

A scenic view of a body of water at sunset or sunrise. The sky is filled with soft, golden light from the sun, which is partially obscured by clouds. In the distance, a suspension bridge spans across the water. On the left, a large blue and red ship is docked. The foreground is dominated by large, dark rocks covered in vibrant green moss. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

Benicia Literary Arts

*Celebrating Authors and
Literature in Benicia*

How to Publish on Amazon
AND PROMOTE YOUR BOOK, TOO



Karen Mercury aka Layla Wolfe
February 8, 2023

Background

I knew I wanted to write books when I was about 3. My mother would read aloud to me—Hans Christian Andersen, Maurice Sendak, that horrifying German cautionary tale *Struwwelpeter*.

I'd think "What power in words! You write something here, in California, and someone across the world reads it. They're *transported to your world*, they see what you wrote. They're *living it*."

I wanted that power. But one thing. I couldn't read.

I believe I put two and two together, watching over my mother's shoulder as she narrated with such animation. When I entered first grade, I already knew how to read! Kids would be all "See...Spot...run..." And I'd be all "See Spot run down the street and cruise into the kitchen to eat a pot of soup."

My only explanation is I figured it out from my mom's tutelage. So yes, people, read to your kids.





First Publication

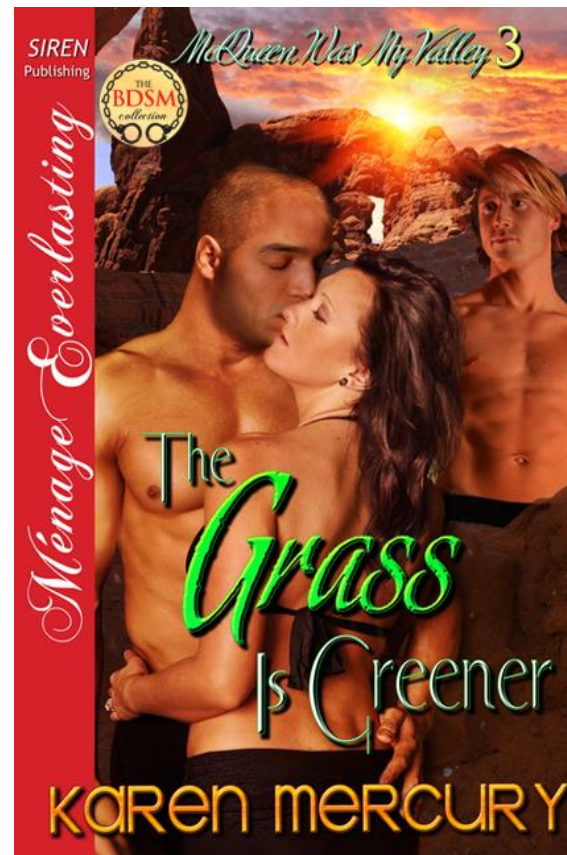
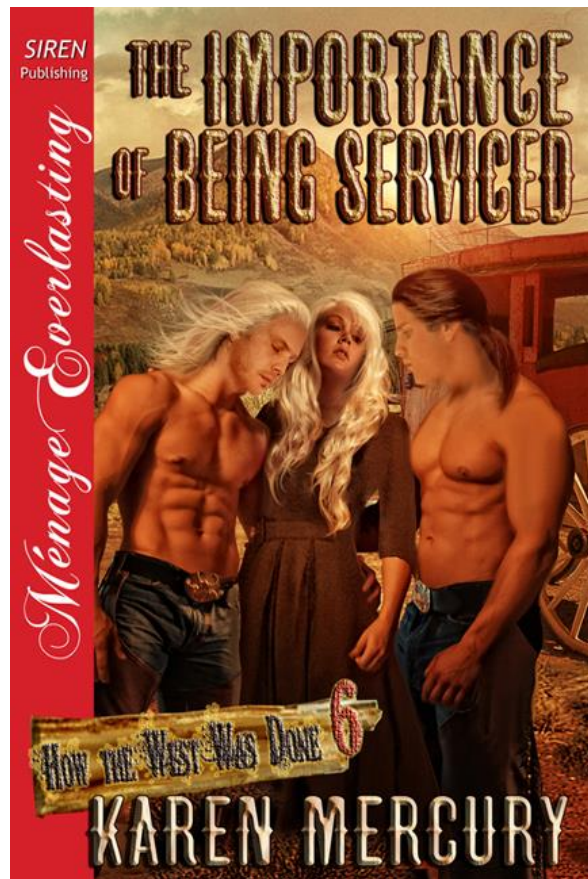
Not wanting to publish for fear of bad reviews, I always wrote books just for my own amusement. In 2003 I needed to purchase a house, so of course I figured, “Let’s finally publish!” Don’t you love how unpublished people think you’ll make enough for that?

