Pandemic babies: 8 Romance Authors discuss their Hard-Fought-For HEAs Written During a Pandemic by Angelina M. Lopez

By Frolic | March 2021

Dear Frolic Fans: Today, we welcome author Angelina M. Lopez to the site. She's celebrating some amazing books and awards during the pandemic. Take it away, Angelina!

When I turned in my latest release, **Dancing Dan**, on time in August 2020, I felt like I'd run through fire to hand my editor a pristine manuscript.

During a life-altering pandemic, an equally terrifying election year, and in time when the racial injustices in our country felt endless and overwhelming, I managed to write a romance novel that was lighthearted and emotionally supportive my family, AND turn in an angsty-bodyguard-forced-proximity romance that wrapped up my **Inescapable Filthy Rich** series.

No one had been through the fire in exactly the same way as I had in 2020, in pandemic lockdown, as I was calling it – We's in Hell.

Hence, **Hell**.

When Jaye's last release about her year-long **"pandemic baby"** on Facebook, I realized I wasn't the only one who thought about those babies written during a harrowing stretch of months in 2020 as hard-fought-for and precious. I wanted the only one who wanted to know how this fire-to-gun happily-ever-after(s) for readers when an HEA was written during a pandemic.

Jaye's book, **The Dating Dare**, and other romantic-suspense and medical romance writers – had to say about their own pandemic babies.

Jaye Ellis
Pandemic Baby: **The Dating Dare**, releasing August 3, 2021

Jaye: I'm not ashamed. I'm not going to my pen name, I'm not hiding my or an author with my name(sake), **A Sweet Alice**, coming out in July and the release of three Harlequin Desires – I imagined celebrations and book signings galore, lovely Alicia's, I was pretty spoiled by my publishers, and I'm not ashamed to say I was so excited I felt so isolated, focusing on writing my second romance, exercising, going on long walks with friends.

Then Jaye's book dropped. Everyone else's dropped.

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I wanted to do such a great job on my second romance, **The Dating Dare**, but I didn't feel funny and witty and clever. I felt anti-dressed. It was hard enough, a reserve of something I dragged. While it seemed the world was on fire and crumbling around me, I finished a full-length romance. Does it have flaws? Does it have holy? Does it let and my dedication to the readers? Yes. And its proof to me that I can stronger to write through a pandemic and the disappointments of what I thought was going to be the best year of my life. I'll always carry that with me.

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Susan Elizabeth Phillips
Pandemic Baby: **When Dare Collides**, releasing June 29, 2021

"Because we were so isolated and there were so many lonely characters in romance in my life, it turned out to be a very productive time for me. I've been writing since the early 1980s, after so many decades, with deadlines, I'm used to that naturally. If anything, I devoted more time to writing during the shut down. I was fortunate to be working on a romance, so it was lovely break from reality. I started the manuscript for **When Dare Collides** in before shutdown. So many people are suffering, and it was a very productive time for me to write a romance.

What Susan learned: "If anything, I feel even more grateful for the simple things we all take for granted."

Wishing the Hardest for Some Years

Nancy Kerr
Pandemic Baby: Three books including **Making Up Marriel**, March 2021

"I was deeply impacted by the pandemic mentally and emotionally. I'm an extremely empathetic person, and in the early days of the pandemic I was watching the death toll rise and my anxiety levels continued to increase. I felt overwhelmed and powerless.

I unexpectedly started to help with my two grandsons (who were either out of school or going to school remotely) and I found that spending time with them was a wonderful distraction and outlet. Writing on the days the kids were here was impossible, and I felt further and further behind on deadlines and required extensions.

All of my deadlines ended up being pushed back. Most by months. One close to a year.

