings that bit. Any book with a form of vampires I was obsessed, I loved seeing different authors' interpretations on the myth. Naturally, when I started writing my own book I wanted to put my own spin on them. As far as royal go, it was really the way that felt the most natural fit with how I wanted Lennox's story to unfold. So I had to learn a lot about royals haha.

YOUR COVER IS SO BEAUTIFUL! WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

I have been hyper fixating on that single drop of blood since I saw the first proof.

THIS IS YOUR DEBUT NOVEL WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED SO FAR IN YOUR WRITING JOURNEY?

I have learned so much, and I'm still learning everyday, but there are two pieces that I think have had the biggest impact on my writing journey. First, just get the words down. You can edit later, but you can't edit if you don't have the words written down. I don't go back and reread/edit during a first draft. I just let the story flow out. A first draft it just that, a first draft. The second biggest thing I learned is to not try and force the story, let it take you where it needs to go. I tried so hard initially to force characters into boxes that I wanted them in and to force storylines, and it just didn't work. Once I stopped trying to direct the plot in a way it didn't want to go and just let it take me where it needed to go writing got so much easier. For example, my main male character Luka's character was vastly different when I started writing, but I realized I was trying to force him into the male main character I wanted, not the male main character that Lennox needed for her story to evolve.

I READ THAT YOU ARE A TAYLOR SWIFT FAN. IF YOU HAD TO MATCH ONE OF HER SONGS TO QUEEN OF BLOOD AND STARDUST, WHAT SONG WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

One song?? That's a tough one, ha. My initial reaction is Midnight Rain, that's Lennox's song, it always has been. Queen of Blood and Stardust is for the Midnight rain girlies (aka me). But Peace is the first song I ever associated with Queen of Blood and Stardust as a whole. I remember listening to it the first time after completing my first draft and it was a goosebumps and tears moment. It feels like it encompasses Lennox and Luka's relationship so well. I don't want to get too much into it and give anything away, but there are different parts of the song that encapsulate both of their perspectives on their relationship and it makes me emotional everytime I listen to it and think of them.

“ ANY BOOK WITH A FORM OF VAMPIRES I WAS OBSESSED ”



Lennox Adair was never supposed to be queen. When a violent vampire attack claims the lives of her parents and brother, Lennox finds herself the High Queen of Lethenia with a kingdom to rule, people to protect, and a mountain of grief to conceal underneath her responsibilities. For two years Lennox has avoided the Blood Court—home to the vampires who murdered her family.

Until now.

Luka Rossi wants one thing, the title of Blood King. A title his grandfather is adamant he must earn by completing one last task: get High Queen Lennox Adair to work with him.

There's only one problem, Lennox hates him.

But Lennox quickly discovers letting the vampire prince into her home is the least of her worries when an ancient vampire group, the Vanir, resurfaces—threatening to destroy everything Lennox has worked so hard to protect. As Lennox agrees to put aside her grievances and work with Luka, she begins to realize that he might be the farthest thing from her enemy.

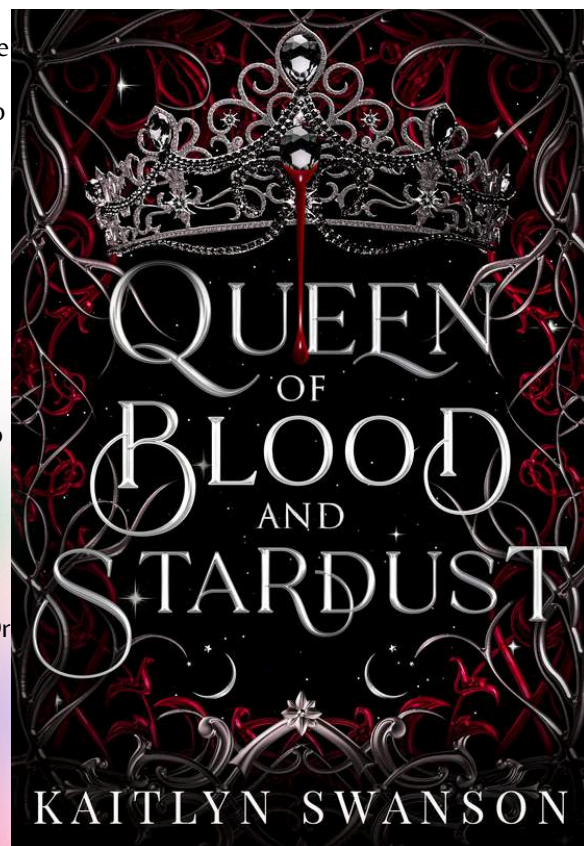
Bonds will be forged.

Lines will be blurred.

Alliances will be tested.

Fates will be shattered.

Can Lennox and Luka take down the Vanir together and secure their crowns? Or will the vampires destroy the life Lennox has worked so hard to stitch back together? Demolishing her home and heart in the process?



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If you enjoy romantasy then you will have a blast reading this one like I did. The banter, the drama, the romance...

Lennox is strong-willed, hard-headed, determined, and at times stubborn. And once you learn and understand what she's been through you kinda understand where she's coming from. Luka on the other hand is witty and snarky at times, he knows what he wants in life and is willing to work for it. They are a slow burn, every time you think it's time for their feelings to come out something happens.

Even though this is a strong character story. I wanted to know more about the world, the magic, how everything was going to unfold, and what was going to happen next. The side characters even stole the spotlight at times. There are vampires, witches, fae, shifters, and many magic creatures!

Kaitlyn's writing is a delight, the way the relationship is built up, the banter, and how the characters handle themselves are well-written. However, I would have liked more worldbuilding, more info on the history, how some things work, just a bit more of a flushed-out world.

A dual point of view that will keep you wanting to read more as the slow-burn romance unfolds in this dark fantasy.



ROMANTIC FANTASY

interview

CATHERINE
LABADIE



CATANDHERWIPS

CATANDHERWIPS



TELL US ABOUT WHAT YOU WRITE.

I write romantic fantasy ranging from dreamy cottagecore, to gothic and luxurious, to angsty urban.

The Fate's Fall duology has dual timelines, fated mates with a twist, and a magical university in a magical town.

The Tales from Lyrassan standalone books have different casts of characters, but they all have cozy, whimsical romance whether the setting is an enchanted orchard or an autumnal forest.

My gothic duology Lustrous Divinities (can be read in any order or as standalones, though I recommend reading *Render to Silver* and then *Garner for Gold*) is much darker, moodier, and decadent.



SHARE WITH US WHAT *RENDER TO SILVER* IS ABOUT.

Render to Silver is set in an Italian renaissance-ish world focusing on a Fount of Silver (like a nun) in a church that venerates ambition and greed. Marzanna, a Fount, accidentally works a Miracle and attracts the attention of Easoren, Silver's High Priest. There are a lot of themes regarding religious trauma, the means of survival in a toxic system, and whether or not to overcome your flaws if they are what kept you motivated so long.

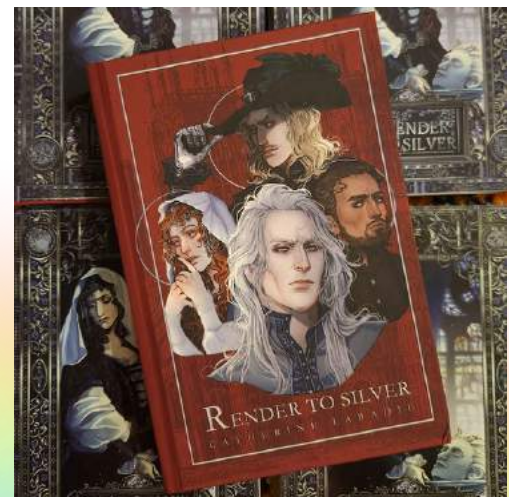
Additionally, while *Render to Silver* can be read as a standalone, it's part of the Lustrous Divinity duology that will conclude in my next book, *Garner for Gold*. That's where the story really expands and we address the consequences of decisions made in *Render to Silver*!

IF YOU COULD CHOOSE A MASCOT FOR YOUR WRITING, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

I sort of do have a mascot! My publishing logo is a Scottish terrier. I've always liked that breed because they're tenacious and fiesty, but also such whimsical little creatures.

WHAT DRIVES YOU TO CONTINUE WRITING EVEN IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES?

I've always written for myself. This is a difficult business to be in - and it is getting worse in a lot of ways. Writing brought me through a lot of hard situations. I believe if you aren't at the heart writing stories for yourself, you're going to struggle a bit harder to stick with it.



YOU HAVE SO MANY PRETTY COVERS. WHAT IS ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE COVERS AND WHY?

Each cover has brought me so, so much joy throughout the process of seeing the first sketch and all the progress reports from my artists until the final version came to life. If I had to pick a favorite, I'd have to say the cover for Garner for Gold really claimed my heart! But I don't typically pick since they are all so special to me.



The Founts of Silver are holy women blessed by the favor of their God...or they are cursed vessels meant to be shattered. Given no other choice, Fount Marzanna clawed her way up their ranks until she was able to begin planning her escape with one of her fellow Founts from Aebbenary, the prosperous island ruled by Silver's decadent church.

Instead, the accidental working of a Miracle sets her apart and attracts the notice of the High Priest. He intends to use her to spark a revival in the city, and eventually the world, which has begun to turn away from a religion that rewards greed and ambition as piety. He's not forthcoming with how, and while tensions in the city rise, while two rival houses contemplate war, Marzanna realizes the role she resents with all her heart won't let her walk away without untold sacrifice.

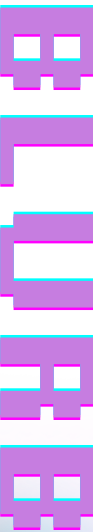


An indie queer fantasy story filled with twists and turns.

This book has the worldbuilding and lore that I have been looking for in my fantasy this year and this one is wonderful. Even though this starts slow and heavy on the worldbuilding it is worth it as we get to see the characters unfold and bloom later on in this read. The representation is strong in this book and feels well done. The characters feel well-written and flushed out. You have some you root for and others not so much.

I was a bit unsure going into this book with all the religious talking I've seen in some reviews but it wasn't heavy and was written in a way that felt real to the world. There's a rebellion, romance, and characters on a journey of self-discovery. This is a neat, one-of-a-kind read that fantasy readers will enjoy. This is my first book by Catherine Labadie and I will for sure be on the lookout for more books by Catherine Labadie and I can't wait. There are some content warnings like death, abuse, gore and so much more so please look up if you need more info.

A beautifully built world, well-rounded characters weave in a romance and you have Render to Silver.



WRITING INSPIRATION

interview

A.J. SHIRLEY



AJSHIRLEYAUTHOR

AJ_SHIRLEY_AUTHOR



TELL US A BIT ABOUT A SAGA OF SHIELDS
AND SHADOWS.

A few years ago, when the world felt upside down and out of control, I started a story that I didn't realize was going to be something much bigger. I was writing to cope, to create a world where people who looked and loved like me could be free, safe, seen, and whole. A world where we all could. That story became my debut novel, A Saga of Shields and Shadows. Armed only with words and a thirst for change, one woman sets out into a perilous world, one where the veil between the mortal realm and that of the gods and demons grows thinner every day. But everything changes when, on her first night of brothel work, an Aegis—one of the kingdom's sworn protectors—requests her company. Together, they embark on a journey of love, hope, and self-discovery.



“It's easy to forget to
make time for
creativity and things
that bring us joy.”



WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF THE WRITING PROCESS FOR YOU, AND HOW DO YOU HANDLE IT?

Finding the time to make it happen can be a challenge. We're all so busy with work, family, and the demands of life. It's easy to forget to make time for creativity and things that bring us joy. But I have made it a priority, even if it's only for fifteen minutes a day, and that's made all the difference.

HOW DO YOU DECIDE ON THE TITLES OF YOUR BOOKS?

That was a bit of a journey. I write a lot in my other career and titles are always the hardest part for me. This book actually started as The Aegis and the Wanderer but then I figured that aegis is such an obscure word, so I wanted to come up with something catchier. I also wanted to give off epic fantasy vibes, and my main character is a writer, so 'saga' felt right. Plus I love alliteration and there are so many good s words. There's a joke in the book world that fantasy books are often titled using the same formula: BLANK of BLANK and BLANK. I didn't think about it when I named my book, but it had to be in my subconscious somewhere. Now all the books in the series will be A Saga of two s words.



WHAT ARE SOME THEMES AND TOPICS THAT CAN BE FOUND IN YOUR BOOK?

I explore themes of identity, belonging, what it means to be your true self—what it means to love your true self. I also like to include themes of social justice, inclusivity, personal responsibility, family, and all those big philosophical questions. But all within the context of a magical world with fantastical but flawed characters going on adventures.

YOUR BOOK HAS MYTHOLOGY INSPIRATION FROM AROUND THE WORLD. IS THERE ANY MYTHOLOGY YOU HAVEN'T WRITTEN ABOUT THAT YOU ARE DRAWN TO?

Well, I am actually working on the third book in this series and so I've gotten to draw on quite a lot of mythology now, even though readers haven't gotten to see it yet. I mostly want to include more mythology from Africa and the PanAfrican diaspora. It's so easy to find information about Greek and Norse and Celtic mythology, but I want to cultivate a more inclusive universe. I want to include mythology from my unknown ancestors, and from other BIPOC cultures. Unfortunately, thanks to colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade, and the impact of white supremacy, it's much more difficult to find those stories. I won't give up, though.

“ I was writing to cope, to create a world where people who looked and loved like me could be free, safe, seen, and whole. ”



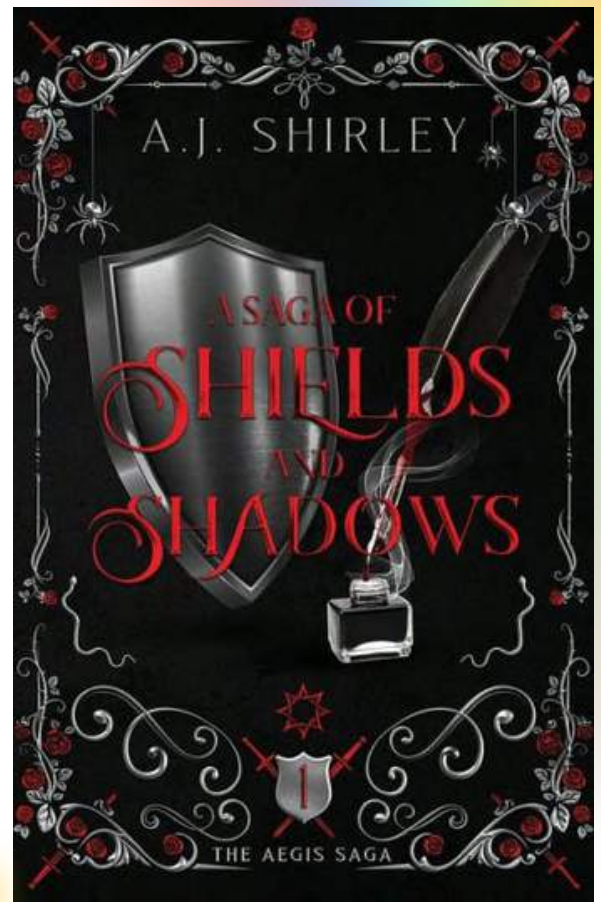
Emma's relationship ends abruptly when she comes across her boyfriend cheating on her at a party. Yet another failed relationship brings her repressed platonic feelings for one of her best friends to the surface once more. Emma's scared to voice her worries and desires, but even if she manages to bring up how she feels, how will Noah react to such a revelation?

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A monster fighting fantasy with royalty, powers, queer wrapped with romance that will keep you hooked.



This romantasy has a good plot, well-done action, and heavy romance. I didn't feel bored while reading this. I feel like this is a great book to start with if you are looking to read more romance-leading fantasies. It has an interesting world and magic, but it's character leading. The characters fall in love fast. I enjoyed the plotline with the travel and fighting monsters, it's something I like in my fantasies. Everything is easy to take in and not overly complicated.

I will most likely pick up the next book or other books by A.J. Shirley as I feel the writing is good, like the characters, and overall just wondering what will or could happen next.

A journey of love, growth, and action in a world where battle monsters aren't just in one's own mind.



QUEER *Five* BOOKS

more people should read

BY LIZZIE STRONGBOX

I'm a monster Romance Author who lives in Florida. By day, I'm a chaotic gremlin, by night, I'm a dnd dungeon master with a pension for punchlines and horrifying monsters. I like to read just a little bit of everything, I mainly read romance, horror, and YA fantasy. My books represent Bi/Pan relationships of all kinds from M/F, FF, FFM, MMF, and so much more. I write books that are sweet, spicy, chaotic, and fun. People can find me on all socials at @ Lizziestrongauthor, and my link tree is here <https://linktr.ee/Lizziestrongauthor>

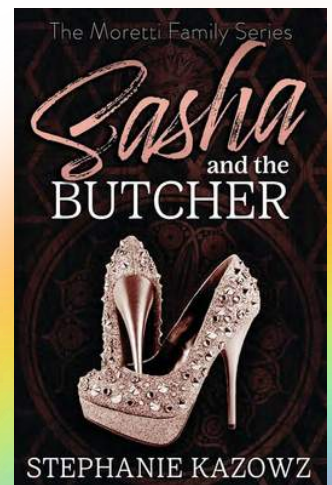


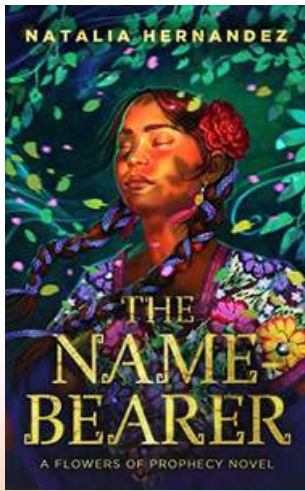
LIZZIESTRONGAUTHOR



She is a Haunting - Sapphic/Bi story that broke my heart and haunts my dreams in the best of ways. There is nothing that makes me happier than a horror book that folds in discovery, acceptance, and a little bit of humor that made me snort out loud. The descriptions are grotesque, the bugs were even worse, the atmosphere was spooky, and it gave me EVERYTHING. A must read for my sapphic/bi horror enthusiasts.

Sasha and the Butcher- if you like slice of life cinnamon roll “accidentally dating the mob boss” books, you’re gonna gobble this up. A bi story that will make you walk a little more confident. Especially for my plus size babes who want a man who worships you, is morally gray, but also is just like... the best? Yeah, the absolute best. The whole trilogy is gobsmackingly good and exactly what my Bi/Pan plus size babes need in their life.





The Name Bearer- Sapphic magically coming of age and learning to stand on your own story. It's beautiful, honestly, I DEVoured this book. Couldn't put it down. The characters suck you in, the plot keeps you hooked, and the heart ache keeps you longing for book 2.



Tentacles & Teeth- I can not rave enough about this book or Rowan Merrick. Everything from the ambiance to the smut, to the representation... did I mention the smut? This is my comfort read when I need a pick-me-up. It's a Bi/Pan smorgasbord. Just delicious- 10/10.



Gearbreakers- A sapphic story about two angry girls trying to fight the government AND THERE ARE MECH'S. Like this book had everything. I loved it from beginning to end and devoured both books in this duet. It's everything I wanted and more, from the atmosphere, the story telling, the strategic mystery unraveling, and I stare at this cover all the time. It really is just the perfect action packed, heart wrenching book.





interview

Mary Dublin & Anne Kendsley



AUTHORS.DUBLIN.KENDSLEY



TELL US ABOUT SHOT IN THE DARK.

Shot in the Dark is the spellbinding enemies to lovers urban fantasy adventure you didn't know you needed! We pitch it as Supernatural meets Fern Gully, a cross between gritty monster hunting and whimsical fairycore. We follow Sylvia, a rebellious fairy of twenty-one moons longing for more freedom than her resistive village of Elysia permits. Her frequent trips sneaking off to the haunted human mansion outside her home forest lead her to cross paths with her worst nightmare— human hunters, Jon and Cliff, who suspect her insolent in a string of gruesome disappearances.

A harrowing captivity transforms into an unlikely alliance when Sylvia saves Jon's life by sealing a magical pact with the enigmatic Ancients— fae powers who demand a cryptic price. Sylvia is left with no choice but to stay by Jon's side while he and Cliff hunt for a ruthless werewolf, determined to free herself from the Ancients' settlement. As the dangerous hunt unfolds, Sylvia finds that not all legends about hunters are true. She realizes she and Jon may have more in common than she ever could have imagined— and icy hostility melts into forbidden attraction. But it doesn't matter how he begins to look at her— it can't matter. If Jon discovers her secret, Sylvia knows her fate is sealed. With the full moon's ominous countdown away, Sylvia and the hunters race against time with the fate of countless lives—including Sylvia's—hanging in the balance.

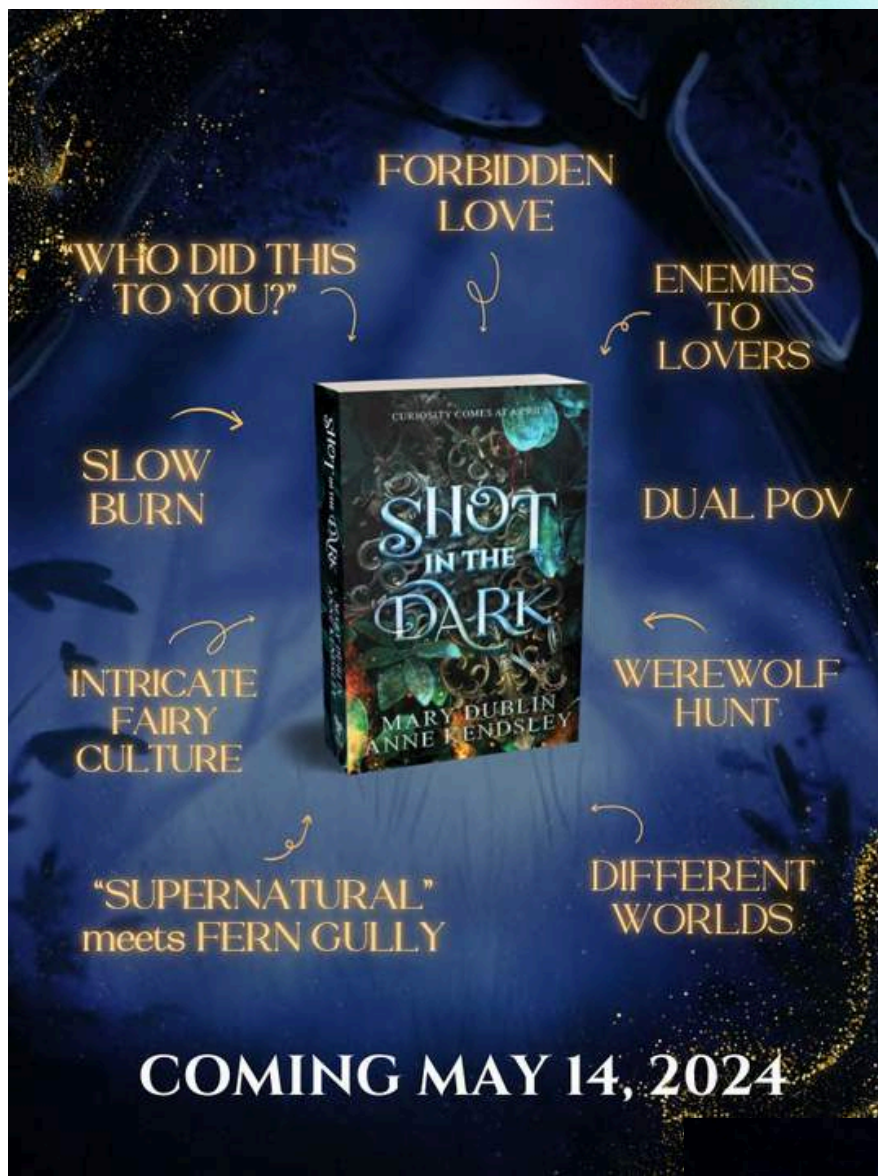
It is the first in a series. We currently have 6 major books planned and a few novellas.

Shot in the Dark is the story that brought us together as co-authors and best friends in its very first iteration over 10 years ago, so it will always hold a very special place in our hearts. We hope that everyone who read this book feels welcomed into the little found family we've been carrying in our heads all these years.

WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER?

It's impossible to choose! All of our characters, especially the trio, are so inspiring and entertaining in their unique ways. Cliff is a very common fan favorite, and we can't blame anyone who agrees! He's colorful, confident, and terrifying in equal measures. We really enjoy his heated banter with Sylvia in book one.





HOW DID THIS STORY COME ABOUT?

Anne and I started off role-playing online based off a simple story prompt, and had immediate chemistry. Writing together soon turned into talking together, which turned into meeting up and eventually traveling together almost every year! Through all our years of friendship and adventures, we never stopped talking about Jon, Sylvia, and Cliff's story, writing shorts and versions of the story for years. In the last few years, the final matured version of the story came into focus.

Though the story has evolved drastically, the original names of most characters remained the same!



WHAT IS CO-WRITING LIKE FOR YOU TWO?

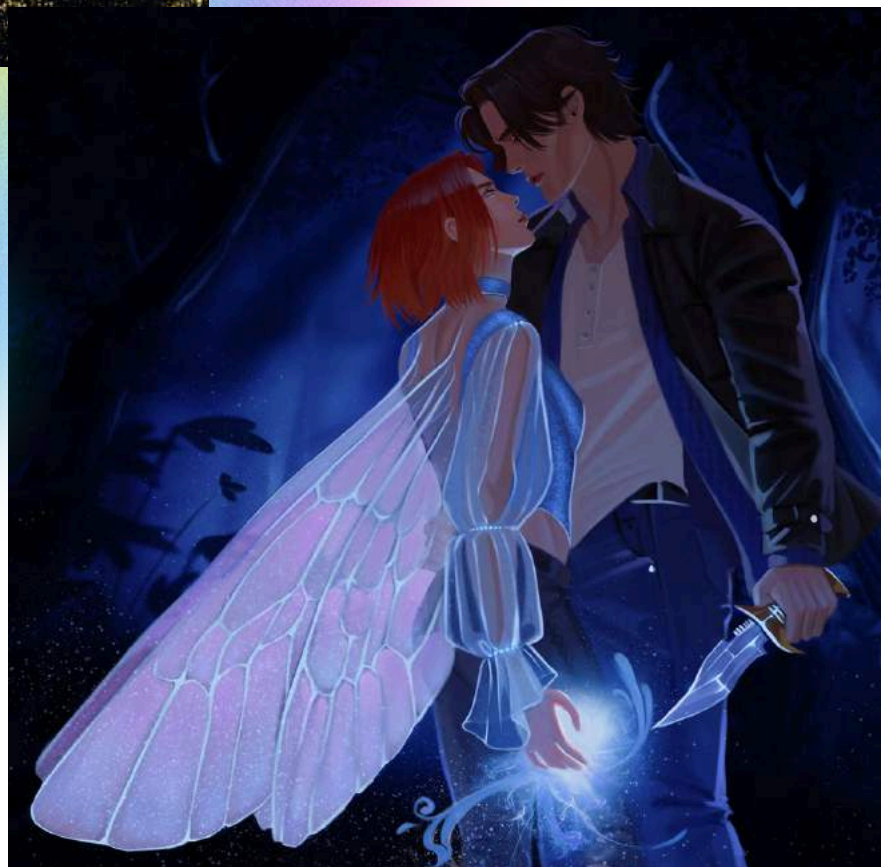
We live long distance sadly, so we do all our work remotely. We share a Google Doc to write—outlining each book and scene copiously before delving into drafting. We take turns writing a page or so— however we feel inspired! During editing, we leave lots of notes and highlights as we comb through collaboratively to make changes.

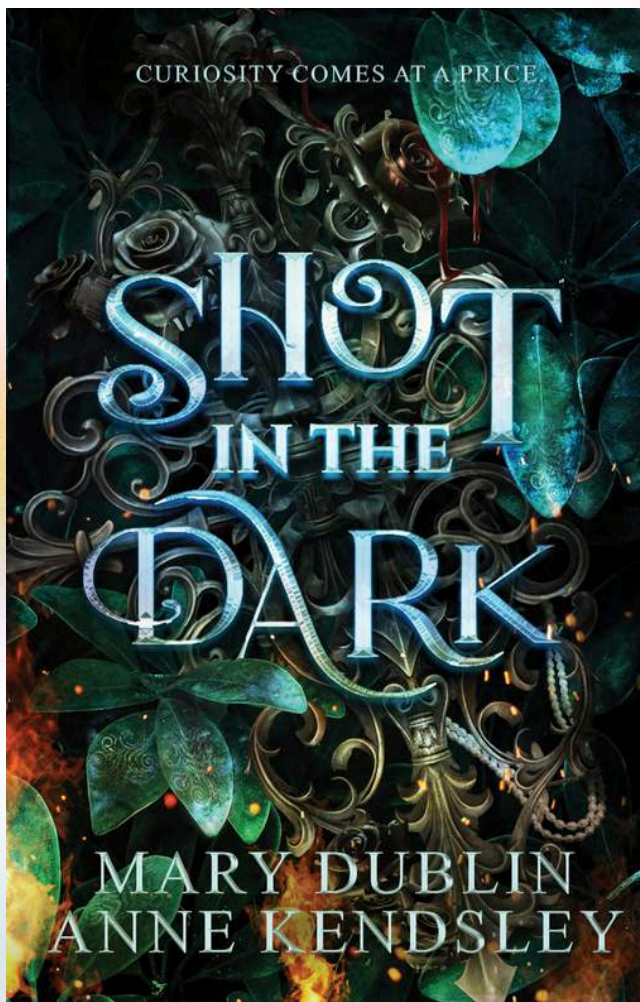
All logistics aside— we are constantly gushing on the phone about story and character ideas. Our friendship makes the process so, so fun and full of excitement. We genuinely love these characters like they're our friends— and we hope you will too!



THE COVER FOR SHOT IN THE DARK IS SO PRETTY. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE COVER?

Thank you! Mary has a design background and worked hard to bring our specific vision to life. It was tricky to strike the right balance of whimsical and gritty! Our favorite part is the frost magic detail on the leaves— we imagine that Sylvia's ice magic is beautiful, and spirals in little fractals as it spreads over a surface.





Obeys the curfew. Never fly past Elysia's boundaries.

Above all — never speak to humans.

For twenty-one summers, Sylvia has evaded the ironclad rules set by her village, driven by an insatiable curiosity to know the world beyond the confines of the willow her fellow fairies call home. Her ventures often lead her to the vacant human mansion beyond Elysia's forest, where ghosts whisper and ancient treasures beckon in the darkness.

Her exploration is shattered by a bullet through her wing— courtesy of Jon and Cliff, seasoned monster hunters who suspect her involvement in gruesome disappearances. A harrowing captivity transforms into an unlikely alliance when Sylvia saves Jon's life by sealing a magical pact with the enigmatic Ancients— fae powers who demand a cryptic price. Sylvia is left with no choice but to stay by Jon's side while he and Cliff hunt for a ruthless werewolf, determined to free herself from the Ancients' settlement.

As the dangerous hunt unfolds, Sylvia finds that not all legends about hunters are true. She realizes she and Jon may have more in common than she ever could have imagined— and icy hostility melts into forbidden attraction.

But it doesn't matter how he begins to look at her— it can't matter. If Jon discovers her secret, Sylvia knows her fate is sealed. With the full moon's ominous countdown away, Sylvia and the hunters race against time with the fate of countless lives—including Sylvia's —hanging in the balance.

After all, killing a monster is easy compared to falling in love with someone you shouldn't.



A slow-burn fantasy romance of forbidden love in a journey where the truth may be lies.

We follow Sylvia a fairy who's wounding about the outside world. Jon is a monster hunter. We start with a dramatic whirlwind of these two opposites clash. The main characters have such good chemistry, banter, and a dash of wit that makes it easy to root for them. It's a forbidden romance; starting off enemies turned friends to lovers with a well-developed slow burn.

This author duo Mary Dublin and Anne Kendsley make a great team, they balance and play so well with each other. The worldbuilding, characters, and plot are all well-flushed and planted out. I also found out that this is a series that's going to have multiple books, so I can't wait to read more of these books.

Shot in the Dark a monster hunter meets fae in a story that unfolds in a unique fantasy world.

Annabel den Dekker

BELLSBOOKSANDWRITINGS



Physical books or eBooks

That is such a difficult question. I read more eBooks because they are so convenient, and it's easy to bring my e-reader wherever I go. At the same time, I love having a physical collection of my favorite books, and there's just something special about holding a physical copy. If I have to choose, I'll pick physical books.

Day at Home or Day out in Nature

This one is easy: day out in nature. I love spending time in nature; it's soothing and, besides writing, my way of recharging.

Young Adult or New Adult

Another difficult one. I've always liked reading both. So far, I've only written Young Adult but I'm working on a New Adult, and I've found myself enjoying both equally. I'll go for New Adult, because the character's ages are closer to mine, so I guess that might make it easier to relate to them?

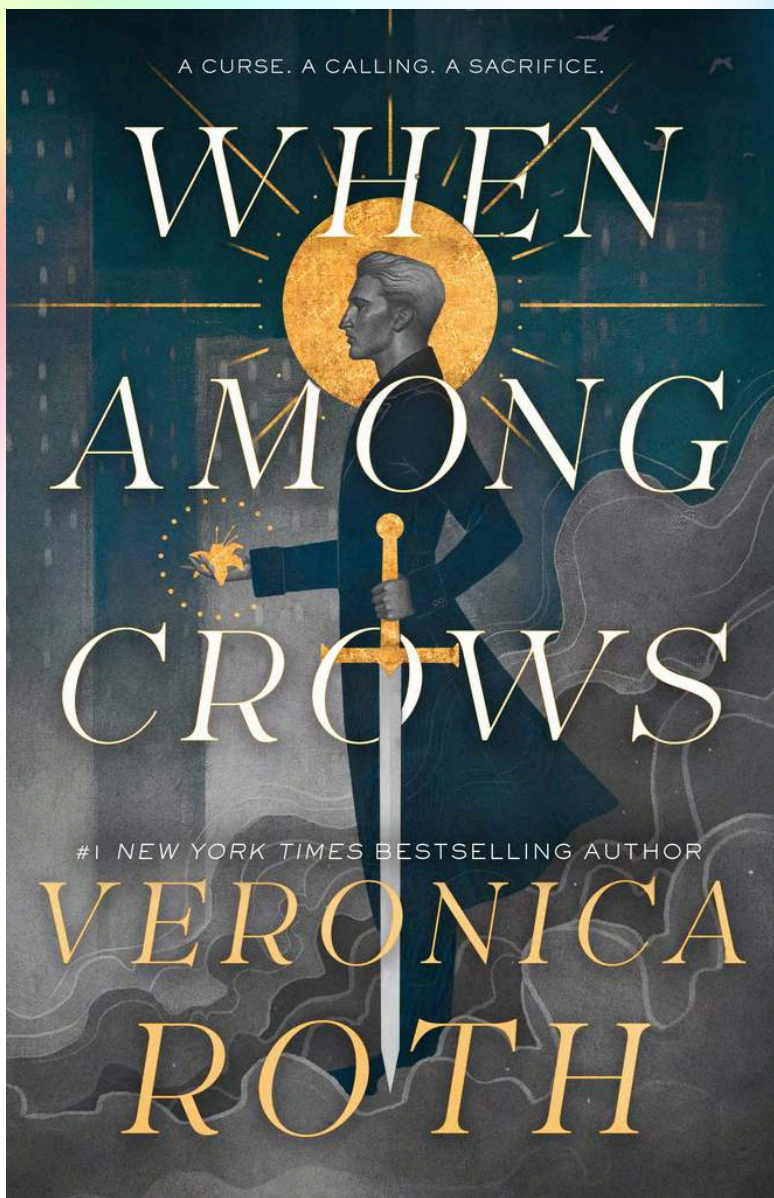
Colorful Covers or Dark Covers

Colorful covers! I love covers that are happy, colorful and bright, especially pastels. Everything is better with a little extra color, in my opinion.

Sweet Treat or Salty Treat

Salty. I don't have a specific reason why, because I enjoy sweet treats as well, but there's just something about salty snacks that I prefer.





Step into a city where monsters feast on human emotions, knights split their souls to make their weapons, and witches always take more than they give.

Pain is Dymitr's calling. To slay the monsters he's been raised to kill, he had to split his soul in half to make a sword from his own spine. Every time he draws it, he gets blood on his hands.

Pain is Ala's inheritance. When her mother died, a family curse to witness horrors committed by the Holy Order was passed onto her. The curse will claim her life, as it did her mother's, unless she can find a cure.

One fateful night in Chicago, Dymitr comes to Ala with a bargain: her help in finding the legendary witch Baba Jaga in exchange for an enchanted flower that just might cure her. Desperate, and unaware of what Dymitr really is, Ala agrees.

But they only have one day before the flower dies . . . and Ala's hopes of breaking the curse along with it.



A novella set in the urban modern Chicago and the journey of redemption, monsters will keep you turning the page.

Going in I knew that this was a novella and the first line from the blurb, "Step into a city where monsters feast on human emotions, knights split their souls to make their weapons, and witches always take more than they give." and that's all I feel you need to know about 'When Among Crows'. So, I won't be talking too much about the plot because I feel that if you like dystopia-ish, monsters-driven stories, Urban Fantasy.

The characters go on a quest and during the quest we get to know, learn, and understand the characters more. There's a witch, forest spirit, shapeshifter, demon-like creator, and more. There are some interesting dark elements like demons that can suffocate you when you are sleeping; that's trafficking. I read online that this is inspired or drawing from Slavic myths and from the little bit I know it felt well done.

I've read so much by the author, Veronica Roth, from Divergent, Carve the Mark, and I feel her writing has improved. It's not the best fantasy writing I've ever read, but it's well done. A good balance between strong character development and plotted out well. For a 179-page long book, it's good, without feeling rushed or choppy. I hope that she writes more about this world. I would like to learn more about the world overall, even if we are following new characters. I listened to the audiobook. I felt that it was good. It has a full cast and was narrated by Helen Laser, James Fouhey, and Tim Campbell. I enjoyed the voice and tones, it helped flush out the world and story.

A compelling adventurous quest of the unexpected crew, a dash of queer romance, in a dark urban fantasy.

O. BOGOSIAN

interview



IRIS.FALLEN_ANGELS

PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT IRIS BIRTH OF THE IMMORTALS IS ABOUT.

Iris Birth of the Immortals is the first installment of The Fallen Angel Series. And in this first book we venture on an extraordinary journey that begins with two sisters as they find themselves ensnared in a cosmic struggle orchestrated by the enigmatic dark prince, Samayaza. Their journey is fraught with peril, betrayal and temptation as they navigate a world where allegiances shift like shadows and ancient debts demand repayment.

HOW DID THIS IDEA COME TO YOU?

In a dream about 15 years ago. I actually wrote down my dream and still have that in my preliminary notes for this series. I saw an amazing temple that I go on to describe in my book, along with beings that was unlike your typical male. I would say the dream gave me the perfect outline as I researched the book of Enoch and the fallen angels.

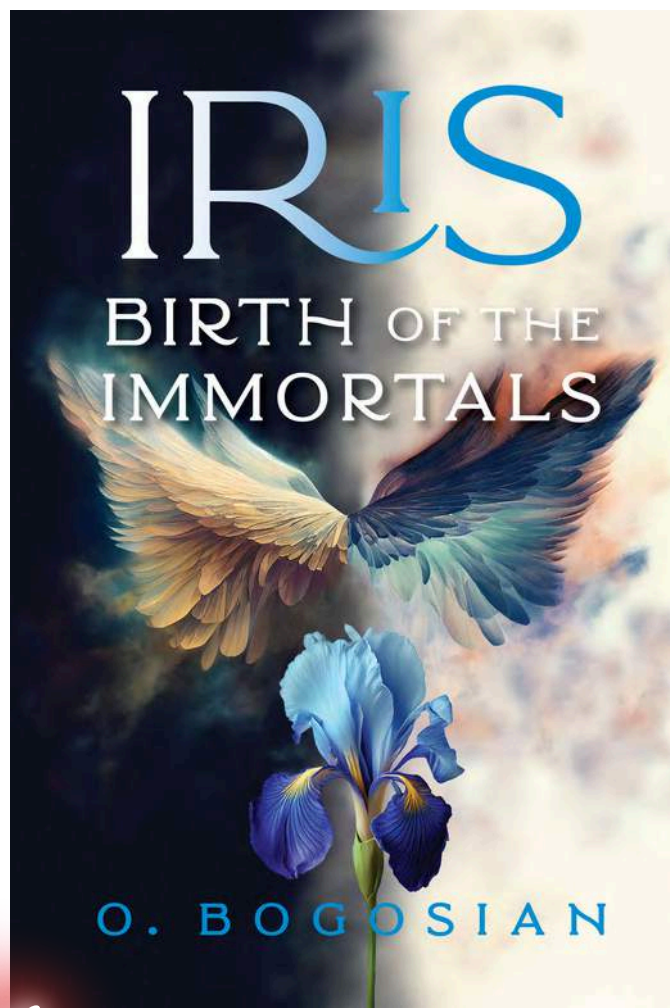
WHAT DRAWS YOU TO EPIC FANTASY?

Epic fantasy has always been my favorite as a teenager and now. I used to go to Barnes & Noble with my brother and we would head straight towards the fantasy books! I think for me, it is the room to allow your imagination to venture into possibilities that we are not exposed to in our daily lives. The draw is the adventure you go on with the characters as they are tested not only in their physical and mental abilities but the challenges they face in what is truly right or wrong.

YOUR COVER IS SO PRETTY! WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

My designer Kelly Carter did a great job in creating what I was looking for. I wanted a cover that represented not only my main characters but also the overall theme of the book. For me, my favorite part is the wings behind the Iris flower. The blending of when light meets dark is not really defined and that was just beautiful to see on the cover.





What happens when the earth collides with the heavens? Through the rip in the ethereal world, more celestial beings tumbled to Earth, tempted by the daughters of Adam, and took sides in the battle for good and evil. One of the dark prince's acolytes, Samayaza, wishes to bring otherworldly retribution to the one who exiled him from the celestial realm. Mortal sisters Iris and Boria are coveted by the glorious fallen spirits, trapped in a dark tapestry of promises and agreements made by their mother's father, Turian, ages ago. The time has come for debts to be collected.

Kidnapped and brought to the temple built by Turian, surrounded by the glorious and transcendent Gregori, Boria succumbs to their unearthly seduction immediately. Iris is suspicious, remembering her paternal grandfather Enok's warnings and lessons about the motives of the fallen spirits. The Gregori can manipulate mortal thoughts and feelings and have unparalleled, vast power that's no match for any mortal. The Gregori charm and magnetism are beguiling, yet something malevolent looms over Samayaza's temple. Iris senses it in every fiber of her earthly body, but the sun has yet to ascend on the horizon and illuminate the serpentine truth behind Samayaza's unholy vision.

A gorgeously written, mythical epic about fantastical beings brought down by earthly lust to live and die among us in an era of epic chaos.

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A unique fantasy filled with romance, immortal beings wrapped around a slow-burn love triangle.

This story is just as pretty as its cover! I am always drawn into stories that are about earth and heaven colliding (Could be because older YA had a lot of angels and stuff so I am always looking to find even better angels books.)

We meet sisters Iris and Boria who find themselves in the center of heaven crashing to earth. I had fun reading about the sisters, the dash of romance and that's just the start.

For me, the best part of this book is the lush, vivid writing style and the world-building. First, the descriptions painted not only the characters but the setting and world itself. I didn't feel lost or craving more history; the author did a great job of not info dumping.

This mythical fantasy of worlds colliding, family, mortal, and love in this marvelous story.





BRENDA POPPY

interview



GLASSFISHPUBLISHING

GLASSFISHPUBLISHING



TELL US A BIT ABOUT VIOLET SKIES IS ABOUT.

Violet Skies tells the story of Violet Innova, a young woman who finds herself alone on the streets of a spaceship without a single memory. With no money, no home, and no concrete links to her past, she does the only thing she can: She finds a way to survive.

A year later, Violet has built herself a life. She's found a job as a lounge singer, moved into a tiny apartment with an eccentric man named Mouse, and forged a small but mighty family. She still can't remember who she was, but she begins to see who she could be.

When Violet is invited to sing at a senator's party, however, her carefully constructed life begins to unravel. Someone uses the party as cover to commit a gruesome murder, and all the clues point toward Violet. She has no choice but to run, leaving her friends behind to live a new life as a fugitive. Yet Violet is far from alone. Two strange new allies stumble into her life, tagging along as she seeks to solve the murder and clear her own name. As they investigate, though, Violet begins to suspect that the murder is part of a far more sinister plot – one connected to the mysteries of her own past. What follows is an epic adventure full of action, intrigue, and a hint of romance as Violet fights to discover the truth and find her-self in the process.



