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Plotting Fantasies with Rebecca Webber

Welcome back Rebecca, it is a pleasure to have you back with us! How have you been? How is your writing career going? Any news about your books?

Hello again! So happy to be chatting with you once more! I've been good, though tired since our new baby girl has been dictating our sleeping schedules! My writing career has been on an upward trajectory. My debut novel, *The Painter's Butterfly*, released on February 7th and I had a blast at the event! Currently, I'm querying my third manuscript and I'm waiting to hear back from a few agents who requested the full story.

Congratulations!! That is awesome! Rebecca, are you a plotter or a pantser*? Btw, what's the difference between one and the other?

I'm a happy mix! A plotter is someone who likes to outline the entirety of their story prior to writing any drafts. A pantser prefers to write freely and let the story weave as it progresses. I use a general outline of events when I write a draft, but I also like to give the story some breathing room. So really, I classify as a "plantser". lol

Can people change sides in approaching how to write the story, or evolve to be more proficient with one rather than the other?

Oh yes! As time passes, all writers evolve in some way or another. I started as a strict pantser, but have since found I'm more comfortable doing a little planning upfront. I also beta read a lot of unpublished manuscripts for other writers, which has been a fantastic learning experience overall.



In your personal experience, both writing and reading, which process or approach to writing is better when it comes to outcome?

There's no right way to write. The most important outcome would be getting the story down on paper. Whatever works best for you is the approach you should use!

Let's dig our nails into it then. Plotting. How do you approach making your plots, what are your foundations?

Usually, I know major events I want to happen in a story prior to starting a draft. I'll make a list of the plot points I want to hit and then spend a little time describing each of the characters as I envision them. After I've got that basic information written down, I start my draft. It's important to stay flexible even if you have an outline, though, because often the story will curve in a way you don't expect.

Rebecca, you deal a lot with kids, and you write for both kids, and parents (I assume). Do you use your experience as a teacher, or other personal experiences to build the plot? Is that helpful?

I think so! I've always enjoyed making learning fun, and I think that sense of joy informs my writing. Kids have always inspired me on my writing journey. As a child, books really helped me find some peace when I got anxious. I want my stories to help kids in the same way!

The mental processes. Are there necessary questions to ask oneself while plotting a scene? To make it better?

It's important to step back and view a scene from the perspective of the reader. Is there enough conflict to maintain suspense? Will the reader identify with what the characters are going through? Is the pacing too slow or too fast? A lot of times, authors put on blinders when they write and may miss how a reader will interpret their work. That's why beta readers are such an essential part of the drafting process.



Can thinking too much about the plot, create a writer's block, or does this process avoids it?

There's definitely a balance. It's very easy to put on the brakes when you **don't** know the specifics of a certain chapter. But sometimes, the only way forward is to write. So you have to pick and choose your battles, and not use "**thinking**" as an excuse to keep from writing.

Rebecca, your latest book is a middle-grade fantasy book, is that correct? Before we go fully about it, I will ask about scenery. How important scenery is when writing, specially fantasy ?

I've always put a lot of value in scenery description, which I think shines through in my debut, *The Painter's Butterfly*. I love that words can transport us somewhere different than where we physically exist. That being said, I'll return to the idea of balance. In my early drafts of *The Painter's Butterfly*, I spent too much time dwelling on the environment description and not enough advancing the plot. Pay close attention to the length of descriptions so as not to lose readers' interest along the way.

How do you go about creating the imagery of the scenes?

I was a poet first, and I tend to fall back on those roots when I describe scenery. My entire life I've had an extraordinary appreciation for the beauty of nature, so you'll see a lot of vivid nature descriptions throughout my books. I've always considered language to be beautiful too, so marrying language with my love of nature has really been a dream come true.



From your experience, what are the crucial elements to make good, or even great scenes? Where do writers have to focus?

I may sound like a broken record, but BALANCE. Describe your characters, paint the setting, vary sentence length to keep it interesting, add necessary conflict to up the tension, and include sensory details to immerse the reader. All are essential to weaving an effective story. I also feel it's important for writers to embrace their strengths. If you're confident about dialogue, circle back to character dialogue if you get stuck. Most of all, have fun! Passion translates into our work. You've got to be excited about a scene for that emotion to translate to the readers.

Imagine, Rebecca, if you were talking to a newbie writer that wants to write fantasy. What are the exercises he/she should do, in order to improve the description skill?

