

Lauren Gibaldi is a public librarian who's been, among other things, a magazine editor, high school English teacher, bookseller and circus aerialist (seriously). She has a BA in Literature and Master's in Library and Information Studies. She lives in Orlando, Florida with her husband and daughter. Her books include *The Night We Said Yes*, *Matt's Story*, and *Autofocus*.

Sarah Nicolas is a recovering mechanical engineer, library event planner and author. She lives in Orlando with a 60-lb mutt who thinks he's a chihuahua. She writes Young Adult novels as Sarah Nicolas and romance under the name Aria Kane. When she's not writing, she can be found playing volleyball or tweeting @sarah_nicolas. She also blogs for *YAtopia* and writes for *Book Riot*.

Sarah: Can you tell us a little about your writing process? Do you plot or go with the flow? Do you start with characters, plot, setting or something else? Do you write every day?

Lauren: I mostly go with the flow. I'll have a basic idea of the story (the beginning and end) and go from there. I either start with plot or character—it's changed for each of my books, honestly. And I TRY to write every day, but I have a toddler so it's a bit hard!

Sarah: How has your role as a librarian influenced your writing and publishing journey?

Lauren: I love being surrounded by books, and recommending books. That's probably obvious from my careers! I chose YA, though, because I like the way teens think, and how important everything is at that point in life. I had a teen group at the library for around three years, and they greatly influenced my writing. I wanted to make them proud.

Sarah: When did you decide you wanted to write novels? And what has the journey between then and publication been like?

Lauren: I've been writing since I was a child—I have diaries to prove it. I decided to try professionally in college, where I wrote for local newspapers and magazines. Then, as part of National Novel Writing Month in 2011, I wrote my first book in the allotted 30 days. It wasn't good AT ALL, but I liked it so I worked hard to edit it. Then I worked to get an agent, who worked to get us an editor. And, after quite a bit of time, that first book (*The Night We Said Yes*) was released in 2015.

Sarah: If you could give aspiring authors just one piece of advice, what would you tell them?

Lauren: Don't be afraid to be bad. Every first draft is bad. Just finish it. You have time to make it better.

Lauren: Congratulations on your book release! Tell us a little bit about the new book.

Sarah: Thank you! *Keeping Her Secret* is part of the multi-author Endless Summer series about teenagers at a summer camp. My book stars Riya and Courtney, two very different seventeen-year-old girls who were childhood best friends and haven't spoken to each other since they shared their first kiss when they were thirteen. They end up at the same summer camp and a full-out prank war erupts between them.

Lauren: Let's back up—how did you get into writing? Publishing?

Sarah: Actually, pretty much the same way you did. I'd been interested in writing for a long time, but wrote my first book as part of NaNoWriMo. (That book, and the one that came after it, are gathering virtual dust on my hard drive.) I started getting involved with the community online, which led to a wealth of opportunities like joining YAtopia, vlogging with the YA Rebels, interning for a publisher, and more.

Lauren: What inspires you to write a book? Where does the inspiration come from?

Sarah: Everywhere! Sometimes it's a person walking down the street, or my sister's dream, or a song, or my best friend spouting a fake title to an imaginary book (that's where *Dragons are People, Too* came from).

Lauren: What's your favorite part of the publishing process?

Sarah: I love meeting and talking to other readers and writers. I guess I could do that if I weren't a writer, but now I get to call it "work."

Lauren: How has your role within the library helped shape your writing career?

Sarah: I used to write at the library before I worked here; both in St. Louis and in Orlando (downtown, Alafaya, and Southwest branches). I wrote a lot of *Dragons are People, Too* on the third floor of the Orlando Public Library and attended many of the author/writing discussions here. I did research at the library, on dragons and fairytales and the publishing process. So the library was shaping my writing career long before I worked here. Now, I get to turn around and share the things I learned with our patrons through writing workshops and planning author events.