



EPISODE 106: MODERN ROMANCE WITH AUTHOR OLIVIA DADE

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/106](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/106)

Maggie Reyes:

Hello, everyone. Welcome to The Marriage Life Coach Podcast. I am over the moon excited today to have one of my favorite romance authors, Olivia Dade, joining us to talk about romance novels, the culture narratives that we have in our society around romance and love, her amazing body of work, which I think is truly revolutionary, and I'm so excited to share with all of you.

And I want to just tell you all now, I will fan girl. This is what's going to happen. I'm just going to be delighted the whole time. And I think one of the things in our culture that I want to just break through is this idea that if we're serious professionals, we have to contain ourselves and present ourselves in some way that is better than some other way.

And my guest today has been someone that I'm just meeting today for the first time, but has blessed my life with hours and hours of joy, and delight, and reading her books has been something that has helped me relax, enjoy life, self-soothe, come into just such a beautiful space in my brain, and in my body, and in just my mental and emotional health.

And I just can't even tell you the honor that it is to have her on the show, to have her share her energy with every single person listening right now. So, I want to also just say that I am freaking out with excitement and that's okay. Welcome, Olivia. Thank you for saying yes. Thank you for being here.

Olivia Dade:

Well, I am honored that you asked me and I'm just delighted that you read my books, and that you enjoyed my books, and if it brought you distraction or joy when you needed one of those,





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then again, I'm honored. Thank you so much for having me today.

Maggie Reyes:

Before we dive into some of the sort of philosophy, and maybe some serious things that we want to talk about, let's just talk about the books. You have a series and you have many, many books. I'm so excited when I discover an author and I'm like, "Oh, they have more books. I can't wait to read those."

But I discovered your work with Spoiler Alert, and then was anxiously awaiting the follow up, which is All the Feels, and devoured it as soon as it came out, and can you tell us a little bit about those two books and how you even decided to write the topic that it's about? Anything you want to share about those books.

Olivia Dade:

All right, so the premise of the world I created for Spoiler Alert, All the Feels, and then the book that'll be out this fall, Shipwrecked, is the idea is there's a sort of a blockbuster fantasy television show which is not Game of Thrones, but it's not not Game of Thrones either.

It's based on Roman mythology called Gods of the Gates, and they're in the final season, and the final season is not going well. And the actors on the set in Spoiler Alert and All the Feels are sort of trying to deal with that in different ways.

In Spoiler Alert, Marcus, who plays Aeneas on there from Virgil's Aeneid, he writes fix-it fan fiction for his own show anonymously because he's criticizing his own show and if anyone found out, he would be fired and sort of blacklisted in Hollywood because you're really not supposed to





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criticize your own show that harshly, especially when you're still on that show.

And so, it's him with his fan fiction best friend whom he meets in real life, but can't really tell her that he already knows her because it was put his job in jeopardy. And then All the Feels involves Marcus's best friend, who's Alex, who is big hearted, loudmouthed chaos demon, who is extremely invested in caring for the people around him, but is also very impulsive and has ADHD.

And he gets into a bar fight in Spain, where they're filming sort of the final climactic battle, and there's some concern that he's in a downward spiral, and some of those concerns are ill founded, but that's not something we know until a little bit later. And he's assigned by the production a minder named Lauren and that is something that does happen in Hollywood. Robert Downey Jr. was assigned at least a couple minders that I know of and he married one of them, so-

Maggie Reyes:
Fascinating.

Olivia Dade:
... this is something that does happen, so he's assigned a minder named Lauren, because I love... One of my favorite tropes is forced proximity, so they have to be together until the final season finishes airing, and she's very diligent.

She's a former ER therapist who is used to seeing people on the worst day of their lives and trying to help them however she can. She's burned out, needs a break, and has sort of stopped... If she ever did take her needs into account, she no longer does, and he is someone who can





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prod her back into the world and make her react, and then make her show herself so that he can help give her what she wants and help her to demand what she needs from him and from the world.

Maggie Reyes:

I love that dynamic too, where it's like you think he may think, "Oh, she's here to help me," but he ends up helping her, and they end up helping each other. It's such a beautiful thing.

Olivia Dade:

Right.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. Love that so much. So, one of the things I loved about the books initially was just the whole world that you created, and it was a beautiful and very well rounded world, and I also read fan fiction too, and I just thought, "Oh, this is something people write about now." This is such a huge thing.