My best advice would be to try some poetry, where you focus on a single element of nature and describe it as vividly as you can. Extract an image you have in your brain and produce an exact copy through words. Writing exercises help to get the creative juices flowing.

Complexity or simplicity? How much details is enough? How much is too much?

This is where beta readers come in handy. Having other people read and honestly critique your work makes all the difference when you're trying to figure out pacing. As I said, writers tend to have blinders on when it comes to their own work. But a reader should be able to point to moments where the plot felt slow or instances where they couldn't stop reading because the suspense was just perfect. Use your readers to inform decisions about the plot.

Rebecca, tell us more about your upcomimg book, The Painters Butterfly. What is it about?



The Painter's Butterfly follows a 12 year-old foster child named Nova as she travels to her newest home, a farmhouse in the middle of nowhere with a painter named Mr. Russell. Nova finds a magical easel in the attic that brings paintings to life! The art adventure teaches her the true meaning of family and home.

Where did this "crazy" plot idea come from?

My sister (a naturally gifted artist even as a child) wanted a story idea where she could act in the movie adaptation with Johnny Depp. She's always been a major Johnny Depp fan. Needless to say, my sister isn't 12 any more! Sorry it took me so long to write the book, Sarah!

Do you have any early reviewers comments, maybe from beta-readers about the book?

My book [actually released on February 7th](#), so there are many reviews on [Goodreads](#), [B&N](#), and [Amazon](#) at this point! But I'll highlight a few of my favorite comments:

"It's particularly a treat to any art lover and would even inspire you to start creating. Through her love for art, and just a bit of magic touch, Nova beautifully paints us all the pain, the joy and just the sheer courage it takes to build relationships."

"This book contains pieces of absolutely beautiful prose; the author paints a masterpiece using words as her paints. I was hooked after reading the first page."

"Beautifully written, full of lush imagery, like a painting. Would be a helpful read for an older child processing grief, or coming to terms with the fact that life is not fair and sometimes deals people a bad hand."



Can you share a snippet of the book along with links, so people know where to buy?

As driven as Nova was to do some sleuthing, she willed herself to wait some more, until Mr. Russell had actually fallen asleep. It was well into the early morning hours when she dared to make her move. Nova had always been a quick learner, and she was becoming familiar with this house. She knew that three steps into the hallway there was a squeaky board and she avoided it with ease. She took care to keep her feet from scraping across the coarse wooden floor and held her breath as she reached the bottom of the attic stairs. The hairs on her neck stood on end as she ascended the staircase, journeying up above into the unknown. The third-story room was pitch black. Nova had difficulty finding her footing with the last few steps. She felt a tickle on her cheek and panicked, holding back a scream, only to discover that it was a pull string to a light bulb as she grasped it in her palm. Feeling sheepish, she gave it a tug. Light flooded into the space and, involuntarily, she gasped.

The room was maybe twenty feet long, with a decorative stained glass window situated at the end. The attic was devoid of any clutter or mess, contrary to the rest of the house. All the walls were an unpainted oak wood gleaming in the light of the fluorescent bulb. The wood smelled reminiscent of warm honey and made her feel instantly at home. Loft ceiling rafters were peaked and airy, making the room seem like the inside of a church. Nova could faintly hear the crickets chirping outside as their sound reverberated off the tall ceilings in a muffled chorus. The acoustics of the room were impressive. The floors were swept and polished, and only three pieces of furniture occupied the area: a storage chest propped against the side wall, a custom wooden easel in the center of the space, and a stool placed in front of it.

It's a studio, Nova realized as she took a tentative step forward. As soon as her foot hit the landing, a force engulfed her, like she had stepped into an invisible, pulsating cloud of energy. There was a palpable electricity in the air, vibrating around her, resonating through her from the top of her head to the tips of her toes. The entire room





hummed gently, the thrum of it massaged her entire body, instantly relaxing her. Butterflies circled in her stomach and she swallowed great gulps of air. It was as if the room was alive. She felt this place wasn't meant for her, like it was a secret hideaway, and the exclusivity caused her a moment's pause. She could feel the

warm energy sweeping from the floor to the ceiling and back again, like a playful wind, always moving, exploring, and changing. She had never felt such a thrill in her life, and she could not reasonably define the magic of the studio. Bathed in a golden glow from the bulb in the ceiling, and perhaps something more, Nova knew for certain this attic was sacred. Yet, she'd come too far to turn away.

