



Author James Weems Newsletter

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

JAMES WEEMS AUTHOR

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Let the Pride ring out! Yes, Pride has begun, so let yours shine!

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Let's dig in, shall we? (Stop me if you've heard any of this before!)

Phoenix Rising Book 1: Band on the Run

First things first: It's gone from a concept ("Phoenix Rising") to a collection of scenes (collectively referred to as "Phoenix Rising Book 1"), in the process giving birth to a prequel (***Benji's Bayou Birthday Bash***) and later a Christmas short story (***Christmas Bonfires***). Those scenes morphed into twelve chapters plus an epilogue, with a word count substantial enough to be a set of encyclopedias, and given a title of ***Phoenix Rising Book 1: The (Un)Official Carica-Tour***. The title was as unwieldy as the word count, so it was changed. There's been whittling away of excess words to get to the good stuff—and it's *almost* ready for publication. Today, you'll get your **first** peek at the novel. (Since it hasn't gone through final edits, it's not the final

version, but it's close.) There's a cover in the works, too. Want to see it? I know you do.....

Phoenix Rising Book 1

COVER COMING
SOON!

A Peek at the Novel

The **actual full cover** will be revealed soon. Meanwhile, here's your *first* look at some of ***Band on the Run***, from London:

Walking into this building is surreal. The outside is so unassuming that someone with no musical interest would hardly guess the significance of the structure; at least to Beatles fans, this building is as culturally important as the Tower Bridge, the Houses of Parliament, and Buckingham Palace. Abbey Road Studios has a low-key exterior but a definitely high-energy interior.

As I enter the lobby, there's a guy wearing white linen trousers reading a copy of the London Times; he's seated next to an Oriental-looking woman who is wearing a white dress. Damn, here I am in black jeans and a navy-blue turtleneck. Someone forgot to tell me it's "Dress Whites" day!

As I get closer, the guy dips, then lowers the paper. He looks familiar, so I blink a few times. Then I realize... ohmygawd, it's John Lennon.

"Looks like we've got company, Mother," he says to the woman. "Hello, mate, we've been waiting for you! This is Yoko...."

I feel like I've been quick-frozen in place or something. My tongue and vocal cords have just totally shut down. They must think I'm a teenybopper or some kind of nut, standing there speechless and motionless. Finally my brain clicks back into gear.

"My gosh, I... I'm so happy to see you," I somehow stammer out. John clasps my hand like we've been buddies all my life, then Yoko demurely takes my hand. I bend and kiss the back of her hand, and she giggles.

"You lads snuck up on us, but I am so f***in' amazed at your talents, mate. George—Mr. Martin—told us your performance of 'A Day in the Life' was *spot on*."

"I'm floored he invited us to record *here*," I say, still in awe.

"Look, man, you're good enough to record *anywhere* you want. You deserve it, and 'Taking Flight' from your *first* album? Man, that's better than stuff we've done since *Pepper*."

"I've got a good group, thanks." I'm blown away with the praise.

"We've got company, George," John calls out.

Two voices reply—one an older, more distinguished voice which I recognize from backstage in San Francisco as belonging to George Martin. That means the *other* voice belongs to....

George Harrison, the youngest Beatle, the guitar phenomenon. He walks into the lobby and smirks, “Guess you meant the other George, huh? No skin off my fingers!”

As my mind begins to melt into mush from being in this place with *The Beatles*—or at least *half* of them, Benji, Todd, Wil, Sean, and Clay spill into the lobby. Like me, they react in a mix of awe and disbelief when they see John Lennon and George Harrison standing there.

When John sees Benji, he looks at me, then back to Yoko. It’s obvious the two of them are deeply in love. He simply says, “You know, mate, who you love and who loves you is between you and that person, and the public isn’t always gonna be on your side—but the love of your life will be. It’s been like that for Yoko and me, too. People don’t always see that.” How the hell did he simply look at Benji and me and figure us out like that?

Perfect timing, because George Martin joins our crowd, bringing along Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr, plus a couple of guys I couldn’t have imagined being in the same room—Mick Jagger and Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones. In the American newspapers, at least, the rivalry between the two huge groups is portrayed as war; yet here are the four Beatles and the two main Rolling Stones, acting like best buddies. It’s confusing! Even the newspapers can’t always figure out the inner relationships and goings-on with famous musicians.

George Martin leads us all to one of the studios, where instruments are ready to be played; there are enough guitars and basses here for a Rock Orchestra. I notice there are three “isolation booths” with full drum sets ready. Wow, we really *could* have a rock orchestra here!

“So. We’re going to record a few basic tracks. I’ve a few ideas we’ll try on for fit,” George Martin says, as I watch the Beatles, my guys, and Keith Richards “gear up” with guitars, basses, and drums. Charlie Watts, Bill Wyman, and Brian Jones—the *other* Rolling Stones members—join the crowd, and suddenly there are three bass players, three drummers, one keyboardist, six guitarists, and one multi-instrumentalist, Brian Jones. That leaves me and Mick Jagger on the sidelines, watching.

