



July/August 2026

Issue 2



Second edition already!

A lot has been happening since the last newsletter, with the new edit of Absolution being released, and I am now preparing to launch both Halja's Gate and an all-new novella about Stansie Ballare!

And my plans after that? More stories, of course!

Lady Mystery

(Character in To Hell and Hopefully back,
drawn by David Williams)

In this edition:

To Hell and hopefully back (novella).....	2
Halja's Gate (novel).....	3
Rebellious children (article)	5
Current Bookshelf.....	8
Sunrise in Valencia (poem)	9

To be put on the mailing list to receive each issue of my newsletter directly,
please contact me via X, Bluesky or LinkedIn.



You can also see a lot more of my posts and articles on my [official website](#)

To Hell and hopefully back (novella)



Stansie Ballare
(character drawn by ArtwithAva)

I created the character of Stansie Ballare in “This sacred Heart” as a young girl in a perilous situation who was looking to Sapphira Rossina for salvation. Little did either of them know that they had a huge connection, and were effectively spiritual sisters. In “Absolution” she was kidnapped and changed into a vampire, an event which provoked massive retribution from her Demon Queen sister who came to her rescue.

But what then? She did not really have a role in *Halja’s Gate*, and I eventually realized that I wanted to know her story and how her life goes. So, I decided she would get her own series!

To Hell and hopefully back is the debut novella in a series dedicated to her. Chronologically, it happens at exactly the same time as Sapphira goes into Helheim to rescue her wife Giulia (in *Halja’s Gate*).

Stansie is just fifteen years old, but her vampirism means she will not really get much older, neither physically nor, in many key ways, mentally. Stories that centre around such a young person have to be handled differently, and this tale does not contain any of my usual more adult fare which pops up once or twice in my novels. I have not censored the story in any way, because I truly feel the tone of this adventure did not need such excessive violence or explicit adult scenes.

It has enough magic all by itself.

Stansie has a ‘special friend’, a girlfriend, just like many young people do. She is a young adult after all, and these days young people know enough about the world to take that in their stride. And they can handle a little inuendo and hints of bad language.

So, it turns out that I wrote a story for young adults and older children. A story that can be enjoyed by teenagers all the way up to centenarians.

To Hell and hopefully Back will be released with ***Halja’s gate*** on 22nd July

Halja's Gate (novel)

The other book released in July is ***Halja's Gate***. This is actually a re-release, edited to tidy up (remove) some of the themes I was unhappy with, and add further depth and clarity where needed. The overall story hasn't changed, although the participation of Father is no longer there (he actually turns up during this same time period in *To Hell and hopefully back*). Other themes have already been eradicated by edits to earlier books in the series, so these floating threads were also cut.



Ride for victory, fight for love!

A cross-mythology action adventure
where rescuing one's love must be
staked against eternal damnation

There are gateways to other places which should never be stepped through.

When Sapphira's wife, Giulia, is pulled from this world and into Helheim by the very Goddess of the Dead, the Queen of Demons must follow. But for this rescue mission, she needs help, a special forces unit of the kind that most people don't even know still exist.

And if fighting a goddess who cannot be killed is not enough, her own 'inner demon' is on the loose and ready to do almost anything to keep her separate existence.

Love must find its way through this collision of mythologies. So mount up on your giant troll and get those horses airborne!



Gynffach Triddle
(character drawn by Michelle Artistry)

Of the new characters appearing in the series, perhaps my favourite is Gynffach Triddle, a giant troll tasked with guarding a bridge and forbidden to leave it. Suffice to say, he becomes a key part of the whole adventure.

Sapphira's resolve and fighting ability are stretched to the limit here, and it is also a great opportunity to develop Casandra and the relationship between them.

Likewise, we see Giulia as an active, forceful agent, choosing to work to save herself rather than be any kind of damsel in distress.

And Thor, the fearless warhorse, gets to trot his stuff again!

In terms of writing and construction, this novel turned out to be rather complicated, as it follows three different points of view, each from a first-person perspective. Obviously, my main character Sapphira is one of these. Giulia, Sapphira's wife who has already had a co-lead in *Absolution*, is the second. The third lead is Swan, a powerhouse soldier, broken by the tragic death of her true love.