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Thank you so much for being with us again
Rebecca!!! See you soon.

Thanks for having me! It's always a pleasure!

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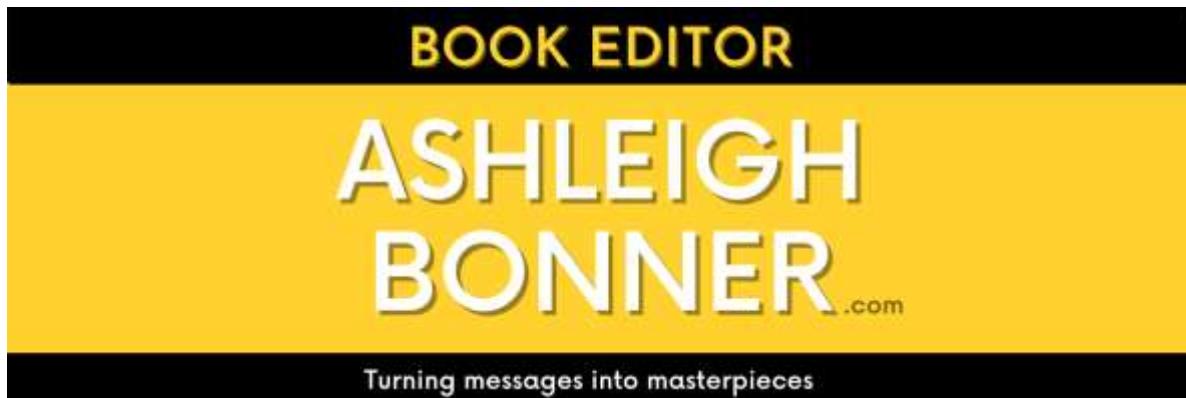


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Why We Tell Stories by Kathleen Ragan

[Why We Tell Stories](#) was an unexpected read, but I appreciate it for giving concrete evidence of the importance narratives held in the past, their role in the creation of the present and how they will and should inform the future.

[Why We Tell Stories](#) succinctly and practically analyzes the role of narrative (*not exactly the same as folktales*), its purpose, evolution, and relevance through three identified periods of time.

This book's format followed a dissertation template with part one introducing the topic, the genesis of the research and identified the three periods (oral, literate, and electronic) being examined, a launching pad if you will.

Regardless, [this book's](#) exploration into narrative and language was compelling.

Ragan research was thorough and extensive. Her inclusion of scientific evidence was especially potent as narrative and language and storytelling are often trivialized and categorized as a 'lesser' subject. By this inclusion, Ragan levels the playing field and firmly plants narrative and language shoulder to shoulder with the subjects delegated as 'more'.

In chapter 8, Ragan seemingly took off her 'professor's cap' and indulged a personal anecdote and that break in the analysis and elucidation was endearing and personable and relatable. I wish more of these instances occurred because it would've engaged the reader



more by injecting a ‘theatre-in-the-round’ essence that would enable the reader to associate with Ragan more.

[Why We Tell Stories](#) asks the right questions and proposes a genuine way forward. Indeed there must be an inclusion of all voices as well as an assimilation as opposed to a replacement of past narratives in crafting a better future. Though [I believe this book](#) to have a definite audience and that is one steeped in academia, I do believe that it is an enlightening read to everyone, as it shines a light on an often overlooked system: **storytelling...**

