



Novel Publicity

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MY TIME TO START OVER

By Melissa Storm

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Part I: Embracing the New Me

Hi, I'm Melissa Storm—although you may know me better as Emlyn Chand.

So why not just introduce myself as Emlyn then?

Because I don't want to be known as that person anymore.

I'm sure you think I'm crazy, or that I haven't thought this through. I've worked toward building my brand and catalog as Emlyn Chand for the last four years. I started my business, Novel Publicity, and grew it into a success that exceeded my wildest dreams. I published *Farsighted* and *Open Heart*, the first two books in a series, which has won multiple awards, sold thousands of copies, and been well-loved by readers of all ages. I published *Torn Together*, a novel that was deeply personal and has received stellar reviews. I published not one, not two, but nine books in my children's series, the Bird Brain Books. I've also built up a large following across several social media sites, made lasting friendships, formed important network connections... But need I go on?

When I first started writing, I decided to take on Emlyn as a pseudonym, because I didn't think my real name or identity was worthy. I figured I could slip into this new alias and be more confident, more accomplished, more likeable.

And you know what? I was right.

I still tried to share my natural vulnerability by fictionalizing it and placing those burdens on my characters. Simmi's self-loathing and terrible body image first belonged to me. Daly's inability to connect with the world around her in a meaningful way—a page torn from my own life's story. Alex's tendency to say the wrong things at the wrong times, Shapri's incessant babbling

about nothing, Laine's struggle to be good enough to deserve those in her life—all of their failings were first mine.

I expected writing about these things to be cathartic, but I was turning them into plot points rather than truly facing my demons. With each stroke of the key, the snare tightened. These problems seemed destined to belong to me forever.

Recently, a lot in my life has changed, for better and for worse.

- I divorced my first husband in 2012 and met my soul mate that same year. We squeezed our wedding in right before 2012 became 2013.
- I struggled with an extremely complicated pregnancy and nearly lost my life, but gained an amazing, intelligent, beautiful, little daughter.
- I moved on from Novel Publicity, but landed a great job marketing for a large publishing company.
- I had to enter debt consolidation, but learned that there are so many things that are more important than money.

And that's just a quick summary. All of these changes have had a profound impact on my life.

Finding real love with my husband, Falcon, has shown me that I am worthy, that I don't need to hide who I am in order to be liked.

Becoming a mother—and one who works outside of the home at that—has changed my interests and priorities when it comes to writing.

Losing almost an entire year of writing due to my pregnancy and the strange things it did to my brain and my energy levels also transformed my abilities and aspirations as an author.

As Emlyn, I wrote deeply flawed characters. I liked to mire the reader in depressing plot points and unhappy endings. I killed off characters with aplomb and truly wanted to make others sad.

As my lesser known persona, Darby Davenport, I wrote shallow, explicit romances, and I hate to say, they embarrass me now.

What if Phoenix or one of her friends found my writings? My poor, poor daughter if she were to ever to discover my erotic romances. I also don't want her to think Mommy hates the world and everyone in it, and that's kind of what my Emlyn Chand novels might suggest.

No more.

Yes, I am turning over a new leaf.

As my writing preferences have changed, so too have my reading preferences. So too have my values overall.

I'm disgusted by my erotic romances, bored with my YA, and sick of writing unhappy, melancholy fiction. I want to write books for women and girls—books that make them feel good, but also mean something. I want my stories to be accessible and relatable for anyone who might find their descriptions interesting.

No more gratuitous sex.

No more foul language.

No more sensationalism.

I'm going to write straight from the heart. I'm going to write stories that will make my daughter proud, that will teach her important things about life, that will give her hope.

Part II: Learning from My Mistakes

Hi, again. Thanks for following me even deeper into my rebranding journey.

Today's post will probably be the most difficult of the series, but it is also the most important in explaining why I decided to throw away an author brand I'd worked on developing for over four years and easily spent over \$35,000 in the process. Why say goodbye to Emlyn Chand when I've clearly invested so much in her?

Because I made mistakes, lots of mistakes--in fact, I count 10. Were they irredeemable? Probably not, but sometimes it's just best to get a fresh start, and that's what I'm doing now.

Mistake #1: I diluted my brand by genre-hopping.