I can't add too much more without telling you spoilers!

Halja's gate will be released with ***To Hell and hopefully Back*** on 22nd July

Rebellious children (article)



Minds of their own

To begin with, writing requires the ability to disassociate oneself from true reality and go with the version that is inside one's own head. We often call this imagining of other worlds and non-existent people 'fantasising', but for writers, it is more than idle imagination. We have to craft at it. It is possible that we lean towards a certain type of madness!

Writers need their imaginary worlds.

Deeply into a story we don't just imagine these places, we live there. We are, after all, trying to get our readers to rent space in our universe while they ride along on our story, and nobody likes an absentee landlord!

Likewise, we have to conjure up the people to fill our worlds. Our characters start out as ideas. We may visualise what they look like, define the circumstances of their life and have a plot which determines the evils that will befall them. However, that is only the start, and as we go about the writing process, these quickly-sketched profiles soon start to develop characteristics, nuances, and before we know it, minds of their own.

Yes, minds of their own. *What a strange concept, don't you think?*

That may be the point where things get interesting because suddenly, like a parent with a reluctant teenager in tow, we discover that we are no longer in tight control; the character developing through the words of our story has other ideas.

Writers are forever trying to make their readers believe in their characters. You can't do that throughout the long process of writing a novel without starting to believe in them yourself. **The inanimate matter of a Golum is given life by a word written on or placed within its head. It is an ancient recognition of the power of writing, the power to bring forth life.**

I definitely talk to my characters, though more often than not, this takes the form of a dialogue between the people I put in my stories. It's a bit more disturbing to talk to the characters directly, as myself, but for the most part I am that strange voyeur, the director of the play, and the omniscient holder of my own imagination, running events through and getting my characters to interact.

I would like to think a lot of authors must be like me, at least a little bit. That said, the writing process is in our heads, and maybe we are all different.

The author as mother

But what exactly is our position when we talk to our characters? By that, I am referring to the nature of our relationship to these beings we have created. I'll briefly borrow here from a transactional analysis concept which puts people into specific positions Parent (P), Adult (A) and Child (C). I'm betting we writers mostly tend to do our direct transactions as Parent to Child. Because that is how we see ourselves.

At this point in my evaluation, ten minutes of frenzied daydreaming and zero research has led me to an even more startling realisation. **All writers are mothers.** Because in creating – giving birth – to our characters that is what we become. Congratulations, male writers – you have achieved something amazing! (Even if it was more in the literary fashion rather than in the literal sense.)

From a psychoanalytical viewpoint, Freud helped to point the finger at mothers, as if everything bad in a boy's development could be laid at their feet. The mother-daughter relationship was always a bit more complex for him, but most analysts agree that it is fraught with tensions. It goes this way for mother-writers too.

I will take a moment to digress here very slightly into the complex world of my own stories. In my Forgotten Wings series, Sapphira also has huge mother issues (she is an angel and her Mother created the universe after all). Perhaps the author-character dynamics have turned me, with my own writer's god-power to create fantasy universes, into a version of that ultimate Mother too, and I fear the potential breakdown of our author to character relationship as it is subsumed within the stuffy-parent to rebellious-child one.

Yes, I have these crazy kinds of thoughts! And I write them down. And you read them. Maybe it was to protect our relationship that I went and projected the mother characteristics back onto my young heroine. In my stories, she now has her own babies and the matriarchal role of being the Queen of Demons. I wonder if she doesn't hate me for it. I guess all writers' plots are steaming with our own subconscious drives.



