

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 grew up in a tiny little village (population: 800), with no openly LGBTQ people, so I was starved for representation. When I first discovered sapphic fan fiction, I read everything I came across, even fan fiction about shows I had never even watched, including *Xena: Warrior Princess*.

The first novel I ever wrote in English—*Conflict of Interest*—started out as *Law & Order: SVU* fan fiction, inspired by Olivia Benson & her leather jacket in season 2 and 3. Since Dawn, the second main character, has been an original character from the start, it was easy to revise the story and turn it into an original novel, though.

2. You've been publishing sapphic romance for over a decade at this point! How did that journey begin?

When I first wrote *Backwards to Oregon* in 2007, one of my beta readers encouraged me to submit it to L-Book, a US publishing house and one of the pioneers in digital publishing and ebooks. I was a little hesitant because I had only started writing in English the year before and wasn't sure how the story held up compared to those written by native speakers. But a few days after I submitted the manuscript to L-Book, they contacted me to say they wanted to publish it.

I published my first five novels with L-Book before switching publishers and joining Ylva Publishing in 2012, allowing me to publish my books in both English and German with the same publishing house.

3. You live in and are based in Germany, but many of your novels are set in the U.S. Do you ever find that you need to do more research for these U.S.-based books?

So far, only two of my books—*Paper Love* and *A Purrfect Gift*—are set in Germany, and they are both set in the city I live in, so I didn't have to do any research on the setting. But if I ever decided to set a book in a German city I'm not as familiar with, the amount of research would be the same as for a US city.

Luckily, I love research and learning about new things and new places. I've learned so much from each book I wrote. Plus I always look for beta readers who live in the city I'm writing about to make sure the setting feels authentic.

4. What part of the writing process strikes you, first (a plot line, a single scene, the characters, etc)?

It always starts with the characters. They are the heart of the story, and everything else—the setting, the plot—develops from there. Usually, a story idea begins with an idea for one of the main characters, and I develop the other main character to be the perfect balance between providing a challenge and complementing each other.

Other times, the core idea isn't so much one character but the dynamic or an interesting situation between two characters. For example, the idea for my latest book, *Bachelorette Number Twelve*, was: What if one character accidentally bids on another character she can't stand in a singles auction...and ends up winning a date with her?

5. You used to work as a psychologist. How do you think that's influenced your writing?

I've been told I write like a psychologist LOL. I think it's part of the reason why my books are so character-centric and why I put so much time into developing my characters before I start writing. My characters don't start existing on page 1. They had a full life—with families, friends, relationship histories, fears and wounds from their past—before they ever meet. I want them to feel real to my readers, not like one-dimensional cardboard figures.

I also don't like to break up the couple at the 75% mark just because of a huge misunderstanding that could have been resolved if only they acted like adults and sat down to talk for five minutes. That doesn't mean they're all perfect—that would be boring—but they at least make an honest attempt at communicating with each other. I love writing slow-burn romances and showing readers the process of the two characters slowly opening up to each other, revealing more layers, and making themselves more and more vulnerable as the story progresses.

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

I have an entire notebook full of story ideas I haven't written yet. I'm not sure I can pick just one favorite, but one I really look forward to writing is the story of Brooke, Winter's sister from *Just a Touch Away*.

Brooke and Winter are both ice queens competing for their father's inheritance. In *Just a Touch Away*, they make a deal: Brooke challenges Winter to book a session with a professional cuddler (which happens in *Just a Touch Away*), and Winter challenges Brooke to finally hire an assistant. Brooke is convinced she works best alone and an assistant would only slow her down, so she comes up with the brilliant idea of hiring a "fake assistant" instead. But she doesn't expect the fake assistant to turn her company—and her life—upside down.

7. What is your favorite meal?

Is cheesecake a meal? If it's not, I'll go with either a veggie Jalfrezi or a Yufka—a Turkish dish invented in Germany. It's a flatbread filled with lettuce, tomato, corn, cucumber, feta cheese, and a garlic yogurt sauce.

8. You organize a lot of giveaways and events – including the favored yearly book bingo! What drives you to organize all of these activities? What is your favorite part?

I'm a strong believer in community. It's the reason I first switched from writing in German—my native language—to writing in English. When I first discovered sapphic fiction, there was no German-speaking community online. No fellow authors to collaborate with, no beta readers, no groups where readers and writers mingle. But I really wanted that community, and when I found it

with English-speaking writers and readers, I promised myself that I would look for ways to give back to the community once I was in a position to do so.

That's why I mentor fellow writers and organize fun events for readers such as my annual Sapphic Book Advent Calendar and the Sapphic Book Bingo, a year-long reading challenge.

My favorite part is knowing I'm doing something that helps fellow authors, especially those just starting out, and that puts a smile on readers' faces and makes their day just a little brighter.

9. 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 Holly from *Perfect Rhythm* and Hannah from *Just a Touch Away* would be instant best friends. Both are people persons, and Holly would be fascinated by Hannah's job—professional cuddling. Holly is asexual but very sensual and touch-positive, and as a nurse, she's in a healthcare profession too, so they'd have plenty to talk about.