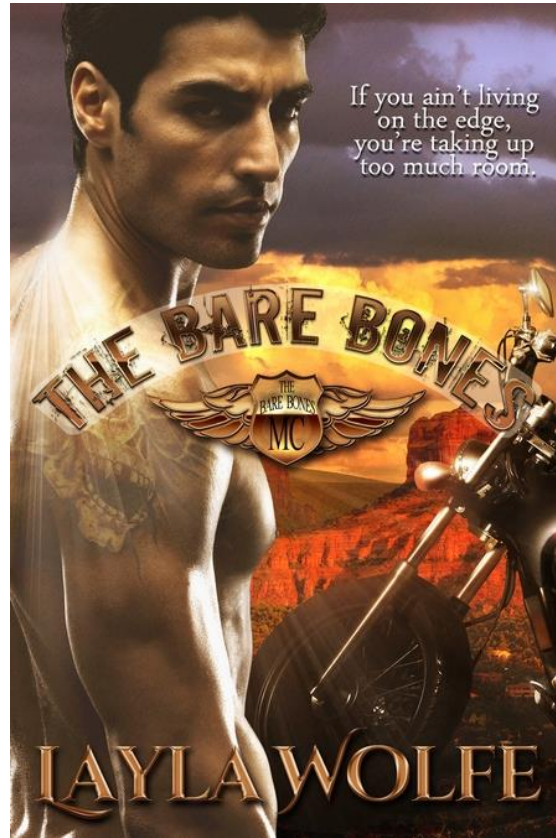
My first few books, historical fiction set in precolonial Africa, were with an established publisher. I didn’t even earn out my \$2,000 per book advance, so I reckoned erotic romance was the way to go.

Erotic Romance

In 2011 I signed with Siren Publishing and set out to deliver a book a month, MMF (male-male-female) ménages with overtones of BDSM. The covers were often mortifying, cut and pasted together without forethought, wigs slapped on (or erased) with horrible fonts all over the place. Fellow writers and I would compare our covers from hell. “Mine is worst. My heroine is baring her breasts to a cow.”

What’s going on in this picture? Not really sure.

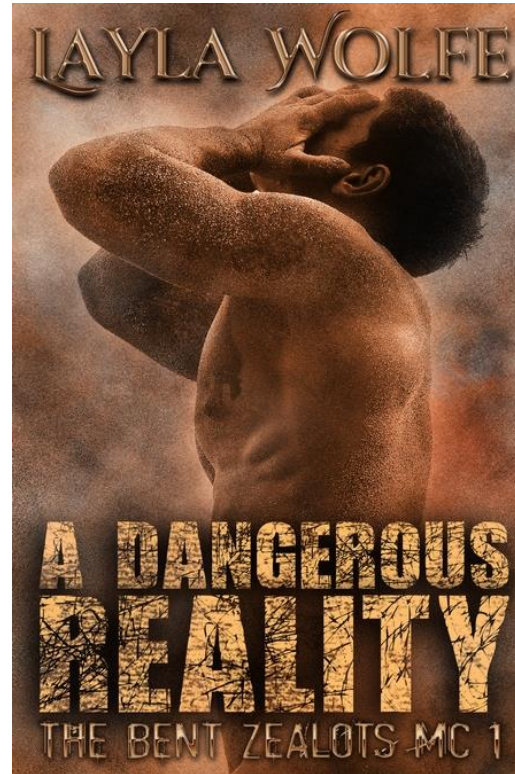




Going Indie

Around 2014 everyone was going “indie,” uploading their own books directly onto Amazon and beyond. Since I’d signed a stupid contract with Siren forbidding me from using my real name, [Layla Wolfe](#) was born.