As Emlyn, I wrote Young Adult Paranormal, Literary New Adult, and Children's Picture Books hybridized with Lower Grade Fiction. I also had ideas for, and was raring to write, Alternate History Science Fiction, Political Thrillers, Middle Grade, and straight Literary Fiction. The only genre I wasn't willing to try was horror--and that's probably, because I'd already made a foray in that direction and quickly discovered I didn't have the stomach for it.

With all these different books and book concepts, one must wonder: Who was my audience?

The truth is I didn't have a single audience. I had one good-sized audience for my YA, and they sometimes looked at my other stuff, but I was never really able to build audiences for those other genres--not like the books deserved.

Part of my great coming out as my true identity involves a second rebrand. I will also be rebranding my children's book series to focus on promoting through the series as not through my author name. I am working on a new website and a new series of blog posts to explain that decision, but you'll have to wait a couple weeks to hear about that.

Let's get back to my shift to Melissa Storm and a discussion of the mistakes I made as Emlyn Chand.

Mistake #2: My business came first, and the books came second.

Most of the time, when someone said "Emlyn Chand," the first thing that came to mind wasn't any particular book or series of books, it was my business, Novel Publicity. I worked very hard to conceptualize and grow NP, and I will always be proud of it, but there's no denying that it was a big part of what I did wrong.

See, I built NP first, and I devoted far more time to it than I ever did to my writing. I often liked to say that I love my business and my books--NP is my wife, and writing is my mistress. I felt guilty whenever I snuck away to write, because Novel Publicity demanded and required so much of my time. It made sense, after all, NP put money into my pocket; whereas, writing usually took that dough away.

Now that I've stepped away from Novel Publicity to work in the marketing department of a large publisher (a job I love!), I've entrusted much of its daily maintenance to my husband, Falcon Storm, to my longtime friend and colleague, Pavarti K Tyler, and to the rest of the amazing staff who has continually believed in and supported NP throughout the years.

Mistake #3: I chased a trend.

But I wasn't just Emlyn Chand. I was Darby Davenport too. Darby is my much-lesser-known, alternate pen name. I wrote and published one steamy romance novella, then partially wrote an extremely erotic follow-up that never saw the light of day.

I made this decision at the time, because I wanted to keep doing what I loved, wanted to keep writing--but as the industry became more and more flooded, royalty checks got smaller and smaller.

I needed to make more money if I wanted to support my writing habit (isn't it sad that we sometimes think of our craft, our passion, as a habit?), so I turned to the best-seller of the day, erotic romance. I never felt comfortable writing explicit sex scenes, but sometimes a writer has to do what a writer has to do. The first novella did reasonably well (nothing earth-shattering, mind you), but my heart was never in the book or the genre. I couldn't bring myself to finish the follow-up, and with only a single novella to sustain an entire brand, it's no wonder my little experiment withered on the vine.

There's a reason all the greats tell you not to chase trends. Either your heart won't be in it and thus you won't be able to finish, or you'll ring inauthentic to readers and possibly lose your soul by betraying the true art of your craft.

Mistake #4: I didn't make a long-term plan.

The first manuscript I wrote was multicultural women's fiction. As I queried that to agents, I decided to write something different, and so came my best known work, a YA Paranormal called Farsighted. Then I started writing kids' books, then, then, then... I ran open and free where ever I pleased. While it's good to be flexible, it's detrimental not having a plan.

I never had a plan--other than the very generic: become a bestselling author, whom readers and critics both adore and who is able to support herself and her family solely through royalty checks.

Guess what? That plan of mine definitely doesn't count! I should have written novel one and then made a long-term plan about what ideas I had that would appeal to a similar audience and then I should've written more of the same. I didn't do that, and it wasn't long before my lack of a plan began to cripple my sales, my productivity, and my overall morale.

Mistake #5: I didn't account for my evolving tastes and preferences.

It's no secret, falling in love first with my husband then with my daughter changed me immeasurably. They're the reason I can't write dark, depressing novels anymore. They're the reason I can't go through with the unconventional blood bath of a series ending I had planned for Farsighted. They're the reason I've decided to enter the publishing world as my true self.

Beyond my new, sunny disposition, I've also gotten fed up with the YA genre. I've read and written so much of it over the past several years that I am just burned out. And it's really bad when an author can't stand the genre she's best known for. That's why my new brand is focused in style and theme but leaves a little wiggle room when it comes to sub-genre or intended age range.

