



Romance novelist Lindsay Hameroff: "Your happily-ever-after might not look like everyone else's. The best we can do is follow our hearts and keep moving forward." (Provided photo)



"Never Planned on You" (St. Martin's Griffin), which hits stores in February. Her first book, "Til There Was You" (St. Martin's Griffin), came out last year.

A graduate of Pikesville High School and the University of Maryland, College Park, Hameroff earned a master's in education from Towson University before beginning her career as an English teacher.

Jmore recently caught up with Hameroff, 38, who now resides in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, with her husband and their two children.

Are you a hopeless romantic?

I've always been in love with the idea of being in love. Even when I was in elementary school, I had boyfriends, although they probably didn't know it. I also had a tendency of getting back together with my exes, which is probably why I am always writing about second-chance romance. Spending my teen years romanticizing the people in my life and daydreaming about celebrity crushes definitely influenced my writing.

What was the inspiration behind 'Never Planned on You'?

Readers loved Ali as an ancillary character in 'Till There Was You,' and I knew I wanted to give her a book of her own.

My editor is also from Baltimore, so we thought it would be fun to set the story there and include some of my favorite places — the Bluebird Cocktail Room, Papermoon Diner, RA Sushi, Goldberg's

Hearts of the Matter

Lindsay Hameroff's 'Never Planned on You' examines the essence of unexpected love.

By Caryn R. Sagal

Of all the java joints in all the towns in all the world, he walked into *hers*.

Graham, the guy Ali fell for eight years ago in London, was somehow standing before her in Baltimore. Was it fate offering a second chance at romance, despite Graham being the groom in the wedding that Ali was assigned to coordinate?

That's the question posed in Lindsay Hameroff's sophomore novel "Never

Bagels, etc.. I wanted Baltimore to feel like another character in the novel.

Did you grow up in Jewish Baltimore?

My family and I belonged to Beth El Congregation, where I attended Hebrew school and was bat mitzvahed. Later, I taught Hebrew school and briefly ran a Jewish book club at Beth El.

As a child, I attended Beth Tfiloh Camp every summer. When I was old enough, I became a counselor and actually met my husband, Avi, there. During high school, I also worked at Jacob's Ladder, which was a gorgeous Judaica shop [in Pikesville].

What led to you becoming a writer?

I always wanted to be a writer. My childhood dream was to write and illustrate children's books. I was on maternity leave when the pandemic hit and kept my sanity by writing and publishing short humor pieces. This led me to the online writing community, where I was encouraged to write a novel. So I took a virtual writing workshop with six other writers and ultimately completed the first draft of 'Till There Was You.' I spent the following six months editing it and signed with an agent the following spring.

Why romance novels?

I've always been a huge reader, though not a big romance reader. But I love watching rom-coms, especially the ones from the early 2000s. 'Till There Was You' was partially inspired by 'Notting Hill,' which is one of my favorites.

Describe your process writing this book.

Most romance novels have certain beats — meet-cute, grand gestures, etc. As a former teacher, I made myself a graphic organizer and used it to plot out the main beats of the story. From there, it took me about seven months to write a first draft and then another three months or so to do revisions with my editor.

I think we did two rounds of edits for this book. These types of edits are content-based — characters, plot, etc. After that, I revised with a copyeditor who looked for errors in continuity. Finally, a proofreader gave me notes towards anything else that needed correcting.

What message would you like readers to take away from the book?

One of the big themes is it is OK not to have everything all figured out. At the start of the novel, Ali feels self-conscious about changing careers and being on a different timeline than her friends and family. She learns that there is no singular path to happiness, and if things don't work as planned, it's OK to dust yourself off and start over.

"One of the big themes is it is OK not to have everything all figured out."

—Lindsay Hameroff

Most importantly, I want readers to remember that your happily-ever-after might not look like everyone else's. The best we can do is follow our hearts and keep moving forward.

Any plans to turn your books into movies?

I've sold the movie rights for 'Till There Was You,' and the same producer currently has an early copy of 'Never Planned on You.' Fingers crossed that she'll make an offer on that, too!

What else is in the works?

My third book, 'Rewrite the Stars,' is a contemporary romance that takes place in the Poconos. Also, a friend and I plan to co-write a script for a Chanukah Hallmark movie. I think we can all agree that we need more good ones! 🎬

Lindsay Hameroff will appear at the Ivy Bookshop, 5928 Falls Road, on Feb. 21 at 6 p.m. and the Jewish Library of Baltimore, 5708 Park Heights Avenue, on Mar. 5, from 7-8:30 p.m. For information, visit lindsayhameroff.com/.

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