YOUR BOOK IS SET ON A SHIP. WHAT WAS THE BEST PART OF WRITING A STORY SET ON A SHIP?

I love world-building, and I've found that a space colony like the Echelon can make for a rich and vivid backdrop. It offers endless opportunities for creativity, allowing me to explore technologies and social structures and norms – as well as the mysteries of space itself!

As Violet travels across the Echelon, you get to see the true challenges of living in space, like the isolation and lack of resources, but you also get to see the creative ways in which humanity adapts. It was a fun process to develop this unique setting and color it in with all the details.

Ultimately, the ship almost becomes its own character within the book. It has its flaws and dark secrets, but it's also an incredible place, full of technology and life. It's broken yet beautiful – just like Violet herself.



WHERE DID YOUR LOVE OF SCI-FI COME FROM?

As a kid, I was captivated by fantastical worlds and imaginative stories, whether that was on TV, in a movie, or in the pages of a book. Authors like Douglas Adams and Ray Bradbury shaped my fascination with sci-fi storytelling, showing me it could be whimsical and funny or poetic and thought-provoking.

I always knew I wanted to be a writer. When I was a kid, I was captivated by fantastical worlds and imaginative stories, whether that was on TV, in a movie, or in the pages of a book. Authors like Douglas Adams and Ray Bradbury shaped my fascination with sci-fi storytelling, showing me it could be whimsical and funny or poetic and thought-provoking. I always knew I wanted to be a writer.

Violet Skies can be purchased on Amazon (<https://www.amazon.com/Violet-Skies-Dystopian-Brenda-Poppy/dp/1735618195>). You can find out more about Brenda and her books at www.glassfishpublishing.com or by following Glass Fish Publishing on Instagram or TikTok (@glassfishpublishing).



WHAT ARE THE THEMES YOU WANTED TO EXPLORE IN YOUR BOOK?

Violet Skies delves heavily into the themes of found family and self-discovery. On a broader level, it also deals with class warfare and what can happen when you have this huge imbalance of power.

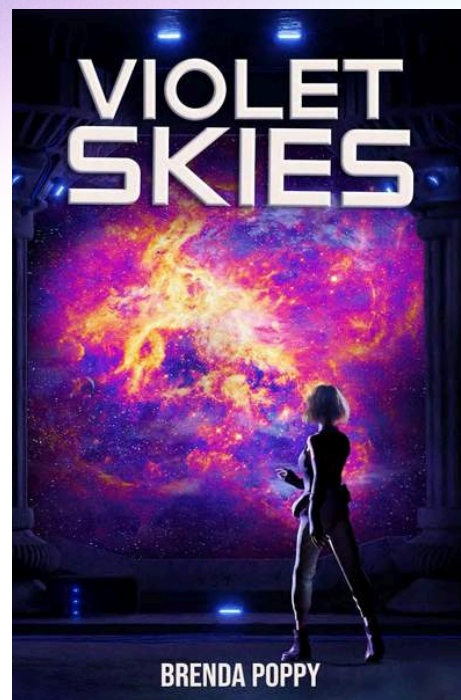
As an amnesiac, Violet is almost a blank slate. She doesn't have a built-in community or a family to support her. So she begins to build her own tribe. In the process, Violet finds pieces of herself, pushing her further down the path of self-discovery.

As the story progresses, though, Violet is thrust outside of her comfort zone and comes to realize that there's a darkness inside of her. As she confronts the fragments of her past and the complexities of her own identity, she's forced to decide what kind of person she wants to be.

Meanwhile, there are simmering tensions in the city itself. The money – and the power – are possessed by a select few, and their decisions aren't always in the best interests of the rest of the ship. As Violet investigates, she's forced to confront this imbalance, along with the people who perpetuate it.



One year ago, Violet Innova awoke aboard the Echelon with no memory of who she was or where she'd come from. Armed with nothing but a name, she built a life, a family, and a home. When the murder of a prominent senator rocks the ship – and Violet is tagged as the primary suspect – her carefully constructed life begins to unravel. Forced into hiding and branded a fugitive, Violet must do everything in her power to find the true killer and clear her name. Alongside a pair of strange new allies, Violet quickly discovers that something far more sinister is at play – and the key to stopping it might just lie in her own past. Join the epic adventure as Violet fights to solve the mystery, save her friends, and find herself in the process.



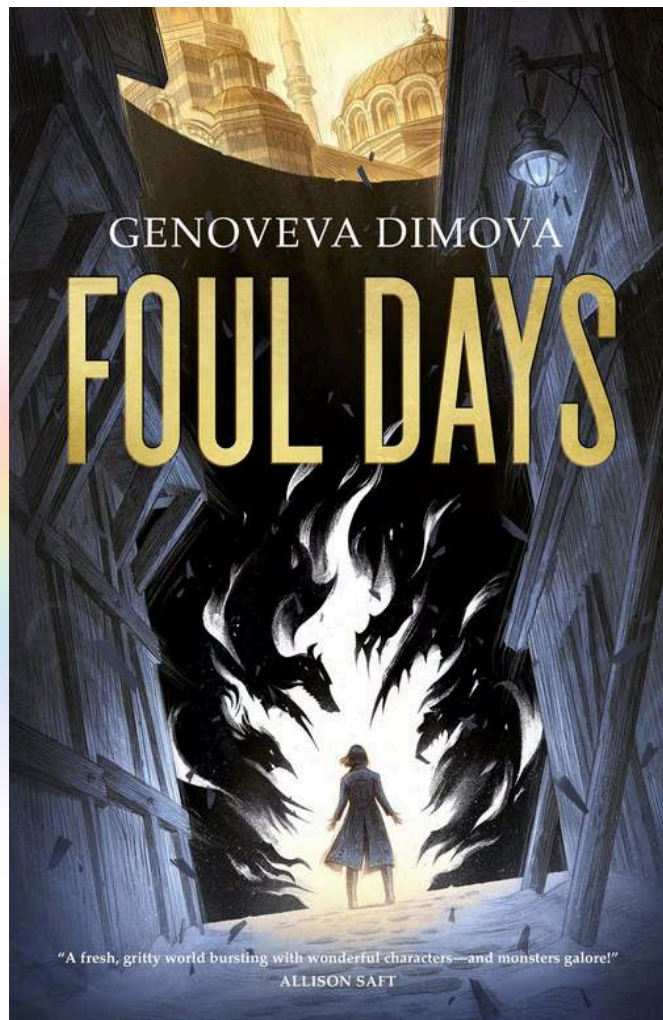
A dystopian mystery of action, exploring the ship life, and the meaning of power.

So I'm not going to say too much about the plot of this as I went in knowing very little and had a blast! This book is entertainment! Action around every corner will keep you hooked. Violet is a neat character to see the world through as she is dealing with memory loss and right away you know that this is going to matter. We learn she works at a club and things snowball from there. I liked these side characters. They not only helped flush out Violet but the world overall. Even though this is set way in the future there are things that are similar and things that are way different but because of the author's style, I never felt lost or confused.

The author's writing is easy to get lost in. I am looking forward to the next book and seeing Violet's story continue to play out. I am looking forward to learning more about this world.

A whirlwind dystopian that will keep you guessing.

REVIEW



The Witcher meets Naomi Novik in this fast-paced fantasy rooted in Slavic folklore, from an assured new voice in genre

As a witch in the walled city of Chernograd, Kosara has plenty of practice taming rusalkas, fighting kikimoras, and brewing lycanthrope repellent. There's only one monster Kosara can't defeat: her ex the Zmey, known as the Tsar of Monsters. She's defied him one too many times, and now he's hunting her. Betrayed to him by someone close to her, Kosara's only hope is to trade her shadow—the source of her powers—for illegal passage across the Wall to Belograd, where monsters can't follow.

Life in Belograd should be sweet, but Kosara soon develops a fast-acting version of the deadly wasting sickness that stalks shadowless witches—and only reclaiming her magic can cure her. To trace her shadow, she'll have to team up with the suspiciously honorable detective investigating the death of the smuggler who brought her across the Wall.

Even worse than working with the cops is that all the clues point in a single direction: one of the Zmey's monsters has found a crack in the Wall, and Kosara's magic is now in the Zmey's hands.

The clock is ticking, the hunt is on, and Kosara's priorities should be clear—but is she the hunter or the hunted? And in a city where everyone is out for themselves, who can Kosara trust to assist her in outwitting the man—the Monster—she's never been able to escape alone?



Fast-paced fantasy of a witch fighting for herself in a world that is against her.

I knew very little about this book other than it's inspired by Slavic folklore, a walled city, monsters, and the main character can't defeat her ex. Going in only knowing that made this journey even more of a wild read for me.

I liked that we jumped right into the action and got to see how Kosara handles herself in intense scenes, it made me think, "ok, anything can happen and Kosara will do what she must." She's a vulnerable character who also has so many flaws. She soon meets Asen. I was surprised by how much we as readers get to know Asen; I'm going to let you discover and learn about him.

This is a debut and Genoveva Dimova surprised me, this did not feel like a debut. This story feels full, that's the best way I can explain it. The plot, character, and magic system all feel well thought out, well rounded. I enjoyed the writing style and will for sure be keeping an eye on Genoveva Dimova and any future books. There are some themes/content warning that some readers may need, like abusive/toxic relationships, grief, and more. (Look up if needed.)

A gripping must-read, Slavic-inspired page tuner of a girl fighting to her magic, in a unique world, in this standout debut that you won't be able to put down.





GET TO KNOW

Nikki Brooke



NIKKIBROOKEAUTHOR

NIKKIBROOKEAUTHOR



Nikki Brooke is a science fiction & fantasy author and scriptwriter from Australia who champions bisexual representation in books and film. She's a self-proclaimed geek, loving science fiction, fantasy, history, and mythology, and is proud of it—which is probably obvious given the genres she writes, plus, she named her dogs Osiris and Apollo after ancient gods. Her debut novel, *Plagued Lands*, a YA Dystopian, is due for release in 2024 and has been chosen by Undisputed Films for adaptation into a feature film. Nikki's writing has earned accolades, including finalist in the 7th Annual Launch Pad Prose Competition and semi-finalist in the ScreenCraft Cinematic Book Competition. Several of her short stories have found homes in anthologies from various publishers.

A queer book you can read over & over: *The Captive Prince* by C.S. Pacat and *Heartstopper* by Alice Oseman

Go to queer author: C.S. Pacat (because of the above book - I love it so much!)

Favorite queer Creator: @capricampeau they have amazing content to help bisexuals, delivered in an entertaining and comforting way

Must have pride item: I love rings, and I adore my ring imbued with the bisexual colours, pink, purple & blue

Favorite pride quote: [Bi]Sexuality is based on attraction, not action



Paige A. Cook

FLIPTHAPAIGE



Paige A. Cook is a Romantasy author and poet. She resides in Wild & Wonderful West Virginia with her family. The wildlife and fae are plentiful in her backyard further fueling her love for fantasy. She draws much of her inspiration from anime, kdramas, and the human experience. You'll find that her work blends genres and tropes in fun and unique ways, like vampires and office romance.

Have your dream book collection but no home library or a home library but you can never get rid of a book, even if you hate it

Home library, but can never get rid of books. You can never have too many. My aesthetic is also something I refer to as cluttercore anyways, so they would just add some extra pizzazz.

Be stuck in a romance novel or a Mystery novel

Romance novel all day every day ❤️ ESP if it's a Romantasy.

Read a book with a cliffhanger, or Read a book with a heartbreaking ending

Give me heartbreak. Make me cry. I love when books make me feel emotions intensely.

Be stuck on a very long plane with no books but when it ends you get three new books or Be on a very long train ride but you get books but they are all low ratings

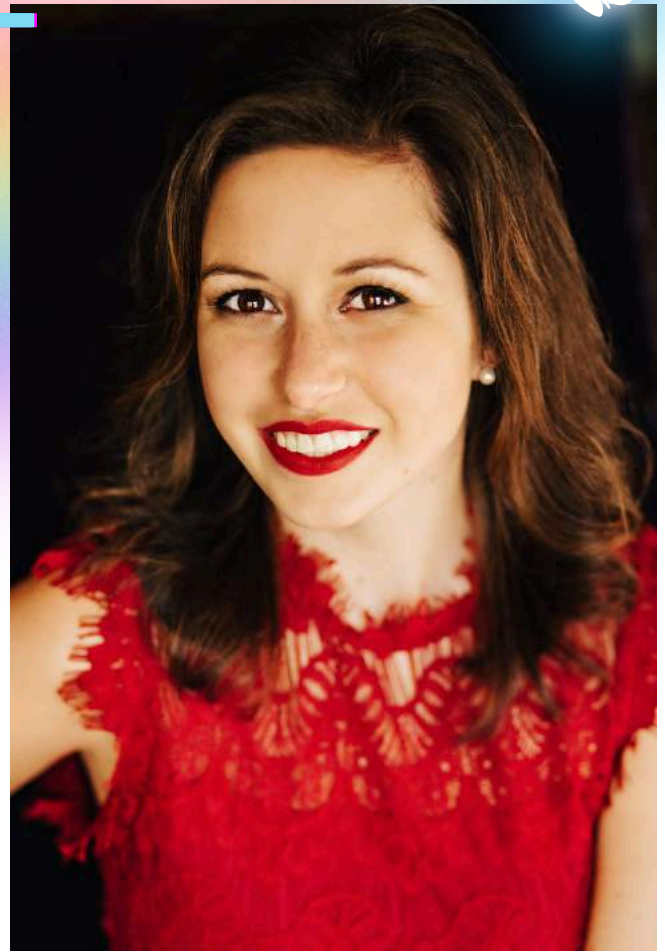
Plane with no book—I'm crafty so I'm sure I could crochet or something instead. Or write more books of my own. Fun fact: I've never been on a plane before!

K.A. LINDE

interview



AUTHORKALINDE



CAN YOU SHARE WITH US WHAT THE WREN IN THE HOLLY LIBRARY IS ABOUT?

The Wren in the Holly Library is loosely inspired by Beauty and the Beast. It's a forced proximity heist novel set in an alternate day NYC where humans live among monsters. A street thief steals from the wrong monster, and instead of killing her on the spot, he offers her a job to work with him.

WHAT DREW YOU TO SET YOUR BOOK IN NEW YORK?

The story was always a New York City setting in my mind. But as I developed the magical system, each master magical user is territorial and structuring it around Graves being the most powerful user in the city, that it's his city, really felt impactful to me. I also loved to think about what it would look like for monsters to take over a densely populated area and how that would be different there than anywhere else in the country.

YOUR MAIN CHARACTER, KIERSE, GETS TRAPPED IN A LIBRARY. IF YOU WERE TO GET TRAPPED IN THE HOLLY LIBRARY FOR THREE DAYS, WHAT ARE THREE THINGS YOU WOULD HOPE YOU HAVE ON YOU?

Snacks, my cell phone, and a notebook to write down all my ideas!

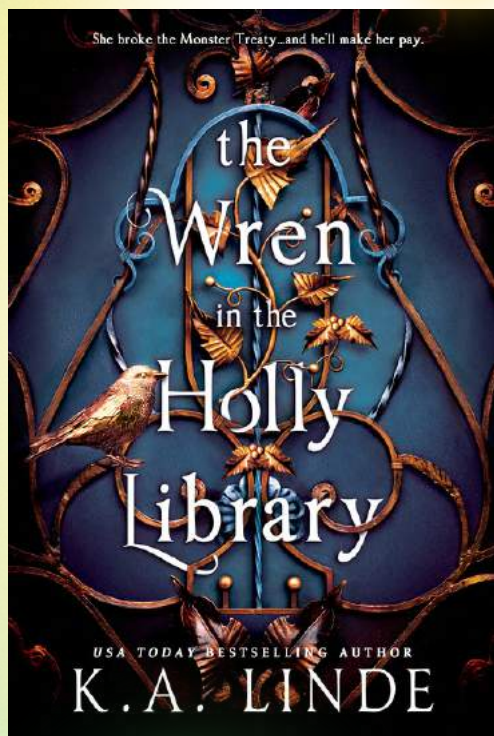
YOUR COVER IS SO PRETTY. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

Thank you so much! I absolutely love the cover that was designed for this book. It was like they took what was in my head and imported it onto the screen. My favorite part is the dark gate against the blue background. It really sets the tone for the novel.



WHAT DO YOU DO TO HELP YOURSELF KEEP WRITING?

I've been a full time writer for almost twelve years now. So I sit down to write everyday Monday through Friday from when my son goes to daycare until he gets home. That routine really helps keep me focused, but also plotting with my friends before I sit down so that I know exactly what I'm walking into in any scene keeps me focused.



Some things aren't supposed to exist outside of our imagination.

Thirteen years ago, monsters emerged from the shadows and plunged Kierse's world into a cataclysmic war of near-total destruction. The New York City she knew so well collapsed practically overnight.

In the wake of that carnage, the Monster Treaty was created. A truce...of sorts.

But tonight, Kierse—a gifted and fearless thief—will break that treaty. She'll enter the Holly Library...not knowing it's the home of a monster.

He's charming. Quietly alluring. Terrifying. But he knows talent when he sees it; it's just a matter of finding her price.

Now she's locked into a dangerous bargain with a creature unlike any other. She'll sacrifice her freedom. She'll offer her skills. Together, they'll put their own futures at risk.

But he's been playing a game across centuries—and once she joins in, there will be no escape...



The Wren in the Holly Library is an adult fantasy romance of monsters in the library mixed with secrets.

Set in an alternate New York City we meet Kierse a gifted thief who takes the risk of breaking into the Holly Library. Where she meets a charming man. Both characters like to keep stuff to themselves. Locked into a dangerous bargain now Kierse must do all she can to stay alive.

I do have to say I love the idea of this story, it was a bit different than what I thought it was going to be but I still enjoyed it. Not the best fantasy I have ever read but it was fun. Not every book is going to make me think or anything but I liked parts of the drama, love the idea of the library, and the romance was fine.

Will I read more if this book is part of a series? Yes, as reading is for escaping and this book gave me that.

Secrets, charming characters, and a dangerous yet beautiful library all wrapped up in mysteries.



GREEK MYTH RETELLINGS

JANE

MCGARRY

interview



JANEMCGARRYAUTHOR

AUTHORJANEMCGARRY



PLEASE TELL US A BIT ABOUT A HOLDER OF HOPE?

A Holder of Hope retells the Greek myth of Pandora from the feminine perspective. The original myth depicts Pandora as merely a woman of blind curiosity. The gods need someone to release evil into the world, they create Pandora for that purpose, and she immediately does their dirty work, shouldering all the blame. I chose to portray her as a more dimensional character—inquisitive, thoughtful, and determined. The story allows the reader to see her growth over time from daughter, to wife, to mother, and the fulfilling life she builds with her husband, Epimetheus. When the gods wield her as a pawn in their power games, she risks losing all she holds dear. Leading to the central question, can the resolve of one woman overcome the power of the gods?

HOW DID THE IDEA OF THIS STORY COME TO YOU?

I've always found the Pandora myth interesting and one detail in particular. After Pandora opens the jar unleashing every manner of evil, all that remains inside is hope. This always led me to question—how did hope get in the jar in the first place? Is hope meant to be another evil or the last bit of good left? I wanted to write a story that explores the role hope plays in the human experience. In times of trouble, should we consider hope the greatest of comforts or the cruellest of gifts?

THIS IS A RETELLING. IS THERE OTHER MYTHOLOGY STORIES YOU WOULD BE INSPIRED TO WRITE A RETELLING FOR?

There are so many women in mythology painted as victims—Andromeda, Danae, & Cassandra to name a few. I would love to create an account that gave any of them agency in their own story. I think the feminist lens is the reason retellings became so popular. The narrative no longer relegates woman to the role of helpless damsels in need of rescuing, but as whole people, making them more relatable to the reader.

YOUR COVER IS PRETTY. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

In the original myth, hope remains in the jar in the form of a dragonfly. In some cultures, dragonflies symbolize change, the transformation over time into your true self. In others, they represent a good omen, or luck. My amazing cover designer, Keylin Rivers of Fantasy Book Cover Design, included some subtle dragonfly details on the cover and they are my favorite part.



JAMES LOGAN

interview



JAMESLOGANAUTHOR



CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT THE SILVERBLOOD PROMISE?

The Silverblood Promise follows lapsed aristocrat Lukan Gardova, who – thanks to a series of bad choices, not least a duel that went wrong – has fallen on hard times. When Lukan learns that his estranged father has been murdered, leaving a cryptic message written in his own blood, Lukan resolves to uncover the mystery behind his father's death. His quest leads him to Saphrona, fabled city of merchant princes, where secrets and dangers lurk in every shadow. The deeper Lukan delves into the mystery, the more he finds himself embroiled in a deadly conspiracy that threatens the entire city.

I think it's important to write what you love, and I've always loved fantasy and adventure stories, so it seemed natural to combine the two. Then it was just a case of throwing all my favourite things into the mix: swordfights, narrow escapes, sassy sidekicks, wit and banter, magic and monsters and mysterious artefacts. All the good stuff!

WHAT DID YOU LEARN DURING THE WRITING PROCESS?

A great deal. The Silverblood Promise is the first book I've ever written all the way through. Stephen King once said the road to hell is paved with adverbs; for me it's paved with abandoned manuscripts. Because I'd never finished a manuscript, I'd never properly learned how to write a book from start to finish, and I hadn't had the chance to properly learn what my own process is. Subsequently, the book took a long time to write – three years for the first draft, and another couple of years to revise it.

It was really hard work, but I learned so much in the process – that writing every day only burns me out, that the first draft doesn't need to be perfect, that thinking time away from the screen is just as important as the writing itself, and that ultimately you just need to keep going and believe in your ability.

When I'm asked for advice, I tend to give three tips: ignore most advice you read online, discover what works for you, and finish what you start. If you follow those tips and keep working hard, you won't go far wrong.



WHAT IS YOUR MOST UNUSUAL WRITING HABIT?

Interesting question! Maybe the fact that I keep a spreadsheet where I note down the exact length of every writing session, how many words I wrote, what the book's running word count is, and my general thoughts on the session. I started doing this because I wanted to try and analyse my own writing patterns – do I have a particularly productive day of the week, etc. I'm not sure I've gleaned much from it, but I like logging my progress, because it's satisfying seeing the word count grow. The most important thing about writing is just putting the effort in and pushing through, and it's nice to have a record of the efforts I've made. It's the effort you put into a session that matters, not the end product. If you deliver the former, then over a period of time the latter will look after itself.

YOUR COVER DREW ME IN WITH THE OVERLOOKING CITY VIEW. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

I actually briefed the cover and led the art direction myself, as I was originally going to self-publish The Silverblood Promise. Fortunately when the book was picked up for traditional publication, my publishers loved the cover as much as I did and were happy to keep it. I love the entire artwork, really. Jeff Brown, the illustrator, was brilliant to work with and he somehow saw the vision I had in my head and put it down on paper (or on screen, as it were). I love the adventure vibe, which was something I wanted to capture. It's deliberately a little retro, capturing the sort of feel you might have seen on 80s/90s fantasy novels, and I think it portrays the reading experience perfectly.



CAN YOU SHARE WITH US A FANTASY BOOK YOU FEEL HAS HELPED SHAPE THE AUTHOR YOU ARE TODAY? AND WHY?

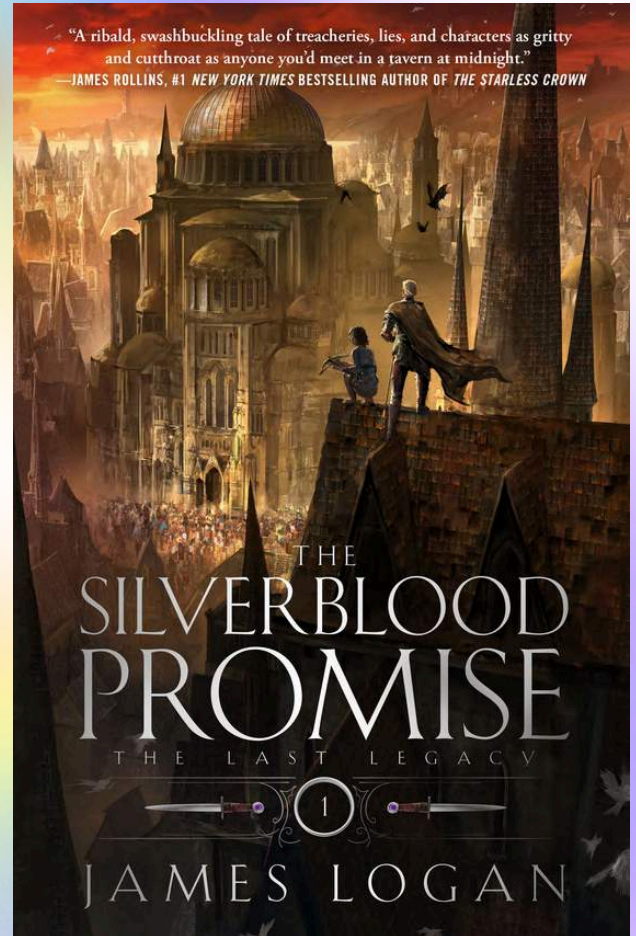
The Lies of Locke Lamora by Scott Lynch was a fundamental influence on me and my writing (Scott actually provided a cover quote for The Silverblood Promise, which I'm still thrilled about). I remember reading Lies in 2006 when it was first published, and it blew me away. I remember thinking "Wait, you can write fantasy like this?" It opened my eyes to the fact that fantasy didn't have to be about heroes on an epic quest to defeat a dark lord, that self-serving rogue characters could be protagonists (and made for far more interesting characters), and – perhaps most importantly – that fantasy could be funny. The sharp wit and banter on display in Lies really resonated with me, which I imagine is why humour is so prevalent in my own work.

Lukan Gardova is a cardsharp, academy dropout, and—thanks to a duel that ended badly—the disgraced heir to an ancient noble house. His days consist of cheap wine, rigged card games, and wondering how he might win back the life he threw away.

When Lukan discovers that his estranged father has been murdered in strange circumstances, he finds fresh purpose. Deprived of his chance to make amends for his mistakes, he vows to unravel the mystery behind his father's death.

His search for answers leads him to Saphrona, fabled city of merchant princes, where anything can be bought if one has the coin. Lukan only seeks the truth, but instead he finds danger and secrets in every shadow.

For in Saphrona, everything has a price—and the price of truth is the deadliest of all.



An epic fantasy of family, the struggle for power, and self-discovery in this page-turner.

I don't even know where to start with this one. I knew that we followed Lukan, who is a "disgraced heir to an ancient noble house." After his father is murdered he heads to Saphrona, a fabled city in search of answers. But once Lunka gets to the city the storyline goes in a completely different direction than what I thought it was going to. There were parts of this story that I loved and others that felt off in a way. I do have to say that I always wanted to read and wasn't bored.

Lukan and the other characters go through so much. There is a character and a plotline that I don't want to talk about as one it's a main part of this story and two it was a part of the story that surprised me when reading.

I liked learning about the world and hoping to learn more about it. This book is 528 pages long but I read it so fast, it didn't feel long, or over-packaged. It was easy to sit down and get lost in.

The writing style is definitely my favorite part. I will be reading more from this author if it's book two or a completely different book, I'm hooked on the writing style. This book does have some heavy topics like death, adult content, and more so please look up the content warnings if needed.

A gorgeous fantasy that will pull at your heartstrings, and make you root for a character whose whole world is turned upside down.

REVIEW

love C.A. CHAPLIN interview

is love

CYNTHIA.A.CHAPLIN

TELL US A BIT ABOUT SILVER STAR, RED DRAGON.

Silver Star, Red Dragon follows Cúraníel, an elvish healer who rejected her society for a solitary, peaceful life. Everything changes when a fight between shapeshifting drakes lands the most feared enemy of the elves in her lap: the Red Dragon, Rafael. Despite her reluctance to save a mass murderer, she heals him. Much to her shock and dismay, during the process she realizes he is her soulmate. Rafael denies the concept, but cannot deny himself, and they slowly form a bond. There is much more to the legendary killer than meets the eye. Eighty-four years later, Cúraníel's life upends again when Celebel washes up at the foot of her hill in dire need of healing. An elvish king, he tells her of strange attacks on their people, and begs for her help. Worse, Celebel is also her soulmate. And Rafael, like any dragon, does not like to share. First of a trilogy, Silver Star, Red Dragon delves into themes of healing trauma, societal expectation versus individuality, neurodivergent main characters, love among immortals, accepting sexuality in unique ways, nothing is as it seems on the surface, and navigating jealousy and possessiveness in a culture of permissive nonmonogamy.

I READ ON YOUR INSTAGRAM THAT "SILVER STAR, RED DRAGON" IS A LOVE LETTER TO CLASSIC FANTASY". WHERE DOES YOUR LOVE FOR CLASSIC FANTASY COME FROM?

I grew up in a small town in the deep south that didn't make much space for anyone who was a little different, so I lost myself in books. I read "The Lord of the Rings" and "The Chronicles of Narnia" in second grade, and fantasy became my escape. From then on, I plowed through everything that had a dragon on the cover.

WHAT IS A TIP YOU HAVE ON WRITING STORY WORLD BUILDING?

Trust your readers to connect the dots. Rather than a big infodump, try to immerse yourself in your characters' experiences. What would make sense for them to react to in their daily lives? There are a lot of things we take for granted as common knowledge, and you can illustrate your world entirely through showing in this way. For example: If you wouldn't normally sit around and think about where your breakfast came from in great detail, your characters won't either. If this breakfast would be strange and special to the reader, give sensory details and the character's reaction instead. It makes worldbuilding much easier to sprinkle in, and it feels more natural to the reader.



CAN YOU SHARE AN INTERESTING FACT OR DETAIL ABOUT YOUR BOOK THAT ISN'T IMMEDIATELY OBVIOUS?

I tried very hard to dismantle the western, Judeo-Christian approach to sexuality and gender roles. Rafael, my morally charcoal dragon shifter, is the inexperienced one due to trauma. He is also demisexual and touch-averse in specific ways. Cúrael is very sexually assertive, and she has zero shame about it. Celebel frequently wears skirts and his more significant past romantic relationships were with men. Pansexuality is the norm among the elves, and their culture is one of permissive nonmonogamy.

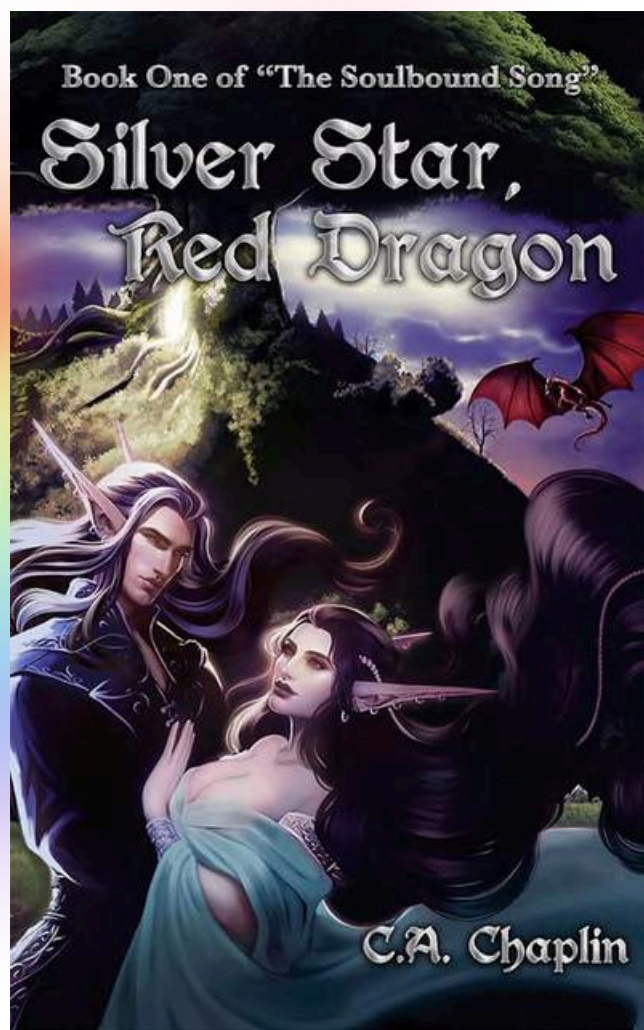
I SAW THE VIDEO OF YOUR HARDBACKS, THEY ARE GORGEOUS. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

Thank you! I'm so in love with my cover it's hard to pick just one thing. Prokaryarts LLC is the cover artist, and they did an incredible job working in small details that pertain to the story or worldbuilding. The pearls in Cúrael's hair, her single gold earring, the light from inside the Great Tree, the crystals at the base of the hill, and of course, the Red Dragon himself approaching in the distance – these are all little hints.

It is rare among elves to have more than one soulmate. To find one in a shapeshifting drake is unheard of. Even if they face opposition at every turn, at least the three of them have... well, not each other.

Self-exiled elvish healer, Cúrael, faces the ultimate balancing the needs of one soulmate, the charming, elvish king, Celebel, with the possessive rage of the other, the legendary Red Dragon, Rafael. Once their greatest bane, when a new war threatens the very existence of the elvish people, they must rely on Rafael's might to survive.

Celebel wants Cúrael to conform and the Dragon to cooperate. Rafael wants to murder Celebel and steal her away. Cúrael wants them both to stop fighting. They must all brave the horrors of war, the disapproval of society, and the unresolved trauma of one big, angry drake.



An adult fantasy that will sweep you off your feet and leave you lost in a world full of drama, action, mystery, and romance.

Silver Star, Red Dragon is 637 pages and I somehow have no idea where to start! First I can't believe this is a debut. I was blown away by that fact.

We meet and follow Curaniel, Rafael, and Celebes who all bring something to this story. They are interesting to learn and follow throughout this book. If you know me I am a worldbuilding and detail reader so going into heavy romance fantasy sometimes is missing but not in this one. We get the complex worldbuilding from history to legends to powers and species; not once did I feel like info was being cut or taken from me and I ate it all up. Seeing as I loved the worldbuilding you know that means I am going to enjoy the writing style! C.A. Chaplin knows how to write not only the setting, and building blocks of a flushed-out world but also the tension if it was between characters or kingdoms, charming characters; it's the character's emotions.

The only weakness that stood out to me was that I wish the side characters were a bit more, I wanted more personally from them. There is some content warning so if that is something you need please look them up. A fantasy for lovers of worldbuilding and romance mixed together in a book of twists and turns.

REVIEW

SKinterview HORTON



AUTHORSKHORTON



AUTHORSKHORTON1



SHARE WITH US WHAT THE CONCEALED IS ABOUT?

The Concealed follows eighteen-year-old Cate to college in England. Yet, when she arrives, nothing is quite what it seems. Even her own identity. Unbeknownst to Cate, a prophecy deems her as destined to defeat a ruthless enemy in a magical land, placing a target squarely on her back. Someone on campus is stalking her, and a narrow escape sends her through a mysterious portal, assisted by two irresistible boys. Yet the fantastical new world is even more treacherous with rival kingdoms and imminent war.

Falling in love wasn't part of the plan, but what's a girl to do? A fresh start was all she wanted—a few new friends in the dorms with a trusty latte in hand—not war, an estranged biological father who is king, or a star-crossed love straight out of Romeo and Juliet (hopefully without the dying part).

As the battle looms, Cate must solve the mystery of the prophecy and decide who in her circle is trustworthy before the place she now calls home is destroyed.



THIS IS BOOK ONE IN A THREE BOOK SERIES. DO YOU KNOW HOW THE SERIES WILL END? AND HAVE YOU ALWAYS KNOWN THAT THAT IS HOW IT WOULD END?

Thank goodness, I DO know how it will end. I don't typically follow a strict outline because I find it stifling, but it's helpful for me to understand where the story is going. I didn't originally, but after some serious brainstorming during the early writing of book two, I found my answers. And I'm excited to dive in!

DO YOU LIKE TO LISTEN TO MUSIC WHEN YOU ARE WRITING? IF SO WHAT IS ONE REPEAT RIGHT NOW?

If I'm alone, I prefer no music. However, if there is noise nearby—I write wherever I can, whenever I can—I listen to something mellow. Recently, Taylor Swift's The Tortured Poets Department is a common play. I have two teenage daughters, how could I not be a fan?



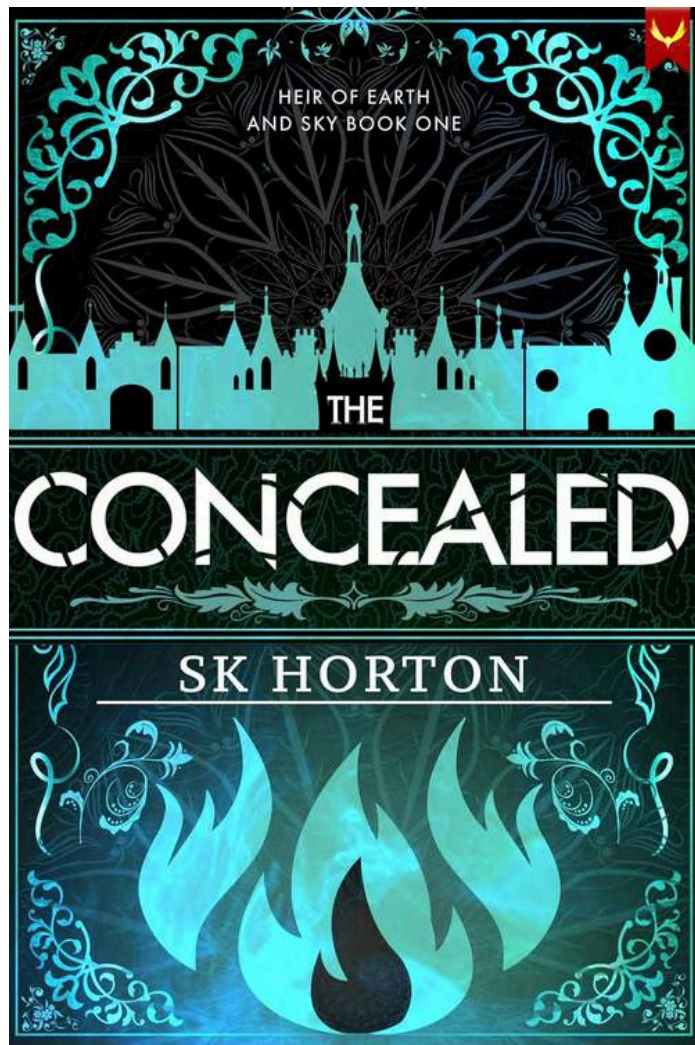
YOUR CHARACTER GOES THROUGH A PORTAL. IF YOU COULD GO THROUGH A PORTAL AND ENTER A BOOK OF YOUR CHOICE FOR A DAY. WHAT BOOK AND WHY?

I love novels from the Regency period—Pride and Prejudice, all the fantastic balls and the like. You'll see that influence in The Concealed. However, much like my main character Cate, I might be too much of an independent woman to truly enjoy it. One day would probably be enough.



YOUR COVER IS SO PRETTY. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

Thank you! I was fortunate enough to be able to give some design input to my publisher. I love the color, which they chose. The Concealed is on the lighter side of fantasy so I asked for something with brighter colors than the typical romantasy. I think it sets it apart as YA as well. They did a fantastic job.



Sometimes destiny is written. Hers was concealed. When Cate travels from Oregon to university in England, she expects her gravest dilemma to be finding coffee instead of tea, but she's got bigger problems—much bigger. At Staton University, nothing is quite what it seems. Even her own identity.

Unbeknownst to Cate, a prophecy deems her as destined to defeat a ruthless enemy in a magical land, placing a target squarely on her back. Now, someone on campus is stalking her, and a narrow escape sends her through a mysterious portal, assisted by two irresistible boys.

Yet the fantastical new world is even more treacherous with rival kingdoms and imminent war. Falling in love wasn't part of the plan, but what's a girl to do? A fresh start was all she wanted—a few new friends in the dorms with a trusty latte in hand—not war, an estranged biological father who is king, or a star-crossed love straight out of Romeo and Juliet (hopefully without the dying part).

As the battle looms, Cate must solve the mystery of the prophecy and decide who in her circle is trustworthy before the place she now calls home is destroyed.

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BEFORE

FEEL LIKE

A fast-paced fantasy YA of a prophecy & a love triangle.

Cate goes to university in England where she believes she just going to live the student life, but an unknown prophecy has other plans for her. Faced with a ruthless enemy in a magical land Cate must embrace who she is, who she can trust, and solve a prophecy's mystery.

I enjoy books where characters go to new countries, let alone a new world, and this book has both. The setting is fun with a cool magic system.

This has a classic YA feel to it, in the way that it's just easy to read, easy to get lost in, and just fun. There is a love triangle, felt that it was well done and balanced well. This does read for younger readers, so it's great for young readers who are looking to branch into fantasy.

A fun unique YA world with characters you'll root for.

HOPE E. DAVIS

interview



HOPEEDAVISAUTHOR

HOPEEDAVISAUTHOR



PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT DEMURE IS ABOUT.

Demure is an urban romantasy book with vibes similar to Twilight. The story follows 25 year old Sierra Lopez as she goes about her life as a Masters student in Dublin, Ireland. Everything changes when she has a date one night, as the man she meets is odd and doesn't quite seem like he is from this world. Although she swears he's her enemy, several chance encounters start to change her tune.

As the enemies begin to become lovers, Sierra finds herself caught up in something much larger than she expected. While Demure takes place half in this world, it does transition to a hidden fantasy world halfway through.

YOUR BOOK HAS MANY THEMES, TOPICS, AND TROPES LIKE MENTAL ILLNESS, KIDNAPPING, ABDUCTION, AND MORE. WHAT WAS THE HARDEST ONE TO WRITE ABOUT?

The hardest trope to write about: Sierra suffers from a bit of body dysmorphia, which coincides with a medical condition. This was hard for me to write because I had to revisit a lot of my own body dysmorphic thoughts that I experienced during my mid-20s. While I am proud of how I look now, it wasn't always that way, and I really wanted readers to relate while also seeing the absurdity of some of the ways Sierra sees herself.



CAN YOU SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

Currently, I am working on Bold, which is the second half of Sierra's story. It will come out December 16th, 2024. I originally wanted Demure to be a standalone, but there was too much to say. After Bold ends, I will be writing a standalone book (for real this time), and then I will return to the fantasy world I built in Demure for more interconnected standalone novels. Sierra's story ends in Bold, but she will appear in the interconnected standalones which will be the stories of major side characters. I'll be starting with Aislan, and then going from there!



WHAT'S YOUR BIGGEST WRITING TIP?

My biggest writing tip is to not give up! Writing is hard, and your result won't please everyone. Just like art, some people won't understand your book or your writing, but that doesn't mean that no one understands it. Eventually, you will find your crew, and your fans, just keep trying! Sometimes, when writing gets tough, taking a small break can help, but make sure you always go back and try again later.

WHAT DO YOU WANT READERS TO TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR BOOK?

I wrote *Demure* "for the vibes" as I wanted to create kind of an intense and unique reading experience. The first half of the book is a bit slow—but doesn't everyday life feel a bit slow? It's also a little repetitive, as everyday life is. Once the book transitions to the fantasy world, it picks up pace, which I wanted readers to feel immersed by. While this isn't a "save



the world" fantasy book, Sierra will have to save herself, and her new friends, before it is too late!

In *Demure* I also wanted to have a diverse cast. Sierra, the FMC, is latina. My grandfather is Mexican and although I didn't grow up quite the same way as Sierra did as I am one generation removed, I do speak Spanish and I included a lot of the themes (and problems) I had/observed with my own family growing up—namely when it came to religion and the Latin emphasis on always helping family—even if they hurt you and you have to put your own life on hold. It's been hard for me to break away from the "norms" growing up, which were a bit different from those of my friends, and I wanted readers to feel that as they read.

I also included LGBTQIA+ characters, as well as some information about a particular auto-immune disease. As humans we are all on our own journey through life, but when we come together amazing things can happen, and I wanted to show that in a fun fantasy setting.



GET TO KNOW

Belinda Kroll



WORDERELLA

Hi! I'm Belinda Kroll, writing and illustrating cozy fantasy, where Jane Austen vocabulary meets modern sass.

Favorite Book: Pride & Prejudice by Jane Austen

Auto buy Author: Abigail Reynolds

Dream Vacation: Anywhere with a nice breeze, shaded seating, light blanket, a book, and a cup of tea or rosé depending on the time of day.

