



Author James Weems Newsletter

romantic comedies that will make you laugh, cry, and fall in love.

JAMES WEEMS AUTHOR

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- I'm getting published (no joke)!
- Update on the novel
- MORE Christmas and Holiday-themed books I read when I'm not writing
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Okay, should we start with just catching our breath? I mean, it feels like 2023 was a year on steroids, or rocket fuel, or something, because it has just FLOWN by. Twelve months ago, the idea that you and I would be talking about a nearly-completed first draft of a first novel seemed about as ludicrous as someone saying there would be a new Beatles song in the top ten. Yet, here we are—Phoenix Rising Book 1 is rushing towards the finish line (there's that rocket fuel again) and "Now and Then" by the Beatles is currently somewhere in the top ten songs worldwide, only 53 years after the group broke up.

SHAMELESS PLUG: As a long-time Beatle fan, I love the song. As a music lover in general, I adore the song. As a techie, I am **amazed** by the song. Bottom line—if you haven't heard it, find it online and check it out.

I am now on Mastodon. Look for me as @AuthorJamesWeems @mastodonbooks.net. If you're on Mastodon, look me up and say hi! I'm still checking the site out, but it's a book-lover-centric platform and they don't allow hate speech or any of the garbage you'll find on some or most social networks these days.

Back to the review of 2023, though. After a slow start—Phoenix Rising *really* wasn't meant to be a contemporary romance, try as I might to make it one—once I re-started as a romantic comedy, the rocket fuel kicked in and we were off to the races. [Am I spewing enough mixed metaphors here, or should I try for a dozen more?] During the year, I wrote the prequel, released it to the world, and

launched this newsletter. For good measure, I followed all that with a Christmas short story. All while writing scenes for the novel—originally I thought nearly 150 scenes, then cut it to 125 or so, then finally to 74. As the novel currently stands, there will be 74 scenes (eventually turned into chapters), plus an epilogue.

“But, James,” you say, “if you’re still talking about the novel getting worked on, what’s that got to do with the comment **I’m getting published (no joke)!** above?” I’m glad you ask! In October, I was online doing some research for the scenes in Rome when I discovered a call for submissions from a publishing company for an anthology they were producing about ROME. Hmm... I checked it out. They encouraged any submission of poetry, photography, or short stories (fiction or non-fiction) pertaining to Rome. I had visited Rome as a high school senior back in 1968-1969, so I decided to write a recollection of my visit. The result was a short story (and I do mean short—just over 1200 words!) which I titled “An American Schoolboy in the Eternal City.” I was notified of my acceptance after the last newsletter was sent. The book will be available through Red Penguin Books and you will get an UNSCHEDULED email from me when the book releases (just warning you now!). For those of you who want to add it to your collection or TBR list, here’s a current image of the cover:
[ROME: The Eternal City]

On to the novel... or should I say “back to the novel” since I have already talked a lot about it. Of 74 scenes plus the Epilogue, as I write this, all have been written; of those, 51 are waiting to be compiled into chapters. 19 are being edited and rewritten and reworked to make them as good as possible... and the remaining five are about to get their first viewing by my book coach and mentor. I **know** the ending of the book.

For a final (for this year, at least) batch of Christmas and holiday-themed books, I am offering you a diverse collection of anthologies. Some may be difficult to find—in many cases, anthologies are available for a specified period before being pulled off the market so the individual authors can take their stories and use them as they desire. If you can’t locate a particular anthology, that’s likely the reason. First up is **Queer Cheer**, the Bay Area Queer Writers Association Third Anthology. Print versions at independent booksellers, ebooks at Amazon and Barnes & Noble, audiobooks on Audible and iTunes. This has a mix of stories and poems. Then there’s **There Goes the Turkey!**, a romantic comedy anthology (darn, I missed it!). This was published in 2022 by Fluffy Fox Publishing. It’s a Thanksgiving-themed anthology, with 6 stories. At the time of writing, the paperback is available (on the ‘zon, of course!). For a new *twist* on the holidays, there’s **O Come All Ye Kinky** from Riptide Publishing. This charity anthology donates 20% to the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom. It features

virtually every human sexual combination. The paperback is available from Barnes & Noble or (amazingly) Walmart. Then there's another charity anthology, this one giving support to two AIDS charities—one in the United Kingdom and one in the United States. Having lost dozens of friends due to the undeclared AIDS pandemic in the 1980s, the cause is dear to me. This anthology is titled, appropriately, **Kind Hearts at Christmas**. The book was published in 2022, and it's available in paperback on the 'zon. There are 13 stories in the book, well worth looking into. Please understand, I'm not getting a cent for recommending any of these books—I enjoyed reading them, so if you want to find out what I read, here you are. If you *do* read any of them, drop me a note and let me know your thoughts—or, better yet, let the author know, by leaving a brief review at Goodreads or Amazon. Independent authors sink or swim based on reviews because so many people base their purchase decisions on those reviews! (Please be kind to my fellow authors!)

Looking ahead to 2024... it feels so odd saying that! January will be here before you know it. I hope your holidays are happy and filled with all the joy you could possibly want, plus a cup extra. Don't ever turn down extra joy—you never know when it will come in handy! Anyway, the next newsletter will pop into your inbox, slightly hungover from New Year's revelry likely, on January 2, 2024. We'll see what's happening with the novel then! And, just to remind you, once I know when the ROME Anthology will be published, I'll send you an extra email just to let you know. I promise I won't overdo it!

If at any time you decide you don't want me popping into your inbox, you can hit the Unsubscribe link below. Please don't send the email to spam—it will cause these emails to be canceled by my email provider. See you in three weeks!