Frustrated with the limitations Siren put on my characters—heroines couldn’t have ever been drunk or had prior sex—I created a gritty motorcycle club series where everyone did just that. [The Bare Bones MC](#) did very well, so I just kept adding books to it. I created a spinoff, [The Bent Zealots MC](#), which is MM (male-male).



KU (Kindle Unlimited)

I started out “going wide” on all the platforms—Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Apple, Google Play. Wayne Goodman can tell you more about that. Because soon I went Amazon Exclusive through their **KU** program. Occasionally I’d try to put a book wide and see how it did, but they never performed well.

I liked the option to put books on free with KU. This really only works if you have more than 1 book up, ideally more than 1 in the same series. The theory being that if the person likes the free book, they’ll purchase others in the same series. (You could always do a short story as a teaser and put that one on “perma-free.”) Selecting the KU countdown never works very well. Just do the “free” option and it’ll get sucked into the algorithm.

KU also works to get traction, to get sucked up in the Amazon algorithm. Their algorithms promote KU books more energetically than books that are wide.

Uploading Your Book to KDP

An important item in your publication is your *blurb*. Most people loathe doing them. I actually *love* writing blurbs! Make it exciting, like something an advertising guy would write. Don't blab on too long. Make it tight, using action words.

Keywords are very important. These are mine for *The Bare Bones #1*. Whatever your genre, there are going to be keywords that “pop” and drive visibility to you. Make sure you don't use ones already in your blurb.

Your Keywords (Optional)

motorcycle

friends to l

biker club

MC roman

biker roma

motorcycle

stepbrothe

Your manuscript can be an .EPUB or a .DOC. It's best if you have an outside person format it. I use a guy on Fiverr who is in India and charges me maybe \$25. It's totally worth it.

The cover needs to be at least 1000 pixels tall. I use a cover artist in Ukraine who charges me about \$25. I give her all the elements—the shirtless dudes, the backgrounds, etc.—and she makes it all look seamless, not cut and pasted.

Uploading Your Book to KDP (cont.)

Choose “All Territories” and definitely pick 70%! It will fill in the other country prices automatically.

Primary marketplace Choose the location where you expect the majority of your book sales.

Amazon.com

Pricing, royalty, and distribution Select a royalty plan and set your Kindle eBook list prices below

35% 70%

i Your book file size after conversion is 0.69 MB.

| Marketplace | List Price | Delivery | Rate | Royalty |
|--|--|-------------------------------|------------|------------------|
| Amazon.com | \$ 4.99 USD Must be \$2.99-\$9.99 All marketplaces are based on this price | \$0.00 \$0.10 | 35% 70% | \$1.75 \$3.42 |
| The following list prices were converted based on the previous price you entered | | | | |
| Amazon.in | ₹ 408 INR Must be ₹49-₹10999 Based on Amazon.com | ₹346 without IN GST ₹5 | 70% | ₹239 |
| Amazon.co.uk | £ 4.14 GBP Must be £1.77-£9.99 Based on Amazon.com | £0.07 | 70% | £2.85 |
| Amazon.de | € 4.62 EUR Must be €2.69-€9.99 Based on Amazon.com | €4.32 without DE VAT €0.08 | 70% | €2.97 |
| Amazon.fr | € 4.62 EUR Must be €2.69-€9.99 Based on Amazon.com | €4.38 without FR VAT €0.08 | 70% | €3.01 |
| Amazon.es | € 4.62 EUR Must be €2.69-€9.99 Based on Amazon.com | €4.44 without ES VAT €0.08 | 70% | €3.05 |
| Amazon.it | € 4.62 EUR Must be €2.69-€9.99 Based on Amazon.com | €3.79 without IT VAT €0.08 | 70% | €2.60 |
| Amazon.nl | € 4.62 EUR Must be €2.69-€9.99 Based on Amazon.com | €4.24 without NL VAT €0.08 | 70% | €2.91 |
| Amazon.co.jp | ¥ 655 JPY Must be ¥99-¥20000 Based on Amazon.com | ¥595 without JP VAT ¥1 | 70% | ¥416 |

Select a royalty plan and set your Kindle eBook list prices below

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70%

Your book file size after conversion is 0.69 MB.

