

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?

My first fandom was *Once Upon A Time* and the couple was Swan Queen (aka the bounty hunter vs the icy mayor). I started writing fic for it when I fell in love with their dynamic. I also enjoyed reading Janeway/Seven fics (*Star Trek Voyager*).

Later, I moved to writing *Devil Wears Prada* (Mirandy) fic. But one story I wrote for Swan Queen was so popular, it had 1.5 million hits and prompted Ylva's publisher Astrid Ohletz to contact me and ask her to write a book (not based on the fic, but just a book). And that's how I fell into being an author. Ironically, I really do not like that popular fic I wrote, and I cringe about it sometimes, so I won't be sharing the name here!

2. Your most recent releases were *The Fixer* and *Chaos Agent*, both starring Michelle Hastings, a character notorious in the Lee Winter-verse for being the villain in Catherine Ayers' backstory. What made you decide to feature her as a main character, with her own romance? At what point did you start to seriously think about her redeeming qualities?

I never used to think Michelle was redeemable. Like a lot of readers, I didn't like her at all. I thought she'd made her bed (aka hung her lover Catherine Ayers out to dry), so she could lie in it. I was a little intrigued by her deep sadness at the end of *Under Your Skin* but not enough to do anything more with her.

A short story I wrote about all my various book villains (*First Class Villains*, in the *Sliced Ice* anthology), changed everything. When Angela Dawe narrated it, I was so in love with how she did it, how interesting she made Michelle sound, that I had to write her story. I was so intrigued!

I also saw a prompt on social media that cemented what I'd end up writing somewhere in her story. It has a superhero turning up bleeding on a villain's doorstep, muttering: "I didn't know where else to go". And the villain takes one look at her and growls: "Who did this to you!" I love that dynamic.

In *Chaos Agent*, Michelle was furious with Eden enough to wreak some minor revenge on her, but Eden is still HER. No one else should ever dare touch a hair on her pretty head. And she will make them pay for it! Loved writing that.

3. You worked in journalism before publishing romance. How do you think that your history and experience in journalism influences your romance writing?

It makes me very good at writing blurbs! And editing my book (and those of other authors). I find it makes me good at compressing, condensing, sharpening my words so there's not much flab and fluff. That, in turn, tends to help me write page-turners. BUT: Sometimes, I wish I could be better at penning fluff and purple prose because writing can be so beautiful if you really slow down and take your time and enjoy the (descriptive) scenery.

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

I usually see something that gives me a blinding insight into what I'd love to write. Like that superhero prompt above. Or, once, I saw a [particular photo of Pamela Rabe](#), a Canadian/Australian actress who looked serene but deadly and I thought: "Oh my God, she could be an assassin and no one would ever know!" (Sorry, Pammy.) Requiem for Immortals was born.

5. There is a big debate about Bess from *Breaking Character* that I've witnessed multiple times over the years, and I want to know your Official Opinion – is Elizabeth Thornton an ice queen?

To me she's just an introverted Brit. But I was fully aware when I released that book that Americans especially would read her as icy, because someone that closed off will feel remote and rude if you're not used to someone being *that* stiff-upper-lippish.

The evidence she's not an ice queen is she has a nice circle of friends she lets down her hair with regularly. However, the evidence that she is a bit ice queeny is that she's told none of them, except Alex, who she dated, that she's a lesbian. She doesn't open up much. So I can see both sides of this one!

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

I keep thinking about a book that's pure sci-fi that involves time traders. You can trade some of your life force, ie your time on this earth, to someone else, for material gain. It'd create a really effed up society where the rich can afford to live almost forever and the poor will be coerced into poor trades out of desperation. But in the end I keep getting drawn back to my plotty ice-queen romances because I love my readers and those are the books they prefer.

7. What is your favorite meal?

I'm fond of a nice lamb roast with crunchy roasted potatoes and veg. It's the former Kiwi in me. That's practically the national dish.

8. You, of course, are famous in the sapphic romance community for writing world-class ice queens. What about the ice queen archetype do you enjoy? Is there anything you find particularly challenging in writing that dynamic?

I love it best when they're clueless. When they push back against the idea they're into someone sweet or cute or good. Felicity Simmons ([The Awkward Truth](#)) is the absolute queen of denial - not just about her own interests, but regarding her boss Elena Bartell possibly being a lesbian - and that was hella funny to write.

What's challenging is making all my ice queens different. I don't want interchangeable characters. I work very hard to make them unique and I really hope readers see that.

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 do think the journalists would all get on - Ayers and King would love Maddie and probably Elena too. I'd love to watch the dynamic between Natalya/Requiem and Michelle some more - I played with them a little in *First Class Villains*. I suspect in the end they might reach grudging respect.

Natalya would, however, hate just about all my other characters without exception. Maybe the one she'd loathe most would be Felicity Simmons. She'd set her teeth on edge with her high-strung-poodle antics and anxieties.

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

It's a close call between Natalya/Requiem and Michelle Hastings. Maybe Michelle these days. But coming up fast in the rear-vision mirror is Ottolie Zimmerman, who played Michelle's long-suffering PA in The Villains Series, and is destined to star in my next WIP.

11. What book got you into reading?

As a very young child I read all of Enid Blyton's books. While they were page-turners, they did leave me feeling dissatisfied. I only realised later it was because the girls only got to sit around and prepare the picnics for the boys, while it was the boys who had the adventures. Even in the girls boarding school books, midnight snacks were pretty much the extent of their fun.