I think Regina—the ice queen doctor from *Bachelorette Number Twelve*—would instantly hate Jordan from *Falling Hard*. First because Jordan is a surgeon and would think she's at the top of the medical food chain, while Regina, of course, knows that it's the ER doctors who are superior. Plus Jordan is a natural flirt, and Regina is the possessive type, so she wouldn't be amused if Jordan tried to flirt with Ellie.

10. Who is your own personal favorite character in any of your books?

That's a question that is making me squirm because it's so hard to pick just one! If I absolutely have to, I would pick Regina right now. Her snarky, cool, confident attitude was so much fun to write!

And, of course, like many of my readers, I'll always have a soft spot for Luke from *Backwards to Oregon*.

11. What book got you into reading?

I've always been an avid reader from the moment I first learned to read, so I don't even remember what book I read first. But the books I was really passionate about as a kid was the *Song of the Lioness* series by Tamora Pierce. It's fantasy set in a quasi-medieval world with magic, and the main character is a girl who switches places with her twin brother to become a knight.

12. What book got you into reading sapphic romance?

I accidentally stumbled across *None So Blind* by LJ Maas online while I was at university. It was an eye-opening experience! I hadn't even known sapphic romance existed.

13. You've written a whole variety of characters not typically represented in romances (featuring asexuality, autoimmune diseases, characters with prominent scars, etc). What's your inspiration behind that?

Real life is a lot more diverse than many romance novels, and I want to reflect that diversity. I don't want all of my characters to be the same, and I want to show that you don't have to be able-bodied or allosexual or fulfill any of society's expectations to deserve love.

Books are a great chance to walk in someone else's shoes for a while and to learn about people whose lives are different from our own.

14. What is your favorite Taylor Swift song and/or lyric?

That question sent me down a rabbit hole, because of course I couldn't just name a song without having re-listening to all of her songs. I have to admit it gave me a new appreciation of her songwriting. I narrowed it down to 20, then to 4, and finally ended up picking "The 1."

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

There are plenty, but the first one that comes to mind is the one I picked my pen name from. *Silent Legacy* (also known as *Glass Houses*) by Ciaràn Llachlan Leavitt was available online as an Uber Xena fan fiction back when I first started reading sapphic fiction. It's actually based on another classic, *Tropical Storm* by Melissa Good. The main characters are a director and an actress, and the movie they are shooting is basically *Tropical Storm*. It's a slow-burn romance—what can I say? I love slow burns—with wonderful character development, but as far as I know, the author never wrote another book, so most people have never heard of *Silent Legacy*.

16. What would you title your auto-biography?

Go Your Own Way

17. A lot of authors have a favored niche and often stick to it, or at least *typically* write in that trope. For me, it's friends-to-lovers, for Lee Winter it's age-gap/ice queen, for Monica McCallan it's second chance romances. You've written all different tropes - ice queens, fake dating, supernatural, crime... Do you have a favorite trope to write? Do you have a favorite trope to read?

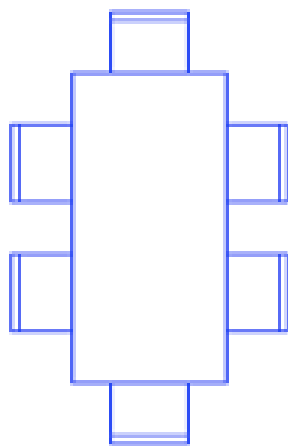
My favorite trope is slow-burn romances. I love taking my time to develop the relationship and really getting to know the different layers of my characters, showing how they reveal those layers bit by bit to each other.

I also love opposites-attract romances, pairing two characters who are very different from each other when it comes to their personalities and their backstories. At first, they might not think they have much in common, but they heal parts of each other and complete each other in unexpected ways.

Luckily, both slow-burn and opposites-attract pair really well with other tropes, so I have written a wide variety of books, including enemies-to-lovers/ice queen (e.g., *Bachelorette Number Twelve*), best friends-to-lovers (*Chemistry Lessons*), age gap (*Wrong Number, Right Woman*), fake relationship (*Just for Show, Something in the Wine*), etc.

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

Regina Novak from *Bachelorette Number Twelve* by you
Caroline Parker from *When You Least Expect It* by me
Bess Thornton from *Breaking Character* by Lee Winter
Rebecca Keane from *Ask, Tell and If I Don't Ask* by EJ Noyes
Maddie Stevenson from *Jericho* by Ann McMan
Robyn Ward from *And Playing the Role of Herself* by K.E. Lane



Explain your reasoning :)

Ooh, cool question! So, Regina and Elizabeth/Bess would have to sit at the head of the table since they are the two ice queens in the group. Regina more so than Bess, so she would, of course, insist that her seat is the “head” of the table and Bess’s seat is the “foot.”

I would put Maddie across the corner from Regina because she’s a master (mistress?) at banter and witty replies, so she could keep up with Regina’s snark.

Rebecca can sit on Regina’s other side since they’re both doctors so they can talk medicine.

Then I’d put Caroline next to Maddie. They are both adoptive/step parents now so they have something to talk about.

And Robyn can sit across the corner from Bess. They’re both actresses plus they have been in the closet for a long time, so that gives them something in common too.