[Marketplace](#) [List Price](#)

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\$ USD

Must be \$2.99-\$9.99

Then hit **Publish Your Kindle eBook !**

It takes like 48 hours to go live, often sooner.

Another Little Trick

With romance, most books are on Kindle. Romance readers are so voracious they don't want paperbacks clogging their rooms. So I'd gone from the snail book method of selling books in malls to the instant gratification of seeing your books and pages read in real time. The wonders of modern science!

Another little trick I recently learned is that you can ask the KDP tech people to add more categories to your books. Pick more obscure ones, because your book will stand out more in, say, Kindle Store< Kindle eBooks< Mystery, Thriller & Suspense<Crime Fiction<**Heist** than in Kindle Store<**Romance Contemporary** where a zillion books fight for space. In your KDP account, you go to the ["contact us"](#) form:



ASIN / ISBN:

Which item is your inquiry about (e.g. the book's details, manuscript, or cover)?

Description of issue or inquiry:

If requesting an update to your book's details, please provide the current text and what you'd like to change it to.

Beforehand, you gather categories you see other similar books to yours have. Look at the bottom of, say, a Robin Schone book. You'll see her categories:

- **Best Sellers Rank:** #276,124 in Kindle Store ([See Top 100 in Kindle Store](#))
 - #410 in [Victorian Erotica \(Kindle Store\)](#)
 - #461 in [Victorian Erotica \(Books\)](#)
 - #64,837 in [Literature & Fiction \(Kindle Store\)](#)

If you click on those categories, you'll see a list on the L-hand side of the page:

◀ [Kindle Store](#)

◀ [Kindle eBooks](#)

◀ [Literature & Fiction](#)

[Erotica](#)

[Action & Adventure](#)

[Anthologies](#)

[BDSM](#)

[Black & African American](#)

[Historical](#)

[Horror](#)

[Humorous](#)

[Interracial](#)

[LGBTQ+ Erotica](#)

[Mystery](#)

[Paranormal](#)

[Romantic Erotica](#)

[Science Fiction](#)

[Suspense](#)

[Thrillers](#)

Urban

Victorian

To tell KDP what you want, you need to make it look like this:

◀ Kindle Store◀ Kindle eBooks◀ Literature & Fiction◀ Erotica◀ **Victorian**

Pick 7 more categories like that! It really helps with visibility. The more obscure, the better. They say to change it up once in a while, but I always forget to do that.

Promo

I have a monthly newsletter that goes out currently to 11,000 people. They all have to double opt-in so there are there on purpose, mostly to get free books I'm sure! I use [MailerLite](#) to handle my subscriber list that comes from [BookFunnel](#), where you post free books. Each month's newsletter I have a book on free they can get, and also post links to my new releases, where sales spike during the newsletter run. I have a guy on [Fiverr](#) to whom I pay like \$7/month to add my free book to his own newsletter (which does everything from cookbooks to religious texts), and [LoveKissed](#) another \$5 to add my freebie to their newsletter. Look around on Fiverr for your own genre to promote!

With MailerLite and BookFunnel, you join hands with other promoters who run promotions, like this:



FREE and sale BOOKS are courtesy of **BookFunnel!** Just click and browse for bestselling romances:





• Contemporary
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Plus More...

