

Take us through your writing process: from idea, to outline, to drafting, to editing.

Ideas come from everywhere – news stories, memories, songs, a feeling. This is a fun stage because it involves a lot of staring into space. It can also take a long time – the seed of *The Season of You & Me* (a family living in a bed and breakfast) was planted about fifteen years ago, but I didn't find the right set of characters until recently. Sometimes I'll get an idea and file it away. I've had an idea that's been growing for a bit that I'm still not ready to write. One day I hope!

After the idea feels like it has potential, I write an outline/synopsis – which for me, is only the beginning of the “like pulling teeth” stage. It's not my favorite – I'm not sure why, because it's fun to sort of imagine every which way the story can go, but I find it hard to brainstorm ideas out of thin air, especially if I don't understand the characters yet – after I have words on the page, that's easier for me.

Drafting is my least favorite stage. I'll use a running metaphor here – a few years ago I ran the Disney Wine and Dine half marathon. (only for Disney would I run 13.1 miles) The first three miles were the absolute worst for me – it's when every awful thought “You can't do this! Who do you think you are? Water, please! What exactly is a runner's high? I don't think I'm cut out for this!” pops into my head and it's the same when I'm drafting, only I hear “This idea sucks. These characters suck. Target is having a sale. Isn't there anything else we could be doing?” My sweet spot is miles five to ten, when I'm like “Hey, this is really okay! I can do this! I'm doing it! I feel great!” which is the same as writing. I love when I've come to know the characters and they can dictate some of where the story goes. After mile ten, it's just like “Baby, you've got this” – now remember, to the finish line it's THREE MORE MILES (technically 3.1) – the same distance that tortured me in the beginning I'm now like ‘piece of cake’, only – I can feel my muscles starting to scream at me, so I'm soooooo ready to be finished. And then crossing the finish line and thinking - “Wow, I did it! May not have looked pretty but – it's done!” Yes, pretty much the same except without Mickey Mouse, although when I'm finished a draft I usually reward myself somehow.

Editing is my happy place. The words on the page are my safety net. I cut about 20,000 words from *The Season of You & Me* first draft because I needed to take the story in a different direction. Each book is unique though. All three I had to do a significant amount of rewriting at the final editing stage. At that point, I really know the characters and I'm not afraid to see what they'll do in different situations. And sometimes you can't get to that place, until after you've written for a while.