

1. What was your first fandom you ever joined (if you were into a fandom). Did you read fic for it? Have you ever written fic?

I've never written fanfic! In the way the term is usually used, that is. Retellings, fanfic, literary influences. Is a literary influence when you don't realise you're writing fanfic?

There's a big dose of Jane Austen in some of my books. That sounds super pretentious, but when we were prescribed book after book from male writers at school, having witty romantic tales about women on the syllabus was a dream. I inhaled all her books when we had to study *Emma* at 17 or 18, and it made a lasting impression. (And I'm resisting the temptation to talk endlessly about my favourite film/series dramatisations now - but Netflix's *Persuasion*, two versions of *Pride and Prejudice*, please a sapphic version.)

2. A trope you and I seem to have in common is an affinity for friends-to-lovers! Abby and Jude in The Goodmans, Charlotte and Millie in Meeting Millie, Poppy and Rosalyn in Poppy Jenkins (I do count friends-to-lovers, even if the friends have had a falling out...) - what exactly do you like about this trope?

So many things. I *adore* friends to lovers. Even if, like in *Meeting Millie*, it's friends to enemies to friends to lovers and any other stages in between.

It adds depth to the relationship. There's usually a focus on sexual chemistry as a priority in romance. Friends to lovers ensures it works on another level too and one that increases the odds that the relationship will last. There's a poignancy when two people already adore each other before they even feel a romantic spark. Or even if an initial romantic spark grew into friendship beforehand. There are as many ways to write friends to lovers as there are people in the world.

The hook though is the anticipation of the unexpected (for the characters) transition from an established relationship to another kind. This always gets me, whether it be from enemies to lovers, a second chance, friends to lovers, even faux romance. That tension of straying somewhere forbidden, the exquisite agony of should they-shouldn't they and the exploration of why and why not. Sigh.

In particular, second chance-friends to lovers is a perfect trope combination for me. The understanding the characters have of each other and their long history lets the reader take a deep dive into the characters. The genuine regard the characters have for each other, established as a friendship, is the foundation for the feeling of rightness and destiny about the couple. Then the tension of the breakup - angst levels are enormous here because losing a friend feels worse than a lover only. And the sweetness of reunion is that league higher too. I'm not sure any other trope will ever beat it for me.*

*Anytime I come to a conclusion about writing/books, I almost always and immediately find an exception. I'm pretty sure of this one though.

3. What have you learned about yourself through writing?

So many things and just how different everyone is, which means it's OK for me to be different too.

You get such an insight to people - from writing the story to readers' reactions and their many perspectives to a book. How people relate to characters, how they see or don't see a story, the variability of people's

perceptions, cultural background and opinions. We live in such a wonderfully varied world. So many differences really are just differences that can happily live side by side.

4. Several of your works include complex family dynamics, including my favorite, *The Goodmans* (I came for Abby and Jude but my heart was torn apart and mended by Maggie and Juliette). Do you go into the writing process knowing these dynamics beforehand or do the ideas come to you as you write?

I love family drama. Send me all the recommendations for sapphic tales with families found or otherwise.

I have a pretty good idea going into the first draft. I do plan and sketch out the character arcs and storyline. But the first draft is an adventure in getting to know the characters properly. The major second-draft edits also get to the heart of them and bring out the themes of the book more clearly. For something so intertwined as *The Goodmans*, I needed a good understanding of the characters beforehand. Especially with the ending I wanted to pull off.

Even with *Meeting Millie*, superficially the simplest of plots, there were lots of moving parts. The two main characters have arcs, but then so does best friend and foe Olivia, and Charlotte's mother too. There was a surprising amount to juggle.

5. What is your favorite idea that you haven't yet written?

Not telling, just in case I write it 😊

I avoid telling anyone what I'm writing until I've finished the first draft. If I talk about an idea too much, I easily get demotivated if someone doesn't like the sound of it (and I am horrible at summarising a story - I could make *The Hunger Games* sound as mundane as feeding bread to pigeons at the park). Also, the first draft is an immersive experience of telling the story to myself. After that, the novelty can disappear and I might not sit down to write it.

6. What is your favorite meal/meal of the day?

It's a tie between a whopping big breakfast, whether full English, eggs benedict or American pancakes. And freshly squeezed orange juice. And strong coffee. *Dribble*. That or when my wife and I have a day off and lunch together, and go out for pho.

7. If you could have dinner with one writer, dead or a live, who would it be?

Carrie Fisher. So funny. So talented. In so many ways. And my god it would be fun. RIP.

8. If you had to pick two of your main characters (from different books) to be best friends, who would they be? And who, if any, would be enemies?

I think Poppy Jenkins would be fabulous friends with Abby from *The Goodmans*. Two sunshine friends who need respite from all the fiery characters around them!

Enemies. I think Maggie Goodman and elitist Nicola Albright would be very frosty towards each other and not in a way that would thaw either. Opposing views in some ways and similar in others. Not sure if the prospect makes me want to run and hide or get the popcorn.

9. Who is your own personal favourite character in any of your books?

This changes almost daily!

I have hearts in my eyes for Maggie Goodman and Millie Banks. I admire both while being acutely aware of their failings. Both very distinctive characters who are often cited as reader's favourites and most hated!

Millie is the kind of big, out-going, confident, sexually aware kind of person I've always admired, me being on the quieter side. I've had friends and colleagues who were the type who'd natter all day, know exactly who they were attracted to and rub people up the wrong way, but who I adored. I'd been dying to write a character like her forever. There are so many double standards when it comes to women who are confident sexually, especially bi women, and I loved Millie for being responsible and respectful but completely unapologetic about enjoying sex.