Mistake #6: I wrote characters to whom readers couldn't necessarily relate.

As Emlyn, the characters I wrote were real to me--very real. I know they felt real to readers too, because I often heard about their desire to "reach through the pages and slap" my characters. Yes, they were frustratingly real. Characters from Farsighted were self-indulgent, wishy-washy, quick to anger, and rude. Characters from Torn Together were detached, depressed, and just plain cold.

And while my characters were well-developed and real, many had a hard time relating to them. For readers who could relate, the reading experience often stopped being an escape and forced them to confront very real and painful demons--myself included. Which brings us to...

Mistake #7: I avoided writing, because what I wrote made me sad/scared/uncomfortable.

I couldn't write while I was pregnant, and exhaustion was not the culprit. I tried working on both my Darby Davenport novella follow-up and Pitch, the third book in the Farsighted series. Both made me cry, shake, and feel sick. Both gave me nightmares. My romance made me blush, and I was afraid even to let my husband read it, let alone my mother or my fetus!

I thought of giving up writing forever, since I clearly couldn't do it anymore. It took me a while to realize that I didn't have to give up my craft, I just had to make something different.

Mistake #8: I got trapped in a never-ending brainstorm.

As I mentioned earlier in this post, I have had fabulous, must-be-pursued-RIGHT-now ideas in every single genre you can think of. I didn't just think of the hook and let it go either. I planned characters, worlds, plot points--my imagination couldn't be contained! Unfortunately, this kept me away from the projects I was supposed to be writing, and for what? The thrill of a new idea?

While that's still a high I won't soon sacrifice, I'd like to try to be excited about the projects I'm writing, not the fleeting shininess of something else.

Mistake #9: I spent too much time talking about writing and not enough time actually writing.

Social media is a necessary evil. Isn't that what we all say? We laugh when a graphic makes its way around the web with a claim that writing is 2% perspiration and 98% procrastinating on Facebook. It's funny, because it's true, right? But why does it need to be true? Can't we make a little, earth-shattering change here?

I'm not creating any social media accounts for my new author brand, and I'm letting go of many that I established as Emlyn Chand. Darby's accounts have already bitten the dust, and I don't miss them one bit!

For now, it's enough to maintain this blog, and--oh, I don't know--actually write my novel! I believe in only doing one thing if you only have time to do one thing well. If my time restraints change, sure, I may add a Facebook page or a Twitter account... or I may just take more time to write.

I love this [post my husband Falcon wrote to challenge the way we view social media](#). Read it, digest it, and consider making a change.

Mistake #10: I spent a small fortune without stopping to think it through.

I mentioned spending at least \$35,000 on Emlyn's books, right? Because I did. As Melissa Storm, I'm going to spend far less money, and I'm going to spend it smarter. I'm going to work on being more authentic, on writing better books, on making deeper connections--not just on creating a flashier show.

Is your head spinning? So many mistakes over such a relatively short span of time. What mistakes have you made as an author? What would you change if you could do it all over again?

Part III: Learning from My Triumphs

Hi, again. I'm so glad you've come back to learn more about my big shift. A 5-post series is no small undertaking--to write or to read!

Today, I'd like to acknowledge that not everything I've done as an author has been bad, horrible, or wrong. I've actually done quite a few things right, and I'm going to take those lessons and triumphs forward with me as I begin again as my *real* self, Melissa Storm. Below, I explain 7 of my triumphs as a writer...

#1. Studied the Craft

I've read at least a couple dozen writer how-to books and countless blog articles on topics from tightening prose to plotting with aplomb--and every bit helped. From the very start, I knew I wanted to write books that readers enjoyed, not just ones that would sell.

My practice didn't stop at reading reference books, either. I studied the genres I wrote, and I used online tools to help hone some of my weaknesses. When I read a novel or a magazine article or even watched a TV show, I'd always make sure to identify what worked and what didn't and think about how I could apply these lessons to my own writing.

And I believe it showed. Farsighted was a well-written book, but its sequel, Open Heart, was miles above it. The unfinished third in the series, Pitch, proved even stronger than the first two. And the next thing I write--now as Melissa Storm--will be even better, because I refuse to stop learning.