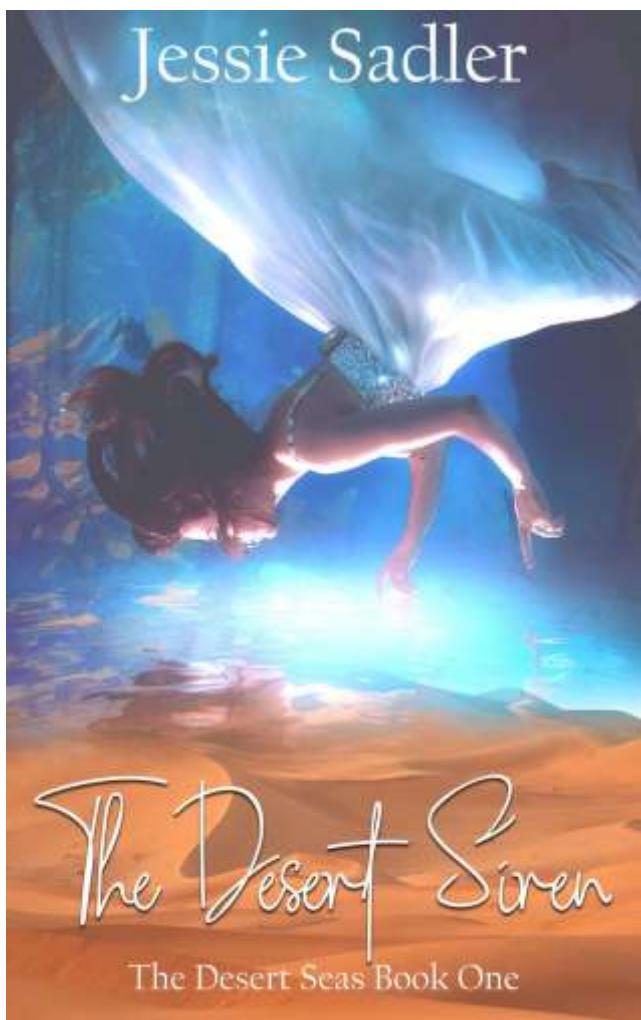
Book Score: 8.0/10

Get Your Book on [Amazon](#)



The Desert Siren by Jessie Sadler

When I started reading The Desert Siren I was reminded of a few of my favorite movies that take place underwater like Little Mermaid (also mentioned in the book) or Finding Dory etc to name a few among others. I am nowhere implying that the story is inspired by any of the above-mentioned films.



[The Desert Siren](#) is a story about a girl named Sahara who has a fear of water as her mother drowned when she was just a kid. Water bodies have always haunted her. Forced to confront her fear Sahara is trapped in the world of Aquacity that lies deep within the depths of the ocean where she is chosen in the royal choir for the queen. Sahara realizes that it isn't just her but a group of shifters who are relying on her when they realize her transformation as a siren is different than normal.

Loosely based on the myths and stories around sirens compelling sailors to abandon ship and dive into the water only to be taken by the sea, the desert siren is a compelling read

about a siren who doesn't want to take lives. Although the story revolves around Sahara, the author has done an amazing job with the side characters, which only helps in making the story better for readers.

A few of my favorite things about [The Desert Siren](#) are, firstly, a very real description and conversation about grief and guilt in various

forms. Be it, Sahara, Nam, and Kai feeling guilty about doing bad things to others to protect their loved ones because they are trapped or Sahara and the other four sirens selected for the choir going through self-loathing when they kill sailors. Secondly, Sahara and her friends stand against the monarch ruling the sea and there is a very powerful statement that the author makes and I quote, “A queen needs her people, not the other way **around**.” Thirdly, it has two of my favorite trope namely, found family and family reunion after years.

A few of the things in the desert siren that make it a powerful yet light fulfilling read are: an intriguing world-building where 75-80% of the book takes place underwater. A group of people who come together to protect and fight for a common cause, an evil queen, a sea witch, and an unfulfilled prophecy.

Coming to the characters, I liked Sahara and even though I was rooting for her, I **didn't** necessarily love her. I think she has still a lot of potentials that remains unexplored and the ending of the first book hints towards a sequel so she still has a long way to go, hopefully, she is going to grow on me in the next installment. My favorite character by the time this book ended was Kai. Kai felt like the perfect lead male character I love reading about. He was described as extremely handsome, he was smart, and brave.

The ending of the [first book](#) was extremely satisfying in terms of a few of the plotlines and it has an amazing for what is going to be a good second book with a lot of adventure for our characters. I'd recommend this book to anyone looking for a fantasy recommendation with cute characters and found family trope.