Summary

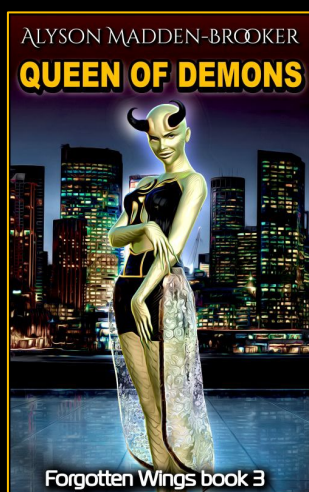
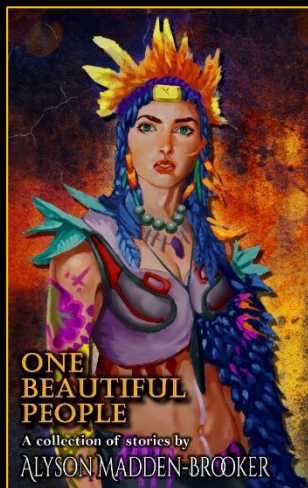
We writers create worlds and populate them with people. We are their de facto mothers. Our babies can become so real that not only might we talk to them (we even write their dialogue!), but we bestow on them our anxieties and issues. It's a bit like being a real parent. In fact, I fear so many of my characters will end up in therapy because of their author. I guess that they can quite rightly point to the fact that I am entirely responsible for what happens to them: *It's mummy's fault!*

So, I'll leave you with this thought:

Nearly all people have some anxieties because of their upbringing and family relationships, and well-written characters should probably have them too, but we don't have to purposely write all those characteristics in; perhaps we just have to go along with being mothers, nurture them and see what turns out.

Current Bookshelf

All my books are available on [Amazon Kindle](#).



Sunrise in Valencia (poem)



Statue of El Cid riding his warhorse Baveca

This is a poem written about the final hours of El Cid (Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar (c. 1043 – 10 July 1099). He was a Castilian knight and ruler in medieval Spain who became well known for his service in both Christian and Muslim armies.

After years of successful campaigns, El Cid ended his life under siege in the city of Valencia. “The Master” as he was known remained undefeated right up to the time of his death. Legend has it that El Cid’s corpse was tied to his magnificent stallion, Baveca, to bolster the morale of his troops.

Metallurgical analysis of a thousand year old sword, identified as the incredible ‘Tizona’, confirmed that the blade was made in Moorish Córdoba in the eleventh century and contained Damascus steel, much valued by top weapon makers of the time.

SUNRISE IN VALENCIA

Onward Baveca, there is much work to be done,
A king must be strong and be up with the sun.
For many years you’ve carried me my brave, loyal friend
And there’s no need to stop now I near the end.
Take me around the battlements yet one more time
Let me gather my troops, let them see that I’m fine.

For so long I've drunk deep of life's magic chalice,
But weaker each day when I ride from my palace
I balance on sharpened blade between life and death
To travel this ground 'till my last faltering breath.
For I must be seen to be protecting this city
And dying on my horse should earn me scant pity.

"El Cid! El Cid!" loud rings out the cry
When swordsmen and archers see The Master go by.

Hard earned from steel and from blood was this title
But Death is my Master and I his disciple.
A hundred battles I entered and did not fall
For five years of gentle peace behind this great wall.

My steed's stately tread sounds in the damp morning light,
Muscled flanks and steamy breath a frightening sight.
Please God won't somebody come and cut me down?
Release me, this weight, this burdensome crown?
See, it takes a war to make of man a poet,
Where fate reaps death from he who would sow it.

The veil of morning mist, raised up by climbing sun,
Reveals the ghosts of men at arms. Some fought, some run.
I know their frightened faces; pale, hacked and scarred
Watching me in stillness, their expressions dark and hard.
"Come with us. Come with us." I can feel their eerie call.
But I'm tied on fast and Bavioca won't let me fall.

Do I see them alive or from the realm of the dead?
Caught in a crossroads of movement in this siege of dread,
Where my horse pulls onward, though we both long to rest,
And my head rolls drunkenly on my armoured chest.
There is a path to Heaven and one that leads to Hell,
Mine ends still moving. So dear horse, judge well.

In another time Bavioca and another place,
We'll fight once again and have new foes to face.
First will I swear on Tizona, my Moorish sword
As I bow to the judgement of my Christian Lord.
Though I might ply my warrior's trade in any land
I'd sooner be God's deadly angel than Devil's hand.