Go to Drink: Lady Gray tea latte

Favorite color: Green

Rewatchable Movie:

Oh no, I have too many! Pride & Prejudice, Just Like Heaven, Beetlejuice, Nightmare Before Christmas, Stargar, The Fifth Element, Much Ado About Nothing...





*Craig
Montgomery*

CRAIGMONTGOMERYBOOKS



Craig Montgomery is an author of fantasy novels and lover of things that are gay and nerdy. His debut YA fantasy, *A Circle of Stars*, is an Achillean romance set in space with an astrology based magic system.

Fantasy or Romance

Tea or **Coffee**

Dark Blue Covers or Dark Red Covers

Happy Ever After or Cliffhanger

Morning Writer or Night Writer

Dogs or **Cats**

Instagram or TikTok

Spicy or **Sweet**



THIS OR THAT

NOMI PALMER

interview



NOMIPALMERAUTHOR

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT INTENSE FEELINGS.

Intense Feelings is a paranormal soap opera in a novel. It all started as a joke or a parody of soap operas in a less structured format that I posted online one “episode” at a time. I was encouraged to adapt it into a proper novel (which was a challenge!) after my readers fell in love with the dramatic escapades and characters. It took me a few years to actually work up the nerve to do it, but I think it’s translated perfectly into a novel.

It’s a lot of fun and silliness while at the same time, it takes itself very seriously. I like to say it’s “in on the joke but committed to the bit”. I tried to write it with the intention of being “literary junk food”, where every chapter leaves you wanting more. Despite its hefty size (572 pages!), most of my readers have reported back that it reads very easily and doesn’t feel that long at all.



YOUR STORY IS TOLD IN MULTIPLE POVS. DID YOU HAVE MORE FUN WRITING ONE POV OVER THE OTHER?

I love writing multiple POV in general, I think it is such an interesting way to tell a story. I love all my characters but the villains are the most fun to write from their POV because my villains tend to be unhinged whack jobs. I think my favourite part of multiple POV is withholding a character’s POV until the dramatic timing is right, often resulting in a mid-story plot twist.



YOUR BOOK HAS THEMES/TROPES OF HER BOTHER'S RIVAL, ENEMIES TO LOVERS, FAMILY FEUD, ETC. WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE THEMES/TROPES TO WRITE?

My absolute favourite trope to write is enemies to lovers. I love the tension, I love the fights that you KNOW will result in a spicy scene, I love the energy I get from two characters who don’t or aren’t supposed to like each other.

I also really enjoy forbidden love, which often goes hand-in-hand with enemies to lovers. I enjoy the conflict(s) that both tropes create, it provides lots of fodder for great plot and storytelling.

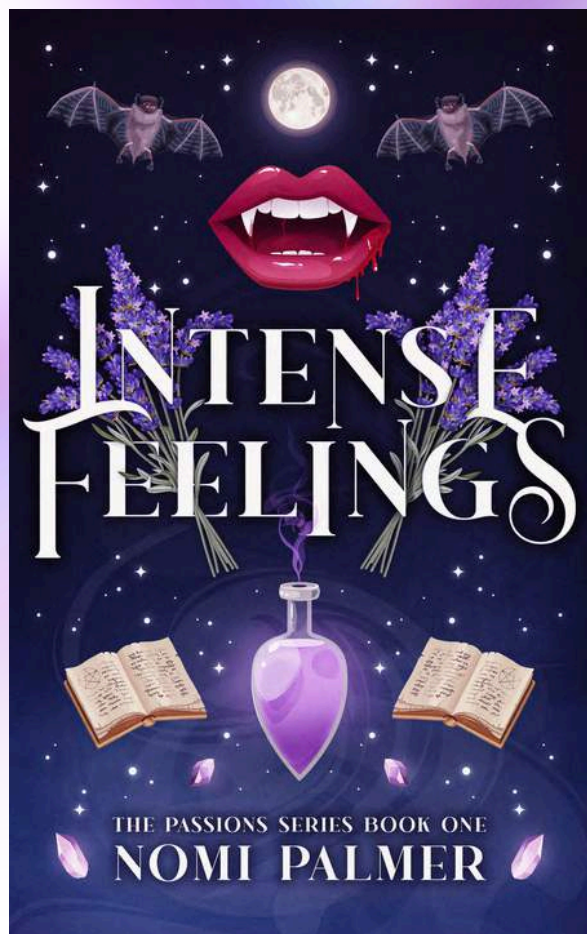
YOUR COVER IS PRETTY. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

Thank you! My amazing cover artist @rachelmcewandesigns made me this cover and she is also making the cover for book 2! My favourite part of the cover for Intense Feelings is how it makes your eye travel all the way around. The balance of images and text is perfect; it's eye catching and forces you to zero in on the title. I can't wait to see my next cover.

I READ THAT YOU HAVE ANOTHER BOOK COMING OUT LATER THIS YEAR CALLED IMMORTAL PASSIONS. CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT THAT BOOK?

Immortal Passions is a direct sequel to Intense Feelings, and as such it is imperative that you read Intense Feelings before diving into Immortal Passions.

Immortal Passions is essentially 5 novellas told in 1 story that all overlap and eventually converge into one connected plot. It takes place 26 years after Intense Feelings and focuses on the adult children of the original characters, plus new characters. The story begins when an angel, Dakota, falls from The Light without knowing why. From there, a series of supernatural events unfold, bringing chaos to Tourmaline once more.



Danger lurks in the shadows.

An eerie energy that defies explanation crackles in the air.

Tourmaline, a small but bustling city, is home to siblings Leif and Nina Callaghan, who lead happy, fulfilled lives—a stark contrast to the tumultuous existence of their rivals, Devlin and Charlotte Ainsworth.

When Devlin returns from Europe with a sinister plan for revenge, two mysterious women also arrive in town. Shrouded in an ominous darkness, their presence heralds chaos.

Leif and Nina are unwittingly tangled in Devlin's plot, which has become entwined with the enigmatic woman who only goes by "C".

Hidden away in a dusty attic, Charlotte uncovers a carefully concealed legacy that changes everything she and Devlin have ever known.

Two families, bound by unlikely love and a centuries old feud, find themselves thrust into a battle between good and evil, where ancient secrets stir and destinies intertwine.



A magical charming story of siblings, following one's heart in an overflowing dramatic romance fantasy. This is my first book by Nomi Palmer and it won't be my last! I had a blast reading this. It's over the top, flowing with wit, drama, and romance on every single page.

It's set in a small but busy city and home to siblings Leif and Nina. The characters and the drama are the stars of this book. There are multiple points of view in this book and each one brings something interesting and important to the plot. As an older sibling, I find myself drawn to books with siblings no matter what it's about. I did enjoy and like all the siblings' relationships in this book. The push and pull between them felt well done. The romantic relationships are also fun and easy to root for.

The magic is also fun; vampires, witches, and demons. Learning how it works was done in a good, for the first book in a series, without info dumping. This is just simple to gobble up. I do have to say that if you are a content warning reader, you may need to look them up before reading this.

A wild ride of a romantic drama that will keep you turning the page one thrill and kiss after another.

HEATHER NIX



BOOKSBYNIX

interview

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT MIXING UP MAYHEM.

Mixing Up Mayhem is a sort of love letter to my partner. I had always sworn I'd never write a romcom, but I have just been so blissfully happy since meeting her, that it sort of just poured out of me. I wrote a note in my phone a couple years back that said "pastry chef summons demon," and it wasn't supposed to be a cute book initially. But it just came out that way in the end and I couldn't be happier!

WHAT DREW YOU TO HAVE JACKIE BE A PÂTISSIER?

My partner is a fine dining chef, but has a background (and degree) in pastry as well! I'm a big foodie, and spend a rather ridiculous amount of my time either eating, cooking, or fantasizing about food. So Jackie being a pâtissier just made sense! I had my partner develop a recipe for the book as well, so anyone who reads it can have their own pastry moment.

YOUR NEXT BOOK WOODBORN, IS COMING OUT SOON. WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FOR YOU WRITING THIS BOOK?

The next book in the Magic and Mishaps series takes place in Los Angeles, which is near and dear to my heart as a born & raised San Diegan. I wanted to push the boundaries and go a little more monster-y for this one, because the love interest in Mixing Up Mayhem is still pretty humanoid. It's going to be a lot of fun!

YOUR COVER IS ADORABLE! WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

Thank you!!! I love the whole thing, to be honest. I wanted a cute vintage kitchen, and the artist did such a wonderful job of bringing Jackie and Vexx to life! She's doing all the covers for the series, which I'm really excited about.

WHAT PART OF THE BOOK DID YOU ENJOY WRITING THE MOST AND WHY?

The food! I know people expect me to say the spice, but to be honest the spice is hard for me!!! But one thing I can *always* write about is food. I did a ton of food-related research for Mixing Up Mayhem, and it was a blast!



ALINA COMSA



ALINACOMSAAUTHOR



ALINACOMSAAUTHOR

interview

PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT LEGE ET LACRIMA IS ABOUT.

Lege et Lacrima is a story about learning how to let people in. There are two things about this story.

1. My therapist keeps telling me to write everything that bothers me in a letter and then rip it to shreds and, in this manner, to let go of those heavy weights. I found that writing a letter doesn't help me. But I figured, what if I wrote a story? What if I put all my hurts, my pains, my truths in a story, give them fictional life and then... rise above them? So... first and foremost, Lege et Lacrima is my therapy letter.
2. I'm an avid reader. And I came of a long run of reading books where I got to know the MCs after they met, but didn't really know who were they before they met. So as I sat down and just... started writing I gave my FMC that start of the story where I got to know her, what makes her tick, what makes her hurt, what makes her happy. As much as Lege is Lalah and Cole's love story, it's also... Lalah's story of acceptance, and forgiveness, and simply self-love.

WHO'S A CHARACTER WHO SURPRISED YOU DURING THE WRITING PROCESS?

A character that surprised me was Emma. To give a bit of context, Lege was supposed to be a standalone. Maybe my one and only book. And as I reached chapter five in my first draft (things are quite different in the published book) I started outlining my characters. Writing brief descriptions, just to get to know them a little bit better. Some turned out to be MCs for the standalone that became a series in my head, some were side characters. When I wrote Emma's description I drew a blank. She was all over the place. A villain? A secondary or tertiary character? Who was she? She had plenty of potential to be redeemed. She also had plenty of potential to be "bad to the bone", and not in a fun way.

I'm a weird combination between a pantsner and a planner. - I tried to write what I WANTED, but my characters took the reins straight out of my hands and did whatever THEY WANTED. And out of all that, Emma shocked me the most.

WHAT IS A WRITING TIP YOU HAVE ON WRITING SMALL-TOWN ROMANCE?

I don't know that I have advice right now. I'm still learning the ropes of the writing process. I went into this trying to write a story for myself, never once considering I'll publish that story. And now it's out. I grew up in a small town though. And I equally loved and disliked it. I think one thing I can say for certain is... I write what I know. My raw feelings, drawing inspiration from my own experiences and a healthy dose of daydreams. I didn't try to stick to rules, in fact I found myself feeling highly inadequate once I got to know fellow indie authors and I saw HOW prepared they were, all that knowledge, all the non-fiction books they read to help hone their craft. And here I was... writing "my own feelings". I think, the only advice I feel comfortable giving is: If the reader in you demands "more, more, and more" as you write the story, you know you're onto the right path, regardless of the type of romance you're writing. So keep at it, because it's not the writer in you that's your harshest critic - it's the reader.

And maybe... don't box yourself in. I started this book thinking I can't possibly write dual POV, I can't possibly write a spicy scene (yeah, the first one I typed it with my eyes closed, beet-red cheeks, and the mother of all cringes on my face). I boxed myself in. And I'm grateful I allowed my characters to give me a proper bottom-kicking and show me that I can do so much more than I thought.



WERE THERE ALTERNATE ENDINGS YOU CONSIDERED?

No alternate endings actually - once I set on the correct path according to my FMC. There was an alternate beginning. *Lege et Lacrima* was supposed to be, as I mentioned, a standalone. But also... an enemies to lovers. And the MMC was supposed to be someone else. But Miss Alana took a look at him and went all "You're a good looking dude and all, but you're not for me." So I ended up deleting ten forced chapters where I tried my damndest to get her to like him. She wouldn't HEAR it, but kept forcing daydreams on me of a different dude. I only found out the name of my MMC twelve chapters in. - How's that for a plot twist?



THIS IS YOUR DEBUT. WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THIS WRITING JOURNEY?



I've learned that the indie Authors community and the readers community are absolutely amazing. I would've given up long before now if it weren't for my fellow authors Jayme Louise and Bella Reves. And this is not me trying to "hype" them up. This is me actually acknowledging I would've given up long before now if it weren't for them. My long long nights of freaking out (hey, time zones actually serve us well since at any given time, at least one of them is awake to put up with me) and them supporting me and encouraging me. My amazing readers... I've no words. I love my book, I truly do. But for some twisted reason I never expected others to love it too. They overwhelm me in all the best ways. And one last thing is: I don't think there's a clear defined process when it comes to writing. (I say with only two written books). But from my limited experience, each book has its own needs. The best thing I can do is learn as many tools as possible and use what is needed when it's needed. Things that worked for *Lege*, didn't work for *Vanilla*. Things I thought were easy for *Lege*, were impossible to do when it came to *Vanilla*. At least one thing worked for both of them: I may know how to write a book, but I definitely DO NOT know how to market them. Some consistency is good tho', no? :D



VAELA & MICAH

interview



DRAGONPROSE



VAELAANDMICAHBOOKS

SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU GUYS WRITE?

We're Vaela (She/They) and Micah (They/Them), a pair of queer co-authors writing primarily dark fantasy stories set in non-colonial, anti-orientalist settings and focusing on queerness, diversity and monstrosity. Our brand of dark fantasy is a little different from the mainstream of "everything is horrible, everything is miserable, everyone dies all the time." We try to write worlds and stories that are vibrant, good and beautiful despite peril, danger and death, and queernormative worlds where people get to be their authentic selves without having to fight for acceptance, or the right to live for who they are. Our writing focuses on marginalised people exclusively, POC, disabled people, physically and mentally diverse characters, and often features themes of mental health, found family and community.

WHAT DOES THE WRITING PROCESS LOOK LIKE BETWEEN YOU TWO?

M: Vaela does most of the writing, and I'm there to help with the structure and go through what she's written to help fix stuff.

V: I need you to really understand just how much your presence helps. I, Vaela, am a poor disabled queer with ADHD and an executive function disorder. Body doubling helps me focus soooo much. And splitting tasks helps me conserve my spoons for the day, of which I never have enough. In large part that just involves decision making, because it really helps to have someone just sign off on a tentative choice you've made.

But yes, I sit there typing 24/7 and Micah makes sure it's actually somewhat on track.

ALL OF YOUR COVERS ARE COLORFUL AND PRETTY. WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT YOUR COVER?

V: I really like having them illustrated.

M: Yeah, I feel like illustrated covers just add so much and give you an idea of the characters you'll get to deal with. They're just very pretty and I like seeing the emotions of the characters in relation to one another.

V: I am a very big "abstract cover hater." I just don't get why you wouldn't want to see people when reading about people—

M, interrupting: I'm not as much of a hater, but I definitely feel more with illustrated covers than ones that just show objects or ones that show pretty designs.

V: I am enough of a hater for both of us. Continuing on from what I was going to say, artists are really cool. Not to knock abstract or still life art, but anatomy is really cool and artists who master it are amazing. I also love getting to actually have butch lesbians of colour on the covers because we need more of them.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM CO-WRITING?

M: I think the thing I've learned while observing and being part of this is how authors think and write their prose, how they come up with those. I think I'm better at it now from watching Vaela do it.

V: I've not learned much in the way of the actual writing, but something that I carry with me always: People are so vastly diverse it is impossible to put into words. The ideas sprung from the life experiences and attitudes of other

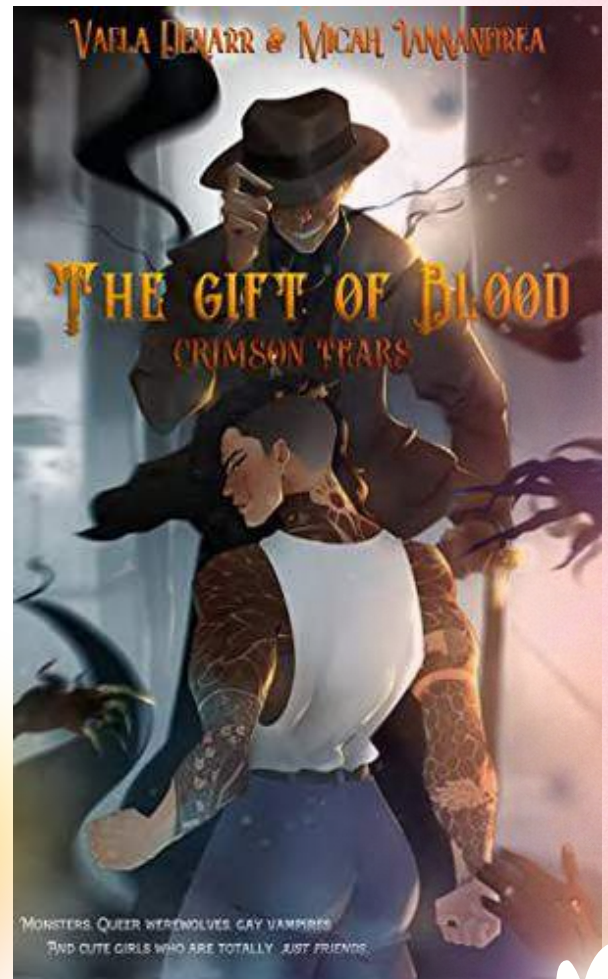


people can be so different from mine, so deep and so valuable. They can express the same feelings I want to express in a completely different way. It's opened up a whole new desire for community, and I really want to start co-writing with more people from marginalised backgrounds. I'm no longer content with just writing, I want to bring the different cultural experiences of others to the foreground, share in them, add to them, uplift them. I think that's a pretty valuable lesson.

SHARE WITH US WHO ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTERS FROM ANY OF YOUR BOOKS IS AND WHY?

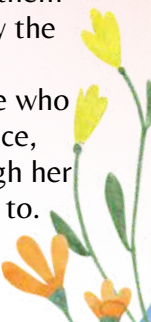
V: We get two because there's two of us. Micah, go!

M: I feel like this is cliché, but Nomi (She/Her) from She Who Earned Her Wings. She started out as a



very important DnD character to both of us, and I'm very happy to see her grow and evolve into the Nomi we know and love. She's the reason I met Vacla, and I was able to because of her help Vacla with their struggles, and I'm really happy about that. Her journey is a little different than when we started with her, but she's a good bean and I love her.

V: I've had to think hard about this, and there were four other candidates, but I have to go with Mare (She/Her) from the Stars, Hearts and Dreams series. It's still being written, but she shows up in She Who Brought the Storm so I count her. Mare is an embodiment of love in the way that I feel it. Love that is completely unbound, untethered, love without limit that wants to be shared. She supports her wife and her wife's girlfriends unquestioningly. She feels joy for them in their separate relationships. She is in a way the beating heart of the polycule, and she is so powerful, so strong, and so very kind. Anyone who meets her is inevitably touched by her presence, and the world is left better than it was through her gentleness and might. She is an ideal I aspire to.



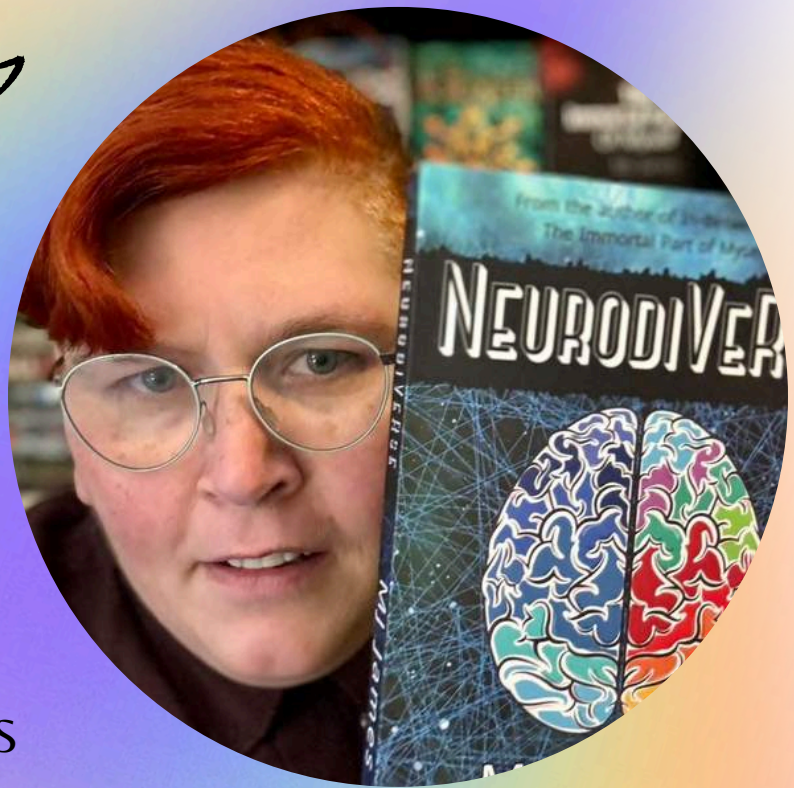
THE
HIT
BOOKS



MJ
James



MJ_JAMES_WRITES



**Listen to an Audiobook & go on a hike or
listen to a podcast during a storm**

**Go to your favorite pride event or see a
drag show**

**Read only traditional books for a week or
indie books only for a week**

**Read only bright-colored cover books for a
month or only read dark-colored covers for
a month**

LOVE
is
LOVE



XAN VAN

interview



XAN_WRITER

ROOYEN

PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT SILVER HELIX IS ABOUT.

Silver Helix is a queer adult aetherpunk novel blending elements of Finnish mythology with cybertech in a dystopian Helsinki where the war between magical Ethereals and humans has left the city scarred and literally bleeding.

I READ ON YOUR INSTAGRAM THAT YOU HAVE TATTOOS. ARE ANY OF YOUR TATTOOS INSPIRED BY YOUR BOOKS?



In a way, yes, the rowan tree on my left calf was inspired by my love of rowan trees and what they represent in Celtic mythology, which is also what inspired my novel *By the Blood of Rowans*. I also have a lemur on my right new, which was initially going to be a bush baby until I wrote my first Sauuti story, *The Heretic Harmonic*, which featured lemur-like magical creatures hence the lemur tattoo. Also, lemurs are awesome.



WHEN YOU FEEL STUCK IN YOUR WRITING, WHAT DO YOU DO TO HELP GET UNSTUCK?

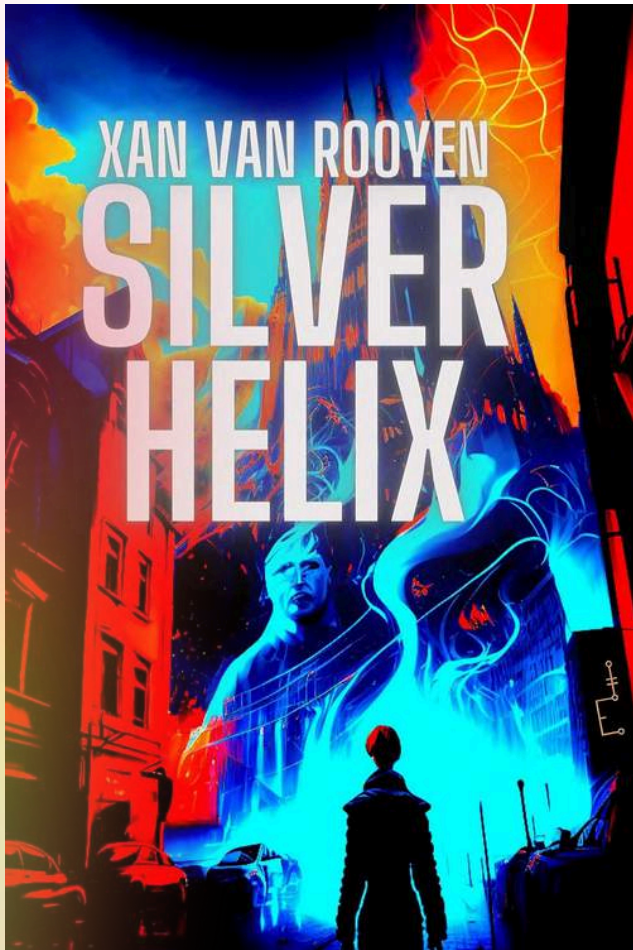


I used to struggle a lot with this and my go-to was always music and it often still is. I usually feel inspired and manage to find my way out of a creative rut by absorbing amazing creative works by others - especially music and music videos. Imagining a story to go with certain lyrics or video images, has often resulted in a fresh deluge of story ideas. But another and often more effective tactic I use nowadays I learned from the songwriter-producer Crywolf (Justin Philips) in the course on creativity he developed. While his methods focus on how to write songs, his free-writing exercises helped tremendously to unlock ideas and rejuvenate my creative thinking and so that's what I use these days if I'm feeling stuck.

If you want to try this method yourself, set a timer for 10 minutes and just write. Don't think, write. Don't edit, just write. Write nonsense, write whatever weird thought pops into your head, vent - whatever you do just don't stop writing for ten minutes and if you find a flow, when the timer goes off just ignore it and keep writing. Do this every day for 30 days and you will have so many ideas to mine for stories!

WHAT'S A QUEER BOOK YOU THINK MORE PEOPLE SHOULD READ AND WHY?

Oh, this is so hard! Does it have to be just one?? I have so many recommendations for lesser known queer books. Honestly, I think everyone should be reading more indie and self-pubbed queer books by queer authors because these have some of the most authentic rep. If I had to pick just one author to recommend though, it would be Cat Hellisen. While they're technically a hybrid author with Big 5 publishing deals, my fav books by this author are their self-pubbed titles: Empty Monsters and Thief Mage, Beggar Mage. Cat's books are dark and lush with incredible world-building, their characters are raw and unapologetic, and themes quite subversive at times so I highly recommend checking out Cat Hellisen's novels if you enjoy slightly more off-beat fantasy.



On the surface, the city of HelsInc appears to have recovered from the war waged between humans and Ethereals, but beneath the scars, the city seethes. The remains of magic festers, causing mutations in human DNA which could give humans Ethereal power-not that the HelsInc government would ever let that happen. The Legion resists, ripping out their neurochips and protesting the mandatory gene therapy for humans with cryptomine in their DNA.

At only 19 years old, Omyr Talvinen isn't ready to play parent to her kid brother, but with her mom in prison on trumped up charges and her deadbeat dad AWOL, she's left with little choice. Forced to risk her freedom to pay the rent, Omyr finds herself at the mercy of a pair of cyborg soldiers when they catch her red-handed stealing nanites from a cyberware Salon. But the synths' powers don't work on Omyr, and they discover they all share a common memory that they must get to the root of. Wanted dead by the government, Omyr and the renegade soldiers turn to a rebel Legion group with dreams of resuscitating dead magic for help. With the clock-ticking for the synths, Zee-Five and Omyr are forced to confront the secrets of their past and a dark conspiracy that'll shake the blood-soaked foundations of the city.



A high-stakes tech world that will have you intrigued to see what will play out next. I have been in the mood for an Adult Science Fiction and I couldn't be more happy that I read Silver Helix by Xan van Rooyen. Not only is it fast-paced, but it's thrilling with twists and turns.

We are dropping in right away with tension and action, but I didn't feel lost. The author does a good job of informing you while also keeping that threat and intention rolling along. The world feels different and well thought out.

I had fun not only following these characters or learning about the world but what I think I enjoyed most was the author's way of keeping me hooked, what's ifs, the guessing, and the omg moments. I will be keeping an eye on Xan as I want to read more!

A dystopian of unraveling secrets, and characters to root for in a high-stakes tech world.



HALLI

mini-interview

STARLING



HALLISTARLING

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT WHAT YOU WRITE AND A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF.

I'm Halli Starling, a queer author and librarian. I used to say I write queer romance, and while that is still true, I've expanded this in the past few years to include writing queer stories and characters. Romance is often a part of that, but not always. I'm from the Midwest in the US and was one of those library kids; if you couldn't find me, I was usually at the public library, nose buried in a book. Those librarians I met when I was a kid taught me so much about the value of books and stories, and they inspired me, left me wanting to do the same for kids who came into the building. I worked in public libraries for about 12 years and then changed industries, but I still work with books.



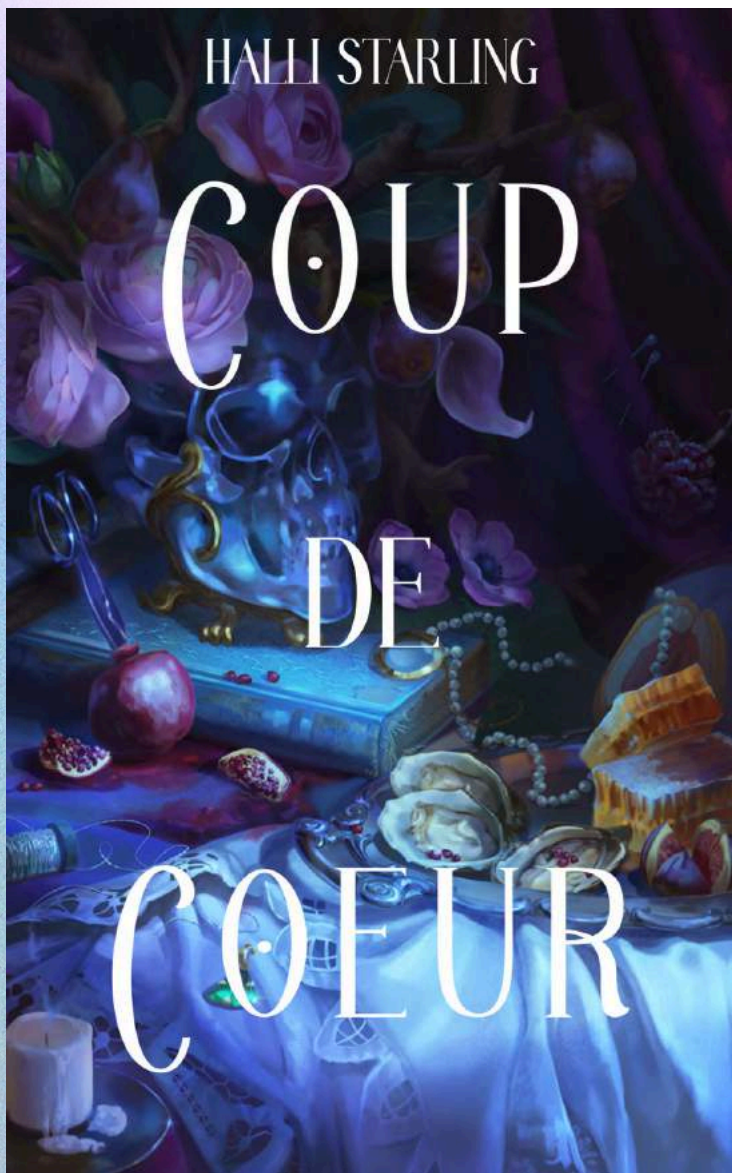
I SEE THAT YOU ARE A CO-HOST OF THE HUMAN EXCEPTION PODCAST. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE PODCAST?

Absolutely! HEX started as an idea between myself and two friends, who I met playing D&D online several years ago. We're all really curious, nerdy people and really interested in a wide variety of topics, so we decided to start telling each other stories we researched. We brought Courtney, our fourth member, in a few years ago. We're headed into our 4th year of podcasts, so our back catalog is pretty large at this point. Topics are super wide ranging, everything from mythology and cults to weird animals and stories lost to history.

WHAT WAS THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU LEARNED DURING THE WRITING PROCESS?

That I can write fantasy! WILDERWOOD, my debut book, could easily be categorized as "light" fantasy, but writing in-depth, researched fantasy felt like a hurdle I couldn't leap. My newest book, COUP DE COEUR, is historical fantasy, set in 1899 in New York City, in an alternate version of our world where magic is common and convenient, but no one knows where it comes from or what it is truly capable of. I so enjoyed writing every bit of that book, so much that I turned it into a trilogy.





g ll a

A queer historical fantasy/romance set in a version of 1899 New York City where magic is common and convenient, *Coup de Coeur* follows the journey of three men whose fates are tied to the seemingly sudden appearance of a strange, possibly sentient, grimoire.

Calix Addington, Earl of Batherton, has a complicated relationship with his friend and former classmate, Lawton Adler. Lawton's tendency to attract, and often cause, trouble leaves Calix sometimes holding the bag (which definitely happens). Calix is also harboring a secret – he's an Oracle, like his mother, and in a world where small magic is meant for aesthetics and convenience, larger displays of magic are frowned upon, sometimes illegal, and very much what the church and several important organizations fear.

When Calix is stuck with a strange book after Lawton's shady dealings go wrong one spring morning, he takes shelter in Ethaniel Harkness's magical tailoring shop. Calix and Ethaniel know each other as customer and tailor, but Ethaniel's kind heart won't let Calix stay in danger. As Calix hears the strange book speak in his mind, Ethaniel contacts his old flame Aubrey Lavigne. Aubrey's expertise with magical objects as the curator for the *Magnificus Collectio*, an archive hidden behind a tourist trap museum, will be key to understanding what this book truly is.

Magic, love, lust, fear, and danger run rampant as this strange book becomes the catalyst for a much larger plot conducted by a secret sect known as The Golden Order. With The Golden Order giving chase to retrieve the book, Calix, Ethaniel, and Aubrey's lives tangle and they must flee the city to separate Calix from the book, shake off their pursuers, and find time for their burgeoning attractions.

A phenomenal queer fantasy in an alternate New York City with romance, magic, and spellbound journey,

Another queer fantasy is anyone surprised... I didn't think so but what surprised me was how I feel for this book. It swept me away into its magical world. What drew me in rather than it was just being queer and fantasy but the author got inspiration from the real-life queer history of New York City. The mash-up of city and magic is well done. I liked the balance that the author has between the city setting and the magic setting.

The author, Halli Starling, does a great job building a backdrop and teaching the reader about the magic system. It's a wide range of magic from tailoring, healing, inanimate objects, etc. Everything is a part of the character's life & plot; and not an event that they must do to get to the next plot point. Please look into the content as there are very dark and heavy topics talked and covered about.

A book cover that's just as beautiful as the story within; a vivid, magical adventures, and a love story you can't help but root for.

MEL E.

interview



MEL.E.LEMON

LEMON

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT VIOLET MOON.

Violet Moon is a sapphic, friends to lovers slow burn with werewolves and a bakery set in an artsy mountain town.

Violet Moon started because one night at a party I told a friend, “what if I wrote a book where werewolves ran a bakery?” I really enjoy paranormal romance, but I wanted a story where the werewolves were queer and where they did normal, human stuff like have jobs and drink coffee with friends and just happened to also be able to shift into wolves.

WHAT DREW YOU TO SET THIS STORY AT A BAKERY?

I’ve always been fascinated by people who can bake well because I certainly cannot. I watch baking competitions and know all the lingo, but I can’t bake to save my life. So, having the book include a bakery was a bit of wish fulfillment.

YOUR CHARACTER SERAPHINE HAS A SWEET TOOTH. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS SERAPHINE'S FAVORITE SWEETS, AND WHAT IS YOURS?

Seraphine loves the tarts at the pack bakery — those little works of art — but she also always has some store-bought cookies on hand (she keeps some in her room at all times). If it’s sugar, she’s into it.

As for me, I love ice cream, but if we’re going for baked goods, it has to be macarons.


YOUR BOOK HAS A SLOW-BURN ROMANCE. WHAT IS A WRITING TIP YOU HAVE ON WRITING A GOOD SLOW BURN?

Slow burns are delicious when there’s so much build up, tension, and moments where they almost figure it out and get together. For me, there needs to be enough of all that so when the characters finally do get together, the reader is like, “FINALLY!” I think that’s the joy of a slow burn and if an author can create all that, it’s going to be so much fun.


YOUR COVER IS GORGEOUS! WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

The artist, Gio, did such an amazing job! It’s so hard to pick any one thing I love because I could stare at this cover forever and never get tired of it. If I had to pick, though, it’d be between the look in Sera and Parisa’s eyes as they look at each other or the way the wolves are nuzzling in the background.






A slice of life sapphic friends to lovers slow burn with werewolves and a bakery




Seraphine's days are filled with fresh coffee, fruit tarts, and doing her best to be the Beta her pack needs. But when Sera discovers she has feelings for Parisa, her best friend and pack Alpha, she decides to bury those feelings for the sake of the pack. (After all, what's a little secret pining between friends?) Strong feelings can't stay buried forever, though, and when they cause her to act rashly, Sera risks losing everything, but could gain so much more.



A slow-burn romance of werewolves, a bakery, and learning to open your heart.



The sweeter the sugar of a book will steal your heart. This cozy queer romance will melt you. We start by meeting Sera and Parise. Sera is Beta to the pack leader, Parise. This is a story of learning to follow your heart and fighting for what you live, on a backdrop of the cutest bakery. Some parts of this book made me smile and made us want to stay cozy all day. This is a great calming, sweet story with a dash of drama and high stakes. I read this book in one day as I couldn't stop writing it. I had to keep going to see the play out between Sera and Parisa and it couldn't be any cuter. I also was interested in the tension that was building between the other werewolf packs.



Mel E. Lemon is a character-driven writer. I felt connected to the characters, they are well-rounded and flushed out. The cover reflects this story, so if the cover looks like something you would like then read this.

A charming queer slow blooming romance of werewolves running a bakery.





ROGBA PAYNE *interview*



ROGBA.PAYNE

SHARE WITH US A BIT ABOUT THE DANCE OF SHADOWS.

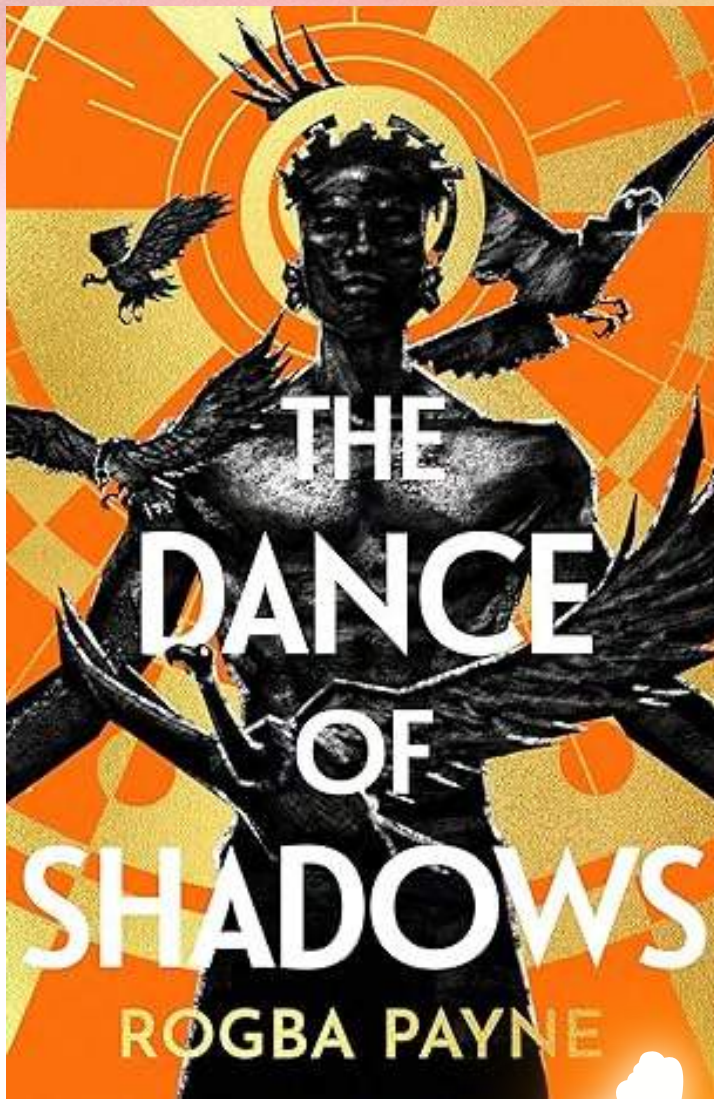
The Dance of Shadows is a story that has its roots in African spirituality and mythology. It follows the story of a musician called Rumi (short for Irumide) who lives in a nation under foreign rule. Despite his dog-rough childhood, Rumi has dreams of playing his drums on the biggest stages around. Through dedication, daring and a good dash of luck he finds a path to follow his dreams but one deadly night changes everything - when a godhunter called the Priest of Vultures attacks, Rumi loses all he holds dear. Wrecked by fear, depression and shame, Rumi has to face up to a daunting destiny to become a Shadowwielder – people able to create weapons from their shadows.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE READERS TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR STORY?

One of the first lines in the book is 'In this life, it is important to know the truth about yourself. It helps to resist the lies.' - I think that line sits at the centre of the Dance of Shadows. I have always felt that self-investigation and discovery is an essential part of living a better, more holistic life. This feels especially true in a modern, social-media driven world, where we are overwhelmed by roles that society pushes us to play. You might have been told your entire life that you are not very clever, or strong or hard-working; but sometimes these things are simply not true. It is far better to know yourself than to prove yourself and I hope that after reading this book readers see the value in finding their own deep truths. I hope that the Dance of Shadows encourages readers to be gentle with themselves while at the same time avoiding all the tainted shortcuts that society tells us hold the truth about our personality.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM WRITING THIS BOOK?

I learned so much! I learned about the publishing world and what it takes to exist within it. I learned about myself, my culture and my own creativity and how writing is such an essential part of who I am. I learned how to take criticism and use it as a tool to improve. I learned about charms, curses and gods that exist within the rich tapestry of West African spirituality. Most of all I learned how good it feels to truly go for something, simply because it is something you are passionate about. All of these things have changed me forever.



YOUR COVER IS GORGEOUS! WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR BOOK COVER?

The colours! I think the bright yellows, oranges and gold juxtapose beautifully with the darkness of Rumi and the vultures. I think it also reflects a theme which is deeply African - darkness in the midst of vibrancy. Danger - even in the blazing hot sun. I love everything that went into the making of the book cover and I am grateful to everyone involved; the cover artist Mayowa Alabi (@shutabug) most of all. A phenomenal job all around.

CAN YOU SHARE WITH US A BIT ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE WORKING ON NOW?

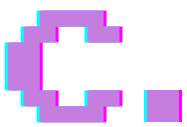
Well, I just finished the first draft of the sequel to the Dance of Shadows, which I am so in love with. I am also working on a sci-fi heist/prison break story which I am calling The Emperor Gene. It is set in a dystopian near future world where prescription drugs have caused mutations that have given most of the population special powers and the rest are normies who are part of an underclass dominated by activist drug dealers. It draws from two of my favourite worlds 'X-Men' and 'the Wire'. The Emperor Gene. It is set in a dystopian near future world where prescription drugs have caused mutations that have given most of the population special powers and the rest are normies who are part of an underclass dominated by activist drug dealers. It draws from two of my favourite worlds 'X-Men' and 'the Wire'.

“ I LEARNED ABOUT MYSELF, MY CULTURE AND MY OWN CREATIVITY AND HOW WRITING IS SUCH AN ESSENTIAL PART OF WHO I AM. ”

WHAT'S A QUESTION YOU WISHED YOU'VE BEEN ASKED IN AN INTERVIEW BEFORE, WHY? AND ANSWER SAID QUESTION.

A question that I wish I had been asked in an interview before is this - What is your favourite under-appreciated novel? I've always looked forward to answering this because it would give me an opportunity to talk up one of my favourite novels - The Ember Blade by Chris Wooding. That book is a triumph in so many ways that I am still a little confused as to why it doesn't have a higher billing in the SFF space. It is new blood for tired veins and refreshes every classic trope that you thought had no life left. More importantly - to me anyway - the Ember Blade speaks with more nuance and intelligence about colonialism and culture than any other book I have read in the last decade.





mini-interview

ROCHELLE



C.ROCHELLE_AUTHOR



PLEASE TELL US ABOUT WHAT YOU WRITE.