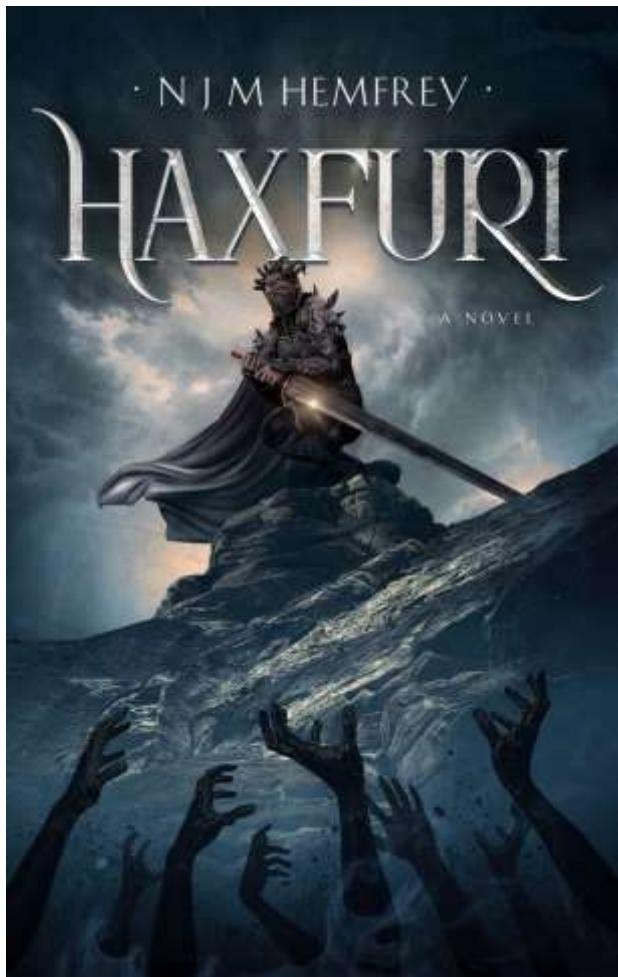
Book Score: 7.6/10

Get your book on [Author's site](#) || [Scribd](#) || [Tea with Coffee Media](#) || [Amazon](#)



Haxfuri by Neil Hemfrey

[A book](#) that starts with a high shock value, suspense, thriller, urgency and flashes of insanity as the reader is thrown head-first – *and without warning* – into the claws of evil creatures commanded by a belic entity that exists to make suffer and to torture. YEAP! Welcome to [Haxfuri by Neil Hemfrey](#).



beginnings of a sound.”

Twisted damned characters are the rule here, and madness is the normal, which, I admit, takes a while to adjust to, but what that does is making [this book](#) gripping due to the curiosity created in us.

The narrative is something that will make you go: “**Oh, wow**” due to its, at times, melodic nature. No. It’s not melodic in the sense of this being a poetry book or sounding like one, but, there are lines that are *so well* constructed, so well thought out, that create an atmosphere that makes the imagery poetic.

” *No birds, no squirrels, no insects, and not even the wind stirred the*

Given that you are reading this review, and later [will read the book](#), it’s our duty to warn you that, you will want to hold down your stomach for this one. It’s sickeningly brutal **and...** raw. If madness had a description, Neil Hemfrey’s words would be the gold standard. This **is...** chaos set free, moral murdered and its

body burn to ashes. Don't expect anything of the light here. You have been warned.

[Haxfuri, the book](#), is something totally different from what you will find from a big publisher, heck, you will NEVER read something as crude as [Haxfuri](#) from a publisher that you can think of. **This is different, this is undeterred writing right here.** You can feel the pain in the **characters**' actions and choices, as they are literally between the sword of insanity and unreserved rage through despair, but they HAVE to keep their sanity and composure in order not to touch one or the other. This is something else right [here](#).

Although [Haxfuri](#) is a grimdark fantasy, (*with a special emphasis on the dark part*), mystery lovers will find many things to be enticed with in this book. As the author proposes many puzzles to the plot, starting with these masks that are given to different people, *most of them evil*, or linked to evil (*or so appearing to be the case*), by an undefined, untraced and unknown party in common, and, even more mysteriously, without apparent reason? Are they a symbol of evil? Madness? Good? Salvation? Do they have powers to be used? Will they make you insane? Are they magical, or merely a symbol? No clues are given to these questions for a long time, but soon enough we will find the answer.

Neil Hemfrey pulls a cracker in [this book Haxfuri](#). He inverts right and wrong, makes the absurd (*yet taken as norm by society today*) and slams the gas pedal on it, in such a deep, sarcastic (yet grim), and blunt way that one can only read in awe, horror and dismay and say: "**what the fuck is wrong with these people**" and then get hit in the head with the realization of what we ignore in our day to day lives and deem as normal, allowing it to happen. I will not reveal to you in which aspects he did it, but once you see it, you will realize how twisted we, as a society have become,



and how delusional and cruel we are, [so grab a copy](#). This is a red pill.

Neil explored all the points of views of the “female vs male” argument [in this book](#), and booooooooooooy, it will leave you re-thinking life decisions and see how much society is fucked up.

