

AUGUST 2021

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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF STEAMY ROMANCE AUTHOR

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Torrential rain - the classic British summer!

Welcome to my latest newsletter and I hope you and your families are all on excellent form. Everything is plodding along well in the Ashworth household, other than the weather! I'm not sure it's stopped raining since last we spoke!

I, on the other hand, have been busy since my last newsletter three months ago, with the publication of:

Black Lace & Promises - Volume 3

A collection of three steamy, shorter stories which total the length of one standard novel. The titles are 'Playing with Fire', 'The Sweetest Thing' and 'Burn Baby, Burn' and have been well received so far.

Available from Amazon.com, Amazon.co.uk, Amazon.ca and Amazon.com.au.

A Very Rural Affair - Book 2

A continuation of book 1 of the same series. Patrick and Fen's intimate relationship continues to blossom. But thanks to media intrusion, close friends, nosey neighbours, wedding preparations and the irrepressible Sally, life at Hawksbury Hollow is destined to never be quiet.

Available from Amazon.com, Amazon.co.uk, Amazon.ca and Amazon.com.au.

During the next few months, I've scheduled in a number of giveaways and Amazon countdown deals. The details are listed below, to give you a heads up. But I'll also try to remember to drop you an email as they happen too.

- August 18-22 - Daniel Lawson Series Books 1 & 2 - Free giveaway
- August 22-29 - Three Times Moor Pleasure - Countdown Deal (99c/99p)
- September 24-30 - Patients is a Virtue - Countdown Deal (99c/99p)



Work in Progress

So much I want to write, so little time!

In the last month or so, I've had to re-organise my brain a little. I realised I had well over 20 ideas for new novels rattling around it, with at least 10 of them either part-written, or at least largely planned. And to be honest, it was getting a bit overwhelming for my increasingly limited intellect ;-)

So I forced myself to put aside some of those projects and just focus on my priorities. The result of this exercise was the production of the below priority list.



Of course, there probably isn't a snowflake's chance in hell of me sticking to this list, but at least I made the effort! This is the list:

1) A Very Rural Affair - Book 3

Written and in the final editing stages. The pre-order is due to be published during September, but I'm likely to pull the date forward to August, unless something goes horribly wrong!

2) To Love, Honour and Oh Pay - Book 3

I spent most of yesterday pulling together all of the thoughts I've jotted down over previous months and produced a coherent plot structure. I started writing the first chapter last night. Really excited about this because I love writing Fiona in particular! She is always saying inappropriate things at completely the wrong time, just like I do...

3) Four Times Moor Pleasure

A sequel to 'Three Times Moor Pleasure', this book will see the return of the four lead characters, plus (spoiler alert!) the introduction of one more!

4) Daniel Lawson Series - Book 8

I have also been starting to pull my thoughts together about book number 8 of the Daniel Lawson series. Again, this group of characters are always a joy to write. I need to dedicate a lot more time to the plot of this one, which is currently sparse at best, but I have the high level story arc in my mind now. This book will follow on chronologically from book 6 (as book 7 was written as a series prequel).

"The Shit Sandwich"

When I had a "real job" and managed a team of staff, I remember having to go on various management training courses. One such course was about how to give challenging feedback to your staff in a constructive way.

Although it certainly wasn't taught by the course leader, I remember one of the attendees referring to a particular method of providing feedback as "the shit sandwich".

Basically, you tell your staff member something really positive, praising them regarding a task they've done well. This is the first piece of bread in the sandwich. Then you share the challenging feedback you want to give (i.e. the shit), and then you finish off by mentioning they do something really well (the final piece of bread). I've never forgotten that analogy and I often think of it, when my books receive reviews on Amazon.



In the past couple of months, my books have received two reviews in particular, which have really highlighted to me the potential minefield of giving and receiving feedback.

Example 1 - A compilation set received a 4 star review. Having firstly praised some aspects, the reviewer added: "I did drop a star since whoever edited the books overlooked the difference between discrete/indiscrete versus discreet/indiscreet, and it brought out my inner grammar Nazi (sorry)... but most folk won't notice, and it certainly doesn't detract from the plot."

This is the kind of feedback I honestly love to read because it allows me to improve my craft. That same day, I went through not only this book, but all 35 of my published books, searched out any instances of the error identified and re-published.

Example 2 - 'Right Hand Man' received a 2 star review. This was quite a shock because none of my books had ever received such a low star rating review prior. The reviewer wrote: "Loved this one right up until the heroine catches the hero making out with another woman when they're supposed to be exclusive. She breaks up with him, only to turn around and apologize to HIM? And he chooses to forgive HER for breaking up with him?? Just.....wtf....just felt gross and I didn't last much longer when I tried to finish."

I'm ashamed to say this hit me hard. Not only have page reads for this book fallen since the review was published but even more damaging, I lost confidence, felt like a fraud and didn't write for 2 weeks after reading it. This was partly because I knew the review didn't fairly reflect the subtlety of what actually happened in the plot. And if the reader didn't pick up on that, I felt it was my fault for failing to communicate it clearly.