I write “love-is-love” romance, in the paranormal, monster & sci-fi (superheroes x villains x aliens) genres. This has included MM, MMF, MFF, and Why Choose (formerly known as reverse harem) all the way up to twelve mates! I do write the stray “straight” but my characters are usually queer in some capacity, and I feel honored to write a variety of stories and experiences my readers can relate to. My writing style is casual, but beneath the humor and banter are complex worlds, twisty plots, a diverse cast, and enough darkness and emotional ruin to keep things interesting. And the spice gets SPICY, so consider yourself warned. (I also have in-depth Content, Tropes, Kinks and Triggers lists on my website: C-Rochelle.com)

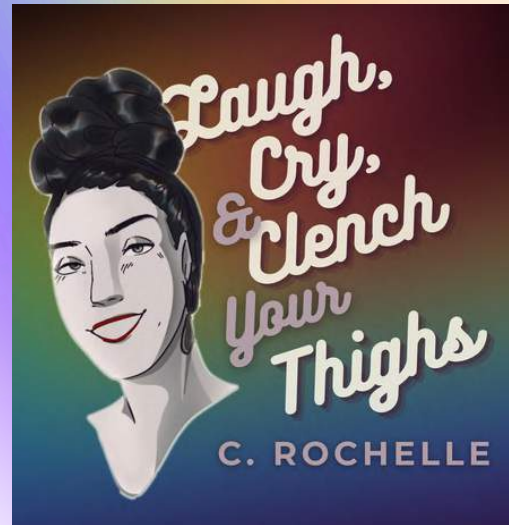
YOU ENJOY SCI-FI AND ROMANCE. WHERE DOES YOUR JOY OF SCI-FI AND LOVE COME FROM?

Honestly, I don’t read much sci-fi and my first movie in that genre was Mel Brook’s Spaceballs, so... that will tell you everything you need to know! Next Gen was on at dinner every night, but Star Trek wasn’t really my thing, and I didn’t watch the original Star Wars trilogy until high school. I enjoyed them enough (and am currently Mandalorian obsessed), but what I prefer in any form of entertainment are genre-mashups, with plots that keeps me guessing, romance on the steamy side, and a good dose of naughty humor (camp is even better!). The Fifth Element is the perfect example of what I mean. On a related note, my dad was a huge comic book/graphic novel fan. He let me read Frank Miller’s The Dark Knight Returns and The Dark Knight Strikes Again at probably way too young of an age, and we loved watching Batman movies together (the Michael Keaton and Christian Bale ones, specifically). Over the years, I’ve discovered Love and Rockets, The Watchmen, Sin City, 30 Days of Night, V for Vendetta, 300, and The Boys and have a love/hate relationship with the Marvel cinematic universe, but there’s just something about the way comics (and the related shows/movies) have this ability to explore deeper topics alongside suspenseful plot, intense character growth, and flashy visuals... it’s addicting and pure magic.

CAN YOU TEASE A BIT ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON NOW?

My latest release was Earth Boys Are Easy, a superhero x alien MM romance, and the first spin-off to my popular Villainous Things superhero x villain MM romances (which start with Not All Himbos Wear Capes).

Up next is the fifth book in the main Villainous series. It’s called Rabble: End Game, is set at the wedding of our superhero + villain MCs from book 1, and will feature POVs from all the main characters from the series (plus some we haven’t heard from yet - which means there will be FF alongside the MM). I’m aiming for a late summer release, and plan to make it as joyful, unhinged, kinky, and queer as fans have come to expect!



Photos: illustrator Kristin Lemonde/@lemonade_doodles on the Himbos special edition cover and the Earth boys cover





AURA MARQUEZ

mini-interview



AURA_MARQUEZ_AUTHOR

PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU
WRITE!

I write urban fantasy. My book is about a queer, autistic, Chicana vampire who's turned against her will at 40.

“WRITING IS THE EASIEST
PART WHEN YOU'RE AN
INDIE AUTHOR.”

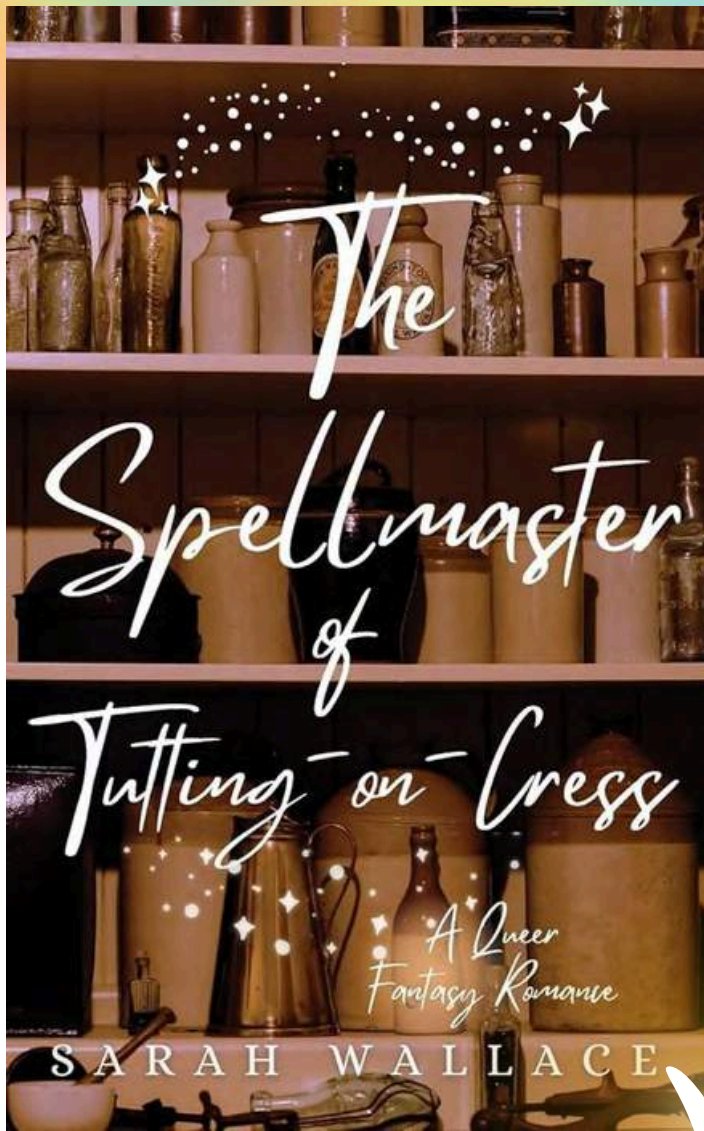
WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM
YOUR WRITING JOURNEY THUS
FAR?

Writing is the easiest part when you're an indie author. I love writing but I hate editing, publishing, social media advertising, trying to get my book noticed on different platforms. I also work full time so at times it all seems impossible. I've needed to learn to be patient with myself. For instance this month was really tough personally and I've done no publicity so I've sold very few books. At the beginning this would have killed me but I'm learning to live with the fact that sometimes I can't do it all.

CAN YOU SHARE WITH US WHAT
YOU ARE WORKING ON?

I am working on book 2 of The V Chronicles entitled Eternidad. I am also writing a scifi stand alone for an anthology project and I have 2 stand alone books that I will write after Eternidad is done. One is scifi and one is urban fantasy.





You can't orchestrate true love...can you?

Spellmaster Geraldine Hartford has everything she could want - a successful spell shop and close friends and family - but she's still waiting on her own swoon-worthy romance. Her friends think their matchmaking efforts are helping, but it's the tall, handsome stranger in town who immediately catches Gerry's eye.

Basil Thorne's life has turned upside down. After his father's death, he's found himself uprooted from Bath to become the head of a family he barely knows. Overwhelmed by responsibilities, not to mention the clamor of Tutting-on-Cress locals wishing to befriend him - only the lovely spellmaster with a twinkling smile seems to soothe Basil's heart.

And he's not the only one who's noticed...

Soon it seems as though everyone in Gerry and Basil's lives is determined to match them up. But Gerry is waiting for the surefire spark of romance and Basil is waiting until his life settles down.

They may be perfect for each other, but it will take some meddling - and a bit of magic - to bring them together.

This book is the fifth installment in the series Meddle & Mend. It can be read after Dear Bartleby or as a standalone.

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A cozy fantasy of a woman who wants to find true love, and a man who trying to put back the pieces after his father has passed, wrapped in a magical world.

I'm starting to think that Sarah is magic, they are sweet and their books are a delight! I have read so many books by them and every single one has been four stars or higher, that hardly ever happens for me. The Spellmaster Tutting-on-Cress has cast a spell over my heart when reading I didn't want it to end. So much that when I had 20% left I would only read a little bit each day to stretch it out so it wouldn't end.

I love Geraldine and Basil. I love all the couples in this world. It starts with the heartache of Basil's father who passed away. We see how that unfolds, the grief he and his family is going through. I love the bonding between him and his siblings. Basil's siblings made me want to hug them and fill them up with cookies and milk. They are sweet, charming, and oh-so funny. While Geraldine wants to keep her shop and career. She wants to find true love and not just to get married for states. We get to see the relationship blooming for Geraldine and Basil and it's nothing but adorable.

If Sarah's name is on a book I am going to read it. I love and have joy telling people about her queer norm book worlds, their writing is easy to read while pulling on my heartstrings may it be because of sweet moments or sad, they are nothing but talent.

Be swept away in this queer norm cozy fantasy, with family drama, following one's heart and magic in a book you won't want to end.





interview JARED PECHACEK



JAREDPECHACEK

TELL US WHAT THE WEST PASSAGE IS ABOUT.

When the Guardian of the West Passage died in her bed, the women of Grey Tower fed her to the crows and went back to their chores. No successor was named as Guardian, no one took up the fallen blade; the West Passage went unguarded. Now, snow blankets Grey in the height of summer. Rats erupt from beneath the earth, fleeing that which comes. Crops fail. Hunger looms. And none stand ready to face the Beast, stirring beneath the poisoned soil.

The fate of all who live in the palace hangs on narrow shoulders. The too-young Mother of Grey House sets out to fix the seasons. The unnamed apprentice of the deceased Grey Guardian goes to warn Black Tower. Both their paths cross the West Passage, the ancient byway of the Beast. On their journeys they will meet schoolteachers and beekeepers, miracles and monsters, and very, very big Ladies. None can say if they'll reach their destinations, but one thing is for sure: the world is about to change.

HOW DID THIS IDEA COME TO YOU?

One day I asked myself “what if there were an epic fantasy about someone walking down a hallway?” Initially, the eponymous passage was just supposed to be an upstairs corridor in a big house, but the story started to sprawl and sprawl. And yet, in the end, it still is essentially an epic taking place in a hallway.

WHAT ARE THE THEMES YOU WANTED TO EXPLORE IN YOUR BOOK?

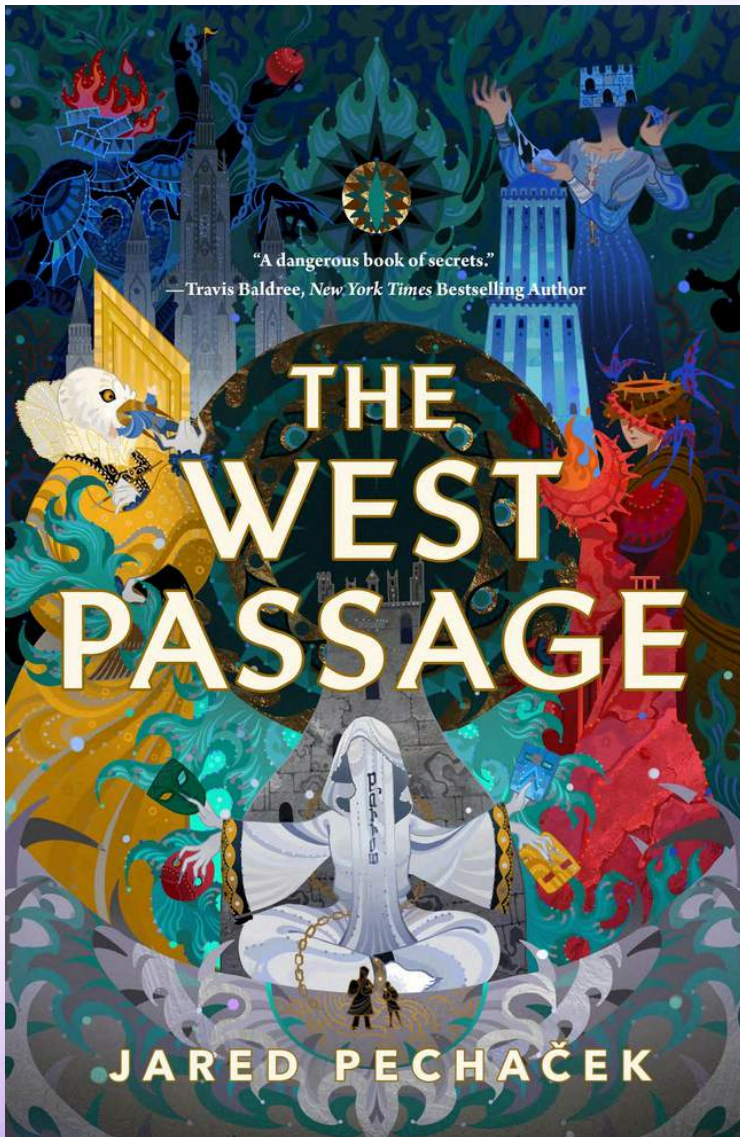
Power, gender, religion. The setting of *The West Passage* exists to be ruled: we never see why or when the palace was founded, and by the time of the story it doesn't really matter, because the book is looking at how systems of authority maintain themselves, zombie-like, shambling long after their original purpose has warped or died away. Though the Ladies who started everything are vanished or weakened, the characters think of themselves as the Ladies' subjects and worshippers, so that is all they're capable of being. This extends to how gender is constructed in the story. In the palace, gender is an identity you put on for a job, like a vestment, and if you get a different job, you get different vestments. And lastly, religion—whatever the Ladies are (goddesses? Monsters? Aliens? All three?), the characters worship them. I grew up Pentecostal, and there's a lot of overlap with how people in my church wanted to interact with God and how characters in my book want to interact with Ladies. They want to experience a numinousness so powerful that it overrides their own selves, and they talk about their divinity as a terrible thing that, nevertheless, they love. That tension between how a worshiper acts/speaks and how their actions/words appear to an outsider doesn't drive the story, but it's the atmosphere of the book.

I LOVE YOUR COVER. ALL THE BRIGHT COLORS DREW ME IN. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

The artist, Kuri Huang, is an absolute rock star! My favorite part of her work is all the detail: she hides birds and eyes and thorns everywhere. Absolutely beautiful stuff.

I SAW SOME OF YOUR ART IT'S AMAZING. DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD EVER TURN THE WEST PASSAGE INTO A GRAPHIC NOVEL? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Dear God no! I love being an artist, I love drawing, but graphic novels are so much work! But I do think it could make an interesting TTRPG. Wizards of the Coast, get at me.



When college freshman Grace Mendes reluctantly attends her first pillow fight match, she falls in love with the surprisingly gritty sport.

Despite her usually shy, introverted, and reserved nature, Grace decides to try out for the Pillow Fight Federation (PFF), a locally famous league of fighters with larger-than-life personas like Pain Eyre, Miss Fortune, and champion Kat Atonic. They may battle with pillows, but there is nothing soft about these fighters. The first and only rule to pillow fighting is that the pillow needs to be the first point of contact; after that, everything else goes.

Grace struggles with deep-seated body image issues, so she is especially shocked when she makes the competitive league and is welcomed into the fold of close knit, confident fighters. As her first official fight performing as newly crafted alter-ego/ring persona Cinderhella looms on the horizon, the real battle taking place is between Grace and her growing insecurities. What if people laugh or make fun of her? Why did she think she could pillow fight in the first place when she doesn't look like your "typical" athlete?

Turns out, no one is laughing when Cinderhella dominates her first match in the ring. And as her alter-ego rises through the ranks of the PFF, gaining traction and online fame (and online trolls), can Grace use the spotlight to become an icon for not just others, but most importantly, for herself?



A queer adult dark fantasy of an epic story of powers, struggles, and a journey in a palace the size of a city.

The West Passage is dark, heavy, and immersive. This is a vivid world, the worldbuilding is some of the best I've read in a while. I love the backstories, the history, the lore, the magic, the setting, creatures, I could go on. It's so different and has a Wonderland feel to it but just more dark, more twisted.

We are following Pell and Kew who are tossed into positions of power for the Gray Tower before they are ready. I love the towers and colors' meaning and how they affect this world. I don't want to say too much about this book as I knew very little and loved learning and being surprised by everything within these pages.

This was Jared's debut and I was completely surprised by the writing style, the worldbuilding, the magic, the whirlwind of shocking findings, and crazy creatures that I had never heard of before. This is for sure a setting, world story. The plot and characters are important but for me, it's the world that took me away into the book. No matter how much info I was giving I always wanted more, it made me think and wonder about this world, history, and lore. I liked the mash-up of darkness and colorfulness in this world. I like that we get to travel and explore this world, it's weird, odd, and one-of-a-kind. This book is gory, heavy, and dark. Please read the content warnings.

No ordinary fantasy in this unforgiving medieval world of powers, adventure around every corner that will shock you, in this tension-filled that will keep you on the edge of your seat guessing what will happen next.



JENNIFER BLI

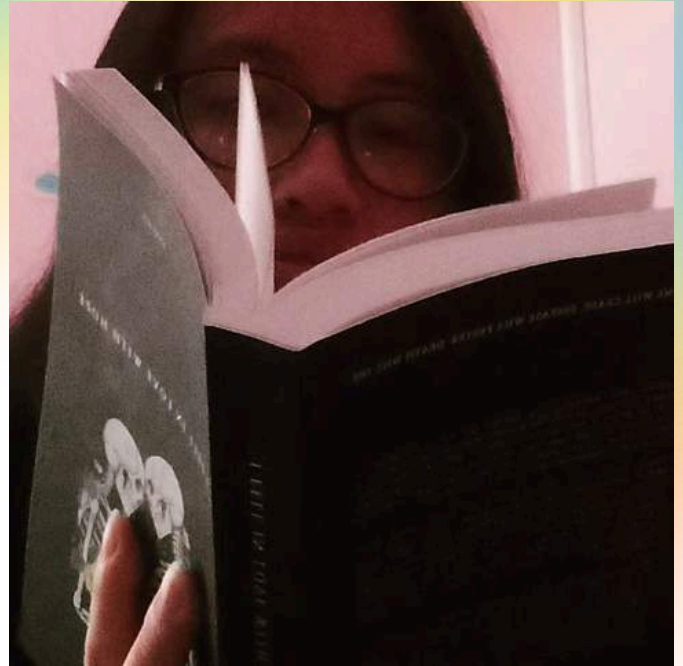
interview



WRITING_JENNIFER

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT WHAT YOU WRITE.

I write fantasy fiction suited for young readers. Currently, I'm working on a nine-book series exploring the lives of two kids who accidentally gain superpowers and how it affects them growing up.



CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR NEW BOOK LUNAR ECLIPSE & SOLAR ASCENT: ADHESION. WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE WRITING OF THIS BOOK?

From writing LE&SA: Adhesion, I learned that the direct sequel is easier to write than the first book. This is book 2 of the series and writing it felt like a breeze compared to book 1. I think it's because book 1 (LE&SA: Collision) established the foundation of the world my characters lived in while this book is simply continuing what is already there.

IN YOUR BOOK, TWO OF YOUR CHARACTERS ACCIDENTALLY GAIN SUPERPOWERS. IF YOU COULD HAVE ANY SUPER POWER WHAT WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

If I could have a superpower, it would be the ability to rewind time. It allows me to undo my mistakes or prevent catastrophes.





PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT SPIRIT WARRIOR: MAODEN'S PATH IS ABOUT.

Spirit Warrior: Maiden's Path is book one in the series. In this story, the MC, Susan Sibley, is a real-world Witch in her "maiden" phase, full of hope and possibility, despite the trauma she has been through. In her naivety, Susan takes risks as she fails to heed her own wisdom. She surrenders her heart and soul when a passionate love appears in her life. Despite her fears, she holds tight to the hope that she can balance her love with Tamika and her spiritual gift. As whispers of wisdom come to her, she's not always sure what to do with her magic, but refuses to stop growing. By the end of Maiden's Path, Susan reaches new insights about the human journey, but still has so far to go in spiritual evolution.

WHAT DREW YOU TO SET YOUR STORY IN THE '90S AND EARLY 2000S?

I chose to set Maiden's Path, book one of my Spirit Warrior series, in the 90's and early 2000's primarily because the series is heavily based on my own journey. This was when I was in my twenties, so it made sense that my MC, Susan, should live her "maiden" years during that time. I also want the series to show the progression of social justice and diversity issues. Using the backdrop of the 90's and 2000's was a great way for me to show the contrast of how people were even more narrow-minded back then. It also enabled me to highlight the unfortunate reality that some ideas are so deeply ingrained in our society that they still persist.

WERE THERE ALTERNATE ENDINGS YOU CONSIDERED?

Honestly, because I am a pantsner, not a planner, I never planned the ending. Since this is a fictionalized version of my own journey, many details are true. I feel strongly that Spirit guides me in developing the fictional elements so I can weave them in smoothly with my own truths as well as depict the lessons about each stage of the journey that I mean for this series to focus on.

CAN YOU TEASE WITH US WHAT YOU ARE WORKING ON NOW?

Right now, I am working on book two in the Spirit Warrior series, Mother Moon. In Mother Moon, my MC, Susan, still struggles to understand how she fits into this world. As a real-world Witch, and someone who has experienced a great deal of trauma, she sometimes feels stuck in her pain. She's become a little too comfortable in her isolation, and in book two, the Universe gives her ample opportunities to grow. Through both new relationships and a reawakening of her spiritual gift, she finds a means of looking at the world differently and embracing the role of the "mother."



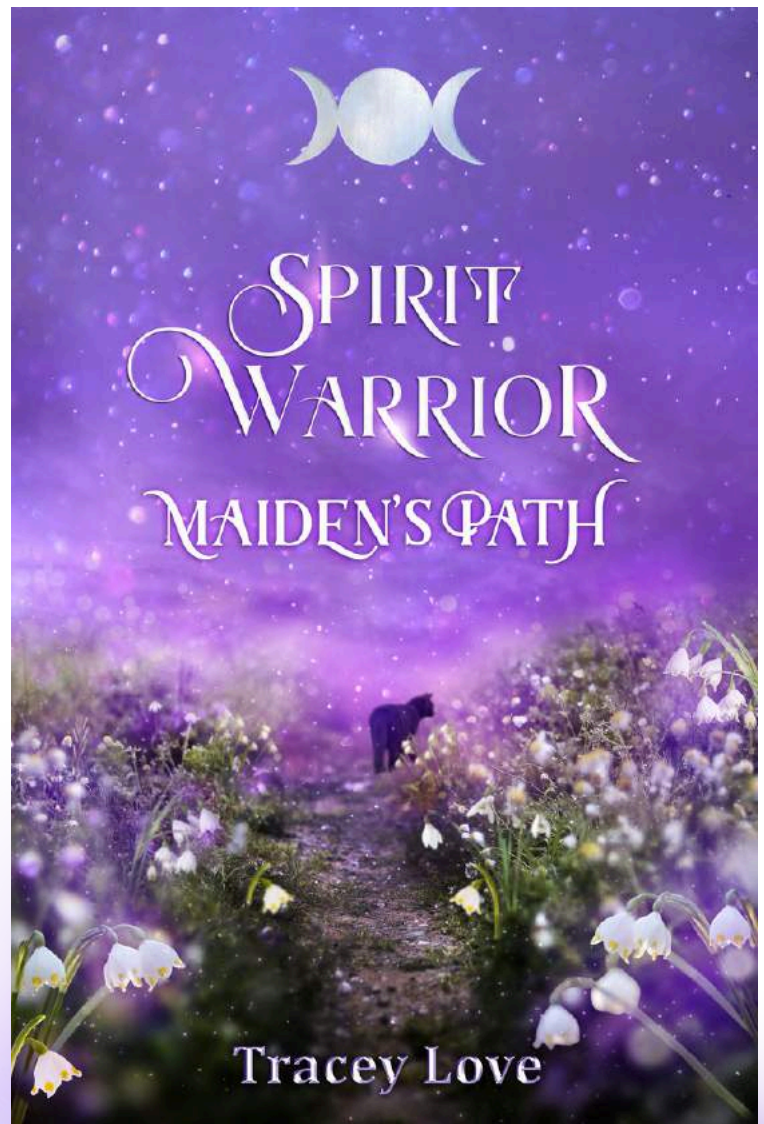
Susan Sibley is a highly sensitive Witch who is doing her best to find where she fits in the world as she tries to understand her spiritual gift. When she falls in love with Tamika, the woman of her dreams, she discovers how easy it is to lose herself in someone else instead. In the Maiden phase, Susan's naivety and fear create her struggle to let the light in, flow with change, and fully realize her power.

Maiden's Path is the story of one young woman's journey to discovering that the happiness you want can only come to you through lessons, which means living through both the painful and joyful parts of the human experience. Opportunities for growth arise as Susan's relationship with Tamika develops. Creating a home and family challenges her Maiden mindset and invites her to step into the role of the Mother. As she continues to receive signs and messages from Spirit, Susan ultimately faces the most painful choice of her life: whether to walk away from the greatest love she has ever known or lose herself in total darkness.

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A story of life's experience, and spiritual elements, with a dash of sapphic romance.

Susan is a sensitive witch who's struggling to fit in with her spiritual gift. I enjoyed learning about the magic and spiritual world of this book. Susan falls in love with Tamika and the story unfolds. We get to see their relationship grow and bloom. I would have to say that the romance and relationship are more on the light side. This is a story about life so the romance is more of a subplot but I still liked it.

This is a story of human experience, life lessons, personal growth, relationship dynamics, and the ups and downs of life wrapped in a pretty magical bow. We get to see the character's growth and development showing the beautiful size that comes with life.

The book was easy to breeze through while also tackling heavy topics like homophobia, body issues, racism and more so look up content warning if needed.

A book of magic is woven through the journey of a witch with a dash of sapphic romance.

FREE

DARCIA interview

G. LAUCERICA



DARCIAWRITES



PLEASE TELL US ABOUT WHAT YOU WRITE.

Tale of Three Ships is my debut novel. It's a pirate fantasy packed full of representation, which is a topic so close to my heart.

The main pirate crew, The Outsider, is a bunch of queer people who found a home among each other. Patriah, the setting of the book, is a world ruled by a few countries, with Goliath leading colonization efforts. Piracy is one of the only ways to be truly free in this setting, but even that is getting tainted by the powerful nation. They're spreading rumors about women being bad luck at sea in an effort to divide and weaken the countries they're invading, as well as the pirate crews that directly steal from them. At first, The Outsider and its captain, Glenlivet, only look out for themselves. They had only one objective: hunting and killing the man who raised Glen. The state of the world simply felt too big for such a small crew to do anything about it. And then the opportunity and means for change fall within their reach...

While my upcoming book is vastly different, plot and setting-wise, the representation and the way queer and other marginalized characters flock together to be safe and to fight injustice, is a staple in my writing that I have no plan on changing.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT RELEASING YOUR DEBUT?

I went to university to study Creative and Professional Writing. They taught me all the elements and moving pieces to get a book published traditionally: how to query agents, how to choose the right agent for you and your book, etc. They told us about self-publishing as an option but they never really went into detail about the ins and outs of that process.

When I decided to go that route, pretty early in the writing stage, I knew nothing. YouTube and TikTok authors creating transparent and honest content about the process saved me. And I'm still learning. They also were incredibly helpful in the marketing aspect, which I was also completely new to.

I think the main thing I learned is that I am far more capable of adapting and doing new things than I ever gave myself credit for.

I LOVE YOUR COVER! WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

Thank you! The cover art is by the incredibly talented and hard-working Logan Howard (@wraithofthavalon on social media). They held my hand through the whole process and brought my vision to life. My original sketch had all the elements the final version does but the composition was messy. Logan fixed this and made it STUNNING.

My favorite detail in it are the glowing floating letters. Glenlivet is always carrying secret envelopes with her, and these are vital for the narrative. I was extremely happy we managed to include them.



In a world under the thumb of an empire, pirates sail away searching for a breath of freedom. But even the ocean is tainted by the powerful nation that has spread lies about women being bad luck at sea.

Glenlivet has never cared about the fear-mongering. Her ship welcomes those who are rejected and need a home.

For all the sailor's superstitions and "codes" of piracy the captain mocks every day, not leaving the docks when it's dark is a personal boundary she swears by ever since acquiring *The Outsider* about eight years ago.

She just might have to break her own rules to protect her crew, escape the claws of a king who wants her dead, and murder the man who raised her.



Pirates, queer, and fantasy are a weakness of mine so when I learned about this book I knew I needed it. I've had this book for six days and made it about halfway through before the deadline. So there will be a full review in the next issue. My thoughts so far... I need more. I still have half a book and I want, no need more! I love books that have a group or crew of characters. I like having a cast of characters and in this book, each one feels like they have a rich and strong backstory. This is a character-driven book and I can't wait to see how some things will unfold. There's a story worldbuilding, well-plotted, and just overall entertaining! If you like vivid world-building, pirates, queer, and fantasy then this one is for you.



LAURA R. mini-interview

SAMOTIN



LAURARSAMOTIN

PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU WRITE.

I write queer speculative fiction—fantasy, horror, and paranormal romance—much of which (like *The Sins On Their Bones*) is based on my Jewish heritage. I tend towards heavier themes in my work, and TSTB is certainly a dark fantasy. But I like to think that along with explorations of grief, trauma, mental health, and more, I'm able to weave in humor, as well as tons of tropes.

HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH YOUR TITLE, THE SINS ON THEIR BONES?

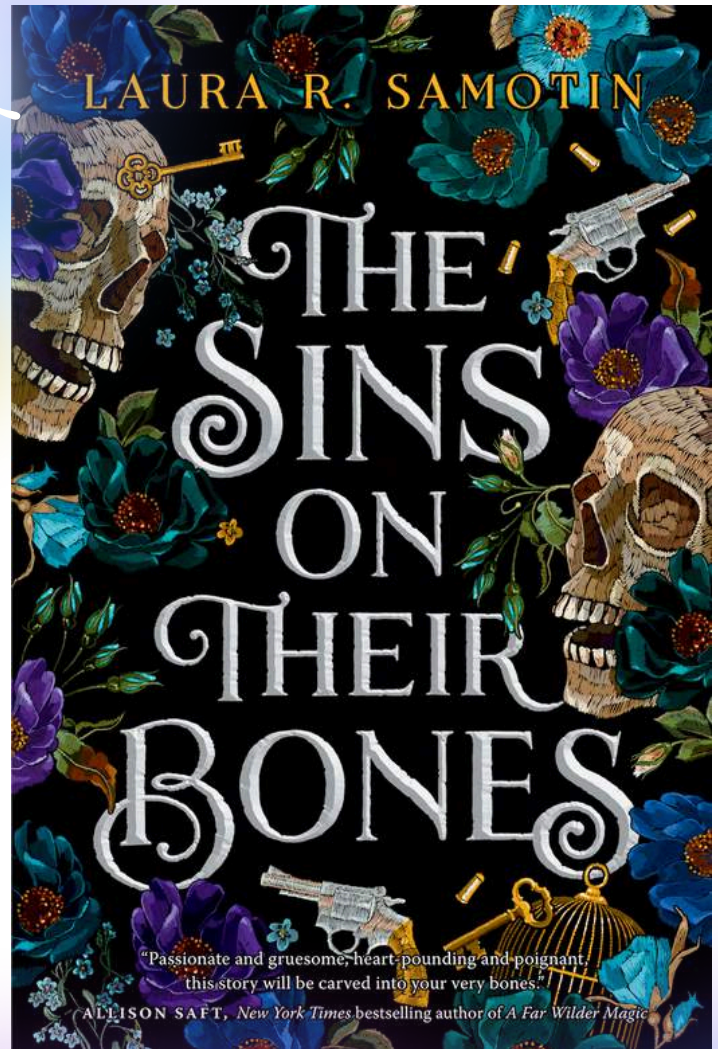
The title is actually an old Jewish curse from the Talmud – “may your sins be written on your bones, so when you die, God knows exactly how to punish you.” I really liked playing with the phrasing, and the curse actually plays a crucial role in the actual book as well!

CAN YOU TEASE WITH US WHAT YOU ARE WORKING ON NOW?

I'm working on edits for the second book in the duology, which wraps up Dimitri's story. I also have a bunch of upcoming work – *THE WAY IT HAUNTED HIM* is a gay dark academia horror coming from Titan Books in 2026, and I'm publishing a romance titled *THE ACTOR AND HIS SECRET* with my co-author Ben Alderson in July of this year. I also have another standalone horror coming from Titan in 2027, and an unannounced paranormal romance deal that I can't wait to tell everyone about soon!

YOUR COVER IS SO PRETTY.

Thank you! The cover was designed by Talia Abrahamson, who did an absolutely phenomenal job. I fell in love with the cover the moment I saw it.



DOROTHY



interview

MC FALLS



FANTASYWRITERGIRL

DOROTHYWRITES 

PLEASE TELL US A BIT ABOUT THE LAST MOONLIGHT DRAGON.

The Last Moonlight Dragon is the first book in a romantic fantasy duology. It's my first fantasy novel that I've published. I've been drawn to the genre since a child and have written fantasy novels for myself from a very young age.

In The Last Moonlight Dragon, my book-loving heroine Celestina finds herself in a terrible position after her parents, who were advisors to the queen, turned out to be traitors helping the enemy. They escape with the enemy, leaving Celestina behind to face the queen's wrath. The queen gives Celestina to the most fearsome warrior on the continent, General Soren Kitman also known as the Beast of Fein. As she travels with the general and his warriors, she searches for the dragons that used to visit the valley near the castle. She has always felt a connection to them and has a feeling that if she could only find them, they'd be able to solve all her problems.

General Kitman is as beautiful as he is terrifying. He's a man who never breaks a promise, and he's vowed to execute her...after he's done playing with her.

As they travel to Soren's homeland, Celestina falls for this complicated man who has both sworn to kill her and has killed to protect her. He's hiding secrets that frighten her. And she's discovering she's not as powerless as the magical slave binding had led her to believe. Uncovering each other's secrets may destroy not only their hearts but also leave an entire kingdom in ashes. Finding the missing dragons may be their only hope.

IF YOU COULD OWN A DRAGON. WOULD YOU AND IF SO WHAT WOULD YOU NAME IT AND WHY?



I have ALWAYS loved dragons. I grew up reading dragon books, writing stories about dragons, designing and sewing a rainbow collection of dragon stuffed animals, and dreaming of dragons. They were as real to me as my classmates. Perhaps even more real in some ways. I was a shy, awkward kid who never quite knew what to say to others.

If I could have a dragon of my own, I would want a large one with iridescent wings and a teal blue body and purple eyes. Wouldn't that be pretty? My dragon would whisk me away to faraway lands with gorgeous libraries, fairy banquets, and fields of unicorns. She'd protect me and love me and be a good friend to have tea with. We'd share common interests in crocheting and reading and would talk about such things for hours.

She'd be called Mara, which means "death" or "ill-omen" because she would be fierce and feral. Others would tremble when she was around. But I would know that she has a good heart and would never cause me harm. Also, I know that death is not something that needs to be feared, only understood and accepted.





I LOVE YOUR COVER, IT'S SO PRETTY! WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

Thank you! I love the cover too. I love the deep blue color for how it sets the tone for the dark themes of the book. Also, I flipped when I saw the sparkling moons in the title font. I had asked the cover designer to design a cover that was beautiful and that people would like to show off on their bookshelves. I think she delivered that and more.

WHAT WAS THE HARDEST PART OF WRITING A DRAGON FANTASY?

The plot and most of the dialogue for this book came to me in a flash. I had been going through a difficult time. My mother was in the hospital, and my sisters and I were facing a future where my mother wasn't going to get better or ever get to come home. Writing this book was an outlet for my frustration and an escape from my sorrow. Because writing became a place of solace and probably because I'd been writing fantasy and dragon stories as a way to soothe myself ever since I was a young child, this has been the easiest book I'd ever written. I think I've been practicing for writing this book my entire life. I love dragons, and they came through for me when I needed them the most.

CAN YOU SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU ARE WORKING ON NOW?

I'm writing the ending to the second and last book in the Moonlight Dragon duology—Curse of the Midnight Dragon. This book is being written after my mother passed away, and I'm finding that through writing it, I'm having to unpack so many complicated emotions that I've been experiencing in the grief process. Rage, anger, and love are all pouring onto the page. The plot for this book didn't come to me like a gift from the dragons, like what happened for me with The Last Moonlight Dragon. Instead, I'm having to find my way through, mirroring how I've been having to find my way through my grief. It's been quite the process, but as I'm nearing the ending, I'm feeling quite good about where the story has taken me. I believe the readers will enjoy (and hopefully be a little surprised) by how everything turns out.

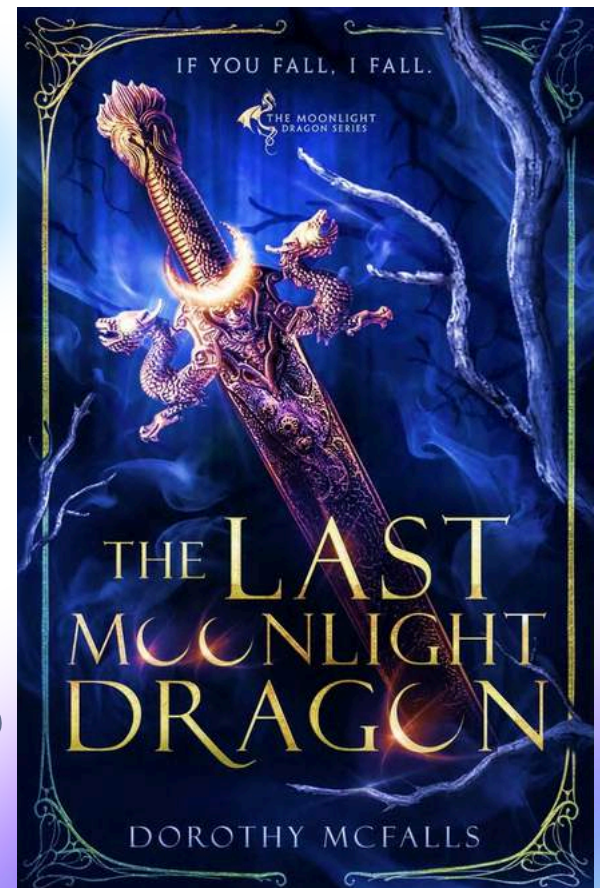
Here's a short blurb for the book:

The adventure continues...

I thought I had everything--love, a found family, security. But it turns out that might have all been a cruel illusion. Everyone out there seems to want to use me for what I am. Well, I'll show them what I think of that. I'll make the ancient War of the Magics look tame. I will light up the sky with my rage.

CURSE OF THE MIDNIGHT DRAGON is scheduled to be released in late Fall of this year.

The cover designer is working on the cover now. I'm anxiously waiting to see what masterpiece she comes up with for me with this one.



REVIEW IN NEXT ISSUE!

LEANNE SCHWARTZ

interview



SCHWARTZWORDS



Leanne Schwartz is the autistic author of the young adult fantasies *A Prayer for Vengeance* and *To a Darker Shore*. She has spent about half her life at either the library or the local theater, where she has played Lady Macbeth, Lady Capulet, Clytemnestra, and Hera—perhaps one reason she writes such vengeful, murderous girls. When she's not teaching English and poetry, she can be found baking pizzelle, directing scenes for the student Shakespeare festival, and singing along to showtunes. She is also the author of the adult romance *My Kind of Trouble* under the name L. A. Schwartz and lives in California with her family.

TO A DARKER SHORE IS TOLD FROM DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW. DID YOU HAVE MORE FUN WRITING ONE POV OVER ANOTHER? WHY OR WHY NOT?



I loved writing both Alesta, the shepherdess with ambitions of becoming inventor to the king, and Kyrian, the painter turned reluctant heir to the throne turned fearsome devil, because I related deeply to aspects of both. And getting to show how fierce and brilliant Alesta is, how much she wants, when fat characters are so rarely fully humanized still in kidlit, meant a lot to me—but is it horrible to say writing poor Kyrian really going through it was probably the most fun? It's hard to write characters like Alesta who are smarter than yourself, but getting to write Kyrian's angst, all the ways he's so hard on himself (I said he was relatable!) while he treasures Alesta, was a treat.

ALESTA IS AUTISTIC. SOMEONE CLOSE TO ME IS AUTISTIC, AND IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME TO LIFT UP WRITERS AND CHARACTERS WHO ARE. BUT WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE A CHARACTER WHO IS AUTISTIC?

I'm autistic myself, so I've always written autistic characters and with this book decided it just felt right for both Alesta and Kyrian to be autistic. She's a scientist who struggles with other people and chafes against their society's religious strictures, and he's a reluctant royal who deals with sensory overwhelm at court and having to mask his autism, like repressing his need to stim. I wanted to show how they have a special connection in part because of their autism but also how they experience it in different ways. My primary wish was to include the challenges and joys of autistic characters in fantasy for autistic readers, and for non-autistic readers to see more of what the experience can be like, so thank you for helping share!



YOUR COVER IS BREATHTAKING. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

Thank you! I was amazed when Page Street hired one of favorite artists, Flora Kirk, to illustrate *To a Darker Shore's* cover; it's an absolute dream come true. I love how she conceptualized the descent from the surface through all the different levels hell, like one of the old woodcuts of Dante's *Inferno*, but my favorite part is definitely Alesta herself. It's such a privilege to see a fat YA heroine centered and celebrated like this on a cover, and her hair with the flames of hell reflecting off it is so fiery and also reminiscent of Botticelli's *Venus*. Alesta's not considered a pretty girl, and endures a lot of teasing and abuse that leads her to want to hide from others, but with Kyrian watching from behind the cracked mirror, I feel like we're seeing her as he sees her, clever and daring and magnificent.

I SAW THAT YOU TEACH ENGLISH AND POETRY. WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM TEACHING THAT HAS HELPED IN YOUR WRITING CAREER?

I think the key thing is it's kept me working with the audience young adult books are most written for. When I first studied to become a teacher I thought the most important thing was going to be knowing my subject well and having good lesson plans, but as soon as I got in the classroom my students taught me it was really all about them; the joy of knowing my students well and what they're going through was the only way I could teach them anything. I try to keep that in mind as an author, to not get too caught up in allusions or language or whatever I'm playing with, but to keep my focus on the reader and how they'll be experiencing the story I'm telling. But also getting to spend so many years reading classics and poetry has definitely helped inspire my writing! My debut, *A Prayer for Vengeance*, drew on metaphysical and cavalier poetry as well as Roman mythology, as *To a Darker Shore* draws on Dante, Milton, fairy tales, and more myth.

I READ THAT YOU DIRECT SCENES FOR THE STUDENT SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL. IF YOU HAD THE CHOICE OF DOING A SHAKESPEARE RETELLING WHAT PLAY DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD PICK AND WHY?

I have so many ideas and even works in progress for Shakespeare retellings! I think it could be really interesting to do a *Lear* with an autistic Cordelia, following her side of things and maybe bringing in some fighting gods to act out all the disruption to the great chain of being and chaos with *Lear's* fall—because it's so autistic to me how she refuses to make a scene declaring her love for her father, and insists instead to “love, and be silent.” But as fan of romance and farce, I also would love to do a fantasy *Much Ado* or *Comedy of Errors*, or a *Twelfth Night* or *As You Like It* that leans into trans themes all the way.

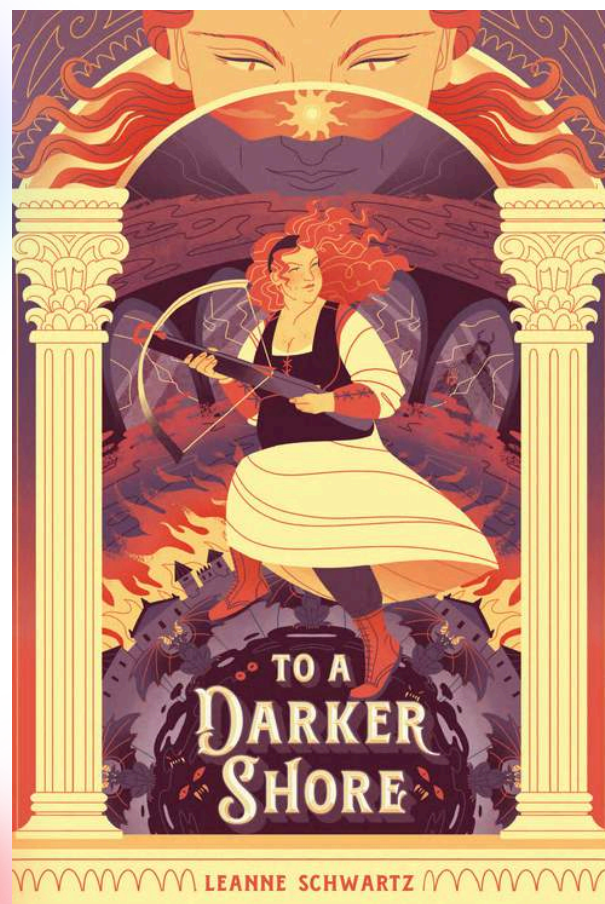
A da Vinci-esque teen girl inventor on a Dante-esque journey through hell to save her best friend.