Bad Boys
Romance

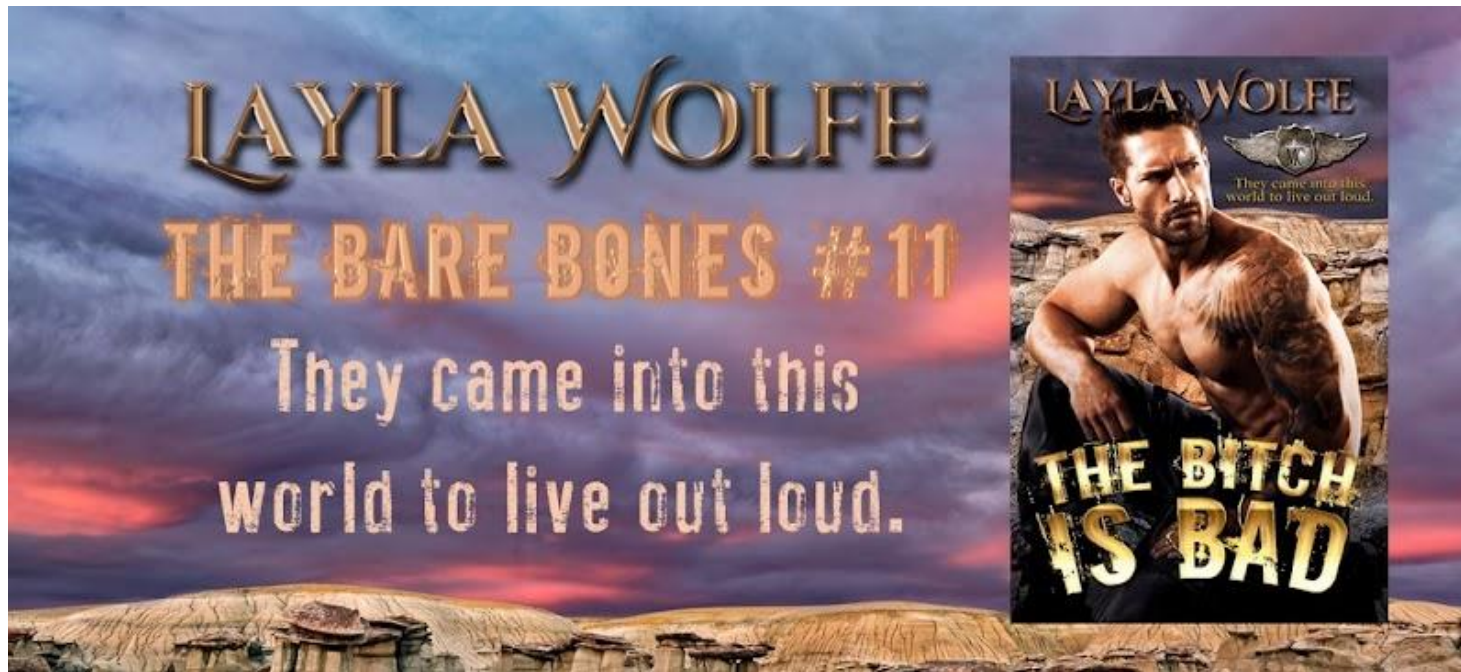
1st to 31st December 2022

A promotional banner for 'Bad Boys Romance' featuring a rider on a motorcycle with glowing wheels and a pair of crossed pistols with wings. The text 'Bad Boys Romance' is written in a stylized, glowing font, and the dates '1st to 31st December 2022' are at the bottom.

Under 2500 subscribers is only \$10 per month with MailerLite. BookFunnel is \$10/month for a mid-list author.

Website

And of course you have to make your own personal [website](#)! I use Blogger for mine. That's free. Link to it in your newsletter.



Amazon used to let you link your blog to your author page, but no more.

Website

Make a great author photo! I used AI for the one here, which is the one I use on my [Amazon Author Page](#). You need them for Instagram, Google, Goodreads, Bookbub...Well, everywhere.



Start a profile on [Bookbub](#), which is becoming stronger and more visible every day. [Goodreads](#) used to be very hot but I rarely look at it anymore. I think Amazon bought it, so they automatically put your books on GR when you upload to Amazon. You can also post your new release booklink in many Facebook groups that seem appropriate for your genre. I of course know all the romance groups.

For non-romance, try (Ctrl + Click to follow links):

- [Self-Publishing Support Group](#)
- [Indie Self-Publishing](#)

- [The Book Hangout Spot](#)

I believe [Draft2Digital](#) is the best way to “go wide” if you choose that.

I hope this has been helpful!