

Getting their payoff

In author [Jessica Andersen](#)'s novels, the worst can (and often does) happen, but everything turns out well for the hero and heroine in the end. Andersen shared why writing novels where justice always prevails matters, how she discovered romance novels, and why she doesn't read the same subgenres she writes.

A conversation with Jessica Andersen

Why do you read and write romance?

Jessica Andersen: The world is not fair. I know the world is not fair. You look in the news. You talk to your friends. You see people get sick, lose family members, have tough times who don't deserve it, quote, unquote. The world is not going to balance out on the whole. It can in a romance novel and it does. I love the fact that I can do terrible things to these characters 'cause I'm a little on the bloodthirsty side and I can put them in wretched situations and I can evoke emotions in myself and put them on the page because I can imagine going through that and I can imagine losing that piece of your life and imagine being in that situation, but I can do it as a writer and my readers can read it knowing that no matter what horrible thing happens here they're going to get their payoff in a way that is not guaranteed in life. [...]

[...] I think it's about hope. I do. I think it's about the—if it can happen to them it can happen to me and I know my story of having had my life implode and then

found a better life on the other side of that has touched a lot of my friends here because they like to see that it does happen in real life.

When did you start reading romance?

I had cut my teeth on Victoria Holt and Mary Stewart, which also they're amazing authors and fabulous for the age group and sort of helped me to understand character stories and that I liked love stories. But, yeah, my first official, quote, unquote, romance novel was Nora Roberts' *Sacred Sins*. I borrowed it from a friend's mom. And I remember we were on a car trip, and it used to drive my father nuts that we'd go on car trips and I'd be reading a book the entire time. And so I think I missed most of a vacation whilst reading that book [...]

[...] it gets rereleased periodically and it stands up really well. I reread it maybe a year ago, and it stands the test of time really well. But it was a serial-killer book with the heroine in jeopardy and the hero's a cop. And she is a psychologist, and she's pulled in to do some profiling for the cops. And so they're striking sparks off of each other. Yet they're being asked to work together. And he ends up stepping into a protective role. And that just really—I enjoyed—she was educated. She was smart. She stood up for herself. Yet here's this guy that wants to help stand up for her also. Even at probably 13 or 14, that really spoke to me. And interestingly, I mean, that's—of the 30-some-odd books I've written, probably 25 of them are romantic suspenses that follow that pattern per se.

What kinds of romances do you read?

I love reading historicals. I don't read in my own genre because I don't want people to say, hey, your book sounded like XYZ's book. Well, I can honestly say I've never read that book. I don't want my decisions and stories to be influenced by other writers. So I will generally read science fiction. I'll read historicals [...]

[...] I am a little esoteric; I don't really go for the books that everybody loves. My

all-time favorite author is a woman named Linnea Sinclair, who writes these amazing science fiction romance novels. Now, science fiction romance: not a big genre, unfortunately. I wish it were; I wish that readers would grab onto it a lot more, because I'd love to see more fabulous space operas. But Linnea does these amazing character-driven space stories that just really speak to me, and they really evoke emotions in me that some other authors just can't do [...]

[...] But I can get so caught up in one of her stories that I am feeling what those characters are feeling, and I am getting angry at them for making decisions that I consider bad. And, to me, that is the mark of a fabulous story. I mean, the J.R. Ward books are fabulous. They evoke emotions. And there's this lyrical storytelling and this voice that very few other authors have. It's just this readability that draws you into the world and into the stories, and just sucks you along that pathway. Where you're 400 pages in, you don't know how you got there. But you're still with her, and you care, and you want to go for the next however many hundred pages.

How are romance novels more fair and just than the real world? Why is it satisfying to read about this more just world?

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