#2. Strove for Quality

This is related to my previous point, but takes it even further. I wanted my books to be able to stand beside even the highest budget NYT bestsellers and to look like they belonged. The stigma against indies does exist for a reason, after all. I was not in the mind of putting out "self-published crap," and, yes, I know many of my writer friends feel the same way and strive toward the same goals for quality.

As a self-pubber, I was willing to pay for professionals to edit my books, design their covers, and format their interiors. When I joined a small press, I insisted on this same standard of quality--and happily received it.

Books are so much more than stories; they are professional packages. Quality has, does, and will always matter to readers--and, as a result, it should matter to you!

#3. Listened to Feedback

As authors, we have to learn to work with other book professionals like editors and designers. We must accept that they are the experts in their respective fields, and--yes--they want what's best for our books too. Sometimes an editor's feedback can be heart-breaking and lead to way

more work than we believed necessary. Still, I'd rather have an editor who picks apart my prose and TEACHES me how to make it better than one who's only concerned about finishing my project quickly and bolstering my ego.

Similarly, we must listen to our readers. I know that sometimes reading reviews can hurt, especially when you attract the attention of trolls. However, I'm willing to bet that you have more positive reviews than negative, and you have them many times over. Readers become invested in our stories, and when they call out specific aspects they find disappointing... Let's just say, there's good advice somewhere in there.

After publishing my first novel, I threw a huge release party and garnered nearly 100 reviews within a few short months. Savoring each one, I noticed a pattern. "I'd give this 5-stars, but..." "I loved it, except..." and even "I had to stop reading, because..." The two big issues that were called to my attention were that a specific minor character had unbelievable motivations and that the ending was too abrupt. I worked with a new editor and published a second, improved edition.

Although I'd prefer to get it right the first time, I am still very willing to incorporate feedback and improve my writing. Oh, yes, you betcha.

#4. Cared about My Characters

Writing character-driven fiction, my players were the actors rather than the acted-upon. They drove their stories, and they had very real (at least to me) motives, desires, shortcomings, insecurities. I often felt guilty for the problems I gave them, and I've even had them come to me in dreams asking me to let up--really!

When I wrote Simmi, the viewpoint character of *Open Heart*, I faced floods of tears. I actually had to dictate about 50 pages of narrative to make myself feel more distant. The pain was just far too real.

At one point, I attempted to write a project about a serial killer. I had to stop after about 3 pages, because I felt the dark churning inside me. I love my characters, I live their lives, I feel their feelings. This is a big reason for my shift to a happier brand. I can't--nor do I want to--stop creating real people, but I *can* stop torturing them.

#5. Engaged with Readers

A couple years into my writing career, I had an epiphany. The best way to market to readers is to engage with them.

Duh, right?

But far too often, we writers shout to anyone who will even passively listen. We blast social media with links to our books and make other overt tempts to market our wares, when really marketing is all about the soft sell.

Talk to your readers, learn about their lives, follow up with them, let them know they matter to you beyond the profit of a few dollars. I have, and I've made life-changing friendships. In fact, the godmother of my daughter entered my life as a reader who had downloaded my book for free and looked me up on Facebook.

Engagement is such a simple idea, but it really, really matters.

#6. Entered Award Contests

Award-winning author has a nice ring to it, doesn't it? Not only can entering--and winning--award contests afford you boosted publicity, but it also VALIDATES you. The bad reviews are much easier to take when you have an award medallion or two in hand. With critical acclaim, it's easier to except criticism as just someone's opinion rather than a measure of your book's worth, your worth as an author, or--worse yet--your worth as a human being.

I entered about a dozen contests for Farsighted and won about 3/4 of them. I paid a lot of money, but in the end I made every penny back via the award payouts. *Writer's Digest* even gave me \$1,000 for their Self-Published Novel contest--woot!

Now, mind you, I have no intention of shelling out a whole paycheck to pay people to judge my books, but I do plan to pick and choose wisely, and--yes--it would be nice to win another award.

#7. Tried New Things

If you stick to the old ways, you will surely become stuck.

New approaches come along and often the new adapters are rewarded handsomely. Some authors had their entire careers made by putting their faith in KDP Select and becoming an early adopter. Those that came later didn't receive anywhere near the same benefit.