Maggie too - I wish I had her fire, conviction and confidence. Writing that complex, funny, fiery, big-hearted woman was enormous fun.

But then there's Poppy Jenkins. My heart finds its home in that book in many ways. And Rosalyn Thorn. I can completely understand Poppy's crush.

10. What book got you into reading?

I remember being super into sci-fi and fantasy as a kid and teen. But I would pick up anything off my parents shelves. My dad was an English teacher so there were plenty of books in the house, my favourite being those he'd annotated in preparation to teach. My dad I read through *Lord of the Rings* when I was eight, him reading most of a chapter and me the odd page or two. I remember so clearly the realisation on Eowyn facing the witch king - undefeatable by men. "But she's a woman!" It was a rare and powerful representation when I was eight - as a girl who liked adventure. Recently, it's so exciting to see fantasy burst wide open in its diversity in all directions.

11. What book got you into reading sapphic romance?

I think Melissa Brayden is the author that tipped me into an addict-level reader. I'd read tons of romances from other authors, but when she started writing books like *How Sweet It Is* and *Kiss the Girl* they had such a great combination of character development, humour, chemistry with a punch of angst and always that reveal of another level to a character or situation. I re-read many of her books, and several times over.

I enjoy lots of different genres, but I always have a sapphic romance on the go at the same time. I love the variety available now, super epic romances like *Those Who Wait*, Milena McKay's beautifully wrought works, Monica McCallan's addictively readable romances, Lucy Bexley's humour, and G Benson's uncanny ability to make me laugh one moment and cry the next (in a good way). And so many more. Spoiled for choice.

12. Honestly, you are a master at doing the “big reveal” in your books, and it’s something I admire so much as a writer, the ability to leave the reader wanting to know everything and - at least for me - making it difficult for me to predict everything. How do you do it?!

Oh, thank you! I’m extremely flattered, especially coming from a writer like you! That’s given me a big silly grin 😊

I suppose my love of both romance and mysteries has an influence on each when I write them. For mysteries, I crave an emotionally gripping story as well as the puzzle of a crime novel. I want a story that has love as a crucial element (could be familial, platonic or romantic). And for romances, I want intrigue to draw the reader through the story too. Even if the romance doesn’t include a big twist, I still want to carefully reveal who the characters are and how they develop. A different sort of puzzle.

13. What is your favourite Taylor Swift song and/or lyric?

It’s going to have to be Shake it Off because I danced around the kitchen with my kids to that song so much!

14. Have you ever read a book – or fanfic – that is criminally underrated? Now is your chance to advertise it:

I’m a huge fan of G Benson’s books. She’s best known for *Who’d Have Thought* and *Purposefully Accidental* - two of my favourite ever sapphic romcoms. But all the elements that make those books so brilliant are also present in her *Dead Lez Walking*. I don’t read horror. I still have nightmares after watching *28 Weeks Later*. I’m squeamish AF. But I *loved* that grim, funny, fast-paced zombie book. Honestly, the main characters are covered in gore and running for their lives, but I still want them to kiss. Amazing.

15. I know I’m not alone in looking forward to Olivia’s story after Meeting Millie. Did you go into Millie knowing you wanted it to be a series or did the side characters take on their own lives as you wrote?

I’ve had the series and main characters for each book planned from the start. The pairings also. I love to have the writing on the wall right from the beginning. I’ve still got a lot of exploring of the stories to do, then I just need to write them. (Must. Sit. Butt. In. Chair.)

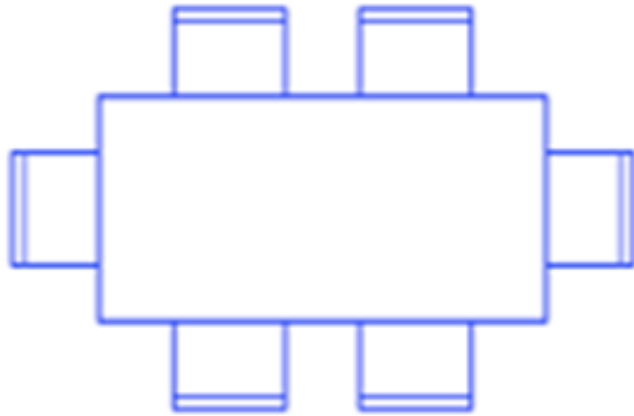
16. What would you title your auto-biography?

I haven’t a clue. (Which makes an appropriate title...)

17. Finally – where would you put these characters on this seating chart:

Rosalyn Thorn (Poppy Jenkins by you)
Charlotte Thompson (Those Who Wait by me)
Lily Connor (Then & Now by Monica McCallan)

Madison Taylor (Purposefully Accidental by G Benson)
Jones Haelstrom (No Strings by Lucy Bexley)
Chiara Conti (These Thin Lines by Milena McKay)



Explain your reasoning :)

I *love* this question!!!

Right, we have Jones Haelstrom and Chiara Conti being dreamy and mature in conversation together. Madison Taylor is sitting next to them being distracted, then brought back into the conversation with a gentle squeeze of the hand by Chiara, who understands.

Charlotte Thompson is being fabulous and entertaining next to Madison and also being entertained because Madison is brilliant. Charlotte splits her attention with Rosalyn Thorn on her other side - both are being perceptive and witty about the whole group. And Lily Connor is quietly, but always surely, charming back to Jones.