“Right, so today and tomorrow, we’re going to see what the top three groups in the world can produce together, and for the newcomers, please just call me George,” Mr. Martin starts. “I’ve got several pieces that I believe would work well in this treatment. First off, we’ll do a few from our American visitors, I think. Mick, if you and Ravynn will join me in the control booth, we’ll get this started.”

Sean looks like he’s just been awarded drummer of the century or better. He’s looking around the studio, drinking it all in. If he were a camera, he would have taken at least three dozen shots in a few minutes. Benji’s reaction is subtle at first; I had expected his Cajun “Who-wee,” but instead got shy Benji, then excited and curious Benji. While Sean is taking pictures, drinking it all in, Benji is memorizing every corner, every panel, every inch of space—the placement of every instrument and every amplifier, and where the control room is in relation. Both are totally gobsmacked, as are Wil, Todd, and Clay—who gets to play a Hofner bass just like Paul McCartney, standing less than two feet from the man.

If you had told me, that day when we first performed on a stage in Atlanta, Georgia, that just a few years later we’d be recording in Abbey Road Studios with The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, *and* George Martin, I would have been calling for serious mental health evaluations for you for such a suggestion—yet, here we are.

George escorts Yoko, Mick Jagger and me to the control room, so we can chat quietly while the instrumental tracks are “laid down,” the industry term for recording the basic track that vocals are then dubbed onto, or recorded into.

I watch in awe as Benji, Todd, Clay, and Wil give John Lennon, George Harrison, Paul McCartney, Keith Richards, Brian Jones, and Bill Wyman an instrumental version of several of our songs. When the superstars nod toward George, he flips a switch and says, “Right. We’ll try a take now. Tape rolling in 5....”

Remember, that hasn’t gone through final edits, but I’m confident the story will remain intact. For the sake of the email and all those filters every email service seems to have these days, I tried to be sure this was as clean as possible; the book doesn’t feature words like “f***ing”—you can guess what it is. Yes, there is definitely some profanity and sexual terminology in the novel. We’re talking about a

protagonist in his twenties, with the rest of the guys in their teens and early twenties; Benji is 17—*just* barely old enough in 1968, when the story is set. If typical teen-aged guy talk including sex and profanity bothers you, you're not going to enjoy this book, sorry! However, there's not a lot of actual sex, so if you're looking for a book filled with little more than that, this book won't do it for you, either. There are some scenes, but the book is a love story, not a sex story.

More Pride, less prejudice

With apologies to Jane Austen, it's time to set things "straight"—but **not** in the manner so many right-wing politicians and religious leaders want you to believe. Since June is Pride month, and so many right-wing politicians and religious leaders around the world are clutching their pearls and having fits because the LGBTQIA2S+ community is being given "special" treatment—after so many of them have championed bills targeting our communities (isn't *that* "special"?)—I feel compelled to take off my RomCom hat and step up on my soapbox for a moment. If you'd rather skip this, just head on to the next bold headline.

Former United States President Jimmy Carter, a very devout Christian from a fairly small community in Georgia (a predominantly conservative state), has a keen knowledge of the Bible those right-wing bigots so love to thump. (Not meaning to compare myself to Mr. Carter, but I'm pretty well-versed in that book, also.) Here's his take on homosexuality and the Bible, as reported through Reuters news and Really American:



Really
American

"Homosexuality was well known in the ancient world, well before Christ was born, and Jesus never said a word about homosexuality. In all of his teachings about multiple things -- he never said that gay people should be condemned."

- Jimmy Carter

**This is what a real
Christian sounds like.**

Incoming! Free books for Pride starting June 1.....

If that heading makes you think of author newsletter book promotions, you've figured out my story already. Yep, on June 1, I will sneak into your inbox with another set of "free for your email" books. I'm offering ***Benji's Bayou Birthday Bash***, with a different cover, though – a few authors genuinely don't like *anything* with AI (artificial intelligence), and the original cover of the prequel was all AI illustrations. The ONLY change here is the cover, so you don't need to download the story again. None of the actual story has changed! (If you want a copy with the new cover just because, I won't argue, and I'll try to avoid sending you a SECOND set of "Welcome" emails!)

Your Turn...



ASK
JAMES

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So, maybe I startled you last time with this new feature, but I'm serious! I really want you to feel free to ask me anything.... I won't bite. Even if you ask me to! (Sorry, that's sort of too much of a legal no-no, you know?) So, reply to this message, or send a message to author@jamesweems.com.

What's next!

Whew, lots of words today, huh? One thing before we're done. Dan Levy, who is an incredible narrator for a lot of my fellow authors, has started a website with his child in support of Trans Kids. They've designed some really great shirts which would be GREAT for Pride (or anytime) and it all supports trans rights. Please visit <https://609design.com> and check the designs out!

Well, this wraps us up. As always, if you decide you're not happy here, just hit the Unsubscribe link below, and no hard feelings... but there's a lot of fun yet to come, so I hope you'll stick around! Remember to check my website, <https://jamesweems.com>, for all the Pride celebrations around the world—let me know if I'm missing any. And other than a special newsletter about the free ebooks, which you'll see on June 1, the next newsletter will pop into your inbox on June 18. See you then, and Happy Pride, One and All!