I also tried self-publishing, tried small press publishing, and even tried my hand at working with an agent. Each had its distinct benefits, and I can see how each could be the perfect fit for somebody else. Ultimately, self-publishing has proven to be the best fit for me. I like the flexibility of setting my own deadlines and having 100% control over my own career, but I also love the small press that published my children's series. Others still say traditional is the only way for them.

We all must make our own choices. Just be sure to keep an open mind.

Well, that's it for today. What have you done right in your career? Have you had the same triumphs as me? Has my post inspired you to try anything new?

Part IV: Finding Inspiration

This is the day I've really been looking forward to. Today, I'm going to share my inspiration behind starting over. Not the why, I've already covered that. Not the how, that's coming

tomorrow. But the what--what was so inspiring I felt the need to start over, what types of books will I be writing now, what will I be incorporating from my old writing styles and themes, and, okay, one *how*, how I got where I am today... But first I need to back pedal a little.

I used to be a writing tornado, then life changed when I got pregnant in February of 2013. I no longer had the energy or motivation to work more than I had to. I mean, I was absolutely exhausted! Then came the pregnancy-induced OCD (which I didn't even know was a thing!) that wreaked havoc with my mind. Even when I carved out huge chunks of time with zero distractions and made clear, easy goals, I still couldn't write. Energy levels remained a problem, but the bigger problem became the darkness of the two books I was attempting to write (Pitch and Skinny-Dipping at Dawn). I'd break down in tears or have nightmares each time I made an attempt.

I just couldn't do it anymore.

And that was a major bummer, since dark, unexpected twists, characters, and endings were kind of my thing. It was at that point, I started privately telling anyone with any sort of vested interest in my writing career that I probably would give it up altogether in favor of motherhood--that anything that took me away from my to-be-born child for so much of the day must clearly be selfish and wrong.

I was rationalizing. The inspiration was gone, the motivation was gone, and I felt guilty. So instead, I made myself feel like I was doing something good and heroic, and I remained convinced for months.

Occasionally, I would miss writing. Inspiration or longing would take hold, and I'd try to write--only to face the same issues of tears, nightmares, and an overwhelming lack of motivation.

In December, while still on maternity leave and waiting to hear back about whether I'd received my current job (It was a loooooong wait, mind you, and I am not the most patient person in the world), I decided to try really, really hard to get back into the craft and to do so productively.

I spent an entire day cleaning cobwebs and moving boxes around our basement and set-up a homey little writer's retreat for myself. I purchased an app that completely blocked Internet access and asked my readers to hold me accountable. I even installed a fancy progress widget on my old website, and it is still there, advertising how quickly I gave up on that particular plan.

The big problem was that I had returned to Pitch, a novel that I'd found uninspiring for months. I felt I owed it to my readers who had followed along with the series, but I had also waited almost 2 years since the release of book #2 and still hadn't even finished a quarter of the first draft.

This is when I started to think about starting over--just before Christmas. *What if I try writing something new?* Of course, I thought I could use the new project to keep me inspired, while still working away at the old one.

Silly me.

I proceeded to wrack my brain for days, weeks, trying to think of the perfect idea to renew my zeal for the craft. I tried so, so hard that I created a dam. The ideas just wouldn't come.

Eventually, I stopped trying, accepted my new job, and went to work. By early February, I had given up on the craft again. "Isn't it great," I told Falcon, "that my job offers a great creative outlet? I don't even need writing anymore. I am fulfilled."

Oh, the lies we tell ourselves.

While I love my daughter, love my job, love many aspects of my life, I just can't quit writing. When would I learn that?

The answer to that question, apparently, was early March. Yes, I made the decision to become myself, to become Melissa Storm, and start a whole new kind of writing career... last week. I then went out and built this website, started this series, and plotted my upcoming books and marketing plan.

The motivation was THAT strong.

It started with a somewhat silly idea for a romance series called "Binky's Bridesmaids." I wrote a little on my lunch break at work, and I had fun with it... but still something didn't feel right. Instead of giving up and desecrating the craft altogether, I decided to think it through.

Why had I been attracted to this romance idea? What about it did I find so appealing?

The answer was that it revolved heavily around friendships between women and it was a feel good kind of thing. I knew writing it would make me happy.