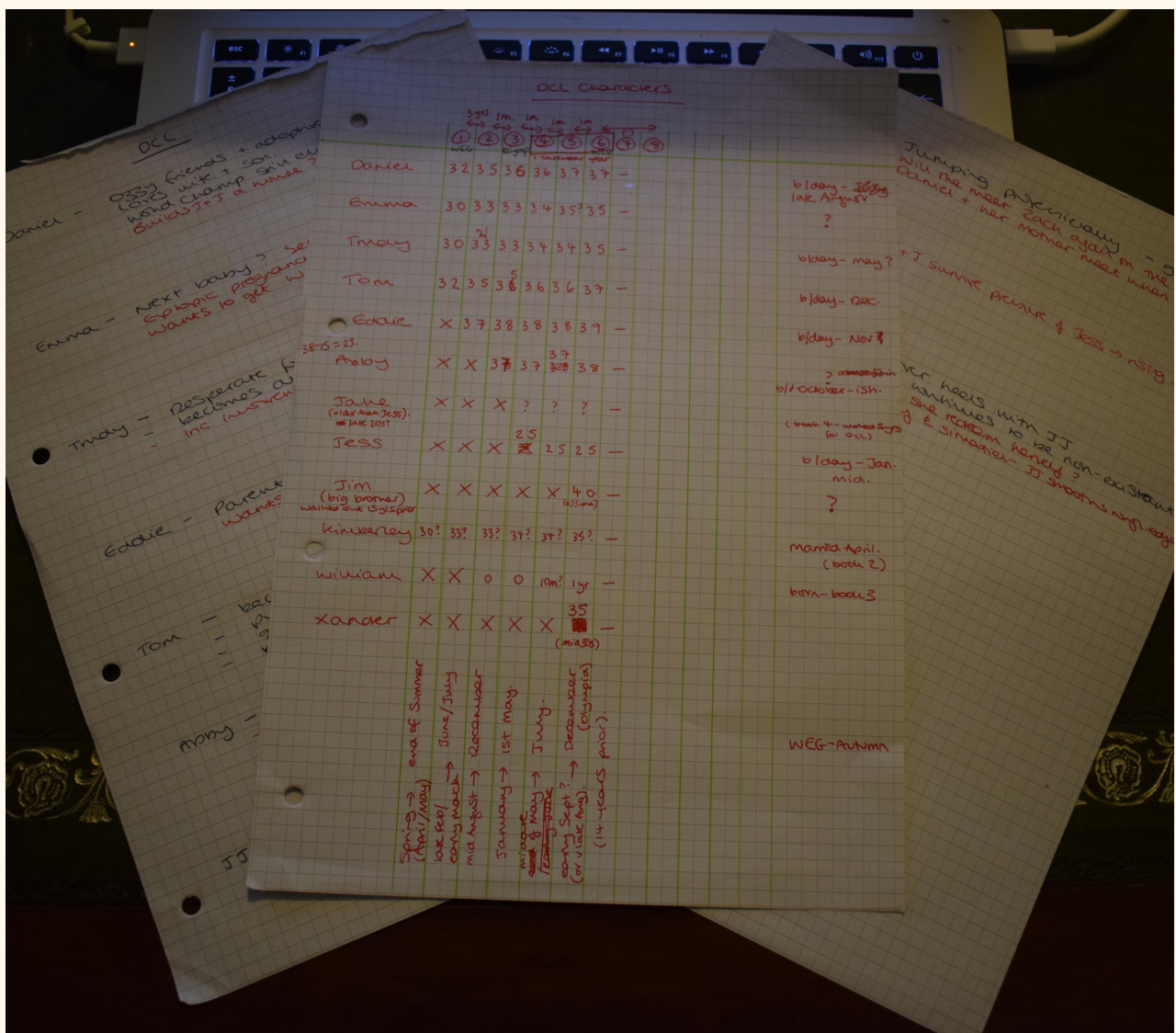
Planning

In my previous life, I used to be a project manager, which probably explains why spreadsheets and planning documents make me unusually (verging on abnormally) happy!

So, it probably shouldn't be any surprise that I enjoy the planning aspects of writing a novel. The process appeals to the perfectionist side of my personality too, as I try to ensure that themes, characterisation and facts are carried successfully through the entire story.

One thing I've discovered, as I add new books to existing series, is that it becomes successively harder to keep track of what on earth is going on! For example, the 7 book Daniel Lawson series is currently close to a total of 400,000 words and the number of main characters has moved into double figures - that's a lot of balls to keep juggling in the air! Of course, it would probably be easier if I only wrote one series all the way through and didn't dip in and out of other stories in between, but I've never been one to make my life too easy!

In the past week, I've been turning my thoughts towards the 8th Daniel Lawson book and I thought I'd share some of my scribbles with you. The middle page is just me trying to work out how old each of the main characters is at the start of book 8 - nightmare!!!



How many have you read?

My list of Amazon/Kindle Unlimited-published books includes:

- First Love, Second Chance (Daniel Lawson, Book 1)
- Perfect Stranger, Strangely Perfect (Daniel Lawson, Book 2)
- Feels Just Like Starting Over (Daniel Lawson, Book 3)
- No Rain, No Flowers (Daniel Lawson, Book 4)
- Easy Come, Easy Go (Daniel Lawson, Book 5)
- Darkest Night, Brightest Stars (Daniel Lawson, Book 6)
- Daniel Lawson: The Early Years (Daniel Lawson, Book 7)

- A Very Rural Affair - Books 1 & 2
- An Accidental Affair?
- Animal Attraction
- Better Fate Than Never
- Black Lace Short Stories - Volumes 1, 2 & 3
- Educating Daisy
- Fictional Fantasies (The Exxtended Version)
- Highland Games
- I Put a Spell on You
- Just Another Winter's Tale
- Management Skills
- One Hot Wynter's Night
- Patients is a Virtue
- Right Hand Man
- Three Times Moor Pleasure
- Time for a Quick One? A compilation of shorter erotic stories
- To Love, Honour and...Oh Pay - Books 1 & 2
- Virtually Lovers