When it comes to characters, and the dynamics between them, easily the most enjoyable dynamic between characters is between Kolgrim and Hakon, that feels like a father/mentor-son relationship, were Hakon is self-loathing for his failures and Kolgrim is the constant slap in the back of the head and kick in the butt that keeps him in sanity and reality from his distorted views in an affectionate way, although at times requires a wip to do so, **but...** yeah this relationship is **VERY** cool, and once you see and understand what Hakon has gone through and has to deal with, you will see how important and necessary Kolgrim is, but also understand why Hakon feels the way he feels. **It's** as if he was born to do some divine task, to be the last tether to sanity, hope and justice in this mad twisted world, so you can see how hard and heavy it is on him. Poor Hakon. **Really**. Imagine being a man that wants peace and spread hope, but being possessed by the most aggressive and warlike creature in the universe, that fuels every inch of your being with massive amounts of rage and combat reflexes. Does he really have a choice in this?

Talking about great interactions, possibly one of the coolest, most twisted, intriguing and unavoidable of them between is the Sol siblings, the “**villains**” and Hakon. Oh dear lord, there is soooo much to explore there that **it's** impossible to tell you on a review,



hahahahahah. The Sol Siblings are just lovable hateful villains, and you can see how much time and dedication Neil put to these characters, because their details are incredible. They are horrifyingly cruel villains, *don't get me wrong*, but they are not “bad” per se. Confusing? Once you [read Haxfuri](#) you will agree.

Ok, here goes something that will sound *REEEEEAAAL* crazy, so read this carefully: although this book has **MANY** scenes of rape, (*and this is the crazy part*) [Haxfuri, the book](#), is actually pro-women and anti-misogyny, specially religion driven. (I told you it would sound crazy).

And then you will be asking yourself, once again, (*after you read 300+ pages* and think: “oh I got this figured out”): Who is the villain after all?! Because *damn*, this is getting twisted here, and the bad guys *are surely* making some sense and looking like the saviours of all of this insane ungodly mess.

[Haxfuri](#) is a serious challenge to men in the padronized ways of seeing women and their own brutality towards them. Neil Hemfrey SHOVED hard-truths to our faces and every man that has the [balls to read this book](#) will afterwards take a **SERIOUSLY** deep look into his own existence, IF that man is sane enough to do such exercise. Brutal! Necessary! Needed! Masterfully crafted and *impossible* to ignore. [Haxfuri](#) is the book all men with balls need to read; hard to digest and impossible to forget. Stark!

Book score: 9.4/10

Get your [book on Amazon](#), and dive deep into madness



Mystery in plotting with Matryce Moon!

Matryce! Glad to have you back with us. How have you been?

I've been awesome and super busy with promoting my book and doing events.



Lavender: Witch of the Valley, is a continuation. I swear these books will have you engrossed!

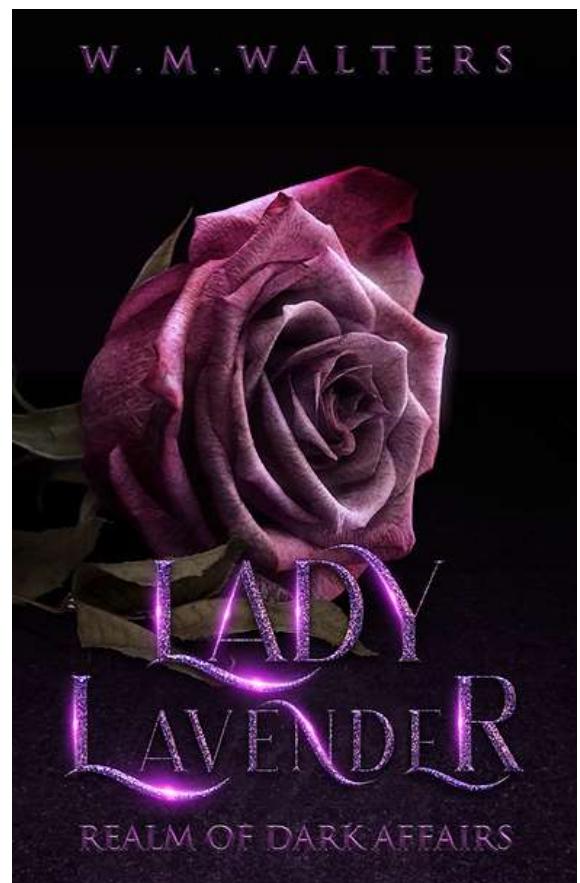
Weaving mystery in the plot seems challenging. How do you go about it?