Plain, poor, plus-size, and autistic, Alesta grew up trying to convince her kingdom that she's too useful to be sacrificed like so many of their country's poor to appease the infernal monster across the poison sea in hell.

When Alesta's attempt to prove herself with inventions goes awry, her best friend and heir to the throne, Kyrian, takes the blame expecting leniency—and ends up tithed in her place.

To end the sacrifices forever, Alesta plans to kill the monster that killed her friend. She travels to the depths of hell only to find Kyrian, alive, but monstrously transformed.

There's no escaping hell or their deeper feelings for one another, and the farther they go, the closer they come to uncovering a truth about the tithings that threatens to invoke the wrath of not only monsters but the gods as well.



g ll a

Action-packed young adult fantasy with lesbian romance and killer monsters.

To a Darker Shore is a character-strong book, with autistic main characters we get to see how Alesta and Kyr handle all the action and drama. Alesta is strong-willed, smart, and plus-size character learning to follow her heart. Kyr is caring and passionate and is learning to become herself. I liked that we got to see them grow and develop.

I had fun with the setting, the dark atmosphere, and the gritty at times. I liked the monsters, the battle, and seeing how the characters deal and handle with them.

I felt the writing was well done. It was fun and will read more from this author. I do have to say there is a bit of religious commentary. I also liked how Alesta and Kyr look and deal with religion in different ways.

With monsters all around, these characters tackle not only danger but what their feelings are developing into.

REVIEW

H O R R O R

SUSPENSE

PAGES

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THRILLER

AND EGGY

METAMORPHOSIS: THE TRANSGENDER EXPERIENCE AND MONSTER FICTION

by E.N. Laurier



ACUREFORLIVINGWRITING



When I was a child, living in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains, my mother would listen to radio shows. To the backing track of smooth jazz, a so-called 'cryptozoologist' recited tales of Mothman and bigfoot. They were mysterious creatures that terrified me. Plenty of things in the trees could harm a child in Appalachia, but the supernatural edge made it just enough implausible to be exciting.

Years later, awkward and never seen without an oversized hoodie, a teenager questioned his gender. My body never felt right. Like many transgender kids, my flesh was becoming more unfamiliar with puberty. I was The Blob in the 1958 movie as the mirror became unkind.

The day my life changed was when I rented a cheesy supernatural action movie. Hugh Jackman plays the titular character in the cult classic Van Helsing. He is bitten and becomes a werewolf in a spectacle of a scene involving the gong of a clock and an incredible set design. I was captivated. Becoming something else, before I had a name for my dysphoria, made the world suddenly clearer. For a whole year, I watched it every day, and my obsession with werewolf stories was born.

I wanted more. But as my queerness came to fruition, I found myself disappointed in the mainstream stories of people like me. Soon I found that very rarely were their tales of revenge and taking back control, as I had experienced in my beloved horror genre. Many queer books were sanitized for a general audience. My young, rebellious soul couldn't identify with such immaculate sentiments, so I turned back to horror.

The connection between queerness and monsters is deeper than it may seem. Today's political climate is dire for the queer community. From every side and even inside the community, transgender people have targets on their backs. It is easy to feel like a monster. That is where horror ignites interest in the trans community.

I found solace in consuming and creating media about monsters. Take Pamela Voorhees in Friday the 13th. Hers is a story about revenge and retribution in the name of her dead son. Then, there was the lesser-known movie Pumpkin Head, wherein the main character is a boy who was killed for how he was born and then raised as a monster to seek revenge.

Horror fantasy is a genre that is no stranger to becoming something more in spite of what the world may tell you to be. If there is a writing equivalent to the underground punk shows and chat rooms that influenced my youth, it is the genre of queer horror and fantasy. The authors in this genre are fearless in stretching the muscles of creativity in this subgenre. Far from the eyes of a typical Barnes & Noble browser is some genuine art. In the authors, often, queer themselves can be completely free and expression.

The works that have sprung from this community, like dandelions from cracks in the sidewalk, are beautiful and gruesome. They speak of revenge and metamorphosis in a language akin to poetry. The guidelines of traditional publishing do not constrain them. Therefore, they can create something revolutionary and without limits.

I'm a writer myself, but first and foremost, I am a reader. And before even that, I am queer. In this unique community, I found books that have moved and disgusted me. But none of them have bored me. The descriptions are vividly gritty. It is wonderful and makes me feel as if every part of me, grimy or radiant, is being represented.

It is pride month, and before you put money down on a novel in a big chain bookstore, look around. Look at queer indie authors who put so much love into their craft. It is among those pages where the deepest feelings of queerness are explored. Like the cicadas that are due to emerge from their slumbers this summer, you may find something that awakens you. You may find something that causes a metamorphosis in your soul.

bio

E.N. Laurier is an author living in the southern United States. His work has been featured in the Bleat It And Read It charity anthology and Re|View online zine, amongst others. He is mainly known for his fantasy and erotica. You can follow him on Instagram under [acureforlivinglit](#) and through X at [acureforliving](#).



LAIKYN

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*mini
interview*

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LAIKYNMENG



YOUR BOOKS ARE LABELED AS EDGY.
WHAT DRAWS YOU TO WRITE DARK,
EDGY BOOKS?

Edgy I think can be represented as a few things. In my opinion these are harder topics that are avoided when writing. From personal experiences and love entanglements you reach a broader spectrum of the human love story when it involves more than just another person, when it involves you. How you see yourself, trust yourself and eventually learn to love yourself in order to be an equal companion to another person. My books are angsty and edgy in ways that heartbreak is a main topic either romantic or from personal relationships. There is always more than just the love story, there is always growth, healing, tears and that is the beauty of awakening, because you become aware of who you were in order to survive and who you want to become in order to live.



PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU
WRITE.

I write contemporary romance, usually featuring multicultural characters with deep love stories and personal self growth.



YOU HAVE SO MANY PRETTY COVERS!
WHAT IS ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE
COVERS OF YOURS?

Oh there are so many! Haha :) I love Moonstruck, National Parks (Of Course!) I love the special edition of Marry Money. Also less known book is Mused. I think that cover has a dark presence but it hold regal status in my mind. No it doesn't have a HEA. But it still is a romance in my head.





MATTEO

interview



MATTEOLCERILLI



L. CERILLI

TELL US ABOUT LOCKJAW.

LOCKJAW is a YA horror about a small town called Bridlington, where everything is allegedly safe and perfect and nothing bad ever happens. That is, until an eleven-year-old boy named Chuck Warren dies in the abandoned paper mill, and his classmate Paz Espino hears everything. The problem is that Paz is a known liar and troublemaker, and she says that Chuck didn't die from a fall: he was killed by a monster that lives under the town, and it's still out there. While Paz and her bike-riding crew are determined to hunt the monster down before anyone else gets hurt, her sister and a few other teenagers in town are desperately trying to avoid being dragged into the scheme. But no matter how much they pretend to be too old to believe in monsters, they're being hunted too.

LOCKJAW is my shoutout to all the kids and teenagers who grew up feeling unsafe in their communities. It's about cycles of violence, and apathy versus action, and how we can band together to build a better future. It also features a dog named Bird, though I've been told I shouldn't use that as a selling point...

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO SET YOUR STORY IN A SMALL TOWN?

I'm from a medium-sized suburb outside of Toronto, Ontario, but we're a bit of an outlier: if you drive even half an hour north, most of Ontario is made up of these small historic towns that started as lumber camps or whatnot. I took a lot of my inspiration from places like Bolton or Warton or Orangeville, and from my mom's hometown of Fort Frances. Especially as real estate gets rough in the big city, I keep seeing people talking about how slow and simple and safe these small towns are... but "simple" is usually a euphemism for conflict avoidant or conservative, and "safe" is deeply subjective. What happens if you actually have issues that need addressing? How do you get out? Where do you go for help if everyone you know has banded against you? Neighbourhood camaraderie is amazing, but when it's used to gang up on people who don't fit in, things get very scary very fast. I like to say that Lockjaw is about taking something that's thought of as safe or harmless (a suburban town, a fluffy dog, a sweet kid) and showing its teeth: I wanted to explore how insidious "nice" towns can truly be.



THERE ARE MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR BOOK.

WHAT ONE SURPRISED YOU THE MOST WHILE WRITING?

Oooh I've never gotten this question before. I think Bird's perspective, mostly because he's a dog so I hadn't exactly been planning to get into his head. But the more the story went on, the more I felt like his perspective was necessary too. Everyone's story is critical to a community (hence the choice to use multiple POVs), that everyone has a context that leads to their decisions, so getting into the head of a "base creature" pushes that forward even more. From the start, Bird can tell that something's wrong in this town, but he has too much loyalty to his owner and not enough agency to get himself out. It's pretty relatable for a few of the characters, especially the younger kids like Paz who are expected to just stay quiet and follow orders. As a kid who grew up in similar situations, there was something sort of liberating about writing Bird's perspective. Like... you wanted me to act like a dog, so here's what the dog thinks about it. Plus it's also just a fun poetic treat to myself to imagine how a different species sees the world.

I SAW ON YOUR INSTAGRAM THAT YOU ANNOUNCED THE CAST FOR THE AUDIOBOOK. CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT THE JOURNEY OF THAT?

Oh my gosh yes! So I should say first that as an author, I loooove audiobooks—they force me to actually listen to the story instead of analyze the craft on the page, which makes it so much easier to enjoy myself. It's the same thing with hearing my own audiobook: it's almost like I'm hearing a whole new story. When I first heard Arlen Aguayo-Stewart audition for Marcela's POV, I got genuinely

emotional, and that's super rare for me, especially from a script I've read a thousand times. Arlen was able to pack so much nuance into Paz's teenage sister Marcela, all the quiet hurt under her confidence and "practicality" to really explore the conundrum of balancing your own authenticity with your survival. From just a three-minute audition, I'd fallen in love with this character all over again, and related to her in a way I didn't really feel before. Breton Lalama and Mich Anger make me just as weepy. And on top of that, my producer is such a champ who totally understands this story, and the director and sound tech are absolute sweethearts. I want to take very little credit for the audiobook—so many people have put so much love and care into it. I'm just the script writer.

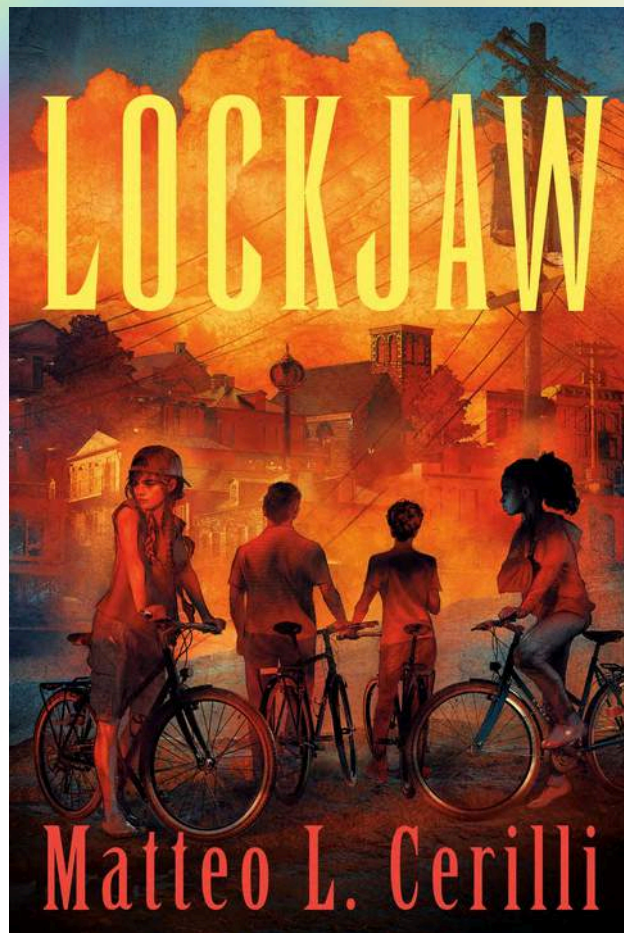
YOUR BOOK COVER IS PRETTY. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

I love seeing a tough little tomboy/baby queer on the cover who dresses exactly like I used to, I love how accurate the town in the background is (the historic church really sets that small-town Ontario vibe), and I love the colour palette. My partner's mom has enthusiastically told me that a fiery cover is a perfect match for balancing out my cool and calm Chinese zodiac. It also so happens that my partner's zodiac is very fiery, so it might have been her subtle way of saying we're a good match. I think about that every time someone mentions the colour palette. Corey Brickley: the cover artist who helps trans artists impress their future in-laws.



Death is neither the beginning nor the end for the children of Bridlington in this debut trans YA horror book for fans of Rory Power and Danielle Vega.

Chuck Warren died tragically at the old abandoned mill, but Paz Espino knows it was no accident — there's a monster under the town, and she's determined to kill it before anyone else gets hurt. She'll need the help of her crew — inseparable friends, bound by a childhood pact stronger than diamonds, distance or death — to hunt it down. But she's up against a greater force of evil than she ever could have imagined.



Young Adult horror of life in a small town battle monsters, rising up voices, and what it means to have a group of friends.

This debut is a great late-night summer read. Chuck tragically died but Paz knows it's no accident. There's a monster under the town she is determined to kill it before anyone else can get hurt.

This is told from multiple points of view, set in a small town, with creeps and chills that will keep you reading. The challenges these kids go through can be hard to read about but it's so important to read and lift these topics and voices up. I love all the representation; from different skin colors, genders, races, queerness, etc. It feels real and not forced.

The writing style is vivid and this book showcases the author's skills. Please look up content warnings and themes as there are heavy topics like blood, animal death, toxic topics, bullying, racism, and so many more. But they are written and handled in an age-appropriate way.

A group of friends battling challenges and monsters in all kinds of forms, in this trans debut YA horror novel.

REVIEW



ALLOYD SPANTON

interview



ALLOYDSPANTON

ALLOYDSPANTON



CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT THE UNFORGETTABLE ALEXANDRA SHAW?

The Unforgettable Alexandra Shaw is an upper YA thriller about a girl who doesn't remember her life and the boy who helps her piece it back together. It takes place primarily at a reform school for troubled teens and focuses on themes of identity, mother/daughter relationships and memory.

HOW DID THIS IDEA COME TO YOU?

This is going to sound really cliché, but it started with a dream. I had a very vivid dream about a girl at a gated-in boarding school. She was in the yard with her friends when a boy came running up to the gate yelling her name and that he thought she was dead. I didn't know who these people were, but I needed to explore that situation a little more.

HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT CHOOSING YOUR CHARACTER'S NAME, ALEXANDRA?

I wish I had an interesting story about why I chose Alexandra as the name. It comes down to her nickname in the book, Lex. The character was very clearly named Lex from the beginning. There was never any other name I considered when writing.

YOU ARE TALENTED AT WRITING THRILLERS AND SECRETS. WHAT IS A TIP YOU HAVE FOR WRITING THRILLERS?

Thank you! There's a lot of discussion in the writing world about authors who plan out their entire novel (plotters) and authors who discover the story as they write (pantsers). For the record, I'm for whatever path leads the author to getting the book done. But for me, especially with a book that has a lot of little pieces and wrong turns, I need an outline to follow that tracks all those details or I will get lost along the way and leave a gaping plot hole.

You also can't force the details. Each scene has a purpose, and the author has a plan, but you have to be careful not to write a scene that feels too convenient for the character. Like, this only happened so that the character could get this information. The art is finding a way for that to happen, but for it to feel natural.

YOUR COVER IS GORGEOUS. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

I'm still so in love with the cover! The team at Qamber Designs and the artist Mariana Kaya did an incredible job bringing my vision to life. It's really hard to pick a favorite part, but I would say the hair. I am a redhead, I knew I wanted something on the cover with wild, flowing red hair and I think it was done so perfectly.

CAN YOU SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU ARE WORKING ON NOW?

There was a moment in time where I was planning on writing a sequel to this book, but I've since shelved that idea. It might be something I revisit in the future, but I have taken a step away from that for the time being. I'm working on two novels at the moment. One is a New Adult Jessica Jones meets Terminator inspired series about a jaded woman who stumbles into solving cold cases. The other is an Adult mystery/thriller which is still in its very early planning stages, but will focus on the complicated dynamics of a marriage made even more complicated when a dead body turns up.



Seventeen-year-old Alexandra killed her father.

It was an accident, but he's dead all the same. Now all she wants is to find her place in her new school, keep her head down until graduation, and try to fix her relationship with her resentful mother.

But then a stranger named Logan shows up, claiming he knows her. And that's not even the weirdest thing. According to Logan, her father wasn't the only one killed in the accident—she was too.

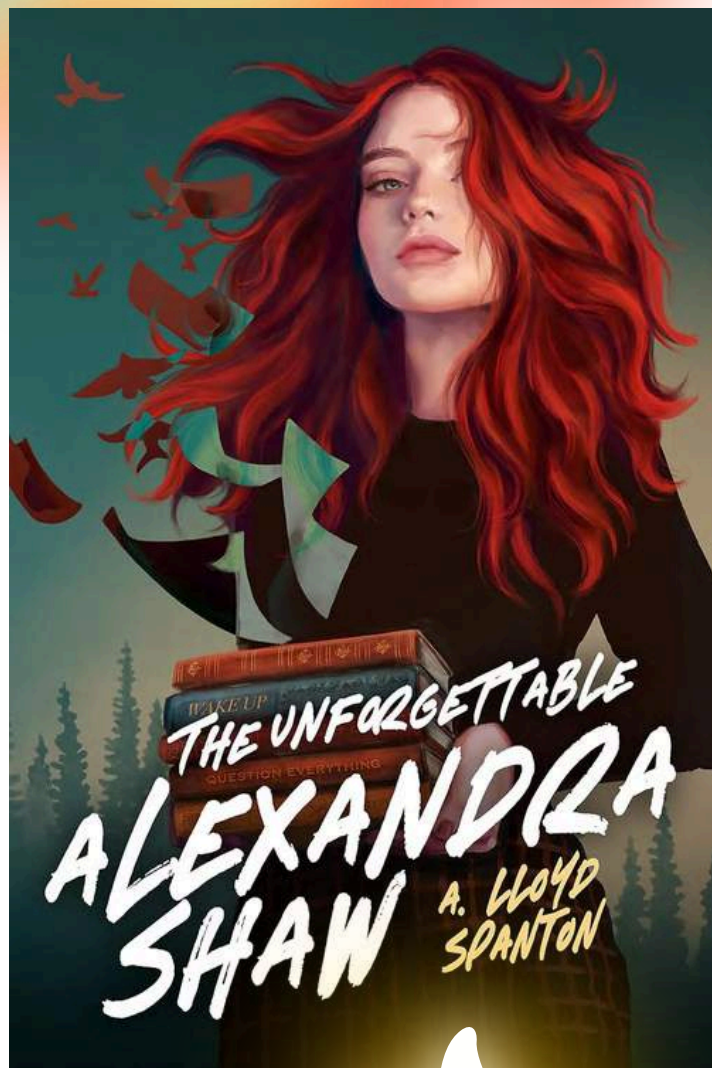
While trying to uncover her past, Alexandra and Logan discover a horrifying truth about her new school and the more they dig, the more dangerous it becomes for Alexandra and her friends.

With no idea who to trust, she races to piece her life back together and take hold of her future before she loses it – and herself – completely.

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A whirlwind thriller of mysteries, boarding school, and secrets.

We are tossed right into the world of Alexandra who is accused of causing the car accident that killed her father. From there we see her move to a new city and start a new so for 'trouble kids'; things unfold and play out here.

I was interested in the relationship between the main character and her mother. Seeing her meet and make friends was fun. The laboratories and detectives were a part of this book that stood out to me. I like the vibes of this book.

There are some other parts that I liked but don't want to spoil or give anything away. I did like this book but I felt like things were rushed, and happened fast and I just wanted it more flushed out, with more plot, character depth, and mystery. Please look up content warnings there are some very heavy topics.

So I did like this but everything was just rushed, the plot is engaging but it felt too fast, I wanted more. And I will give this author another shot. If you are a reader who likes a quick read of mysteries then this book is for you.

A quick YA thriller of secrets and mysteries.



HALEY NEWLIN

interview



HALEYNEWLIN_AUTHOR



HALEYNEWLIN_AUTHOR



SHARE WITH US WHAT NOT ANOTHER SARAH HALLS IS ABOUT

"Not Another Sarah Halls" is my homage to Young Adult Horror, centered around the theme of friendship. It delves into the heartache of drifting apart from childhood companions, the looming specter of adulthood, and the journey toward self-discovery.

Set in the eerie backdrop of Oakhaven, a town plagued by unresolved disappearances, the narrative follows Autumn and Becca, inseparable friends grappling with the town's dark history. While Autumn remains haunted by the past, the rest of Oakhaven prefers to bury its secrets and move forward.

Autumn's quest for closure intensifies when Becca becomes the latest victim of the malevolent force that has plagued Oakhaven for generations. Her grief transforms into a desperate mission for answers as she confronts the sinister forces lurking in the shadows.



WHAT IS A WRITING TIP YOU HAVE ON WRITING UNEASY OR TENSE SCENES?

When creating tension in scenes, it's imperative to slow the pacing to intensify the dread. The most chilling and unforgettable moments in horror linger in the unease. These are the parts of a story that grab ahold of readers and refuse to let go. Terror has a unique ability to distort time. Utilize this effect to make your readers squirm!



YOUR OTHER BOOK, TAKE YOUR TURN, TEDDY, IS SET IN THE 1970S. IS THERE ANY OTHER TIME PERIOD YOU WOULD LIKE TO WRITE ABOUT?

I've always been drawn to earlier periods for my writing because of the absence of modern technology. It helps the theme of isolation thrive without the crutch of cell phones and social media.

My short story, "The Butcher On Blue Jay Way," featured in Kandisha Press's Slash-Her anthology, was loosely inspired by Sweeney Todd in an era devoid of contemporary technology. It adds an extra layer of dread.

My next novel ventures into the late 1950s. I've enjoyed learning about relics and the atmosphere of that time. It's also a fun way to pay homage to horror films/books then, like William Castle's *The Tingler* (1959), starring Vincent Price, and Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960).

While I find myself gravitating toward the 1960s and 1970s, also due to my love of music and the developing tools in criminal justice, I'm interested in exploring the 1980s. I'm envisioning this as a slasher. Kalynn Bayron's acknowledgments section in her YA Horror novel, *You're Not Supposed To Die Tonight*, is probably behind this. Her passion for '80s & '90s horror is infectious.



I LOVE YOUR COVER. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

Thank you so much!

The Conjuring (2013) was a significant inspiration for "Take Your Turn, Teddy," so reflecting that dark, neutral color scheme on the cover was crucial. Rory, the ghost child, played a pivotal role in shaping Teddy's character, influencing his age and demeanor. The cover art perfectly portrays the isolation of rural Indiana, particularly for a child like Teddy, amidst the menacing and vast cornfield. This setting mirrors the central theme of coming-of-age in the book.

Another detail I particularly adore is the piercing yellow eyes of the demon, inspired by the watchful eyes of T.J. Eckleburg from *The Great Gatsby*.

WHERE DID YOUR ENJOYMENT OF HORROR COME FROM?

My love for horror began with reading R.L. Stine's *Goosebumps* and Lemony Snicket's *A Series Of Unfortunate Events*. Years later, I stumbled upon Stephen King's *IT*, and the *Loser's Club* cemented my passion for the genre.

During a visit to my grandfather's in my teens, we watched a classic horror Halloween special featuring *House of Wax* (1953). I was obsessed with Vincent Price's presence and wicked prowess, even behind a mask. However, if you want to see Vincent Price in his prime, spooky persona, watch *The Diary of a Madman* (1963).



K.C.

BLUME



interview



KCBLUMEBOOKS

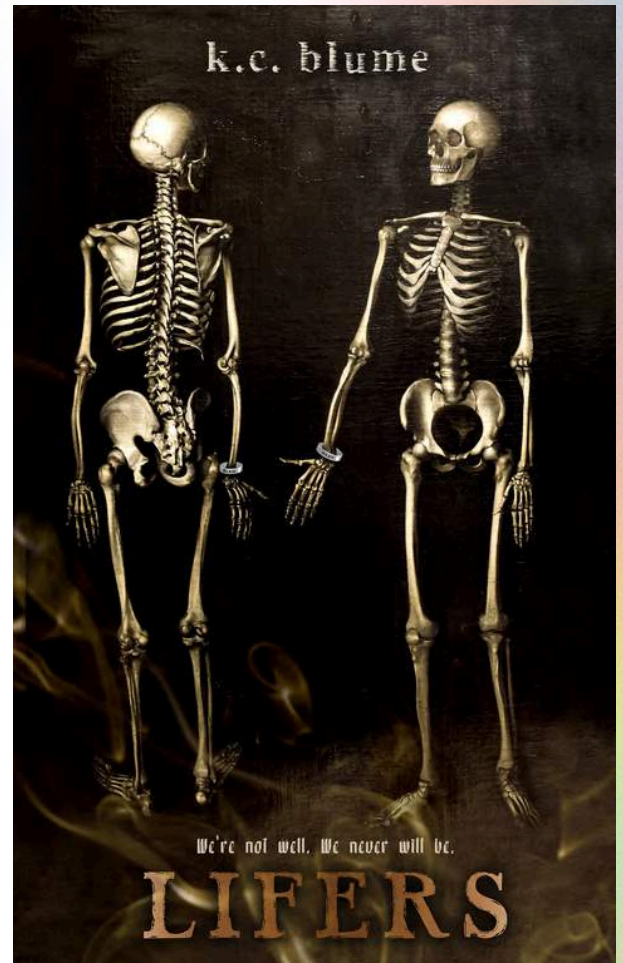


CAN YOU SHARE WITH US A BIT ABOUT LIFERS: A SAPPHIC DARK ROMANCE?

Lifers is a sapphic dark romance novella that details the difficulty of navigating love while also trying to keep a close eye on your own mental health, especially for those of us who have various mental health issues to grapple with. It also touches on the systemic oppression of women in the American healthcare system

HOW DID THIS IDEA COME TO YOU?

I was actually in the middle of writing another book that was supposed to be my debut when Lifers came to me! I was in a little bit of a writing slump and maybe a depressive state. I struggle with depression, anxiety, and OCD myself, and I have family members that have been institutionalized. I often think about the book and movie "Girl, Interrupted", because it had a pretty big impact on me when I first got my OCD diagnosis. So it was definitely inspired by that film.



WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE WRITING JOURNEY OF THIS BOOK?

That bigger isn't always better! The story that you need to tell may only be 100 pages long, and that doesn't make it any less worth telling. Lifers is just a short little novella, I think it's only 98 pages, but the messages I've received from some of my ARC readers are profound. Don't force your hand just because you want a 200 or 300 page book. Your story will write itself.



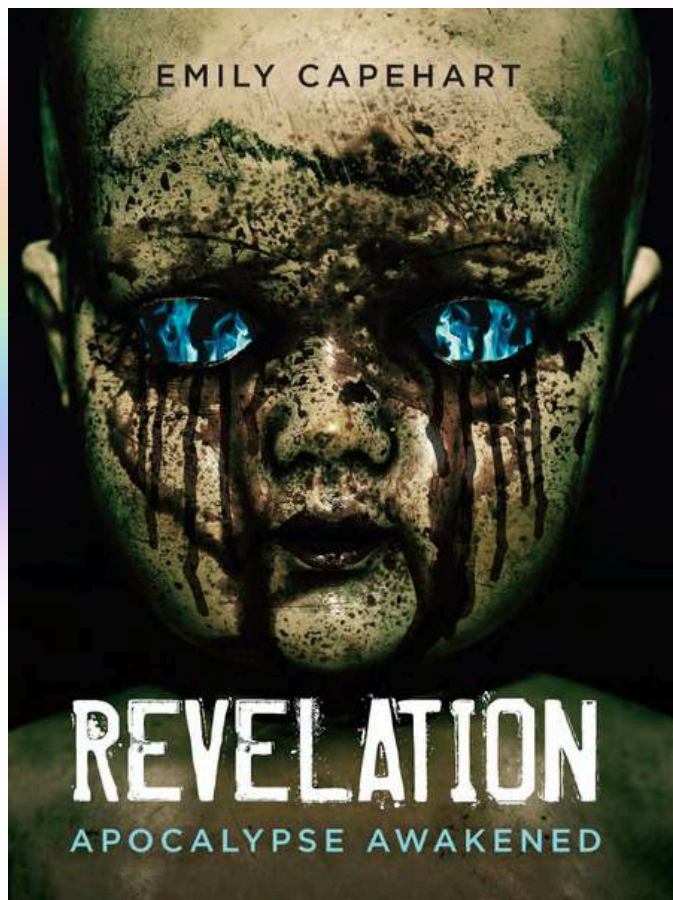
WAS THERE A REASON YOU PICKED THE NAMES RILEY AND BLAIR?

Actually, I chose Blair because of The Blair Witch Project. I don't personally have or want kids, but I've always thought that if I had a daughter I would name her Blair. Since that isn't happening, I named my first book baby "Blair". I chose Riley because I love neutral names. Ones like Alex, Sam, Max, Kai, etc. Riley has always been one of my favorites, so that went to my next character.

I LOVE YOUR COVER! WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

The cover was actually a pre-made that I purchased from @DreamEchoDesigns on Instagram! I saw it way before I was ever even finished with my first draft and loved it. They made a few adjustments for me. I definitely like the insane asylum on the back the best.





When pastor's widow Eleanor Abraham conceives a child in a dark ritual, she claims it is the second coming of Christ. In reality, something much more sinister is afoot.

As Eleanor and her late husband's successor, Pastor Larry, begin delivering fire and brimstone teachings targeting the LGBTQIA+ community, the congregation rallies under the banner of hate. Then Eleanor falls in love with Heather, another female leader at the church, and everything changes.

When Eleanor's child begins to speak to her from the womb, she must join Heather in pursuit of the first seal of the apocalypse. Will Eleanor be able to trust in the power of love? Or is she doomed to a destiny of fear and eternal darkness?



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Queer, horror, is a page-turning that you won't be able to put down.

This is one of the most creepy, uneasy dark books I've read in a while and I quite enjoyed it. I do not want to say anything that will give away a single part of this book. Going in I knew just parts of the blurb and that's it. I say if you like horror, fantasy, and queer stories, then you will enjoy this one.

The world itself was interesting and intense. There are apocalyptic themes throughout. I felt uneasy and like I never knew what was going to happen next. But this is really a story about characters. It's about celebrating identity and growth.

A thrilling queer horror about identity in a chilling story.



DOOM INDIE AUTHOR

mini interview



VESPERDOOM

TELL US ABOUT WHAT YOU WRITE.

I write queer science-fiction and fantasy with a focus on autistic characters, overcoming trauma, and horrors.

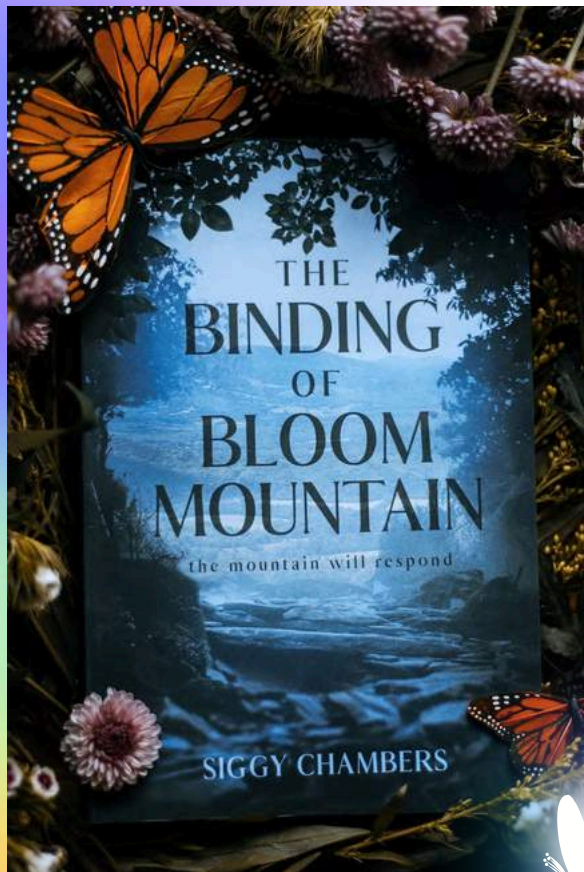
WHERE DID YOU GET THE INSPIRATION TO WRITE ABOUT A CURSED MOUNTAIN?

I live on the outskirts of Appalachia, which is steeped in folklore, and I have read a lot of supernatural fiction with haunted/cursed places like lakes or mountains. In 2021, I noticed that a very large tree grew out of the side/top of a mountain close to the town south of where I live. I wondered what the importance of the tree would be and if there were any rituals associated with it. From that I decided that a cursed mountain and a ritual hike to contain the magic would be an interesting (and hopefully easy) story to write.

WHAT DO YOU WANT READERS TO TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR BOOK?

I'm not sure there's any one thing I want people to take away from my book.

It has a mix of themes: starting over, complex family dynamics, and how being autistic would make a character react to horrific events different to a neurotypical person. I also wrote this while I was undergoing testing for autism and adhd, so that part of the book continues to mean a lot to me.



YOUR COVER, THE BINDING OF BLOOM MOUNTAIN, IS PRETTY. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

I love the misty, kinda hard to see foreground of the cover! It gives the right vibe for the later sections of Bloom. I also love that the mountain in the background is one of the mountains near my home, since it is the basis for the setting.

YOUR BOOK WON BEST ADVENTURE IN THE QUEER INDIE AWARDS. CONGRATULATIONS! HOW DOES THAT HELP? DOES IT MOTIVATE YOU TO WRITE MORE OR DOES IT PUT MORE PRESSURE ON YOU?

Thank you! I think that winning an award really made me realize that people like my book. I've had mixed feelings about it since publishing, but since winning the award, I feel better about it overall. It helps whenever I'm having problems with my current WIPS.



STEPHANIE ROSE *interview*

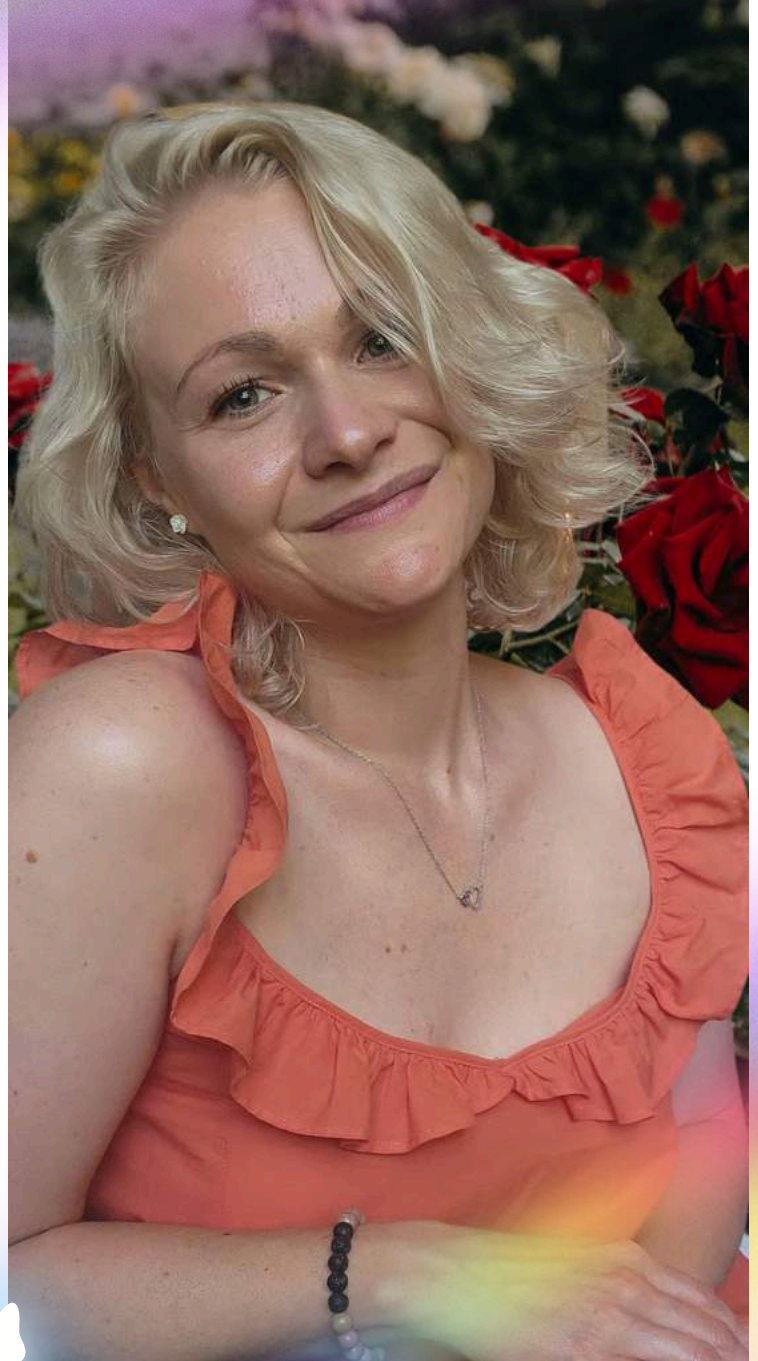


STEPHROSE1201

PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU WRITE ABOUT.

I'm honored to share what I write about! I'm a multi-genre author; as a self-published author I write Greek mythology horror and released a series, ANGRY GREEK GODS, which follows certain underrated Greek gods who have kind of lost their temper and are rebelling against Olympus. It takes place in modern times, with a human protagonist investigating all the issues the gods cause on earth. Also as a self-published author I'll soon be releasing a historical romance, THE GOLDEN FLOWER, which is a story about a young duchess and her progression towards marrying a crown prince, and all the obstacles in her way. It's a slow-burn love story with complicated politics, set in late 1700s in a fictional country with French & British influence.

On Wattpad, I write primarily contemporary steamy romance (mostly billionaire romance), spooky ghosty stories, and I dabble in light sci-fi.



WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

I'm currently not writing, though I will be soon - I have some sequels to work on for some of my Wattpad steamy romances. I'm also waiting on additional editing feedback from my editor for THE GOLDEN FLOWER, and hope to share a cover reveal for it soon! Mostly these days I'm just prepping and creating graphics and promotional stuff through Canva.

I READ ON YOUR INSTAGRAM YOU WRITE GREEK MYTH HORROR STORIES. WHAT DRAWS YOU TO THOSE TOPICS AND THEMES?

I love Greek mythology. I grew obsessed with it after watching the first Percy Jackson movie (I know, not representative of the books) and did tons and tons of research, never knowing I'd use that research one day to write a book. I actually tried writing several books with Greek gods, but they never stuck until **CARNIVOROUS CUPID**. The inspiration from this book came from a popular song, "Cupid carries a gun", which had me suddenly thinking: okay, but what if Cupid was evil? And maybe not a gun but poisoned arrows...? I'm pretty sure I developed the entire plot for the story in a matter of hours. To me, it had to be gory - which was a first for me, as I never wrote horror before that point. It had to be gross and gruesome, and let me tell you, the research I had to do for that one... phew it was rough. But I'm happy with the result; a few readers compared the story to a Quentin Tarantino version of Percy Jackson



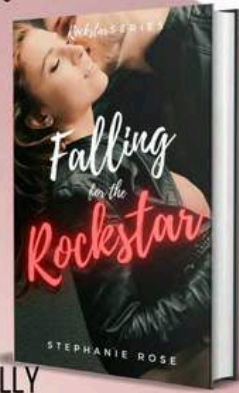
I ALSO SAW THAT YOU USE WATTPAD. CAN YOU SHARE WITH USE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED AND FIND HELPFUL FROM USING WATTPAD?

Wattpad can be a great tool though it's not for everyone. I've been on there for nearly 10 years now, and I've found it to be super helpful for sharing my stories and getting feedback. I've learned to schedule posts and pay attention to reader comments and what they like. It's a totally different market from book publishing; Wattpad readers are looking for super engaging, super immediate stories with short paragraphs and lots of dialogue. I've had to adjust my overly flowery stories many times to accommodate. I think Wattpad is a great place to start off; if you're not sure about publishing, not sure how your stories will reach their audience or what the reaction will be, I recommend posting there on a weekly schedule, and engaging with readers and other authors. You may end up publishing after that, or who knows, Wattpad might be interested in your stories to feature them and help them grow

Steamy Rockstar Romance

SPICY

BILLIONAIRE
FAKE-DATING
CELEBRITY ROMANCE
LOVE TRIANGLE
JÉALOUS-POSSÉSSIVE
MORALLY GRAY
THE PLAYBOY
INSTA-LUST
SEX GOD
BAD BOY
HAPPILY EVER AFTER... EVENTUALLY
LOVEABLE ROGUE
LGBTQIA+ REP
RICH VS. POOR
CHILDHOOD CRUSH
DON'T MEET YOUR IDOLS
FAN-GIRL
GROUPIE LOVE



ONGOING ON **wattpad**



Greek mythology horror

FALLEN CUPID

MÜRDÈR MYSTERY
GOD IN HUMAN FORM

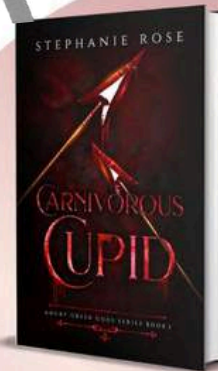
FAMILY ISSUES
RELUCTANT HERO
RÈVENGE

MORALLY GRAY
GRAPHIC GÖRE

OCCULT DETECTIVE
RELIGIOUS HÖRRÖR

EVERYONE IS A SUSPECT
MÜRDÈRÈR POV

ALL MYTHS ARE TRUE



FULL SERIES AVAILABLE ON

amazon

EBOOK, PAPERBACK, HARBACK



ALISON GERVAIS

interview

ALISONAUTHORGERVAIS 

PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT A GAME MOST FOUL IS ABOUT.

A Game Most Foul tells a story about an aspiring young writer by the name of Jules Montgomery, who is set to spend the summer in London attending a prestigious writing seminar. Jules has a rocky start after having struggled with writer's block while dealing with her progressive hearing loss over the last year, but she soon settles in and even makes a few new friends. But when one of those new friends disappears while on a day trip to Oxford, Jules finds herself caught up in a century's old mystery full of unexpected twists and turns that ensure it will be a summer she'll never forget.

YOUR STORY BROUGHT CLASSIC CHARACTERS WATSON AND HOLMES TO THE MODERN WORLD. ARE THERE ANY OTHER CLASSIC CHARACTERS WHO YOU THINK WOULD BE FUN TO BRING INTO THE MODERN WORLD AND WHY?

What a fun question. I happen to be a huge Jane Austen fan, so I wonder how a modern-day Mr. Darcy or Elizabeth Bennett might come to life. These characters are so beloved and have been for so long that I imagine there is a whole slew of stories waiting to be told taking place at a modern-day Pemberly.

YOUR BOOK COVER HAS A CLASSIC MYSTERY FEEL TO IT. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

I love how the silhouette of Sherlock Holmes turned out! The deerstalker hat and the pipe are so recognizable, yet not necessarily at the forefront of the cover. It's eye-catching and I appreciate that the team at Blink YA let me offer input as the cover came to life.



WHAT'S A TIP YOU HAVE FOR WRITING MYSTERIES?

I think what I found most useful while writing A Game Most Foul was allowing myself to rewrite certain scenes as often as I felt I needed to – particularly scenes that focused on the central mystery of the story. It might take more time, but it will be worth it in the long run when you're (mostly) satisfied with the result!

REVIEW IN
NEXT ISSUE!



MY TOP 5 QUEER BOOKS

with CARLOS

CARLOS RIVERA AUTHOR 

My name's Carlos E. Rivera. I'm a Hispanic writer, living in Costa Rica. I'm the writer of the best-selling, award-winning horror trilogy, "White Harbor" (Book 1: "The Local Truth", Book 2: "Blackout", and Book 3: "A Hole in the World" coming October 2024) As an anxious, introverted, gay kid growing up in Costa Rica during the 80s and 90s, my refuge was escaping into and devouring sci-fi, fantasy, drama, crime thrillers, and above all things, HORROR.