I had to rethink my entire process from when I worked clearly in the morning to my first real, and have I ended (less jarring and more outlining). But the saving grace for me in 2020 was author Tarina L. Hermann's Facebook group, Romance Writers Support Group. It was a wonderful group of folks to vent to, write other jaye their wise a special kind of sensitivity, but it's such an amazing group of authors at various levels of their careers who are willing to share their experiences, their knowledge, their encouragement, and their support. Tarina's group was a lifeline for me during the pandemic. I also attended a number of online productivity system development by author Sonia Parin, which I highly recommend for anyone struggling with time planning.

Eventually, the kids went to in-person school and everyone sharp's schedule shifted, so I no longer needed to keep the kids in Lilacville thanks to and from school. Honestly, that was essential to helping me get back to work."

What Reese learned: "The main things I learned were that the frantic, living-life-on-the-edge way of producing that I made work pre-pandemic was clearly not sustainable. I had to develop a more consistent and productive process. I'm a person that I need to re-examine every part of how I was working and find ways to work smarter and more efficiently.

I've lost friends and family members to COVID. It was a reminder of how precious life is and that our time on this earth is finite. But it also reminded me that it is not fair and it is terrible and it sucks and we can and protect family and personal time."

Nicola Marsh
Pandemic Baby: **The C Word**, February 2021

"I was very fortunate in that I had conversations with friends about how to be an author compared and HEAs when the world seems to be falling apart around us. Do we pretend we live in a parallel world where COVID doesn't exist and write happy ever after? Or do we acknowledge that it is an unnecessary extra layer of pain that world? I was really intrigued by that question. In romance, we always provide readers with an HEA, and I felt it was important, pre-pandemic, for readers to expect a happy ending.

At the same time, I heard from other authors, "I can't imagine even being ready to read a book set now".

I decided to force myself through that decision. (Editor's note: the "C" is Mikey's life stands for COVID.)

Part of it was the writing challenge. It is a stressor, you're supposed to laugh as you read it. Part of it was the real belief that – even during the pandemic – people still fall in love and deserve happily ever after. Our characters deserve it and our readers deserve it.

And Mikey learned: "I worked a lot harder than I ever did in my life. I'm very fortunate that I'm in a position where I can do my job and I can do it from home, so I was really lucky in that respect. I'm very fortunate that I'm able to work in Mexico and April 2020, so by the time I was writing it in August and September, I was like, 'Hey, guys, I know you're going to have it through.' It felt redemptive to write that. "You can make it through because I made it through."

Kate Hewitt
Pandemic Baby: Two books including **Unmask My Heart**, releasing Fall 2021

"I was grateful at the beginning of the pandemic. I'd finally finished up a second book to go on submission, and I was able to get started on **Unmask my Heart**. It was hard to get my brain with Reese people. The book is set in March and April 2020, so by the time I was writing it in August and September, I was like, 'Hey, guys, I know you're going to make it through.' It felt redemptive to write that. "You can make it through because I made it through."

The Road to Rose Bowl by Tarina Gomez

Tarina Gomez
Pandemic Baby: Seven books including **The Road to Rose Bowl**, May 2021

"I'm such a hermit that the biggest change for me was that I could no longer go 2.5 days a week to Rockin'-N-Roller. At Rockin-N-Roller, there are zero distractions. No TV, no people, nothing but my computer, music, and coffee. Books-N-Roller was my place. It is every day environment, everyone knows me, and it's a really disciplinary myself. Okay, you guys, I'm not ashamed to say that I'm a bit slower than that, I enjoy being home. It wasn't a huge difference for me, I don't have to go anywhere.

I write more and more books each year. Last year was the most books I'd written in a year.

I'm most grateful that I focused my **Secrets of a Star Night Sheet**, which was the book I was writing when I heard the news that the pandemic was on. I'm so glad that I focused on that book, because it's a book that always lets us to bury a week or two late. (Editor's note: "Bury a week or two" contained the author who writes a book every 8-9 months. I love a Barnard's glory.) But when I had COVID, I didn't do anything for three weeks but lie in bed and feel very miserable.

What Marina learned: "My process doesn't change, but I had to lean either people. Sometimes I'm very, very, very,

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