When it comes to mystery, I always create the mystery and the solution (if there is one), and the plot usually comes together in the mix for me.

Ok, weird question: which comes first, the mystery, or the plot?

Matryce, you are the author of Lady Lavander, and recently the second book has come out. Can you tell us a little about these books? What are they about?

Unfortunately, the second book was delayed with a release date of March 30th. My first novel, [Lady Lavender](#), is a fantasy novel with a taste of romance, adventure, and magic. It follows Dahlia Rose, a Fae, and her journey to finding her purpose, which is not at all easy. The second novel, Lady



The mystery!

When it comes to writing mystery and dark scenes, the element of background is always a must, it must be crafted very carefully, I assume. How do you enhance the scenes with the imagery and mystery?

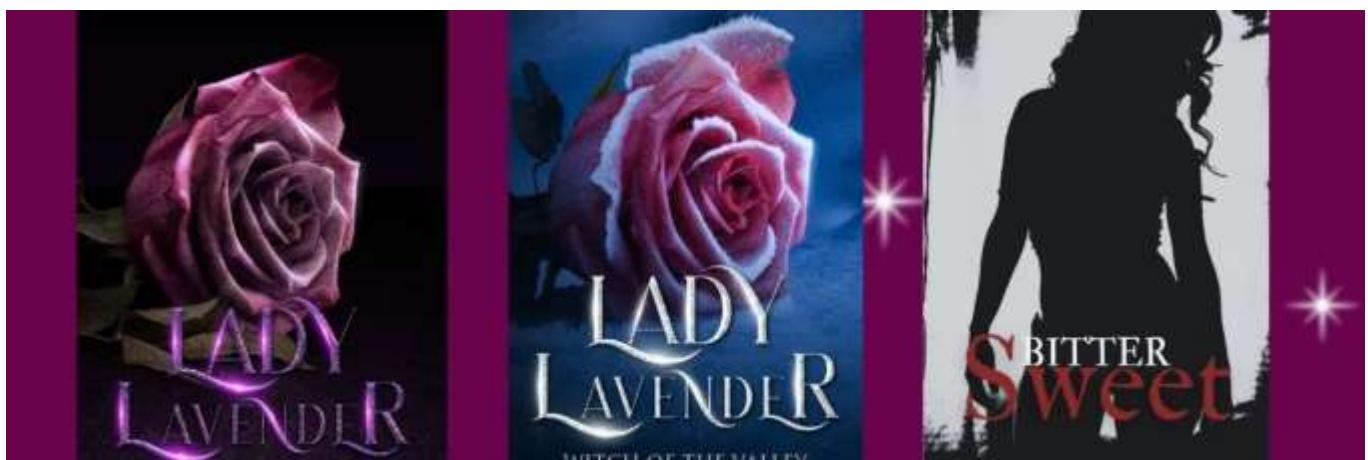
It's all in the senses. A scene should make you feel like you're there or put you in the shoes of the character. It should make you want to see what they see, smell what they smell, feel what emotions they feel. I use the senses to create the atmosphere.

Does subtlety play a role in creating gripping scenes, be it in mystery settings or romance?

I think both play a role in creating gripping scenes.

Another weird question: how do you make characters influence the imagery towards the reader? How do you deal with perceptions in the reader-character-narrator dynamics?

I feel that the atmosphere influences the reader. Truly, the book is up for interpretation depending on the reader's perception which determines the characters they love, hate, or feel neutral about.



Talking about characters. I know it's simpler for you to write Black characters, but, how do you go about it, and deal with the nuances that many

readers might not get? Do you try to "explain" or tone it down, or do you go full throttle?

Honestly, in [my fantasy novel](#) not many of the "nuances" are present but if they were, I definitely wouldn't tone anything down.

What have readers of the Lady Lavander books have been saying about it Matryce?

They think its a great fantasy! Many have told me they are gripped by Dahlia's journey and where it takes her. There's a lot of anticipation.



Where can readers interact with you Matryce?

I'm most active on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and my Tiktok channel.

Before we go, would you like to send shoutouts or leave a message to readers and your fans?

To everyone who's read the book, thank you so much for supporting me and my purpose. And for those who haven't read it yet, [it's highly recommended](#), not because I wrote it, but because we all need an escape from reality into a really good book.

Thank you so much for being here with us Matryce, see you soon!

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