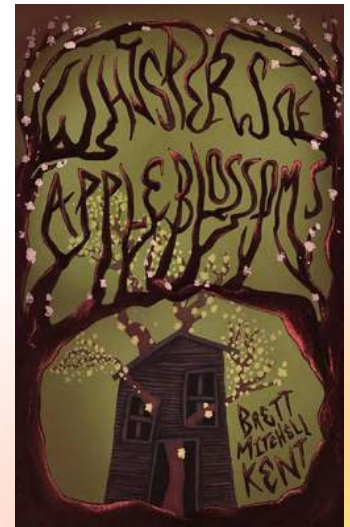
I like to take themes relatable to everyone, but which the queer community in particular can see themselves in: topics of found family and feeling like an outsider, mixed with themes of familial, religious, and gender-based trauma, sprinkled with a bit of my country's folk stories, resulting in what I think is a peculiar blend that might feel is familiar but unknown. For me, that's the foundation of horror: something mundane and relatable that, seen from the right angle, seems a bit askew.



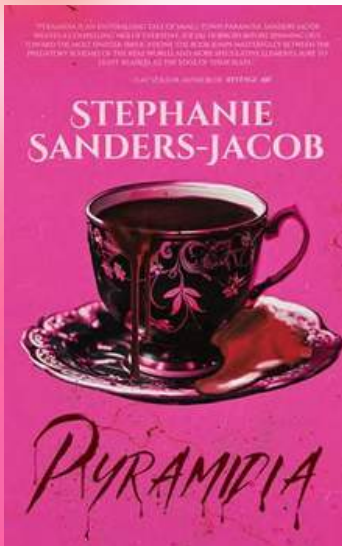
"Haunted Places & Other Stories" by Mark Allan Gunnells - This is a collection of queer horror stories that charmed me from the end of the brief introductory story; it's so unapologetically gay, it might feel jarring to any non-queer people, because it's one of those things people prefer not to discuss about being a gay man. What follows is a series of very varied tales that show case Gunnells's ability to infuse humanity and care into his characters.



"Whispers of Apple Blossoms" by Brett Mitchell Kent - If you like a bit of a love story infused with horror. This is a story of love, loss, and haunting heartbreak. There's something very sweet in the prose that intermingles with the horror. It's a slow burn, which tends to clash with today's short attention spans, but please stick it out and soak it in. There's so much heart in this story that makes it extremely rewarding.



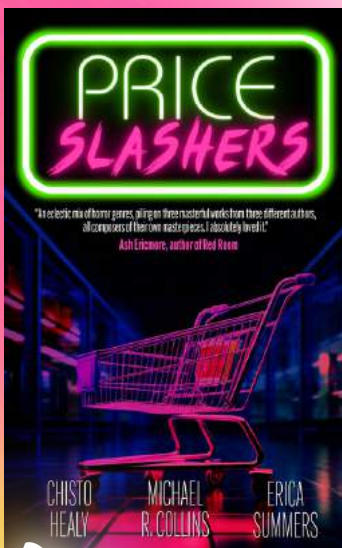
"Pyramidia" by Stephanie Sanders-Jacob - An anxious introvert's nightmare. This book takes the most predatory tendencies of MLM's and pyramid schemes and turns them into literal predators stealing your life and mental health. This is one of those stories that feels askew and sort of "quirky" at first but catches you off-guard when you realize things have spun out of control... kind of like with an actual MLM.



"The Count" by David-Jack Fletcher - This is a weird one, but a good one! It's vampires, but not really. Haunted houses, but not really. Possession, but not really. It's surreal, bloody, bizarre, infuriating, and tragic, and does a great job at trans representation that feels so natural and effortless I wish the whole world would take a note from David-Jack's penchant for writing flawed but engaging queer characters.



"Price Slashers" by Chisto Healy, Michael R. Collins, and Erica Summers - I wanted to list more authors than five, so let's close with one hell of a combo. Three authors with the same prompt: "Melissa comes out of a grocery store covered in blood..." This runs the gamut from a serial killer investigation, to eldritch otherworldly cosmic horror, to extreme splatter. This is a sample platter that should make you go and read the other works by these authors.



YVONNE

interview



YVONNE.KNOP

KNOP

PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT A CASE OF MADNESS IS ABOUT.

A Case of Madness is about Andrew, a middle-aged closeted man who gets fired from his job and falls in love with a man the same day. He is overwhelmed by his emotions and starts talking to Sherlock Holmes, his favourite fictional character and persistent hallucination. It's a story about self-discovery, love, friendship, and acceptance.

YOUR BOOK IS GRUMPY FALLS FOR A CINNAMON ROLL. WHERE DOES YOUR LOVE FOR THIS TROPE COME FROM?

Since I was a teenager this was my favourite trope. I guess it's rooted in my belief that everyone is good at their core and that everyone has a soft spot for something.

WHO'S TWO OR THREE QUEER WRITERS YOU FEEL MORE READERS SHOULD READ AND HOW DO THEY MAKE YOU WANT TO KEEP WRITING?

I always recommend the classics, because they made me want to explore queer literature and create my own stories: Jeanette Winterson (Oranges are not the only fruit), E. M. Forster (Maurice), James Baldwin (Giovanni's Room)

IS THERE A SEQUEL OR SPIN-OFF PLANNED?

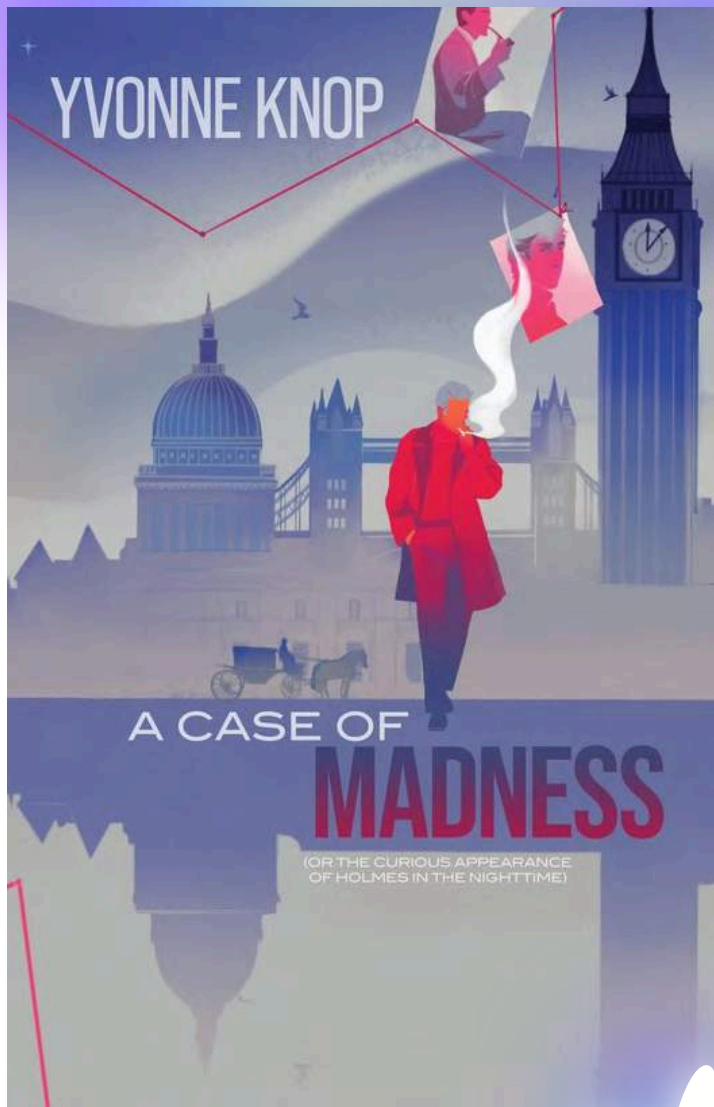
The sequel is partly written and I plan to finish it this year. However, another project got in the way.



I LOVE THE VIBE OF YOUR COVER. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

The cover was chosen by my publisher, but I'm happy with how it turned out. I like the Sherlockian London vibes. My favourite part is the little picture where the main protagonists hug.





I just got sacked. I was hit by a bus. I'm permanently drunk. I have cancer. I'm inescapably gay. And, incidentally, I've fallen in love with a stranger whose life I saved.

My name is Andrew Thomas, newly-unemployed Sherlock Holmes scholar, and I don't know how to do any of this.

I know only Holmes can help me untangle this madness, and he isn't real. Except he absolutely appeared in my house, told me I'm in love with a man I just met, and then in a fit of pique I sent him away.

Maybe he's a hallucination or a specter or a ghost (pick one?), but now I desperately need Holmes' help. So to find the answer to my case and the man of my dreams, I'm chasing a fictional character through London with my very own Watson (hi Mina).

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ll

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A queer mystery, Sherlock Holmes, what more could you want?

First I have to say going in I knew this dealt with cancer and as someone who's dealt with that before it's a topic that I find hard to read. But between Sherlock Holmes, queerness, and the mystery I was hoping it would be easy to not concentrate on that. For the most part, I was able to not think about it but that is my personal experience. I don't think the author was over the top or anything like that.

The plot and the mystery were well planned out and unfolded nicely. I wasn't bored with the mystery or the romance of this book. Both are balanced and fun to read about.

I am a sucker for Sherlock Holmes, the shows, movies, books, books inspired by Sherlock Holmes, and so on. That's why I love that it was cheeky, charming, and witty seeing Holmes and Andrew play off each other, how they are weaved together, and how it played out.

The author is good at writing, from the blooming romance to the wit of these characters. I would say there are a few content warnings so I would look them up if needed. But if you like books set in London, about growth and mysteries, then you might enjoy this.

POPPY

mini-interview



ONEBIGSTORYVERSE

HAVOC



TELL US A BIT ABOUT WHAT YOU WRITE?

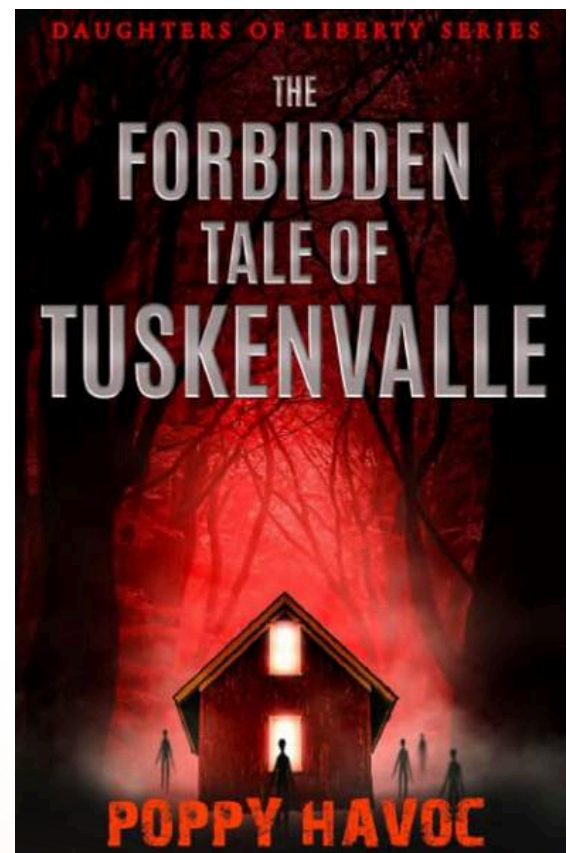
I'm heavily influenced by mental health issues, emotional affairs, and relationship dramas. I love to write about strong fictional women. No, not the kind that are 200 pounds and beat the shit out of men, but the (practically-possible) ones who are competent enough to handle their responsibilities and burdens and know how to ask (and take) help when they need one; be assertive and also be a feminist without exhibiting misandristic characteristics. But throughout my stories, they mostly learn how to do that stuff and evolve as they age and experience life. Talk about genre: I write psychological thrillers with a blend of supernatural Fantasy and horror. Oh, and drama. There will be a lot of drama.

WHAT'S YOUR TIP ON WRITING HORROR?

Write what scares you the most. Definitely, there are plenty out there with the same kind of fear. It will also be easier for you to capture the emotion on the pages since you have first hand experience on it. And make it as graphic or psychological as you can. Whichever fits your style, genre and does justice to the kind of fear you choose. Personally, I love to write slasher when combined with paralysis. Also I'm afraid of the consequences of forgetting something. (Yeah, I know! That's too specific) You can see this throughout my novel, Drop Dead Darlings.

CAN YOU TELL US WHAT YOU ARE WORKING ON NOW?

Book 2 of Drop Dead Darlings, obviously. In the previous book, one of the three friends, Opia, vanishes without a trace. Throughout the book, her whereabouts was a mystery. There were some questions left unanswered, some things needed tying up... So in the book 2, I'm aiming to resolve all that, plus build on the lives of the survivors from the previous book. But it's such a complex plot and also I'm planning to make it a standalone. I have been taking long breaks, I mean months, between writing parts of it, just to get the perspective right.



Shane
Blackheart



SHANEBLACKHEART



Dark fantasy or Contemporary

Dark fantasy always. I can't really relate to most contemporary stories.



Short books or Long Books

Short books these days.

Books about Demons or Books about Dragons

Books about demons (but I may be biased since I like to write about them)

Action scenes or **Emotional scenes**

Emotional scenes. Action scenes are too hard for me to visualize.

Tea or Coffee

I can't choose, I like both!

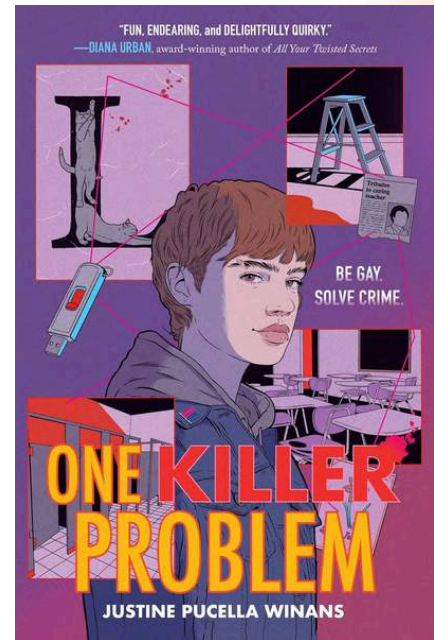
THIS OR THAT

BOOK *mini* REVIEWS



YA Queer dystopian of Andrew and Jamie who are facing storms, and old enemies, but can love overcome?

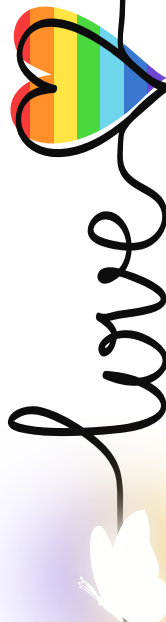
This is the second book in All That's Left in the World. I love dystopia and it's queer so I was ready for the second book as soon as I finished the first one. We get to see Andrew and Jamie's relationship form in this dangerous world. I enjoyed the talk of community, trust, and the unsureness of what will happen next. Erik's writing is some of my favorite YA writing, as he's good at tension, talking about important topics, and having them woven neatly into the plot. I like the world that these characters live in, and the discussion of the environment and global warming. If you like queer YA dystopian mixed with romance and drama, perfect summer read.



A YA queer murder mystery of who did it, found families, and putting the clues together to solve the unknown.

We are following Gigi who finds herself in detention, but when she and her friends receive a mysterious email that leads them to her favorite teacher's classroom where they find him lying in a pool of blood.

The author does a great job of building up suspense giving reasonable clues that help us, the reader, put together the pieces without taking away from the story. I enjoyed the characters, they are well-rounded. It's overall just a fun read with a mystery that's on a darker, wittier, side. I haven't read anything else by Justine Pucella Winans, but I want to. The dark wittiness of this book is entertaining.





romance



PAGES 109-125

BUBBLY SWEET QUEER ROMANCE

interview

MARGHERITA SCIALLA



THEMARGHERITA.S



THEMARGHERITA.S

SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU WRITE.

Hello! My name is Margherita Scialla and I write all kinds of queer stories (contemporary, romance and fantasy). I always try to diversity the type of queer representation I write in each of my books because I want everyone in the lgbtqia2s+ community to feel represented, and my stories up to now all have had some type of slice-of-life or cozy element. As of now my books are all mostly feel-good, but I have darker stories in the work as well (especially for the fantasy wips).

TELL US WHAT BY YOUR SIDE: A QUEERPLATONIC SHORT STORY IS ABOUT?

By Your Side is the story of a woman who's very unlucky with relationships. She lives with her two best friends, and she has platonic feelings for one of them, but she never felt like she was allowed to act on her feelings and so she kept trying to date "normally". None of these relationships worked, however, and her latest one ends up in her being cheated on. Our mc, Emma, tries to get over the hurt of the breakup while her friend Noah takes care of her, but when he's so kind to her it's harder for Emma to ignore just how deeply she cares for him.

IS THERE A SCENE IN YOUR BOOK, BY YOUR SIDE, THAT YOU LOVE THE MOST? WHY?

My current favorite scene is the bedroom scene, when Emma comes back after the party and Noah comforts her. I just love platonic feelings in general, and platonic cuddles are just the best.

I'm actually in the process of rewriting By Your Side. The core of the story will remain the same, but I want to make it slightly longer and improve the representation. So... my favorite scene might change soon. I also have bigger plans for the future that will be connected to this story.

YOUR COVER IS ADORABLE! WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

My favorite part of the cover is the cozyness of it (pillow forts?? hell yeah) and the soft way Emma and Noah are looking at each other.



SURPRISE
RE-RELEASE



available as paperback & ebook

previously published as "By Your Side"

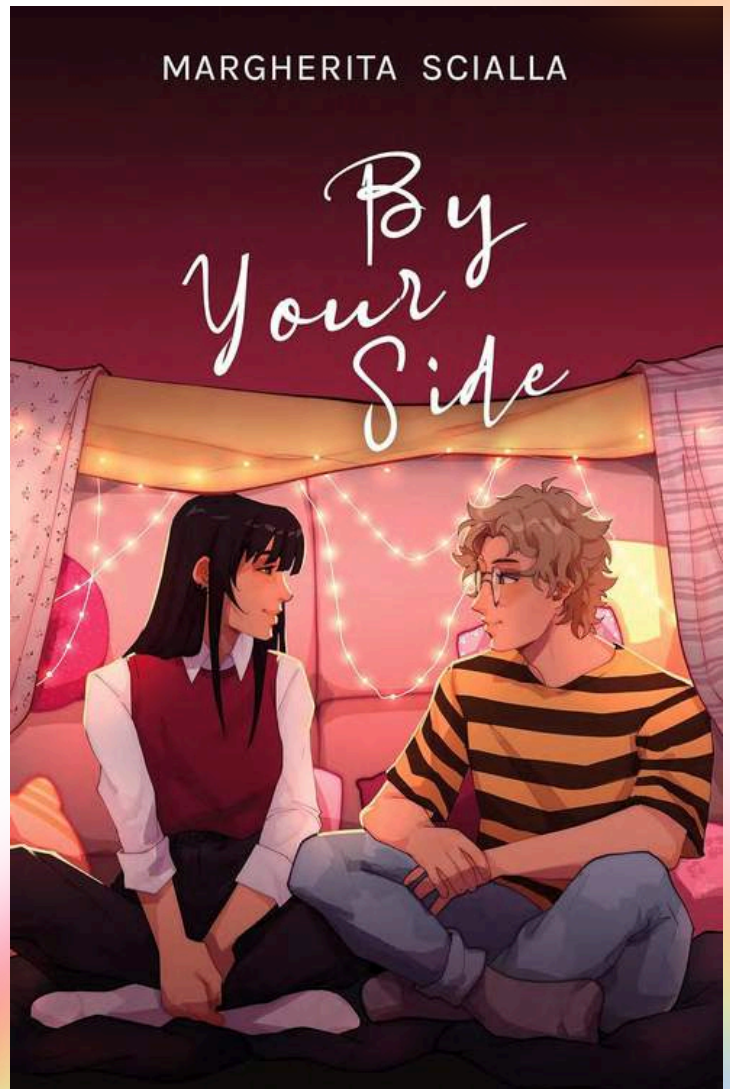
WHAT ARE THE MAIN THEMES IN YOUR BOOK, AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT TO YOU?

I think the main theme is the complicated nature of feelings and how heteronormativity has made it harder for people to even question most of their "habits" or thoughts. In the rewritten version I want to delve deeper into Emma's confusion and into the discussion of what is romantic feelings and what isn't.



Emma's relationship ends abruptly when she comes across her boyfriend cheating on her at a party. Yet another failed relationship brings her repressed platonic feelings for one of her best friends to the surface once more.

Emma's scared to voice her worries and desires, but even if she manages to bring up how she feels, how will Noah react to such a revelation?



A bubbly sweet queer novella about the growth of friendship.

We start with a heartbreak for Emma when out of nowhere she finds out her boyfriend is cheating on her. This brings up repressed feelings for one of her best friends. From there we get to see them bloom and blossom. This is only 56 pages, read it in one day and was left wanting more by this author. It's a joy seeing these friends grow and embrace themselves. You can't help but root for them.

This queer novella with sweet characters is a fun read for a sunny day.

M.H. Cali

MHCALIWRITES



Bright cover or Dark covers

- It depends on the vibe of the book. I genuinely love both.

Happy endings or Bittersweet endings

- Again, can't choose. I prefer Happy Endings, but sometimes they don't make sense and a greatly written bittersweet one can have such an impact.

Single POV or **Multiple POV**

Library or **Bookshop**

Sweet or **Salty**

Sunset or Sunrise

As the threats toward Lucas escalate, he and Raven find themselves at a crossroad.

While they carefully navigate what it means to them to be in a relationship, and reflect on what they truly want out of the future, their enemies seem determined to bring Lucas to his knees.

But what are those people truly after?

The consequences of this unraveling are far-reaching, unavoidably resulting in tension and life-defining choices for the new couple. Although a relentless disarray is undeniably creeping inside their existences, in the midst of the chaos, a slew of questions are begging to be answered. Can they make the most out of the cards they were dealt? Or will the recent events lead them to their doom?

Even what exactly are they willing to sacrifice to stay true to themselves?

The answers might very well seal their fate.



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Breaking Patterns picks up where Balancing Entropy leaves off with Raven and Lucas. There are many things I enjoy about this book but mostly that it's just fun. I enjoy seeing their relationship and I like that they are working on it, there are not any toxins. The side characters, and the friends help make this story feel more round and flushed out. I don't want to talk too much about the plot but there were some twists and turns, the mystery, the blackmailer, and the surprise.

More people should have this on their summer reading list as you won't wanna put it down, can't help but root for the romance, and the mystery will keep you hooked for hours.

I like M.H. Cali's writing style, the charming romance makes you care for them. The mystery and how it all unfolds is addicting. And that ending... I need the next right away.

Romance facing and dealing with mysteries is a wild ride in this page-turner of a book.

REVIEW

QUEER, ROMANTIC, SUSPENSE

interview

ARDEN COUTTS



ARDENCOUTTS

ARDEN COUTTS



TELL US ABOUT FALL INTO
MIDNIGHT.

Fall Into Midnight is my debut novel. It's a queer romantic suspense book that follows our genderfluid bouncer, Gray, and our bookish ER doctor, Hannah. On a rare night out Hannah goes to Club Midnight where she meets the mysterious female bouncer Gray. It's a case of instalove and as they navigate their feelings for one another, Gray finds out that someone is trying to kill Hannah. There's romance, spice, instalove, and a vindictive ex!



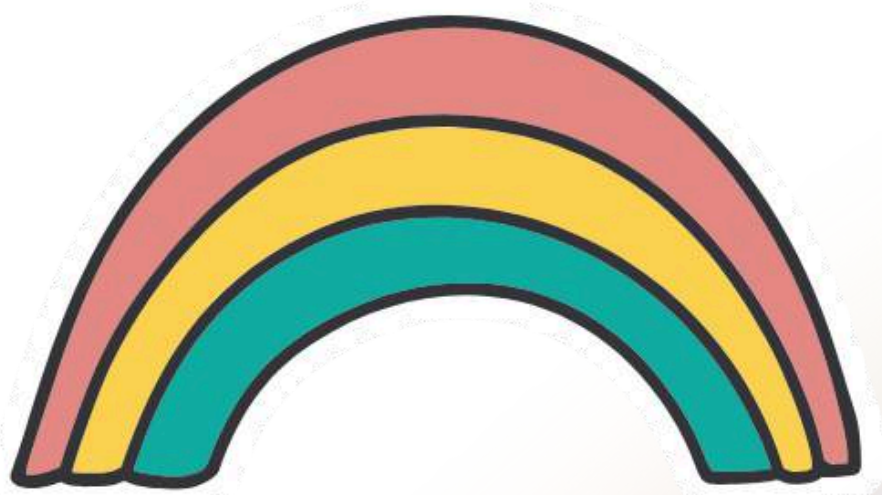
I LOVE YOUR COVER. WHAT IS
YOUR FAVORITE PART OF
YOUR COVER?

I love that it looks like a painting and that you can't tell if Gray is male or female. I wanted Gray to look very androgynous and I think the artist nailed it.



YOUR BOOKSTORE HAS A PAPERBACK WITH A SWAG DEAL FOR FALL INTO
MIDNIGHT. CAN YOU SHARE WITH US ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE SWAG PIECES?

The character cards! I'm a huge kpop fan and when you purchase a kpop album you usually get a photocard along with it of one of the members of the band. I wanted to do something similar with my book. I actually listened to a lot of kpop while writing Fall Into Midnight so it felt very fitting. When you order the swag deal you get several character cards, each is a beautiful character illustration done by @ artchamaleon (IG account). He does amazing work!



ARDEN COUTTS

IF YOU COULD CONVERSE WITH ANY OF YOUR CHARACTERS, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

What a great question! I think I would chat with Gray. Both Gray and Hannah represent parts of myself. Gray is the confident, strong individual that I wish I was, and Hannah represents my anxiety and insecurity. I would love to talk with Gray about what it takes to be confident, and how they've overcome their fear of judgement and how they've become so resilient.



DO YOU BELIEVE THAT BOOKS HAVE THE POWER TO CHANGE SOCIETY? IF SO, HOW DOES THIS BELIEF INFLUENCE YOUR WRITING?

Absolutely! I don't know where I would be today without books. I grew up in a very rural place and my escape was reading. It broadened my imagination and allowed for me to live a thousand different lives. I hope that my books can do the same for others. I want my writing to be an escape from reality, to open people's hearts and minds to different worlds and to show people that you can still find yourself in your 30s and 40s and can still find love!

“I want my writing to be an escape from reality...”



MY TOP 5 QUEER BOOKS

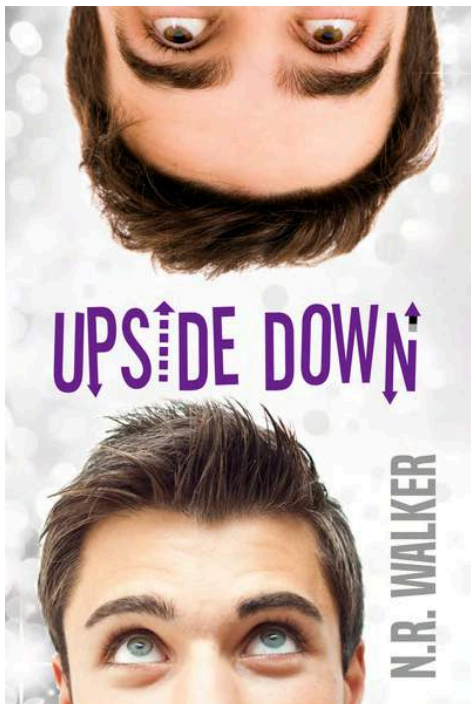
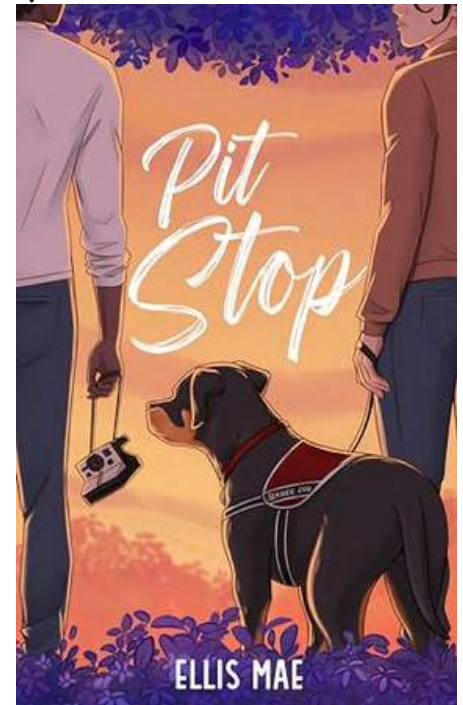
with JAN



JAN35104974

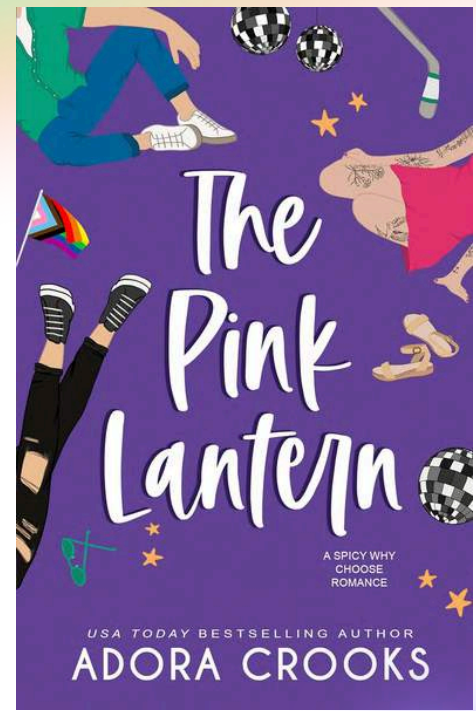
Hi, my name is Jan (she/they), and I am an asexual bookstagrammer who loves reading about diverse and queer stories. My Instagram handle is @jan35104974, where I mainly shed light on queer stories across different genres. I think it is really important to uplift stories that feature different relationship dynamics and LGBTQA+ characters because it's important for people to have representation and for them to be seen. These are five independently published queer books I've recently enjoyed reading that feature intricate storylines and wonderfully written characters.

Pit Stop by Ellis Mae is a captivating adult fiction novel that features exceptional representation across multiple marginalized identities. The story follows a diverse cast of POC main characters, including those with disabilities and those in the transgender community, navigating a quick-paced yet deeply moving narrative. From the very first page, Mae skillfully weaves together threads of adversity and triumph, crafting a textured story that immerses readers in the lived experiences of these multifaceted protagonists. The book is both lyrical and moving, allowing the plot to move forward with a sense of breathless urgency while simultaneously leaving space for subtle character development and touching emotional scenes. Readers will find themselves fully invested in the characters' journeys, whether it's witnessing the challenges they overcome or the joyful moments that bring them together. Underlying the low-stakes drama is a powerful message about the importance of representation and allyship, as Mae uplifts marginalized voices and perspectives in a way that feels authentic and impactful. Pit Stop is a must-read for anyone seeking fiction that not only entertains but also enlightens and inspires.



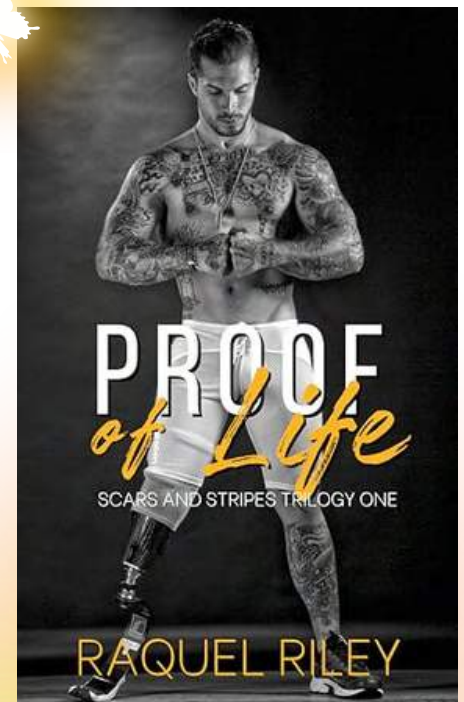
Upside Down by N.R. Walker is a delightfully heartfelt adult fiction novel that offers a refreshing take on asexual representation. With a humorous and low-anxiety storyline, the book follows the journey of a protagonist who navigates the complexities of relationships and self-discovery. Walker's vivid and relatable story allows readers to fully immerse themselves in the characters' emotional journeys, whether it's the protagonist's struggle to understand their own identity or the development of a genuine, supportive connection with their love interest. What sets this novel apart is the way it seamlessly integrates asexual representation without making it the sole focus of the narrative. Instead, it is woven organically into the fabric of the story, allowing readers who identify as asexual to feel seen and understood. The result is a heartwarming, humorous, and ultimately uplifting tale that celebrates the beauty of love in all its forms and helps readers feel a little less alone in their own experiences.

The Pink Lantern by Adora Crooks is a captivating adult fiction novel that dives into the beauty of polyamory with non-binary representation. The story follows a protagonist whose love interest uses she/they pronouns as well as navigating the intricacy of a sapphic relationship within a polyamorous dynamic. Crooks's skilled storytelling immerses readers in a world, where the characters' identities and experiences are treated with the utmost care and respect. Through vivid descriptions and authentic dialogue, the novel explores the joys and challenges of embracing one's true self, while also highlighting the importance of communication, trust, and mutual understanding within the context of non-traditional relationships. The Pink Lantern is not only a compelling work of fiction but also a powerful exploration of the diversity of human experiences, and the unique perspectives they bring to the table.



By the Pint by Gemma Croft is a captivating adult fantasy romance that immerses readers in a richly imagined setting. Croft's skilled worldbuilding and immersive storytelling transport readers to a realm where the fantastical and the familiar coexist, creating a sense of wonder and enchantment. At the heart of the narrative is a tear-jerking romance that blossoms against the backdrop of this intricate fantasy setting. Croft's use of vivid descriptions allows readers to fully immerse themselves in the characters' emotional journeys, whether it's the thrill of a budding connection or the heartache of navigating the challenges that stand in their way. What sets this novel apart is the way it seamlessly blends the fantastical and the relatable, creating a reading experience that is both escapist and deeply resonant. By the Pint is a must-read for fans of adult fantasy fiction who crave a story that is both imaginative and profoundly moving.

Proof of Life by Raquel Riley is a powerful adult fiction novel that explores the complexities of bisexual identity with disability representation. The story follows a protagonist navigating the challenges of their bisexual awakening while also grappling with the realities of living with a disability. Riley's skilled storytelling delves into the emotional nuances of this journey, crafting a narrative that is both heartbreaking and ultimately uplifting. Readers will be captivated by the protagonist's resilience and the way they navigate the intersections of their identity, as well as the compelling military-based storyline that adds depth and intrigue to the overall plot. Riley's use of vivid language and touching characterization ensures that readers will be fully invested in the characters' lives, feeling the weight of their struggles and the joy of their triumphs. Proof of Life is a must-read for anyone seeking fiction that not only entertains but also challenges preconceptions and sheds light on the lived experiences of people who live with different challenges.



KACEY *interview* SOPHIA



AUTHORKACEYSOPHIA

TELL US A BIT ABOUT AN ARTIST'S DREAM.

An Artist's Dream is short, romantic story which follows Kaia, her family and friend Evah in Zante, Greece. I was inspired to write this whilst I was actually on holiday in Greece, sunbathing. I've always been a writer, having kept many journals and even writing on Wattpad when I was younger. But I knew I had a good story and had to write it down. An Artist's Dream deals with difficult topics such as chronic illness, anxiety, coping with death and heartache. Although it is short, it really takes you into the world of Kaia and how she meets the mysterious Maverick, who really turns her world upside down.

HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH OR CHOOSE YOUR CHARACTERS' NAMES KAIA AND MAVERICK?

I came up with my main characters names whilst I was on my sun-bed one morning. The name Kaia is slightly inspired by my own and Maverick was inspired by Top Gun, a film that my partner and I love. Maverick is definitely very cheeky but he has a good heart and cares for his family. I'm very proud of these two characters and how they blossom together.

THIS IS YOUR DEBUT NOVELLA. WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THIS WRITING JOURNEY?

I've learnt that it is tricky. Success may not always come instantly and it's about being kind to yourself as well.

In the first few months, I wanted to do well and would over compare myself to others. It's important to remind yourself that we're all on a journey, and that it doesn't matter if it doesn't sell 1000 copies instantly. If it sells one copy, then I am happy and it means I've gained traction. I've also learnt a lot from other indie authors, as well as my readers who have helped me to improve my writing. I am very grateful for them.

I SAW ON YOUR IG THAT YOU HOST AN INDIE AUTHOR LIVE Q&A. HOW DID THIS COME ABOUT AND WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT HOSTING AN INDIE AUTHOR LIVE Q&A?

The cover is absolutely amazing, designed by Acacia from Ever After Cover Design. I love the way my two main characters are standing opposite one another and the way that Kaia is holding a paintbrush, her passion is art and I really wanted to display that. I have worked with Acacia again for my second book, the sequel to An Artist's Dream and she did an amazing job again. Thank you so much to her and the team.

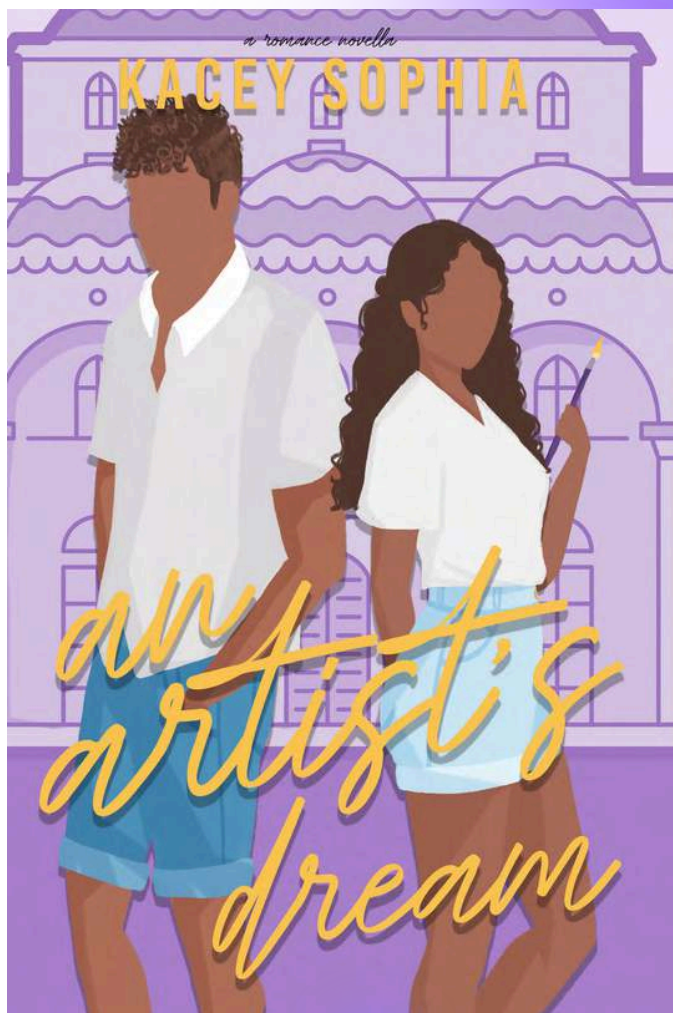
YOUR COVER IS ADORABLE! WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?



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Kaia has been living in Zante, Greece alongside her best friend Evah, her father and her grandmother. Her life seems normal until a young man named Maverick knocks her perfect painted world off its easel. A romance brews between the two but will Maverick's secret threaten to break them? Through Kaia's eyes, Maverick is confident and maybe a little full of himself, but intriguing nonetheless. The problem? He's up and down like a plane in turbulence, causing her frustration. Will she and Evah like his sudden proposition? Follow Kaia and Maverick as they learn more about one another and why they may need each other more than they think.



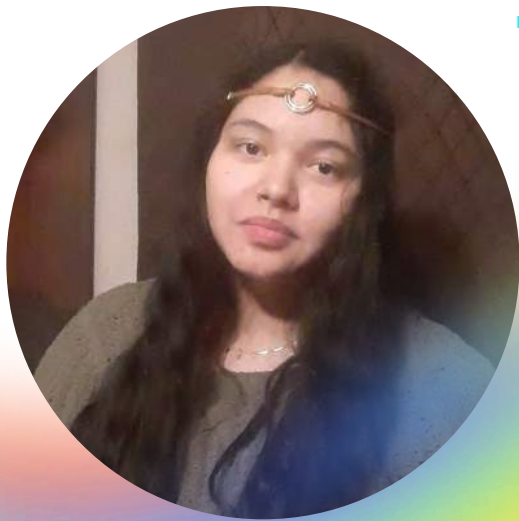
Fluffy and sweet, this romance novella will sweep you away.

This novella is just under 100 pages and it's just cozy. I'm not going to get into the plot too much because I don't want to spoil anything. Truthfully, I think if you like romance, family, following a dream, with a dash of drama, then I think you might enjoy this one.

It's set in Greece, a setting I want to read more about. I had fun with the backdrop of the story. I liked that Kaia has a dream and a passion. The family and the family's hotel were so fun to read about, I love it when there's a family business as it just adds so much more drama to the story. This is Kacey's debut, when reading you can kinda tell that this is a debut. But the author does have skills at writing different elements, and weaving plots together; it's easy to get lost in. It's a story with twists and turns. It's a character-driven book and a good way to spend a sunny day. If you need content warnings there are a few light ones like chronic illness, so please look them up if needed.

Trouble arrives along with a new face, Kaia is chasing her dream while balancing her family's hotel and romance in a wild read that will leave you wanting the next one.





THIS OR THAT



Esme Rosè

ITSESME_.ROSE



Paper Back or **Hardcover**
Tea or Coffee

Morning Reader or Night Reader

Short Books or **Long Books**

Audiobooks or **ebooks**

Dog-ear or **bookmarks**

Buy or Borrow

Series or Standalone

To everyone I've loved before,
Little things I remember.
To everyone I've loved before,
Negative dissipates around you.
To everyone I've loved before,
Know that you saved me.
To everyone I've loved before,
I still love you.

Forget Them, Please is a poetry collection for everyone I've loved before.



Real, raw, and heartbreaking poetry that shines a light into young love.

This was a fast read, finished in just one sitting and I enjoyed it. The middle and end of the book were more enjoyable to me.

You can feel the poet's pain and hurt, but also the overcoming and new beginnings. I am open to reading more by Esme Rosè as there are feelings in her words. There are some topics in here that some readers may want to know about so look up content if you need them.

I liked the poems, Colors Undone, Little Things, Scar Tissue. I highlighted a few lines, but "Securing my heart like the walls of my tower." is good.

Poetry about young love and the power that love has.

BLURB

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FEEL

SKYE ERIKSON



SKYEERIKSONBOOKS

interview

PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU WRITE.

I enjoy writing anything from poetry and music to full length novels and anything in between. My writing tends to be a bit on the romantic side, and also I enjoy exploring thought provoking and self-empowering ideas through my writing. I hope to inspire people the way many writers before me have inspired me. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community I am very focused on including these types of characters, as growing up when I did (early/mid 1990s), there was little to no representation for LGBTQ+ in the media or local libraries in the area of the Midwest US I grew up in. My debut novel has graphic adult content, but in the future I plan to write YA fantasy stories, and even children's poetry books that are LGBTQ+ centric.

WHO'S A CHARACTER OF YOURS THAT TOTALLY STOLE YOUR HEART?