I always say I'm sort of the fan fiction nerd of my friends. I probably... I don't know if any of my friends do that, but so reading a book that just reflected my own reality was very amazing. What was your thought process a little bit when you thought about world building and creating these characters? Will you share a little bit about that?

Olivia Dade:

I think the premise came from a couple things that were happening in the final season of Game of Thrones, which I didn't actually watch, because I have trouble... Really, it sticks with me,





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violence on screen.

Maggie Reyes:
Same.

Olivia Dade:

Particularly sexual violence, so I did not watch the show, and I'm also cheap, so I don't have HBO. But I did see .GIFs of Jaime Lannister and Brienne of Tarth on Twitter, and they were very good .GIFs, and I'm kind weak for .GIFs of couples.

Maggie Reyes:
Same.

Olivia Dade:

Like romantic .GIFs showing a lot of chemistry, and so I was intrigued, especially since Brienne of Tarth is... I mean, Gwendoline Christie, who plays Brienne of Tarth, is gorgeous, but Brienne of Tarth, they tried to make her as non-gorgeous as possible.

She's taller than him, and she's extremely strong, and I was very interested in the idea of sort of untraditional, that she was not traditionally beautiful as she's portrayed on the show. And so, I went to YouTube, the mother of many good things, and they had a fan super cut of all of Jaime and Brienne's scenes without all the other stuff, so there is-

Maggie Reyes:
Oh, that's awesome. Yeah.





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Olivia Dade:

So, there is some violence what with the hand, but generally it skips a lot of the stuff that would be upsetting to me, and if you just watch your scenes in isolation, it very much reads like a romance up until one of the last episodes.

But until that point, it very much reads like a romance and I was intrigued. And then, so I started reading fan fiction about them, so you put that together, and then for like a year and a half I read nothing but Jaime Lannister and Brienne of Tarth fan fiction. It was all I read.

And around that same time, interviews with the Game of Thrones cast kept coming out, and fairly or not, a lot of those interviews were interpreted as being somewhat negative about the final season in the sense that as I've said before, some of them looked like when people would ask about the final season, it would look like impromptu hostage videos.

Maggie Reyes:

Impromptu hostage videos. Yeah.

Olivia Dade:

And so, I said, "Well, what if you were on a show like that?" What if you were on a show like that? You devoted years of your life to this show and it all just went off the rails and you hated it in the final season, just hated it. But you couldn't really say anything because you can't sort of badmouth a show that you're on, really, and so what would you do?

And then I sort of traced that through at least the first couple books. Marie and Peter's book is less concerned with that, but for Alex and Marcus, it's something that they're grappling with in





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different ways, and so that was really... Jaime-Brienne fan fiction plus those interviews sort of gave me the essential premise for the first couple books. Yes.

Maggie Reyes:

That is so awesome. And did you have as much fun writing the books as they are to read? Because there's a lot of humor. There's stuff in the books, and we'll talk about that next, but there's also so much sort of delight, of sort of the ridiculous situation they're in, the wacky things they do, the things that they write. What was it like for you?

Olivia Dade:

I would say that I really enjoyed writing it. The part that I think was probably what felt like playing to me as an author were what I call the interstitials, which are the little snippets you have between the chapters, which could be text exchanges between characters, it could be snippets from fan fiction about their characters.

There was a snippet from the book series that the television series is ostensibly based on. And then Marcus, particularly, is famous for having had a lot of really terrible roles in really terrible shows and movies, and so I got to do script snippets from his terrible, terrible television shows and movies, and that was such fun for me.

In part because it wasn't supposed to sound like me. It was supposed to be written by, in the case of the fan fic, Marcus's fan fic he takes writing very seriously, so his is actually going to be pretty good. April's is also going to be quite good, because she cares about the craft of writing too, which a lot of fan fic writers do. Not all, but a lot do.





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But then there are fan fic writers that are just having fun, so there's some that were... All of them should have different tones. Some of them were in first person, which I never use. Some of them use present tense, which I never use.

And I got to sort of just sound like all sorts of different people and I didn't have to follow all the rules that I usually have to follow because these aren't professional writers. So, I don't have to follow all the rules that I have to as an actual published author who's trying to sell her book. So, that was a lot of fun, particularly Marcus's terrible scripts.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. Yeah. Awesome. Yeah. So, in the book, one of the things that I really resonated with and loved so much, and it felt like fresh air on a spring day, was the fact that the characters were not quote unquote perfect. I grew up, not grew up, but since like my early 20s, I've read... I don't know. Hundreds of romance novels.