I realized there were more questions to ask, so I sat down with Falcon and created a worksheet.

- Write down 5 story ideas
- Identify the common themes
- List adjectives that describe what you want to write
- List things you do not want to include in your fiction
- Identify other movies and books that you'd be proud to have written

This exercise was amazingly helpful. I'd only filled out 3/4 of a piece of a white paper, and my entire outlook changed!

Some of the things I wrote down as common themes were: *love is powerful, love supersedes the ordinary, love realizes potential, strong women, creative energy, light speculative, Phoenix could read these stories at a relatively young age*

Where I truly surprised myself is in detailing what I didn't want to include in my writing: *graphic sex scenes, overly flawed characters, depressing endings, cliché/forgettable story lines and characters, swearing/foul language*

Coming up with 5 story ideas was easy when I told myself it was just for this worksheet. I formed them all during my morning commute and dutifully wrote them down on the paper at the beginning of this exercise. Of the five, there were two I just couldn't get out of my head, one about a single mother who falls in love with the doctor who delivered her baby and one about the Angel of Death who falls in love with a woman he's sent to kill.

The angel one really stuck with me.

I started to build a world for my angel. I did some research on the various choirs and mentions of angels in the Bible. I thought about how other cultures and religions viewed the afterlife and how those beliefs meshed or didn't mesh with Christianity. As I followed these jack rabbit thoughts, characters, worlds, systems, and stories began to form in my mind.

Oh, I was excited.

Now, the logical side of me knew I couldn't commit to yet another series, especially after having abandoned *Farsighted*. But the emotional, impassioned side knew my idea was much bigger than this one story about this one character, who just happened to be the Angel of Death.

What about a series that takes place in the same world, but without repeating characters or building upon old story lines? Yes, that was most definitely it.

Now, I had all kinds of ideas buzzing around my brain, and the idea for "The Pearl Makers" was officially born.

To explain the title, I need to give you a glimpse of the mythology I've created. I also need to answer one very important question: Is this Christian fiction?

The answer: Sort of, but not really.

Yes, the books will be devoid of sex and swearing. Yes, the angels are good and pure beings whose main objective is to help humanity, and, yes, God is referenced in the books when relevant.

However... My representation of angels is not strictly Biblical. In fact, I've integrated other belief systems, such as reincarnation, and eliminated both Satan and Hell.

In my Universe, there are 5 types of beings: God, Angels, Old Souls, New Souls, and Pearls.

Pearls are people who have passed through the Pearly Gates, who have learned all of life's lessons and are ready to take up residence in Heaven. Angels are called "Pearl Makers," because it is their job to help humans reach Heaven. Old Souls have lived lives before and are going back down to Earth for another try. New Souls are getting their first chance. That's it.

Of course, I have a much more intricate system than this, but I'll save it for the books.

As much as the Angel of Death inspired me, I am not starting with his story. First, I will write "Diving for Pearls," which will be a hybrid short story series/ novel serialization and which I plan to offer to readers for free (much more on this marketing/ publishing plan in tomorrow's blog post, so be sure to come back then!).

Diving for Pearls tells the story of Elizabeth, a woman who dies in child birth before the story even begins. One of the rules of my universe is that a human who dies via self-sacrifice is turned into a protector (more commonly known as a "guardian") angel rather than being forced into another life as a human. Elizabeth is assigned to watch over the daughter she never met, who is named Daisy. If she can help Daisy make good life choices and become a Pearl, the two will be able to live together in Heaven. But first, Elizabeth must watch her daughter grow up from afar.

This story is for Phoenix, and I hope it will show her that a mother's--her mother's--love knows no boundaries. I want my daughter to know I will always be there for her, and, yeah, I'd like for her to believe in angels.

Well, that's it for today. How do you find inspiration? Has a story ever surprised you by taking hold and refusing to be ignored? And do you believe in angels?

Part V: Moving Forward

Today, I'd like to share my writing, publishing, and marketing plan moving forward. As you've probably gathered by this entire series, I'm super excited about this new direction in my writing career, and I have incredible passion for the world I've invented in *The Pearl Makers*.

Sure, some of you know my writing from previous works published under a different pen name, some of you know me from this or another blog, and some of you may even--gasp--know me in real life. But for the most part, I am a *brand* new author, and I need to start right back at the beginning when it comes to building a catalog, finding a readership, and just generally making myself known.