The first book I recall absolutely loving was *Danny the Champion of the World* by Roald Dahl. That scooped me up into the delight of plotty goodness and humour.

12. What book got you into reading sapphic romance?

Tropical Storm by Melissa Good. It's an excellent read, then and now.

13. If you could pick one song to epitomize your characters, what would it be? One song each, for as many characters as you'd like to answer with.

This question sprained my brain. May I pass on it?

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

I'm sorry, I don't listen to Taylor. I do appreciate her success and the fact she does excellent charity work. The only song I know of hers is the one about Haters Gonna Hate. That seems apt in a social media age!

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

Fanfics, there are two. GL Dart's *Just Between Us* series (a mega-long serialised collection of stories from *Star Trek Voyager*, about a burgeoning romance between Janeway and Seven). It's a terrific

page turner and the plots are wonderful.

Also, anything [Chain of Clovers](#) wrote for *Devil Wears Prada*. She's such a talent. [Land Fathoms](#), for example, was a gut punch and so very memorable.

If you want more of my *DWP* fanfic picks, I did a top “ten” list [here](#).

Book: Australian author Jess Lea’s debut sapphic novel [A Curious Woman](#). It’s a romantic mystery, and it’s adorable and funny and so clever. Plus one icy-as-hell ice queen. Oh my heart!

16. What would you title your auto-biography?

Are You Laughing Yet? I just really want people to laugh with me. It’s a dodgy habit to have but I can’t help it. I feel so happy when I get people laughing.

17. Your next book is *Vengeance Planning for Amateurs*, which is due out in February, featuring a baker seeking revenge on her exes and an ice queen bookstore owner willing to help her. Can you tell us anything more about it?

It’s my first officially stated romantic comedy, although really I think *The Awkward Truth* probably was as well. It’s all a bit silly and good fun.

Here’s the blurb: Muffin maker Olivia Roberts has had it with her awful exes taking advantage of her good nature. The theft of her nana’s beloved stuffed penguin is the absolute last straw.

She puts up an ad at her local crime bookstore for a henchperson to help her enact a little mild revenge. To her astonishment, Margaret Blackwood, the mysterious, icy, and annoyingly opinionated bookstore owner, applies.

For two clever, capable women, they turn out to be woeful at vengeance. But much to their dismay, they discover they’re pretty good at falling in love! An offbeat lesbian romantic comedy starring penguins, plotting, and payback.

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

Michelle Hastings

Elena Bartell

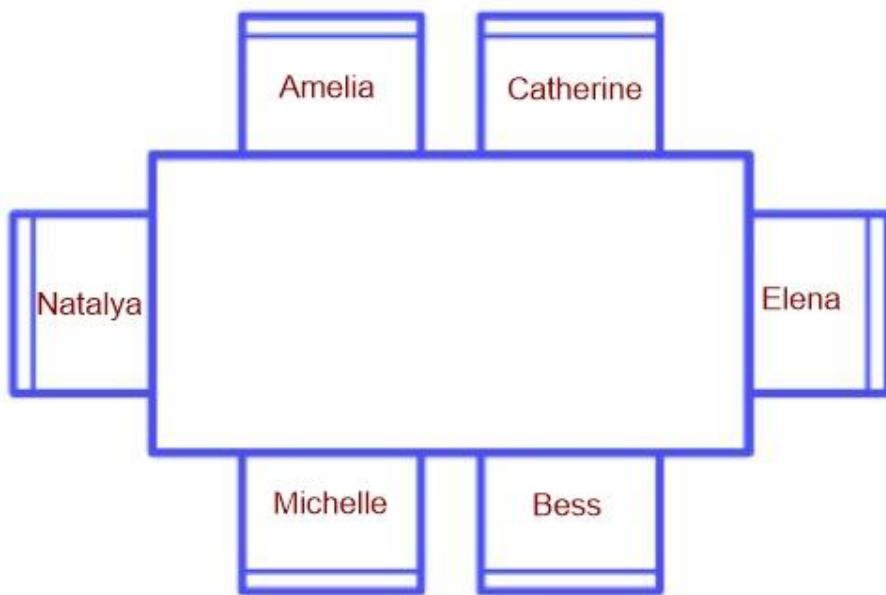
Catherine Ayers

Bess Thornton

Natalya Tsvetnenko

Amelia Duxton

Explain your reasoning :)



Okay first, by unspoken agreement, Natalya/Requiem gets her choice of seat. She chooses the head of the table because, hell, she's an apex predator and ain't no one arguing with her.

Elena chooses next, facing Req, opting to be also at the head of the table because she believes it's her due since she's running the world's biggest media empire. Status? Yeah, okay. She wins.

This is unfortunate because Michelle *really* wanted to sit facing Natalya to get a better read on her. She knows she's an assassin (thanks to *First Class Villains*) and wants to keep a watchful eye on her.

Before Michelle sits, though, Bess slides into the seat beside Elena, because she plays the media baron in a biopic about Elena's life and knows her from that. And Catherine sits on Elena's other side because they have journalism in common and it also never hurts to not get to know a potential future boss. A-1 Networking 101 from both queens.

That causes a rather uncomfortable dilemma for Michelle. She can sit beside the ex she ruined, Catherine, or sit opposite her, diagonally, and get an eyeful of her all dinner long. Yikes! I think she won't want to be too close, so she chooses opposite.

Amelia doesn't care at all. She takes the last seat. Frankly she didn't even want to be at this dinner. She's the one who keeps checking her watch...