And I enjoy them, and in no way do I want to diminish the beauty of many beautiful stories that have comforted me throughout the years. But one of the things that they sort of have in common is the hero and the heroine, they're well adjusted in general, their bodies are very-

Olivia Dade:

Conventionally attractive?

Maggie Reyes:

Conventionally attractive, like one body type, or very... It's the best phrase. Conventionally attractive. And in these books, they have quirks. They have different things that just make them





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I think more layered, more unique, like you feel them as humans, right? They're characters, obviously, but you feel the humanity of the character with ADHD.

Whenever I think about Spoiler Alert, it's like the least important thing is what the heroine's body looks like, but she is fat, and it's like to me, it's like the least important thing in the book, but to her it's such a journey, such an important part of the journey, and how she reacts to him, and how he reacts to her. And seeing that depicted in a mass market romance novel for me was just like fresh air, cold water on a hot day. I'm like, "What is this magic?"

So, can you tell us a little bit just about your philosophy or how you conceive of the characters you want to portray in your books?

Olivia Dade:

Well, one of the things that is most important to me in my writing is the issue of body diversity and normalizing different types of bodies, and specifically the fat representation, because I'm fat. I'm not using that as a pejorative. It's like saying that I have brown hair or that I'm pale. It's just an aspect of who I am and it's meant to be a neutral descriptor, right?

Maggie Reyes:

Yes. Yes.

Olivia Dade:

There's nothing wrong with being a fat. It's just a description. So, it's important to me to have representations of fatness on the page that are not harmful to readers. And in my case, I don't really do self-loathing fat characters, because I think that experience has been on the page





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actually quite a bit.

Even though Spoiler Alert, part of it, more of it than All the Feels is about fatness, but it's not about her learning to accept or love her body, or somehow learning that her body can be desirable. She already loves herself. She already knows she's desirable. She's already confident in her body.

Her sort of character arc, her journey in the book is setting boundaries with the people in her life who don't accept her the way she accepts herself. People who care about her and that she might love, but they're hurting her by not accepting her as she is, and she needs to set boundaries with them and basically say, "You're hurting me. You need to stop hurting me or else our relationship can't be the same."

And so, that's sort of her journey in there. And then for Lauren, it's different. And so, one of the things I try to do in my books is fatness is not a monolith. We all have different experiences and relationships with our body, so you're going to have some people... You know, April does have moments of insecurity because of outside voices rather than her own.

The female main character of my third book, Shipwrecked, has none of that. She loves her body. She knows she's sexy. There is nothing internal about that. No internal doubts for her, in part because her family didn't fat shame her, so she's very confident.

So, different experiences with their bodies, and then I try to... I don't want my male main characters to be just a bland façade of handsome alpha perfection, because to me there's one point... April, in Spoiler Alert, is a geologist. She says to Marcus at some point that sort of surface





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perfection doesn't interest her.

She is much more interested in what lies beneath, even if some of what lies beneath has been contaminated somehow, because she's a geologist, so she's working with contamination. But the idea that the surface perfection for her is not interesting, and that is actually very much the case for me, as well.

I like to have male main characters who have a full range of human emotions, which is I think not always the case, where male characters are not given sort of room to be in distress. They can be angry, but are they sad? Do they have doubts?

I try to portray that in my books, which other authors do too, but it's important to me. And also, particularly in the first two books, because you have sort of movie and television stars and normal everyday women, I wanted to make sure that there were reasons that those men would have a certain amount of empathy for those women.

Because if you're just a ripped, handsome, buff white guy who has never had any sort of difficulties in your own life, it might be harder for you to sort of understand where a normal, not hugely wealthy, fat woman might be coming from in her life.

So, in the case of Marcus, he has dyslexia, and it's been a source of conflict with his family, and a source of hurt for him, so he can kind of get where April is coming from. They actually have a lot in common for two people who seem almost entirely different on the surface.

And in the case of Alex, he has ADHD, which partially is because I have people I love who have





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ADHD and I wanted to put them on a page, and I made sure I had sensitivity readers so it wasn't harmful, and that it seemed accurate, but also...