I also haven't been producing a regular, steady stream of content for the past year, and I need to re-learn how to make writing a daily priority in my life.

This is why I'm pursuing two projects simultaneously. One is a traditional novel called *Angel of Mine*. In it, the Angel of Death falls in love with a woman he's sent to Earth to take. Each time he gets close, he refuses to let her die. All the while, her string of near death experiences slowly begin to open her eyes to the mystical realm, providing her the opportunity to love Death back, if that's one she chooses to take... And that's more than enough on that for now!

My other project is quite a bit different in form, though it too takes place in *The Pearl Makers* universe. It's called *Diving for Pearls* and is a hybrid short story collection, serial novel, and traditional novel, which will be released in a series of ten stand-alone short stories (of roughly 5,000 words each) that integrate to tell the larger story of protector angel, Elizabeth, and Daisy, the child she died bringing into this world.

So in order to build my reader base, develop an author catalog, and to hold myself to small, yet consistent, writing goals, my publishing plan looks like this:

- Release part one of *Diving for Pearls* in about a month
- Let everyone who's subscribed to my newsletter know that it will be free via Amazon for its first 3 days
- Enroll in KDP Select to maximize advertising opportunities, price at 99 cents
- After the 3-month KDP Select term is up, distribute to other channels via Smashwords-- make the book free everywhere

I plan to repeat these steps for the next 9 short stories as well, meaning each book will be free for the first 3 days following its publication (and I'll make sure everyone subscribed to receive "new release announcements" via my newsletter is given plenty of notice. During the remainder of the first 3 months following publication, each short story will be priced at 99 cents. After that, each short story will be made perma-free on Amazon and on all major eBook retailers.

I will release each story 2-4 weeks after the publication of the last, depending on how quickly I can write AND do the story I've fallen in love with justice (and also how quickly my editor can edit).

Once I've published part 10 of *Diving for Pearls*, I will add roughly 25,000 words of new content to the story collection, integrating them into a full novel. All 10 short stories will remain free, but the completed novel will be priced between \$4.99 and \$6.99, depending on its final length and eBook best practices at the time of publication.

All the while, I will also be writing *Angel of Mine* and will hopefully be able to follow up with its publication a few months after the novelization of *Diving for Pearls*. Once I've finished my first hybrid project, I will consider doing another depending on reader feedback and interest as well as my own enthusiasm for and ability to write fiction in this crazy, new way (new for me at least!).

I've also brainstormed several other stand-alone short stories that will add depth to *The Pearl Makers* universe and will enhance my other readings. Theoretically, these could release any time. I'll totally let myself take writing tangents AS LONG AS I am staying up-to-date with my goals for *Diving*'s serialization.

If you'll remember, I mentioned having to enter debt consolidation in this blog series' inaugural post, "Embracing the New Me." I also mention that I spent over \$35,000 marketing my work as Emlyn Chand in "Learning from My Mistakes."

Needless to say, I plan to be much smarter this time around.

First, I've bartered my marketing and web design skills for editorial services (performed by an editor I already know and trust--and have worked with before). Second, while I've always been the first to emphasize the importance of professional cover design, I can't reasonably afford to

pay for 11 separate covers for *Diving for Pearls*, especially when I'm giving away 10 of the books for free.