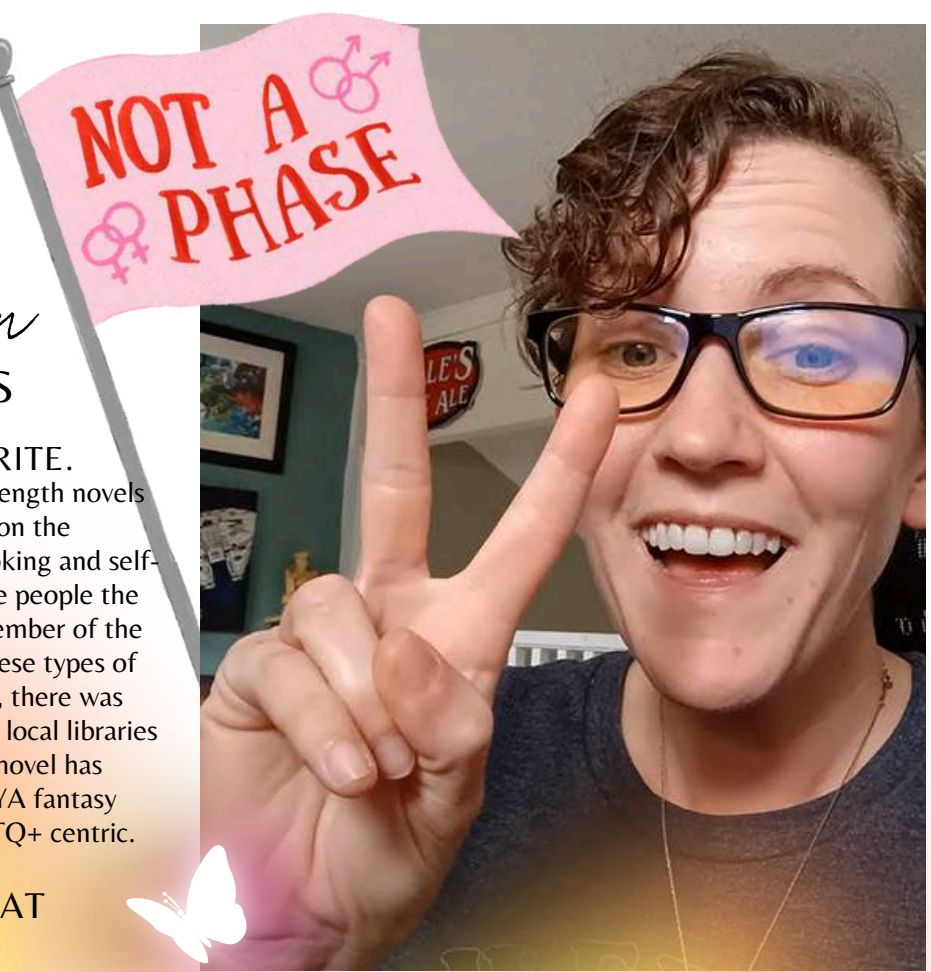
The love interest of my book, Malesa Valenciano, absolutely stole my heart and I hope she does the same for readers! Total book girlfriend material! She starts out very sweet, flirty, cute and funny, but as the book goes on, reveals a much darker and spicier side behind closed doors that contrasts the playful jokester she is in public. The saying "a lady in the streets but a freak between the sheets" is certainly her vibe!

WHAT'S THE HARDEST PART OF WRITING FOR YOU?

For me, it's not the actual writing itself, but the idea of sharing my work with others. That was my biggest obstacle for many years. It was a private sanctuary for me for a long time, and the idea of opening my heart and soul to the world and having them read my thoughts and feelings terrified me out of publishing for years. Fear of judgement after already experiencing harsh judgement by the world for many years prior due to my sexuality was almost an unbearable thought. I overcame it by realizing it is not me who should fear judgement from them, for most judgement is not really justly so, but merely a source of unwarranted criticism that stems from lack of understanding. I am absolutely open and willing to receive constructive criticism and I look forward to it! But for someone to say a book is automatically "bad" or even "evil" for having LGBTQ+ characters in it is what I am referring to.

CAN YOU TEASE WITH US WHAT YOU ARE WORKING ON NOW?

I am in the final stages of editing my debut novel, Dark Little Dreams of Saint Augustine, a genre mashup of lesbian romance and erotica, supernatural and paranormal mystery and thriller elements, with a splash of humor sprinkled in. It follows the story of Cadence Clearwater, a student at Flagler University, as she struggles to start her life anew in the city of Saint Augustine at age 23. When she meets Malesa Valenciano on the first day of class working at her family's local bakery, she is turned upside down when she realizes she has romantic feelings for another person for the first time in her life... and it happens to be another woman! As their secretive romance heats up, the horrifying news of a pair of missing students seem to put a chill on the air itself, and as pieces of their dismembered bodies are discovered around town, Cadence begins to suspect there is much more to Malesa's family than meets the eye... If a mashup of Romeo and Juliet, Twilight, Fifty Shades, and Nancy Drew with a lesbian twist sounds up your alley, this one's for you! Trigger warnings will be present!



RHEA *interview* RYAN



RHEARYANWRITES

TELL US A BIT ABOUT PRETTY LITTLE ISLAND.

Pretty Little Island is a dark romance/thriller about a group of high school youth that end up in a tragedy on their way to a hockey tournament in Alaska and have to self govern, manage aspects of the heart and survive. However, the book is not intended for young adults but for a mature audience of 18+ because of its dark and spicy content. It has everything from mystery to suspense and lots of spice and swoon worthy romance within these pages.

Tropes:

Highschool

Hockey

Survival

Love Triangle

Angsty Romance

Twins



THIS IS A HOCKEY ROMANCE. ARE THERE OTHER SPORTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO WRITE ABOUT?

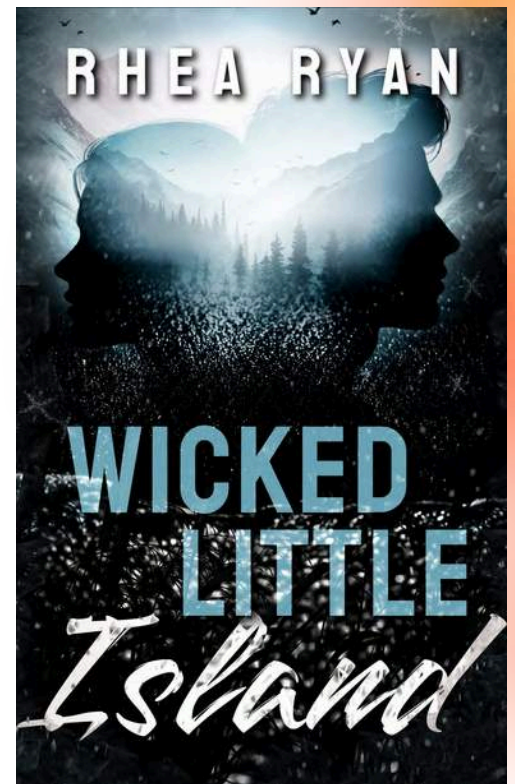
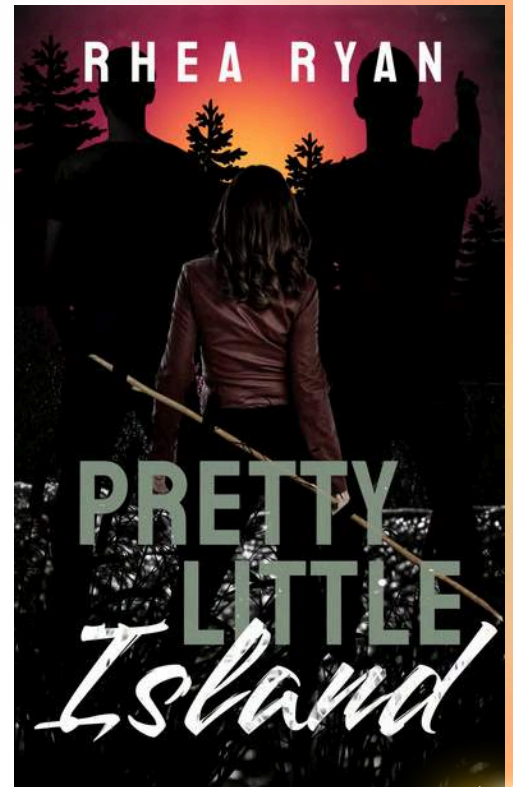
There are certainly hot hockey players and some elements of hockey, but it's not your typical sports romance book. I chose hockey because I am from Canada, and that sport felt the most natural for me to write about. I don't plan on writing any more sports romances at this time.

THERE IS A LOVE TRIANGLE. WHAT IS YOUR BEST WRITING TIP FOR WRITING LOVE TRIANGLES?

This was tough. I gave both male love interests distinct personalities and equal amount of time on the page with the female main character. I felt the emotions as I was writing, and honestly didn't know which one she was going to choose until I wrote it. Make both love interests believable and get the readers feeling just as conflicted as the characters are about who they are going to choose. The story should be able to go both ways.

SHARE WITH US A BIT ABOUT YOUR NEXT BOOK, WICKED LITTLE ISLAND.

Wicked Little Island releases on July 11 and is the sequel to Pretty Little Island, which leaves you on a bit of a cliffhanger. The story picks up right where the other leaves off. I don't want to spoil too much, but I can say that Wicked Little Island is significantly darker than the first. Survival isn't pretty.



MERLINA

interview

GARANCE



MERLINA_GARANCE_AUTHOR

TELL US ABOUT DANDELION.

Dandelion is the story of Bill and Bobby, two men in their 50s and former lovers, who meet again by chance in 1973s after twenty years separated. They were in boarding school together and formed a very strong friendship there, both being outcasts (Bill is autistic and Bobby is Jewish). Their relationship slowly evolved into something more romantic and for a good decade, they hid their couple from the world due to homophobic laws, until Bill misstepped and Bobby ended things.

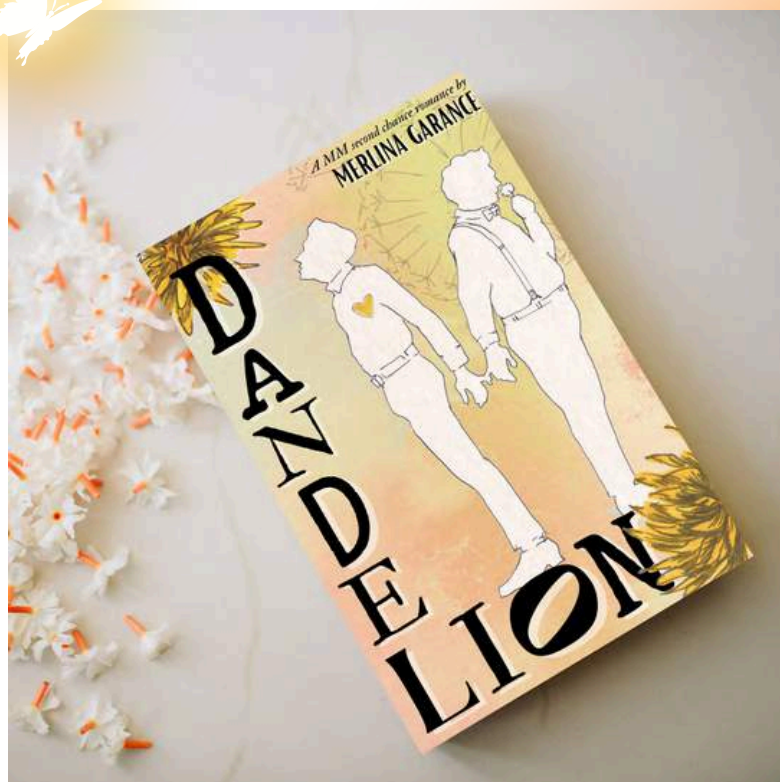
The book follows their reunion from Bill's point of view, while Bobby's point of view gives us flashbacks from their first ever meeting to their separation, until we catch up with 1973.

It's a romance but it's also about personal growth and fighting for the life you want.

Readers have said they like the historical aspect, the depth of the characters and their chemistry and the writing style.

YOUR BOOK IS SET DURING THE 1930S TO THE 1970S. WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO SET YOUR STORY DURING THAT TIME?

I often have to answer questions like these with "I don't know, my characters made me do it." Sometimes I don't feel like it's my choice, the story and characters are just guiding me to the right setting, whether it's geographical or historical. Bill and Bobby just were made to find their happy endind in 1970s US. It ended up being really interesting to write though, because of the research involved in it. The story spans from the 1930s to the 1970s so I had to know what the world was like in each one, and how that impacted their story. For example, them being young men during WWII. I had to think what the fear of being drafted and sent to war could mean for their relationship, for example. Besides, those decades were very important in Bill's character, to explain his fear of pursuing a relationship with Bobby.



WHAT DREW YOU TO WRITING A SECOND CHANCE ROMANCE?

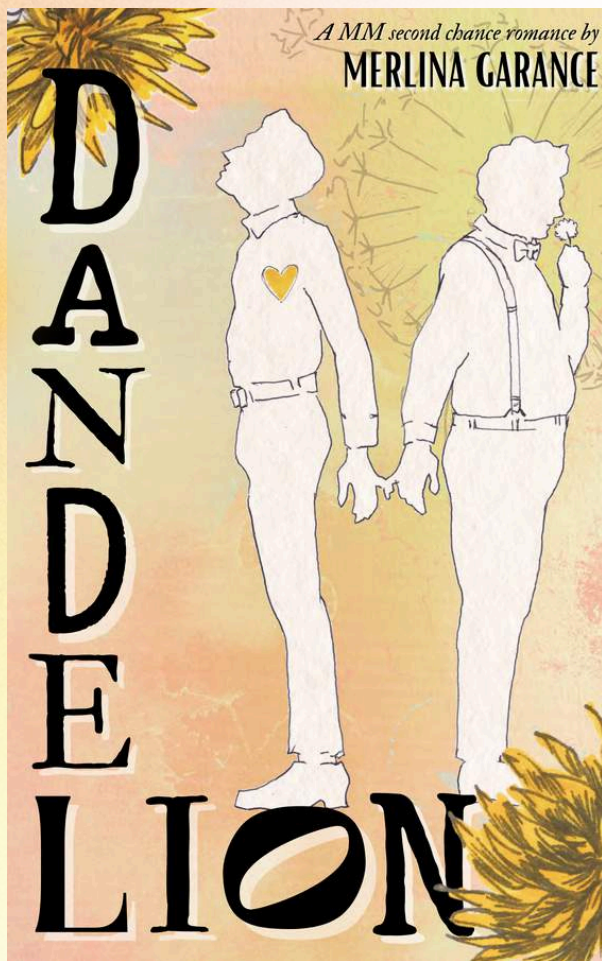
It wasn't my first time and it certainly won't be the last! There is something I just love about two people reuniting after years of being estranged, and having to work through their past together. There is something personal in it for me, as my partner and I didn't work on our first try and it took us fumbling and growing more mature to give things a proper go. I think it's about the angst (I do love writing it), the conflict, but two people being so drawn to each other they have talk things through and acknowledge their mistakes. Plus it allows to work in between present times and flashbacks, and it's a writing tool I really love.

YOUR COVER IS SO CUTE! WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

Tough question! It's the one I'm proudest of, of all the books I've released so far. My artist helped me define the postures we wanted the characters in, and it's a really good representation of each of their personalities and their relationships. I was also happy of how I ended up having the dandelion seeds surround Bill's head in a sort of halo. I'm also happy of how I placed the title! I felt more confident experimenting this time around.

THIS BOOK IS TOLD IN DUAL TIMELINES. WHAT'S YOUR BEST TIP ON WRITING DUAL TIMELINES?

As I mentioned above, there is a lot of research and keeping track involved. I ended up making a timeline file to remember how old every one is at any given time, what's the technology available, etc. Of course you have to choose the most relevant events to flashback to so it stays interesting. I'd also advise to keep the flashbacks related to the events happening in the present. It will make the flow of reading easier and avoid the reader getting lost between too many themes and events.



1973 – At 53 years old, Bill, hadn't expected to run into Bobby when he signed up for that medical convention in Houston. Fair to say they didn't exactly part on good terms last time.

Twenty years later, is Bill ready to finally admit his feelings, his sexuality, and to gather his courage to conquer his old lover and friend once more?

A second chance romance with flashbacks to young love, addressing the struggles of coming out in an unwelcoming environment and building the life you really want.

g

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A second chance queer romance that will make you smile.

Bill and Bobby run into each other at a medical convention. Things didn't end well the last time they saw each other. But things are different this time.

I like this story and all the themes, and topics, covered in this book. I thought that Merlina Garance's writing was what stole the show here. The emotions, and characters that are written are done strongly and in a way that you just fall into the pages and stay for a while.

There are flashbacks, that I thought were well done, I am happy for the flashbacks as we get to see them young, discover themes, and their feeling, and see how they ended up where they are now. I enjoyed both timelines and woven together nicely.

An adorable story of second-chance love, stepping into one's own, all wrapped, in a heartfelt story.

MELISSA

interview



MELISSADYMONDAUTHOR

QTYHOMD

TELL US ABOUT PAGING DR. HART.

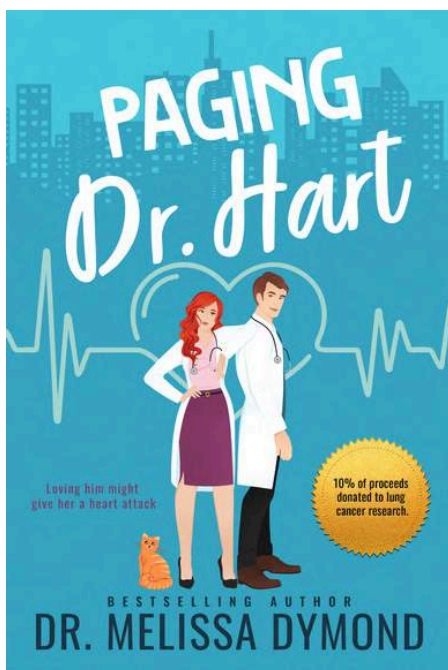
Paging Dr. Hart is a dual timeline medical romance novel with suspense. In the current timeline, we see Dr. Tiffany Hart working hard in the hospital. She's guarded and closed off, relying only on her cat and romance books for comfort. Dr. Ethan Clark is a new hire in her department. She's assigned to train him. They butt heads initially, but eventually sparks fly. Ethan becomes determined to break down her walls. In the past timeline, we watch Tiffany grow up and see why she became closed off. Eventually, the past and present storylines merge together for an exciting ending.

All of my books come in 2 versions because I want all of my readers to feel comfortable. I have a spicy version with mild explicit language and sex scenes. I also offer a sweet version with no bad language and only kissing.

10% of the proceeds of this book will be donated to fund one cancer research. I am proud to join the fight against cancer.

YOUR COVER IS SO COLORFUL. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

My favorite part of the cover is the orange cat. Tiffany has a cat named Fred The Cat. At the end of the book I have a bonus chapter, which is from the cats point of view. I think it's one of the funniest things I've ever written.



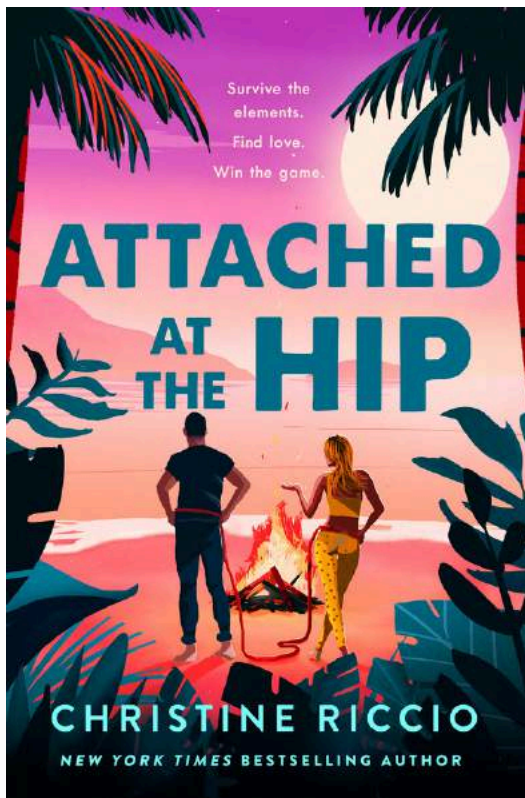
WHO'S A CHARACTER, WHO HAS SURPRISED YOU WHEN WRITING?

In the past timeline Tiffany meets a bad boy character named Rafe. All of my characters talk in my head, but he is the loudest and most grumpy. He's a very complicated and conflicted character so sometimes what he does surprises me. Eventually I'd like to give him his own book.

WHERE DID YOUR LOVE FOR SWOON WORTHY STORIES COME FROM?

I am an avid reader myself. I love to read romance and can easily read a book within one to two days. I like the idea of how transformative love can be. I think in romance books, we see characters blossom due to the power of love. There's something very satisfying about seeing that character growth.





Survivor meets The Bachelor in *Attached at the Hip*, an irresistible, romantic adventure by New York Times bestselling author Christine Riccio.

Orie Lennox has spent her entire life prepping for her happily ever after -- and now that she's graduated, she's low-key wondering, when the heck is it gonna hit. Her love life, her new job, her relationship with her sister: none of it is quite what she envisioned it to be.

One evening, on a whim, she applies for a reality show where she'll be stranded on an island, with a bunch of strangers, to play a game of human chess for a shot at a million dollars. What better way to force herself to break up with the things that aren't bringing her joy, than to abandon them all on short notice to live off the grid on a beach in the South Pacific!

Orie's shocked when she ends up cast in an experimental romantic edition of the show: and even more surprised to find that her old high school crush, Remy, has been cast as well. Orie's one of ten contestants, set to compete in formidable challenges, while speed dating, in the wilderness: without deodorant, toilets, shaving cream, or showers. (How!?)

She finds herself tied up — literally — in a game of risky alliances as she navigates ever-growing feelings for her one that got away, alongside an exciting array of budding new relationships.



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Attached at the Hip is a book made for summer with drama, self-discovery, and romance.

The reality show aspect and the fact that I have been following Christine Riccio for years is what drew me to this book. I have read her other books and I enjoyed this one the most. It feels like her writing is getting better with each book she writes. There is a goofiness that this book has but I felt that I needed that when I read it. It's just an easy and fun read. Not everything makes sense, but this was a drama-filled story. You couldn't help but wonder how the game/show was going to unfold. Everything in this world is hyped up on drama and over the top, mixed in with some cringe. I listened to the audiobook, it was well done and narrated by Brittany Pressley, who I felt did a great job of getting the voices of the characters right. I get that this will not be for everyone and the writing will not blow you away with deep poetic writing. But if you are looking for a summer read about a woman learning what she wants, bookish references, TV show setting, and drama on every page; then you might have fun with this book.

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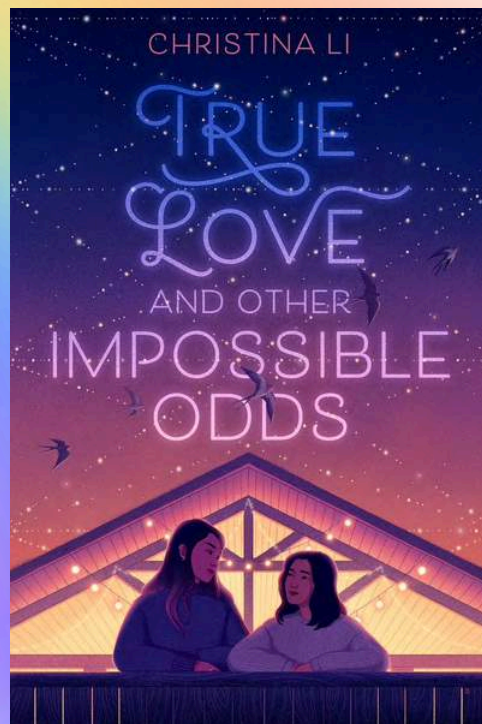
Pitched as Nina LaCour meets *The Half of It*, the story follows a first-year college student Grace Tang who invents a class algorithm that pairs people with their perfect romantic campus match, only to have everything thrown into question as she explores questions of love, identity, and her past.

A heartwarming coming-of-age queer romance.

I went in only knowing that this was a queer YA contemporary. And if that is all you need to know, then go and read this book. We are following first-year college student Grace who invents a class algorithm to pair off her classmates into their perfect romantic partners. But nothing goes to plan and Grace begins to question everything.

This book shines a light on the beauty of blooming into adulthood, the new start of life after high school. The talk of identity is written so well.

The story explores love, identity, growth, and becoming oneself in this coming-of-age story.

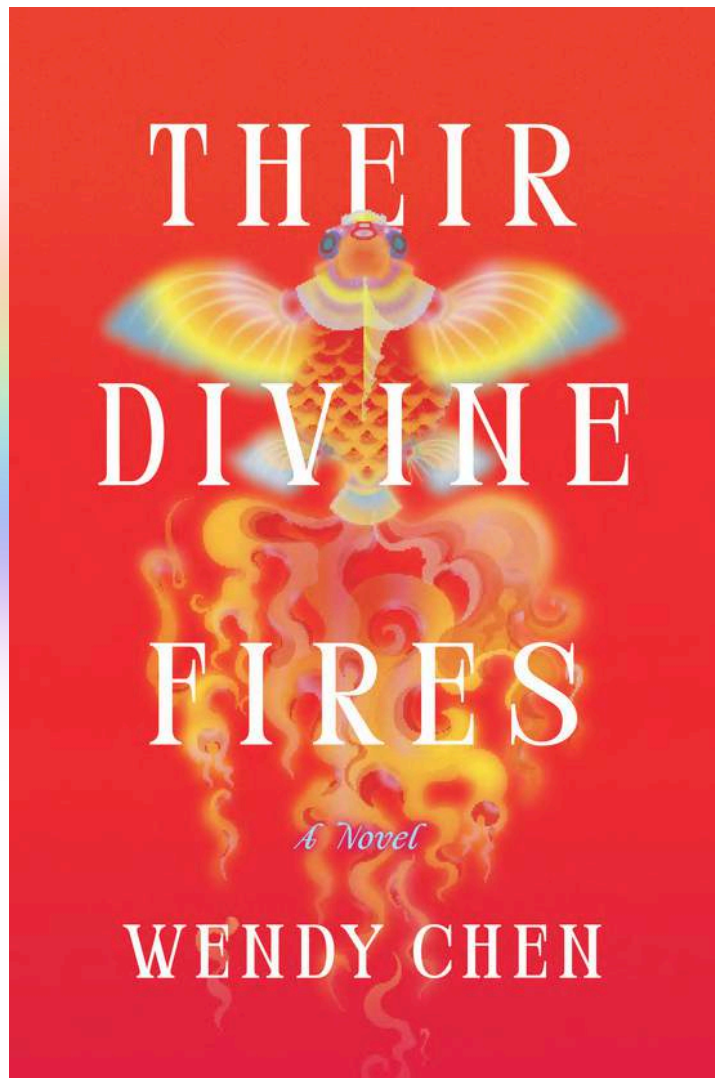


AND

WOMEN ARE

MARCH FOR
EQUALITY!!





A family saga that begins at the dawn of the Chinese Revolution and spans 100 years to trace the intricate lives of four generations of Chinese and Chinese American women

In 1917, at the dawn of the Chinese Revolution, Yunhong grows up in the southern China countryside and falls in love with the son of a wealthy landlord--but on the night of her wedding, her brother destroys the marriage before it has lasted even a day. Yunhong's daughter Yuexin will never know her father. She passes that sorrow on to her daughters Hongxing and Yonghong, who come of age in the years following Mao's death, battling the push and pull of political forces as they forge their own paths. Each generation guards its secrets, leaving Emily, living in contemporary America, to piece together what actually happened between her mother and her sister, and to understand the weight of their shared history.



Historical fiction of a family sage and the generations of Chinese, Chinese Americans, and the power of history.

I was drawn to this as I tend to enjoy stories that deal with generations of families, seeing how things are connected and what family and ancestry mean.

Diving into the 1900s, the dawn of the Chinese Revolution in a small countryside village where Yunhong falls in love with a wealthy landlord when her family is taking care of him. But the night of her marriage, her brother destroys everything. Now Yunhong's daughter, Yuexin, will never know her father. There was also a small talk about being an actor, that I found interesting. Also with talks about beauty standards.

In the book we see how families are different from one generation to another, we see how secrets can keep families together or pull them apart.

Wendy Chen is talented. The skill Wendy has of weaving stories from one family member to another is nothing but powerful, and important. There are heavy topics if you need them please look them up.

This historical fiction is a whirlwind of emotions, family drama, and what it means to be a human.





interview PEACEFUL CREATIONS

Janejira



SHARE WITH US WHAT YOUR SHOP, PEACEFUL CREATIONS, IS ABOUT.

My name is Janejira Damron (Sometimes Herschel) I am a genderfluid Thai-American comic artist, author, filmmaker, and cosplayer. Peachful Creations is my independent art shop. When I heard that the term "fruity" is a way they used to describe the gay community I decided to take it literally and use it as my branding. Growing up I was also very much surrounded by fruit. My mom had two apple trees, two plum trees, two types of pear trees, a cherry tree, clusters of raspberry bushes, blueberries, strawberries, and raspberries in our backyard and in the summer we would sometimes pick peaches and blackberries or go hunting for apple orchards and she would always mail packages of boujee luxury pears to my sisters around christmas. Our fruit bowl was also always filled with peaches and whatever was in season and my sisters always had clementines at their houses. I also have a major sweet tooth so that was kind of the inspiration for my dessert/fruity theme. I'm also slowly incorporating art inspired by the hot goth girl aesthetic because I want to create something fun for everyone.

WHERE DOES YOUR PASSION FOR ART COME FROM?

Ever since I was overly excited to come outta the womb I've had a deep love for the arts. I started reading manga when I was 11 and I would sketch my own comics. My parents recognized my passion and always gifted me art tools for whatever medium I was interested in. Digital art, inking, watercolor, alcohol markers, cosplay, soap making, etc. I spent the entirety of my school life always drawing and creating and I could NEVER imagine what my life would be like not going down the artist path.

YOUR ART IS SO ADORABLE! WHAT ARE A FEW OF YOUR FAVORITE PIECES?

My holographic Catstronaut Print, holographic Boba Ghost print, and pineapple turtle sticker are my absolute favorites. They're also the pieces that I can look at a million times and still be shocked out of my mind that it was in fact me who made them. They started out as silly doodles in my sketchbook and then I thought waaaaaaiiiit I could elevate these into something more.

SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU ARE WORKING ON NOW.

Right now I'm working on expanding the flavors for my fruit wallets. I found a pattern for sewing wallets on etsy and then I thought "What if fruit?!" The amount of joy I've seen on people's faces when they hold my fruit wallets has motivated me to make more. I made a stack over the summer and then was confused when I didn't have that much by the time the next pop up shop rolled around because I forgot my friends bought them all out over time. I'm also using the leftover fruit fabric to make fruity bows as well.



HOW DID YOUR SHOP COME ABOUT?

My shop was actually a complete failure back in 2018/2019 when I first started out. I had my name and the website all set up and ready to go because RedBubble just wasn't doing it for me so I rebranded from JanejiraDraws to Peachful Creations. I went to free events that I heard about through my ex and up until 2020 I made one single \$5 sale through my website and at pop ups and events I either only sold things marked \$1 clearance or nothing at all. Back then I made resin earrings and soaps. A few of my watercolor bunnies sold but the amount of dough I was splurging on soap materials and shipping supplies for hypothetical orders ate up everything. Then in 2021 when I got Covid and Isolated myself for 20 days I did some deep thinking about if I wanted to give up entirely or try again but do it exactly how my favorite artists were doing it. Making my own stickers, selling prints, applying to conventions, designing a table layout, I got crazy excited just thinking about that. So once my tax refund dropped I replaced my broken printer, bought a silhouette portrait cutter and sticker paper, researched for weeks, properly filled my business as a sole proprietor and then the next year I did my first anime convention at Chibi Chibi Con as an official vendor artist!



I LEARNED THAT THE FUNDS FOR YOUR GHOST APPLE STICKERS GO TOWARD YOUR PRODUCTION COMPANY TO HELP FUND YOUR INDEPENDENT LGBTQ+ FILMS. CAN YOU SHARE WITH US A BIT MORE ABOUT THAT? AND WHAT DOES THIS FILM MEAN TO YOU?

So I have also always been passionate about film. I graduated from The Seattle Film Institute in 2019 with a bachelors in film and worked for a production company for a few years right after school. While I was in Covid Isolation I also thought about branching off and making my own production company because that was something I had always dreamed of. Four years later I decided I WILL make that happen. So I claimed Ghost Apple Productions as my own and started from scratch with everything I had learned from working from the previous company and working with the wonderful people at the Film Institute. I turned my logo into a sticker to incorporate it into Peachful Creations. Currently I'm working with one of my trans friends on an LGBTQ+ coming of age film. This project is incredibly important to us because it was actually written before my friend came out and kind of foretold her trans journey and it evolved into a Love letter to Seattle and the skate community. It's also a commentary on the intersectionality between skate culture and the LGBTQ+ community. It wasn't planned but a majority of our film crew and the artists we are collaborating with happen to also be queer and I think a film for the community made BY the community is much needed because I don't know about you but I'm kind of exhausted seeing lesbian movies made for the male gaze, famous straight white cis actors playing the gay lead, and being told the queer version of a hallmark happily ever after isn't "realistic". Get real.



PEACHFULCREATIONS

JANEJIRADOESART



YOUR SHOP IS FULL OF CUTENESS! YOU HAVE STICKERS, BUTTONS, ACCESSORIES, PRINTS, AND MORE. IS THERE AN ITEM YOU HAVEN'T MADE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO?

I would love to get acrylic keychains made and I'm thinking about art bullet journals. I'm a bullet journal girlie and I've been trying to get all my friends into it as well. I'm also one of those writers that collects pretty journals but can't bring myself to write in them so I buy more pretty journals that I "for sure" will actually use. So it would be pretty cool to design my own.

"I've had a deep love for the arts."

Where do I start? This package is filled with so much cute stuff! ghost, hearts, food theme... but my favorite stickers have to be the Pride Cat Smoothie Stickers. They are too cute to handle. Pride and cats what more could you want? They have more than just stickers... They have art prints, buttons, bows, keychains, hair clips... I was sent a pin of a ghost blowing a bubble and it's on my bag it makes me smile every single time I see it. I was also sent a Catstronaut Holographic Mini Art Print. A cat that's an astronaut and it's one of my favorite prints I own. I have pj pants that have cats that are astronauts it's something I just love! There is cute food art, Animal Crossing, Pokemon, and mystery packages; there is just so much adorable! It's all made very well. Some of the best stuff I've been sent. The holographic prints/stickers are so shiny and glittery and are on thick paper. If you are looking for colorful, bright, fun, charming art then look no further than Peachful Creations!

It's pride month so get yourself some goodies and support a queer artist!



THE POWER OF INDIGENOUS BOOKS



interview **INDIGENOUS BLOOD**



JUSTATEXASGALWHOLOVESBOOKS

BOOK_LOVERS_UNITE



HOW DID YOUR JOURNEY OF BECOMING A BOOK REVIEWER GET STARTED?

I'm not really a book reviewer. I just read for self-care and because it's one of my addictions. I've been reading since before I turned 5yrs old. Every book I've read I've loved and I've yet to DNF a book.

WHAT ARE THREE INDIGENOUS BOOKS THAT YOU WOULD WANT MORE PEOPLE TO READ?



The 3 Indigenous books that I would like others to read are Blood Sisters by Vanessa Lillie, Sisters of the Lost Nation by Nick Medina and Never Whistle At Night.

YOU HAVE BOTH GOODREADS AND A STORYGRAPH. DO YOU ENJOY ONE OVER THE OTHER MORE?

I have both Goodreads and StoryGraph, I've to say I enjoy StoryGraph more.

YOU READ SUCH A WIDE RANGE OF BOOKS! IS THERE ONE GENRE THAT YOU LIKE MORE THAN OTHERS? WHY OR WHY NOT?

The genre I enjoy the most is queer books. I'm in my inner child healing era. I'm GenX and growing up I didn't have access to queer books.

YOU HAVE MANY PETS, HORSES, DOGS, RABBITS, BEARDED DRAGONS, AND MORE. IF YOU COULD HAVE A MAGICAL AMINAL AS A PET WHAT WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

A magical pet, I'd choose a dragon. I find them fierce and they symbolize power, good fortune and strength.



RIGHT HERE.

WRITE QUEER



RIGHTHEREWRITEQUEERPODCAST

podcast interview

HOW DID RIGHT HERE, WRITE QUEER PODCAST COME ABOUT?

Tessa: If I'm not mistaken, someone made a passing joke about how our biweekly calls sounded like a podcast episode. Then Sebastian, our resident podcast expert, started cooking on the idea for real. He posed the idea of a real podcast in our next meeting, and all of us were immediately on board. It was a little slow going at first—I think all of us were apprehensive to take the leap and believe that folks could enjoy listening to us talk—but once we got moving, great things happened!

Noah: Originally the Queer and Cozy group came together because we all wanted some sort of community. I think as our kinship grew and the conversations we were having deepened, there was this realization that perhaps we had something to offer to readers and other indie authors like us.

Sebastian: When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a podcast.

PLEASE INTRODUCE YOURSELVES AND WHAT YOU THINK YOU BRING TO THE PODCAST.

Sebastian: I'm the guy that presses Record! I also edit the podcast and act as interviewer/moderator for our other authors. When I'm not doing podcast things I'm writing queer romance, including historical and fantasy.

Tessa: I'm a fantasy romance author that somehow built a narrative voice with the combined power of a theatre background, a Creative Writing degree, and 70+ fanfictions on ArchiveOfOurOwn. I like sharing ideas about craft and how to have fun with a narrative voice. I also bring a good sense of humor—apparently of the goose variety.

Sarah Wallace: I'm an author who writes queer historical fantasy, typically with romance. I've published 5 books as of this interview (my sixth book comes out June 28!) and as I've been fascinated with learning as much about indie publishing as I can, I think I bring a good amount of knowledge about the business side of indie publishing. I want to help other indie authors grow and succeed so I'm hoping this podcast will allow me to do that as I geek out about publishing!

Noah: I'm a queer indie author who predominantly writes fantasy, but the book I'm working on now is historical fiction. I've published eleven books so far, and my long term goal is to help other indie authors get their feet off the ground. I'm excited to share my publishing experience thus far, and all the creatives I love.

Luna: Hi, I'm Luna and I write Fantasy Romance. I'm the only UK based writer in the group so I guess I bring some English vibes. But mostly I am simply here to have fun, share my experience and help encourage others to take the leap and follow their dreams of indie publishing.



Nina: I'm Nina! I write fantasy and horror, that kind of doesn't fit the 'cozy' label as much as the others but I'm just happy to be here, honestly. I'm here less for the cozy aspects and more for my passion for helping indie authors make their books the best they can be. With a marketing degree and a good amount of experience working with authors as an artist and vice versa, I'm excited to use my experiences to help others make creative decisions that can bring them to the right audience!

Sarah Whalen: I write contemporary romance with asexual leads who don't have to change themselves to get the love they deserve. My education is in communications (on the entertainment media side) and gender/sexuality studies, which affords me another perspective on the topics we discuss.

Shannon: Cozy historical fantasy with relatable queer characters who get an HEA is my jam! I'm always happy to discuss any of those topics, nature, baked goods, and the adventures of indie publishing.

Becca: I'm a cozy fantasy romance author, and frankly, I'm just here to shout about things I love with my friends. Hopefully other people vibe with it!

WHERE OR HOW DID THE NAME RIGHT HERE, WRITE QUEER GET PICKED AS THE NAME?

Sarah Wallace: We were spitballing ideas and we had come up with a handful of contenders. The main things we wanted to convey were that the podcast would be featuring queer authors who (for the most part) write cozy stories. We all voted on our top choices and then ran polls in each of our stories to let our readers pick. Right Here, Write Queer was a clear winner across everyone's polls.

Noah: We've called ourselves the Queer and Cozy crew since coming together, and we wanted something in a similar vein for the podcast. After coming up with some ideas and weeding out the best, we left the final decision to our readers.

CAN YOU SHARE WITH US WHAT LISTENERS CAN EXPECT FROM THE PODCAST?

Sebastian: Listeners can expect thoughtful conversation on a variety of topics relevant to indie fiction in general and queer cozy stories in particular.

Sarah Whalen: I talk about things on the podcast that I haven't shared anywhere else yet.

Noah: I think it's a great opportunity for readers, and authors, to catch a glimpse of us in all our glory. And by glory, I mean awkward writers nerding out about things like they love, from writing to reading and more. Yes we'll be talking about serious topics and offering good advice, but we will also be us, unfiltered. Mostly.

SEEING AS YOU GUYS ARE QUEER COZY INDIE AUTHORS. WHY DON'T EACH OF YOU RECOMMEND A COZY INDIE BOOK AND WHY DO YOU FEEL MORE PEOPLE SHOULD READ IT?

Sebastian: *Castle Waiting* by Linda Medley is a cozy fantasy graphic novel series about what happens to all the secondary characters in fairytales when the protagonists depart for their happily-ever-after. Beautifully illustrated, wildly inventive, heartwarming to the core.

Tessa: *Cover Story* by Valerie Gomez. Valerie doesn't quite market the book as "cozy" per se, but there are so many elements that remind me of other indie cozy books I enjoy. It's a queer, contemporary love story that has all my favorite things: found family, hurt/comfort, and grilled cheese.

Sarah Wallace: I'd recommend *The Scandalous Letters of V&J* by Felicia Davin. It's a queer historical fantasy written mostly in epistolary format, and it's excellent. Its coziness might be debatable since there are some pretty high stakes but it felt like home to be reading it, so I say it counts!

Noah: I loved the *Lore and Lust* series by Karla Nikole. They were some of my first queer books and will forever hold a place in my heart because of that. Not only are they cozy and romantic, but I've never quite read vampires like this and it's a refreshing take.

Luna: One of my favorite ways to consume cozy stories is through graphic novels and a recent favorite of mine is *Mooncakes* by Wendy Xu and Suzanne Walker. It's a wholesome and cozy romance between a hard of hearing witch and her non-binary werewolf friend/crush as they try to figure out what to do when the town cult summons a demon.



Nina: Oh, *How the Music Soars* by W. Payne Sillavan! It's inspired by *Over the Garden Wall* and follows a cat that wants to fly and a frog that wants to play trumpet. It reminds me a lot of books I read when I was younger, and though it gears towards a younger audience itself I fell in love with the characters. It definitely touches on the good old queer conundrum of wanting things your family doesn't understand.

Sarah Whalen: I loved Rebecca Burgess' *The Pauper's Prince* graphic novel series. It's a queer-normative historical fiction with autism rep, stunning art, and wonderfully endearing characters.

Shannon: *Whispers in the Woods* by K.C. Carmine is a beautiful little novella with lots of nature, friends-to-lovers, and a HEA.

Becca: My rec is *Poised in Either Eye* by B. Pigeon and Fell A. Marsh. Dual POV queer romance between two dragons masquerading as humans in the city, each with their own past and reasons for concealing themselves. Absolutely adorable and I totally cried over it.



Right Here, Write Queer has easily become one of my favorite podcasts! I look forward to each episode. I enjoy the large cast of hosts, and hearing about their writing, books, and publishing. They talk about writing, reading, publishing, and being a part of the queer community, how they handle things, what they have learned, etc. This podcast is important as it's lifting up queer authors voices. It's a group of queer and cozy indie authors who are sharing their thoughts, and what they have been through as writers and readers.

The production is well done, it's easy to hear and understand what they are saying. It's a clear and clean production. I enjoy the topics they cover from exploring history, to character-driven stories, to co-writing and so much more. The only downside to this podcast is that I want more and longer episodes! I can't get enough of this and I am honored that I get to see this podcast bloom and grow.

This podcast is for both readers and writers, there's something for everyone.



click
here



RIGHT HERE WRITE QUEER



CLAIRE LOUISE ROBINSON *interview*



CLAIRELOUISEAUTHOR

TRUTH AND WISDOM -
CLAIRE LOUISE - AUTHOR



TELL US ABOUT TRAUMA TO TRUTH.

Trauma to Truth is my first book baby. I had been writing poetry for years and I kept getting told to do something with it. So February of 2023, I was unwell with the flu and I thought if I don't do something, I'm never gonna do it. Thus Trauma to Truth was born. I already had quite a lot of poetry and blog posts written, as I used writing as a form of healing when I was going through therapy, it was just a matter of pulling it altogether. I wrote many new poems over the space of a week, it was definitely one of my most creative phases. Trauma to Truth is written in lessons, telling a story of honesty, rawness and hope as it goes through my healing journey. It's almost like a memoir, written in a journal format. I wrote it mainly for myself but in hopes that my experiences can help others who have been through similar. I've been told it could potentially help so many people, as it is really relatable. It's just getting it out there.

WHAT IS ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE POETRY OR PROSE FROM YOUR BOOK?

This is a hard question!

I think Trauma clock as it's so different and is a perfect opening, because the clock can be stopped if you are able to let it. I also love Mistress because we all wear masks. Unearthed as that is where my journey of healing flourished, that ultimate feeling of finally feeling free. The one with a special place in my heart is the one about my kids, as they are my reason for healing and living.

YOUR COVER IS PRETTY. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR COVER?

The favorite part of my cover is the Phoenix rising. It is so symbolic and deeply personal for me. I've been burned so many times through my life, but have always risen from the ashes, into the flames.



WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU ARE HAVING A HARD WRITING DAY?