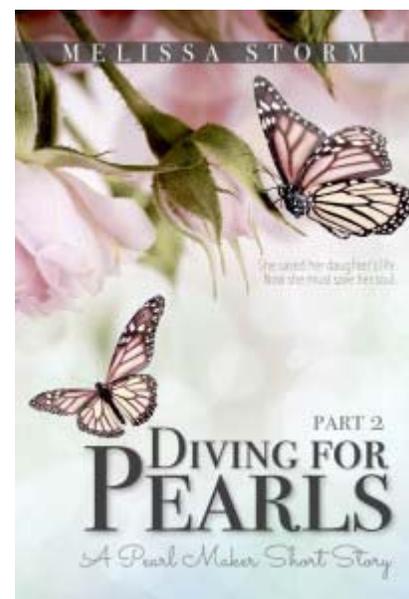
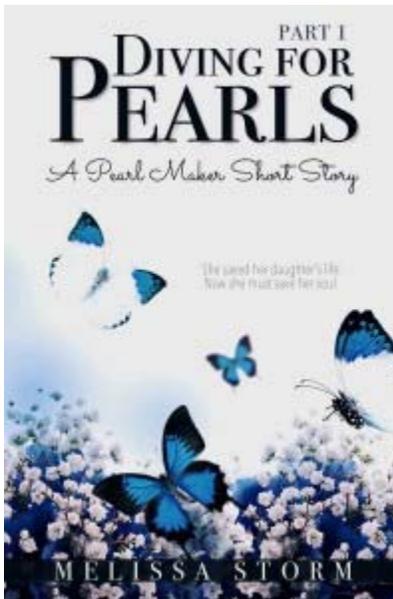
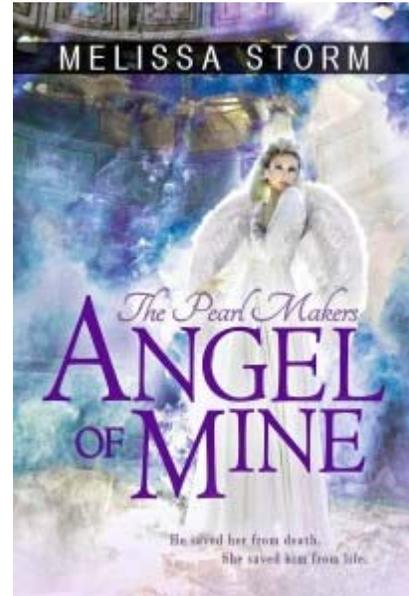
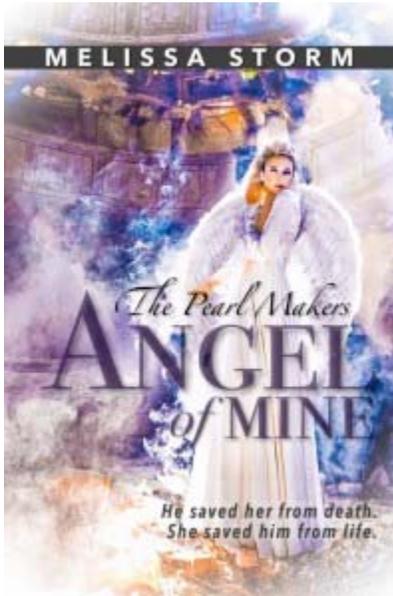
To that end, I've kept my fabulously talented cover designer, [Mallory Rock](#), for my full-length novels, and she's even already designed *Angel of Mine* based on my concept. I first tried doing it myself and ended up with some major readability issues (among other things).

Seeing the two side-by-side proves the worth of a professional, I'm sure of it!

For my freebies, I've been practicing and researching and getting advice about cover design and have become passably okay.

I'm using three free apps on my iPad (fancy, right?) to get the work done. Yeah, no PhotoShop. The apps I'm using are called Aviary, PS Express, and Phonto--look them up (if nothing else they're super fun).

Check out the first two covers for *Diving for Pearls* below. I'm actually pretty proud of myself, even though I know I have a long way to go!



No, I am not condoning cutting corners with book production, and, yes, I still guarantee the highest standard of work I can deliver. I love writing, and I love the stories I create. I also take pride in them and believe in creating a dynamic, fluid experience for the reader.

For those of you who have been wondering, I will not close my current Facebook profile and open a new account. Ever since marrying Falcon, my name on Facebook has been Emlyn Chand (Melissa Storm). Now that I'm coming out as... myself, I will change my name to Melissa Storm

(Emlyn Chand). If we aren't already Facebook friends, please add me! My profile is www.facebook.com/missambition.

As I mentioned earlier in this series, I believe in doing one thing at a time and doing it well. I will not be creating a Facebook author page or opening accounts on Twitter, Pinterest, Google+, what have you. For now, let's just stick to you, me, this blog, and my Facebook profile, sound good?

Once again, THANK YOU for taking this journey with me. I've been absolutely overwhelmed by the outpouring of support you've given me here and on Facebook. I thought no one would notice or care that I was making this change--and, boy, was I ever wrong! Looks like I still have a bit of work to do when it comes to my self-esteem, but--hey--I'm embracing the real me, and that's a very important first step of this brave, new life.