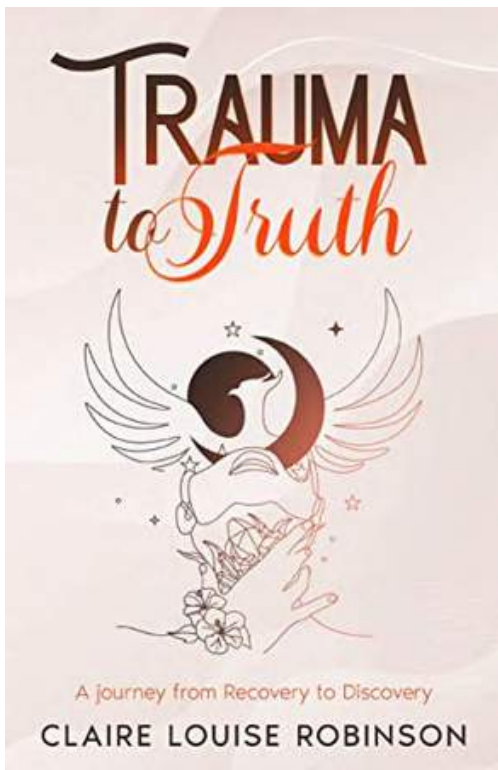
I don't write every day. I get spurts of creativity, usually just as I'm going to bed! I always type ideas into my phone as they come. I've written some of my best poems, after waking at 2am! Or one of my best places is sat in the car, waiting for my son to come out of school. I also find meditation helps. I have an ability to revisit times of pain or joy and remember how it felt, even though I don't dwell there anymore.



I SAW ON YOUR IG PAGE YOU ARE OBSESSED WITH MUSIC. DO YOU WRITE WITH MUSIC PLAYING? WHY OR WHY NOT? AND WHAT ARE A FEW SONGS CURRENTLY ON YOUR PLAYLIST?

I sometimes write with music playing. Usually something instrumental or classical. I try not to listen to lyrics as I don't want the words of the song to end up in my writing!

I have so many play lists! Songs that I'm obsessed with right now are Let me Hold you by Hybrid Minds, Deep End by Ruelle. Daylight by David Kushner and my absolute anthem Paradise by Coldplay. That song hits every time!



Trauma to Truth is an inspirational, moving collection of poetry and prose that documents a journey through trauma to truth. It tells a story in lessons start to finish and how it is possible to go from recovery to starting the discovery of who you can become..

It begins with Trauma and how it was personally viewed and moves through the process of unpicking, un-ravelling, highlighting the highs, lows and all the emotions in between. it covers anger, domestic abuse, drug addiction, grief, love and loss, finally finishing with forgiveness and finding yourself. It is a raw and honest account of one woman's story to share, that there is in fact light at the end of the tunnel and you do not have to be defined by your past.



A poetry book about the journey of a woman, of trauma, and healing.

This book is beautiful, from the poet's style to the poet's life and what she has gone through and overcame. You get to feel the heartbreak, you can feel the strength, the determination. Claire's journey is filled with darkness but also light and hopefulness. She transformed herself, and her life.

The book is broken into chapters called lessons. There are ten of them, there is something in each one that made me feel something. A few lines I enjoyed are "Memories there that are embedded in the ground", and "The women on the outside, often scold the little girl on the inside."

I like the poet's style. You can feel the emotions, the passion.

There are some content warnings so please look them up if needed.

A poetry book of recovering, discovering, and showing others that there is a bright side.



AUTHOR OF "THE HEART WANTS WHAT IT WANTS: A DESTINED TWIN FLAME JOURNEY"



interview

D.M. BATTEN



D.M.BATTEN

SHARE WITH US WHAT "THE HEART WANTS WHAT IT WANTS: A DESTINED TWIN FLAME JOURNEY IS ABOUT.

There are two different ways I want to answer this question. First off, I want to refer to the blurb that appears on the back cover:

This autobiography is particularly significant as it explores open-mindedness, non-traditional love, and caters to various niches such as coming-of-age, LGBTQIA+, twin flames, spiritualists, and those who dedicate themselves to serving God, regardless of their background or the trials they encounter in life.

As a college Professor and a PhD Candidate, I have triumphed over seemingly insurmountable obstacles and been blessed with the ability to empathize with people from all walks of life, embracing diversity. I have learned how to apply my knowledge by experiencing life firsthand, rather than merely preaching about it. With a personal objective to align my perspective with a higher power, I am confident that this book accomplishes that goal, gradually guiding readers through the many challenges life presents and offering insights on viewing them through the lens of unconditional love.

I strongly believe that personal experiences are the most powerful tools we possess to navigate and understand the world.

But I also would like to explain it in my own words:

It is a book about healing and learning how to overcome obstacles in life through having a positive mindset, engaging in personal spiritual practice, and following your passions. I spent a large portion of my life working towards these three goals, and the outcome has been magical. I am beyond amazed at the opportunities that have presented themselves to me, and I have found the true meaning of love. It came through meeting both my twin flame and my soulmate in this lifetime.

As a quick explanation, a twin flame is someone with whom you share a soul. When you meet them, you think that they must complete you. Then, after separating, you realize that you complete you, and they are a bonus. That is the true meaning of the spiritual relationship between twin flames: they are you, but in a different body. Your likes and dislikes, your tastes, even your religion and your choices can be vastly different, but when you are with them, none of that matters. There is just a sense of familiarity and home that no one else can hold. It is so hard to explain, and when you do meet them, and recognize them, the synchronicities and signs in your life will tell you the truth, if you are open minded enough to listen.

HOW DID YOU DECIDE ON THE TITLE?

I sat down with my twin flame during a call from my hybrid publisher from Divine Works Publishing and tossed around ideas. When we came upon this one, all three of us agreed. Because the heart does want what it wants; there is no reasoning with it, because it is not based in logic, it is based in love. And the subtitle? I wanted to declare my love, once and for all, for my twin flame, and this meeting, this life, this experience, it is 'destined'. It is beyond our control. It is what it is.

WHAT'S A MUST-HAVE WHEN WRITING?

Wow. I'm a pretty picky writer. I need music, I need an organized space, and when I'm writing by hand, I need Pilot Precise Extra Fine pens! When I'm typing, the main thing I need is an undefined amount of free time, uninterrupted, because I lose track of it. I can start at 3 in the morning and write until the next afternoon when inspiration hits.

WHAT'S THE BEST ADVICE YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED ABOUT WRITING?

I would have to say that, as a College Professor, I give my students one key piece of advice that I'd like to share with you and your audience: "writing is a process, not a product". If you remove all the expectations on the final product and just write from the heart, you can't go wrong.

I think the best advice I've received, then, is to just write. Sometimes it came from other people, and sometimes it was simply the advice that I was giving my younger self.



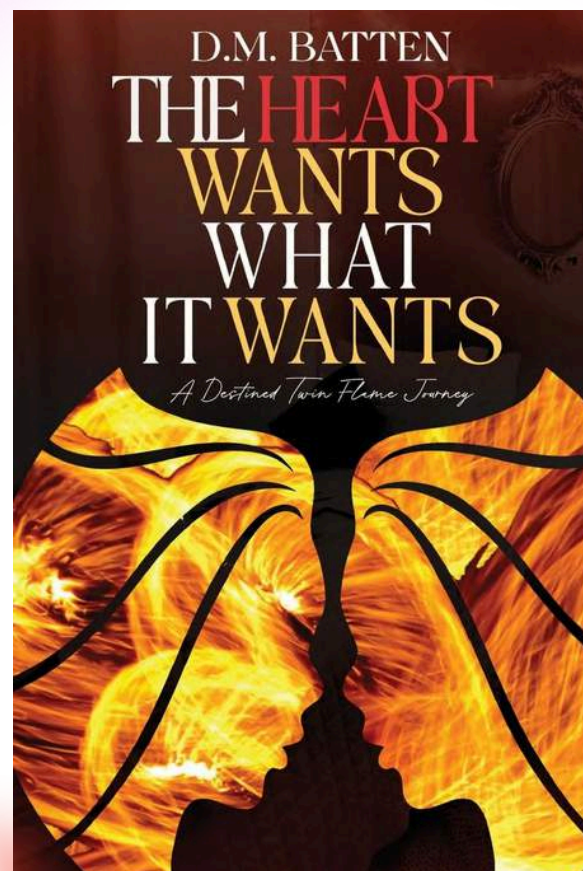
This autobiography is particularly significant as it explores open-mindedness, non-traditional love, and caters to various niches such as coming-of-age, LGBTQIA+, twin flames, spiritualists, and those who dedicate themselves to serving God, regardless of their background or the trials they encounter in life. As a college Professor and a PhD Candidate, I have triumphed over seemingly insurmountable obstacles and been blessed with the ability to empathize with people from all walks of life, embracing diversity. I have learned how to apply my knowledge by experiencing life firsthand, rather than merely preaching about it. With a personal objective to align my perspective with a higher power, I am confident that this book accomplishes that goal, gradually guiding readers through the many challenges life presents and offering insights on viewing them through the lens of unconditional love.

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CAN YOU SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON NOW?

Sure! First off, I am finishing the last year of my PhD, so this has had to take some precedence in my life. I am also starting the second book, a sequel to this first one, picking up where I left off in the timeline. Also, as an exclusive for your audience, I'm going to share with you one of the things that will make the second book much different. In the first book, I establish the relationships that are involved in the title. In the second, I will go deeply into the experience of being a twin flame and share recorded experiences between the two of us that are magical, mystical, synchronistic, and unexplainable. Our relationship is truly the stuff of dreams.



A powerful autobiography of a single person's journey through life and becoming one's true self.

This autobiography shattered my heart while also being a healing story of self-discovery. When reading this you can feel the rawness and realness that the author has put into this book. We get to see what life was like for the author in the 90s, we see the struggles with addiction, the struggles with sexual, regional, and overall just how hard it is being a human.

The writing is strong, I felt the passion, and the pain; even though this is an autobiography I was hooked. She does a great job of writing her feelings and experiencing what she went through. Vulnerable is the word I would use to describe the book.

A compelling story of overcoming some of the darkest and hardest things, a journey of growth and happiness.

SAVE LIBRARIES, LIBRARIES ARE NEEDED

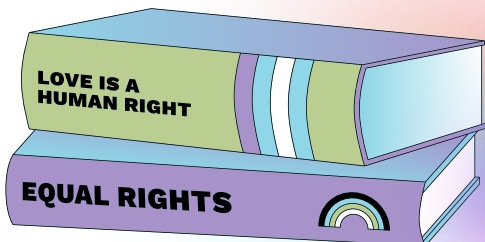


Right now I am getting ready to vote to save my library. Yes, you read that right. If this bill does not pass, my small town and all the other small-town libraries around me will no longer exist. A safe place for kids after school, a place for people to use the internet for free, and a place for book lovers to get books, where groups meet, and where people can go ask for help or other info. Will. be. no. more.

That means I, who uses the library weekly, and so many other people around where I live will have to travel one hour and ten minutes. Yes, from my house to the library that we would all be forced to use is one hour and ten minutes, that's with no traffic, with traffic will be longer.

Why? There are two main reasons. One, they don't have the funds, so to come up with the funds they want to raise the land taxes. People here are against having to pay more taxes to fund a library. People against saving the library say that they aren't needed, there's the internet. Say that to the kid whose parents can't afford the internet and they need it to do their school work to better their future. Tell that to the person struggling to get a job when they don't have a phone or a place to apply for jobs online, as most jobs online only accept online applications. What about the people who love to read but don't have the money to buy new books? I grew up going to the library and getting books from there, as we could not afford books, let alone at the rate I was reading them. Who's going to explain to the elder generation who get their entertainment from the library in a format that is filmier to them? What about the jobs that will be lost because the library is closed? What are those people to do? Just pack up and leave? The list could and does go on. It's more than just a place to borrow books from.

Two, they don't want 'darg book events' I've seen so many comments and posts with those words in it that I can even keep count of them all. People against saving the library are scared of having queer events at a place their taxes would be funding. How narrow-minded do you have to be to want to lose such an important part of your town because of someone's sexuality and gender? Who's going to tell all the kids that they can't go to story time or the after-school, weekend clubs that are at the library because people are closed-minded and judgmental? I do live in a small town, where people are afraid of change. Last year was the first year there was even a little something pride-related. But queer, pride does NOT equal library and that's what people think of here. Why? Books are a safe place that explores every single type of person and people who tend to enjoy learning about other people's lives and journeys like to lift up and support each other. (And they don't want their kids 'exposed' to open-minded people who accept people for who and how they identify. What about the kids who are going to lose that place that could spark the love of reading, leading to an overall better and safer life? It's because the library is a place of knowledge, a place to learn, grow, and see different cultures and ways of life. We can see what it's like in Scotland, Tanzania, to Manila... we can fight dragons to stand up for human rights. We see people chasing their dreams, dealing with grift, and questioning their gender. The library is not just a room full of books. It's a community. This is a good lesson on why voting matters. Every single vote shows what people feel strongly about. We could lose an important part of our small town. A part of me is scared that it will happen. But like I have read and learned about countless times, I keep hope and belief that we will get to keep our small library.



KAYCEE_K7



ASK THE COMMUNITY

WHY DO LIBRARIES MATTER?
WHAT DO THEY MEAN TO YOU?



NESHAMAPUBLISHING

Libraries are one of the few places I feel safe as a queer person, and reader!



STORIESBYDESIRAE

Libraries for me make me think of elementary school, crossing the street as a class and going to the library and choosing a series I've been reading. Then, us getting about 15 or 20 minutes to spread out in the library, choose a bean bag or cozy corner and sit and get lost in the world of the book. Libraries are important because there are endless stories to connect with. I want schools to still have library visits because I think it will help children build their literacy skills and have something to look forward to. The bookmarks, checking the book out in your name, responsibility to keep the book in good condition, asking the librarian questions, and having fun with a book.

ANGOLETHBOOKS

Libraries are one of the last places left on earth where there are zero expectations of you walking in. In today's world that is so important.



KATEBEATTIE.AUTHOR

Libraries support equality, safety and knowledge. They welcome everyone and encourage community connections and personal growth. There is no bias or expectations. I am on first name basis with my librarian as are my children. We have access to a new picture book every night and that has fostered their love of literature.



REJOHNSONAUTHOR

I grew up poor. Libraries made it possible for me to consume the vast amounts of fantasy and paranormal that I did. They made me a better writer by affording me the opportunity to ingest copious amounts of books.

CHRYSTALSTEVENS1331

I was bullied a lot in school so I would escape into the world of books to get away from them. Even when I wasn't reading just walking down the aisles of books brought me peace. The library became my Sanctuary. I really feel that libraries are life preservers. They save you from drowning in negative emotions.



BOOKSDOGS ANDCOFFEE

interview
WITH SAMMIE



BOOKSDOGSANDCOFFEE91

BOOKSDOGSANDCOFFEE



CAN YOU PLEASE TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOU?

Hi I am Sammie (she/They) and you most likely saw me on Tik Tok dancing with books! I am a Lesbian, disabled, Jewish, Latinx, bookish creator/bookseller. I live with my beautiful wife, our two crazy dogs Ellie and Yoshi, and our in-home library. Yes, it's an official library WE COUNTED! (come visit the lezbrary). When I'm not reading or trying to see what my dogs their mouths, I am playing a board game with friends, hanging with family, or engrossed in a video game.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT BOOKS?

I have always been that person who would see someone in a bookstore looking at a book that I love and then give them unsolicited book recs. When Booktok first became big in 2020, I didn't see many folks, at the time that time, talking about lgbtqia+ books especially Sapphic creators. As someone who came out in their 20's, I didn't read a lot of queer media growing up/there wasn't a lot that was traditionally published. I wanted to create a safe space where I could talk and share my love for all the lgbtqia+ books I have read. So, I decided in late 2020 to start making Tik Toks videos showcasing queer book recs.

CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT THE BOOK CLUB PAWS, PAGES, AND BREWS?

I started Paws, Pages, and Brews as a way for my community to connect a little more personally. So many people have a para social relationship with creators now a days, just seeing each other in a video or interacting through comments. And I really wanted a personal way to connect with the community I have built.

I also incorporate Discord so we can chat, video and dm each other while we read.

HOW TO BUILD A GOOD ONLINE COMMUNITY?

Honestly, luck! But also, just being yourself. And I know that sounds like such a cliché. I am weird af. I know I am and early on when I got on Booktok I tried doing all the aesthetic videos, making my videos professionally edited, trying to do what other creators were doing. And it just didn't work for me. What did work was being my dorky, nerdy, book loving, silly self. From that I found a wonderful group of people who wanted to follow me, who turned into a community, and some who have now turned into lifelong best friends.


WHAT ARE A FEW OF YOUR FAVORITE BOOKS?

That is a loaded question! I read primarily Fantasy/Sci-fi, but do read from other genres as well. Fantasy would be Priory of the Orange Tree by Samantha Shannon and Malice by Heather Walter.... Ok I also have to add Faebound by Saara El-Arifi.

Sci-Fi hands down is The Locked Tomb Series by Tamsyn Muir (Yes series count!).

Romance goes to Delilah Green Doesn't Care by Ashley Herring Blake. Young Adult goes to Legendborn by Tracy Deonn for the win. And Middle Grade is a tie between The Witchlings Series by Claribel Ortega and All of The Percy Jackson books.

PRIDE MONTH *by Sara Mosier*

SARAMOSIER_AUTHORPOET  PLAYLIST

Marina and the Diamonds-Bubblegum Bitch.

An avid advocate of LGBTQ+ rights, Marina describes herself as a 'gay icon' but also adds she is not a "cliché pop star". She uses her fame and her voice to highlight issues that the queer community faces, not simply taking on the title as some kind of medal. Bubblegum bitch is a uniquely poppy hit. She has managed to make pop music sound like her own.

Available on Apple Music and Spotify

Tove Lo- Grapefruit

Pronounced "tuve lue" creates grunge influenced rock, thoughtful lyrics both awe-inspiring as well as humorous. Her new album explores gender double standards and self-love, an ideology to own your body, whether it is male, female, trans or nonbinary.

This particular song tackles eating disorders, diet culture and the double standard of body positivity. "Body positivity help me out" I think it shines a light on what is seen as beautiful, feminine, masculine, all of the above and the challenges many face with the looming presence of social media as a self-scale.

Available on Apple Music and Spotify

Dove Cameron- Still

It was a tough choice with Dove Cameron, but Still is an amazing love song, the focus of time moving too fast. As a writer the lyrics snagged me first, poetic and honest it's one of my favorite songs. As a fellow bisexual, Dove is an amazing artist that sets the stage for self-expression and acceptance. She's thoughtful but also has fun with her music.

Available on Apple Music and Spotify.



Jake Blount- Boll Weevil

I know I'm going to make a 180 turn, but this girl loves bluegrass. I came across Jake Blount, a queer person of color earlier this year. He takes a traditional genre like bluegrass and turns it on its head. His violin, fiddle, and banjo playing is smooth as hell. His vocals are smooth, controlled, and in this particular song gives me major Jim Morrison vibes. I hope he eventually gets an album on Apple Music but he's on Spotify!

Shea Diamond- I Am America

A trail-blazing black trans woman, she sings proudly about her identity and avidly uses her music as a way to quote, "use your voice as a force for change." I Am America reminds me of Janelle Monae's style and lyric choice. Her music gives an enlightening perspective of not only the trans experience but also being a woman of color as *well* as trans. This artist is one of those creators that weaves messages into her lyrics, catchy, head bopping music with thought provoking words. My favorite combo! Her story is also worth looking up, she is bad ass and a hell of a survivor and a powerful voice in the trans community.

Available on Apple Music and Spotify

Ashnikko- Possession of A Weapon.

This artist is one of my go-to's. Her entire album "Weedkiller" is angsty, funny, and dark. Personally, this track is a female rights anthem. Taking back our bodies from white cis men that have NO idea what they're doing but think it's perfectly fine to reduce us to nothing but reproductive ovens. I thought this song was important to include given the nature of our country since 2016. Music is an outlet when we feel helpless, a voice when we are constantly silenced, and a message that says we're here to fight.

Available on Apple Music.

Betty Who- Between You + Me

A fellow queer artist, Betty Who delightfully blurs the line of gender. Her masculine and feminine energy is refreshing, which she incorporates into her shows. I saw her live and her energy is contagious! It's hard to choose just one of her songs, go check out all her albums!

Available on Apple Music and Spotify

Amy- Elena

Elena is an indie artist I found while perusing TikTok I found her pretty early on in her online presence and you can see and hear her find and accept her sexuality. It's hopeful and painful which is the case with so many people in the queer community. She also wrote a Stucky themed song, for those that may not know it's the ship between Captain America Steve Rogers and Winter Soldier Bucky Barnes. I recall her writing that song after the movies ended and it's a heartbreaker.

Available on Apple Music

Dezi- Make it Home

Another indie artist, Dezi illustrates the freeing passion of publicly loving the same sex without fear. The fear of affection between two women, two men, etc. I am just in love with the lyrics, she uses the feeling of the poem The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost, she is aware of the dangers of being 'out' but wishing to face it head on with hope.

Available on Apple Music

Poutyface -Pretty Boy

I am in love with this song, a poppy song about a relationship between a girl and a femboy, what could be more beautiful? It's a perspective I don't see often, another song that obliterates social norms and I am all for it! It's poppy and catchy, perfect for Pride Month!

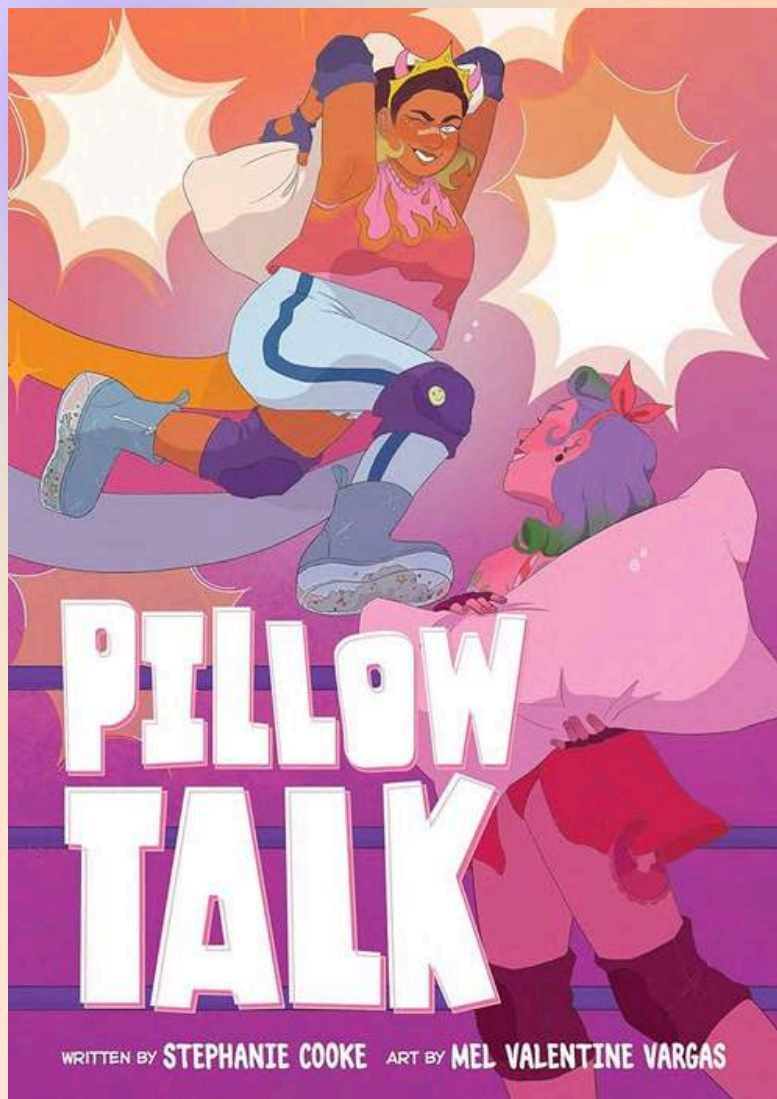
Available on Apple Music

Honorable Mentions

Phebe Starr- Ice Tea Liberace

Marshmello & Dove Cameron- Other Boys





When college freshman Grace Mendes reluctantly attends her first pillow fight match, she falls in love with the surprisingly gritty sport.

Despite her usually shy, introverted, and reserved nature, Grace decides to try out for the Pillow Fight Federation (PFF), a locally famous league of fighters with larger-than-life personas like Pain Eyre, Miss Fortune, and champion Kat Atonic. They may battle with pillows, but there is nothing soft about these fighters. The first and only rule to pillow fighting is that the pillow needs to be the first point of contact; after that, everything else goes.

Grace struggles with deep-seated body image issues, so she is especially shocked when she makes the competitive league and is welcomed into the fold of close knit, confident fighters. As her first official fight performing as newly crafted alter-ego/ring persona Cinderhella looms on the horizon, the real battle taking place is between Grace and her growing insecurities. What if people laugh or make fun of her? Why did she think she could pillow fight in the first place when she doesn't look like your "typical" athlete?

Turns out, no one is laughing when Cinderhella dominates her first match in the ring. And as her alter-ego rises through the ranks of the PFF, gaining traction and online fame (and online trolls), can Grace use the spotlight to become an icon for not just others, but most importantly, for herself?

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Pillow Talk is a bright charming coming-of-age story that will keep you smiling and cheering for these characters.

I grew up watching wrestling so when I saw this graphic novel take a spin on the sport I grew up with I knew I had to give it a go. It's queer and wrestling (but with pillows) what more could you ask for in a vibrant story!

We meet Grace who's shy but soon falls in love with the PFF pillow-fighting foundation. It's not soft, gentle fighting, it's real fighting with special moves. What I liked most about this was seeing the backstage stuff, coming up with names, moves, etc. I also love all the queer representation. There's a huge theme of female friendship, community, and body image. We get to see Grace step out of her shell and into her full self. It's just a fun book, perfect for summer!

The art is vivid and reflects the real world with different people from different backgrounds. Queer, straight, color tones, and body types. I love all the representation it's the best part of this book. The art style is beautiful, the bright colors help bring the story to life in a way that is perfect for the story. If you enjoy graphic novels about self-discovery, and queer characters, in a coming-of-age story that will bring you smiles, then pick this one up.

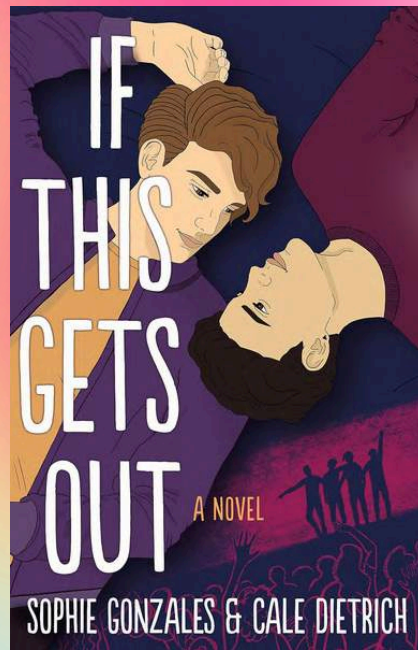
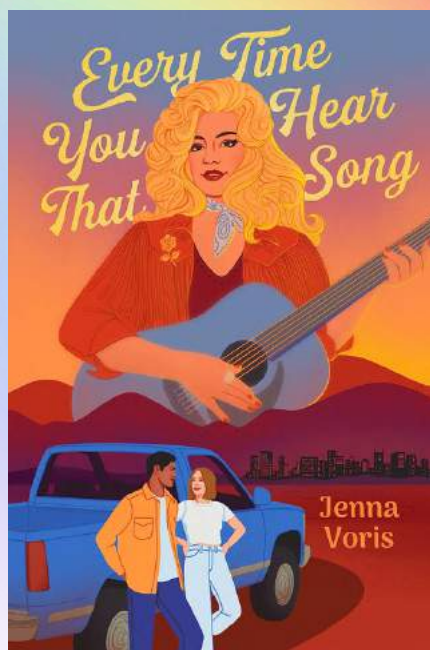
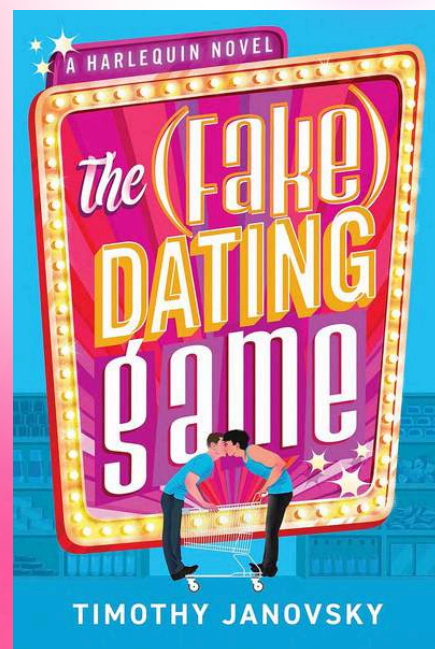
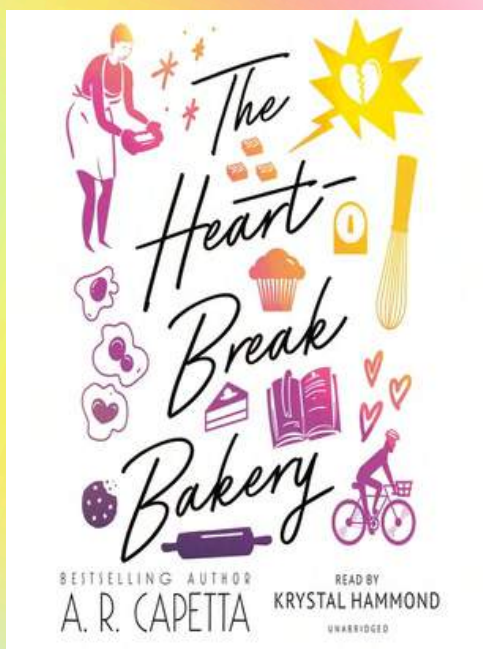
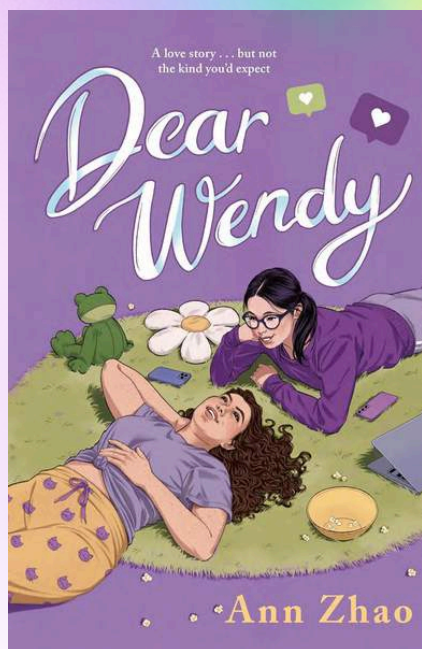
MY TOP 5 QUEER BOOKS

with

KATHERINE FROM



ASIAN_BOOKSTOREKAT



SRITAMA

mini

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SRITAMASEN_

interview

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT VIOLET MOON. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT WHAT YOU WRITE AND A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF.

I am a Bengali trans sapphic poet, essayist and writer from Kolkata, India. I have published poetry and fiction writing in various US and India-based literary magazines, queer forums and independent zines.

My debut poetry collection, *There Used to Be a Lake Here Once*, was created as part of a university assignment, and after being acquired for publication in 2023, has been released by Writers Workshop, India in April 2024.

Practically all my writing, whether poetry, stories, or creative non-fiction, revolves around themes of trans identity and queerness in a Bengali context. A lot of South Asian queer literature available to us is written by diasporic authors, and while I am extremely grateful for them, the lived experiences of LGBTQ people residing in India—particularly middle-class—is quite different to the stories we usually find in Western publishing. I want to create narratives of community and joy, that speak to trans queer folk in India itself, particularly Bengali youth.

WHAT IS ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE LINES FROM *THERE USED TO BE A LAKE HERE ONCE*?

There is a poem in the first section of the book, titled *Family Heirlooms*, which deals with how the history and identity of the people you love gets etched into your personhood like a real, tangible mark, like an heirloom to be passed down through generations. It is addressed to my parents and my older sister. The last lines of the poem says, "I hope you remember me. / I hope I melt into you". I would like to think that every person is a mosaic made from memories or reminders of beloved people and places. It is one of my favourite books.

HOW DO YOU BALANCE THE BUSINESS SIDE OF BEING A WRITER, WHILE STILL BEING A BOOK LOVER?

It's too early in my career to answer this, I'm only a debut poet! In India, a full-time author role is not sustainable for a majority of writers. At the same time, queer literature and writing is not popular except for very small reader bases in the urban areas. I think currently indie press in India (just like in the US) provides far more diversity of voices and themes in literary publishing, than mainstream tradpub. Hopefully, we shall see positive changes in the near future. For myself, I have managed to build a following through blogging and social media (I run a book review and promotional account), that comprises both desi and international trans queer readers. A lot of my writing I make available online; it is important to keep in mind safety and affordability for young queer readers in India. With my poetry collection, I have done my best to sell author copies at a fair price so the readers can support me directly while getting personalized editions.

I don't think I will ever stop loving books. It's easy to get disheartened if your work doesn't sell, I get that, but I do not write my stories to score a bestseller. I write them so young trans and queer Indians can take comfort in the fact that they are not alone, like I once was. If that helps even one person feel some joy in their identity and their life, I have succeeded.





AMARA

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interview



AMARAJLYNN

PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU WRITE AND A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF.

I'm Amara Lynn (they/them), and I've been an indie author since 2017! I started out with a small press for my first book, then moved to self publishing in 2019. I write a variety of queer SFF romance short stories, novellas, and a couple novels. My focus is on portraying authentic characters finding their happily ever afters in queer normative worlds. I'm usually inspired by anime, video games, and cryptids

I READ ON YOUR WEBSITE A BIT ABOUT LGBTQWRITEATHON. CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT THAT, WHAT PEOPLE CAN EXPECT FROM IT, AND HOW IT GOT STARTED?

LGBTQWriteAthon is happening for the first time in June 2024, for US pride month, and I'm super excited for it! I've been hosting writing hashtag events since 2018, first on Twitter, then adding Instagram. It started out as a NaNoWriMo adjacent event called LGBTQWriMo, however; following the recent events regarding minor safety issues at NaNo, I've decided to go off on my own, and so LGBTQWriteAthon was created with the aim of providing queer writers with a positive and safe environment to connect and create, without the association to NaNoWriMo.

LGBTQWriteAthon will run in June and in the fall, and is a set-your-pace writing event. Daily question prompts will also be posted on Instagram and BlueSky for everyone to answer and connect with others! Be sure to follow me, @amarajlynn on Instagram, amaralynn (no J) on BlueSky, and the @LGBTQWriteAthon account on instagram for the latest updates!

YOU'VE WRITTEN SO MANY BOOKS LIKE MOTH PIT, TOIL TROUBLE, FLOWERS AND FARA, AND MORE. OUT OF ALL YOUR BOOKS, WHAT ONE WOULD YOU SAY YOU HAD THE MOST FUN WRITING?

I will absolutely choose favorites of my own books. There are two that I had a lot of fun with. The first is Into the Deep, my pirate/merman fantasy novel. It was a lot of fun because the main character is cursed with bad luck, so coming up with all manner of unfortunate scenarios to get him into was amusing. The other, more recent work, is Spider Moth, which was fun because it's a low key self-aware parody of Twilight. Getting to work a bunch of Twilight references into it was so much fun. It's my little ode to Twilight, one of the things responsible for making me a monster romance fan.



Thanks for having me! I hope you'll join me for #LGBTQWriteAthon, and I also host a weekly accountability and line share tag, #QueerWriters, so be sure to check that out!

RACHEL

CHURCHER

mini interview



RACHELCHURCHERWRITING

PLEASE SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU WRITE!

I'm the author of a UK-based YA dystopian series, and a stand-alone LGBTQ+ 'finding yourself' novel (perfect reading for Pride Month!).

The Battle Ground Series is set in a near-future UK, and the story was subconsciously inspired by watching the Brexit debates. Not the party politics, but the fact that the two sides never communicated – they just shouted over each other. It was such a wasted opportunity to have a grown-up discussion about the future of the country, and the idea that this style of debating might continue led me to explore a worst-case scenario for the UK, post-Brexit.

Angels is a standalone London-based LGBTQ+ 'finding yourself' story – with a twist. It's about heartbreak and friendship and attraction, and how hard it can be to find your own way in the world. The book features a range of characters as they discover their identities, passions, and relationships. It's a university heartbreak story, an exploration of friendship and attraction, and an allegory for the LGBTQ+ experience.

I'm delighted that Battle Ground, Book One of the dystopian series, has won a Wishing Shelf Book Award and a Readers' Favorite Award, plus a Readers' Favorite Five-Star Seal. Angels is also a finalist in this year's Wishing Shelf Book Awards.

WHAT WAS THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU LEARNED DURING THE WRITING PROCESS?

I've been a Sci-Fi and Space Opera fan for as long as I can remember, and I even have a Masters Degree in Science Fiction Studies. When I sat down to write my first novel during NaNoWriMo 2017, I honestly assumed I would come up with something involving spaceships and interesting aliens and distant planets. I was really surprised when a character I wasn't expecting turned up in my head and told me to follow her – into a UK-based near-future dystopia!

It turns out that a Masters in Science Fiction Studies, teamed with a BA in Geography, and a whole lot of years to observe the world led my subconscious to predict an isolationist, totalitarian government in the UK, where sixteen-year-olds can be conscripted into a form of National Service, and protest is forbidden. When I turn on the news in 2024, I have to remind myself (and anyone who will listen!) that my dystopian series is a) fiction and b) a warning, not an instruction manual!

My characters continued to have minds of their own, throughout the writing of the Battle Ground Series. One of them was supposed to have a tie-in short story devoted to his exploits, but he had so much to say (and was such a delicious bad guy!) that he ended up with his own novel. Another character developed a habit of waking me up in the middle of a night with scenes fully formed and ready to be written. I'm not a morning person, and I value my sleep, so she wasn't my favourite fictional person!

When I was writing Angels, my characters also rebelled. I had an outline idea for the story, but one character decided to do something very illegal (I had to rewrite that section, because it would have completely changed the emphasis of the book!), and my lovely gay student couple refused to be split up, even when I threw some horrible life events at them. They won, I lost, and they're still together (and it was absolutely the right outcome for the story!).

So what did I learn? Respect your characters. Listen to your characters, even if they wake you up when you'd rather be sleeping – and especially if they dig their heels in and refuse to compromise. They usually know better than you do where the story needs to go!

CAN YOU SHARE WITH US WHAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

This year is not shaping up to be a writing year. I'm the co-organiser of the Foreword Festival in Bury St Edmunds, UK (along with fellow author Jackie Carreira), and we're running several events in 2024. 'Pay It Forward' on August 31st is an event for authors who are raising awareness or funds for charities with their books. I'll be partnering with PTSD UK, as there are characters in all my books who experience PTSD, and I want to raise money and awareness for the charity.

I'm also running a YA Lit Fest with Suffolk Libraries in September, and we'll be welcoming YA authors and readers to Stowmarket Library for a day of books, panels, readings, and Q&A sessions. Next year we'll be running another full Foreword Festival, celebrating fringe authors and small presses from Suffolk and beyond in advance of the official Bury Lit Fest.

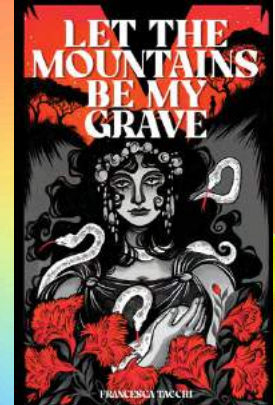
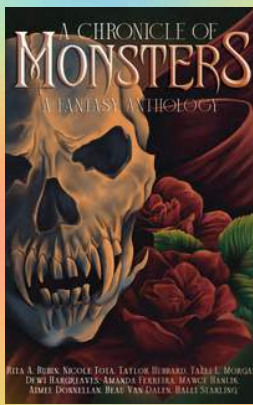
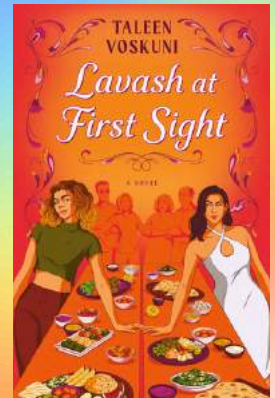
There are a number of book ideas developing in my head, and I'm looking forward to meeting my new characters when I finally sit down to write. I'm sure they will find new and interesting ways to surprise me. I can't wait to see what direction they take me in this time!



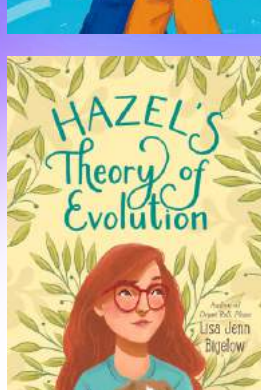
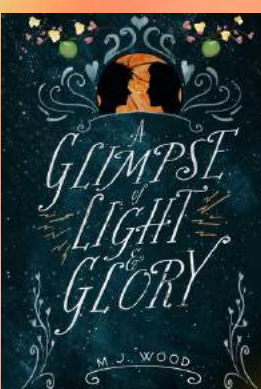
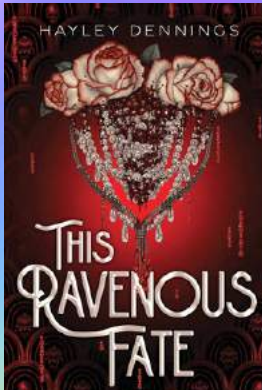
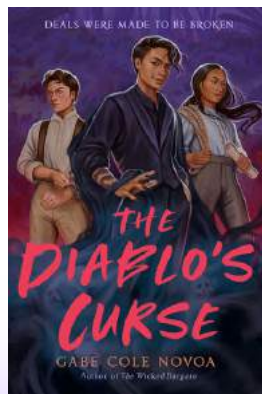
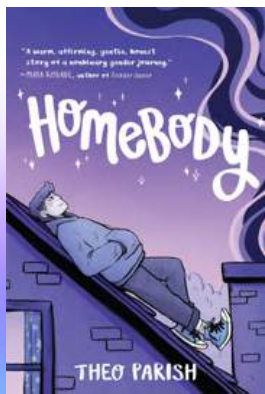
QUEER READS

book list

It's the most colorful time of the year! Pride month! I read queer and pride books all year long, but with everything going on in the world, with it being the pride issue I knew this issue book list needed to be pride. I tried my best to only add books that I personally haven't read, so these are all underrated books as I just learned about them while putting together this list. I will be making a post where you can share your favorite queer book or one you feel more people should read. Happy Pride, everyone and remember you matter!

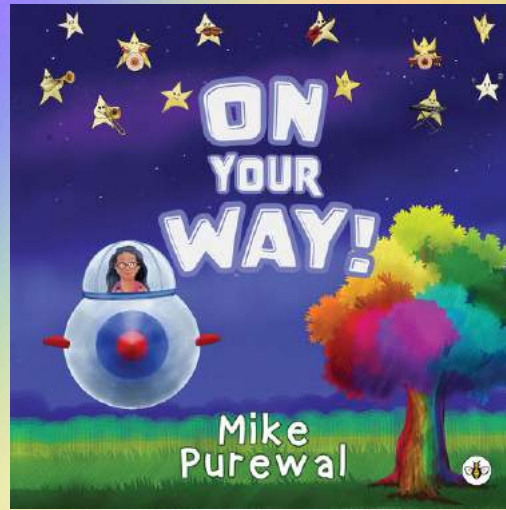


ADULT



CHILDREN MIDDLE GRADE

BOOK REVIEW



[g](#) [iv](#) [a](#)

Children's poetry about family love, growing up, and the overall power of life.

I enjoyed this poetry collection, it has "one hundred never-before-published poems". Many of these poems touched my heart. Lines filled with emotions that are easy to understand the feeling that the poet is showing us about her life. A moving and beautifully written poem that you can enjoy and find something new with each read.

[g](#) [iv](#) [a](#)

This is a cute read with important topics.

It's a story to inspire kids to be adventurous and use their imagination. It's a magic journey to the center of the universe with rainbow trees, dancing with stars and so much more adventure.

The art is bright and colorful, helping bring the story to life. It also talks about feelings like anger, worry, and fear. It's a great balance of adventure and lessons.

[g](#) [iv](#) [a](#)

This book is about joy and the journey of being a human.

This is a book about children finding and discovering their identities, exploring the world around them, and learning to be themselves. The characters are curious so they go on a journey of they will never forget.

The art is playful, the writing is rhythmic and poses. The art is vivid, and bright and shows the children's imagination. This is a great book for kids, as it is fun, and different while talking about topics that matter.

Fly through space with the character while you see the characters grow.