Well, frankly I had to explain why he blew up his career in the first book, and then it implied a certain amount of impulsiveness as well as a huge heart, and so that fit to me with the ADHD aspect of things. But again, his background with his mom, with domestic violence in his family, and the ADHD, will sort of help him I think understand Lauren better and sort of the challenges she's faced, and give him that huge heart that he has.

Maggie Reyes:

As you're describing the characters, one thing that comes to mind is how it's such an almost lighthearted and delightful book to read with all of this depth underneath of these struggles that these characters have been through, and that balance of sort of lightness and depth, it's like very often you have a lot of lightness, or you have a lot of depth, and you don't have necessarily a lot of books that have that integration.

Which I think about as a Life Coach, thinking about my community, and myself, it's like we integrate the parts of ourselves. We don't shun and dismiss them. We just bring it all together. So, I have this concept I call the big burrito of life, and I'm like, "Life is like a big burrito. You have the beans. You have the rice. You have the good. You have the bad. You have the completely irrelevant. You have the delightful." It's all in that big burrito.

And one of the things I see in your books is such a beautiful depiction of like, "Oh, they're super successful in this, and struggling in that. They're so amazing in this one area and then in this other area they have a challenge." And it's so well depicted in such a beautiful, loving way





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towards the characters. As you write them, you love the characters in their whole humanity.

Olivia Dade:

I try. Occasionally, some of the premises of my books are a little banana pants, like you know, a standard guy writing fan fiction about his own show, and then meeting his fan fiction best friend, but once you have that premise, I try to play it straight in the sense that if these were real people in this situation, how would they feel and how would they react?

So, once they're in the position that I put them in as the author, I try to make it as realistic as I can and make sure that they feel like fully realized human beings. And as you said, life is a big burrito, and there's going to be...

There are very few people who don't have areas where they're vulnerable, or parts in their life where they need to move past things, and progress, and part of the beauty of I think really good romance novels is you get to see not only the growth of the characters as a couple, or if they're more than two characters, a thuple, or whatever.

You not only get to see that, but you see them as individuals sort of manage to sort of heal whatever it is that they're struggling with, and that the relationship helps them with that, but it's also personal, sort of a personal metamorphosis, as well.

And the really, for me at least, the best romances not only make me believe in the romance, and in love, but also that they personally are in a better place at the end of the book than they were at the beginning, even apart from the relationship. And that's sort of my hope.





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And I will be frank, I think that my willingness to sort of portray raw emotion on the page, even with the humor, is something that it helped once I went to therapy, because I was very invested before therapy in pretending everything was fine, and everything was not fine, and so I sort of was willing to be vulnerable enough to actually put emotion on the page and not try to keep an ironic or humorous distance from it.

There's humor in my books, but the emotion should also be real in there, and if it's a sad scene, some writers, very good writers, can sort of take an authorly distance from it. I am not one of those people. If it's a sad scene, I'm crying as I write it, because I am in that character's head, and if it hurts them, it hurts me. And that's not something I'm sure I could have done 10 years ago, pre-therapy.

Maggie Reyes:

So, first of all, thank you for just speaking so openly about that journey for yourself, and your journey with therapy, your journey with being so identified with your characters, and I love what you said that at the end of the book, they're better humans. Not just in their relationship, but as individuals.

Because literally everything that my whole podcast is about is about you showing up to your relationship the way you want to show up, because it's who you want to be in the world regardless of what's happening in the relationship and how you want to handle that and what you want to moving forward.

So, it just makes so much sense to me that I'd be so obsessed with your books because we have that underlying sort of philosophy. We share that, for sure. I would love to know your thoughts,





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because this comes up a lot when I'm coaching, on the culture narratives we sort of grew up in, the ocean that we swim in around what relationships should be, what it should look like, who should do what.

These expectations from TV shows, and books, and all the sort of different things that go into our head, and then we arrive at a relationship with another human and we bring all these cultural narratives with us, and what I think is so disruptive and revolutionary about your books is like, "No, we arrive at this relationship with other human, and here's my humanity, here's their humanity, let's work it out. What can we do?"

And I just think it's so amazing to see that represented in the genre of romance novel and in the way that you do it. What are your thoughts about sort of breaking through some of those cultural narratives?

Olivia Dade:

I mean, on a personal level, I'm a lifelong romance reader since the age of six or seven, and my parents had an awful marriage, and I will tell you that I'm married, happily married to a wonderful husband, who is very much the epitome of, "That's my wife," energy.

He literally has a huge poster that he created outside, right next to his desk, with all my book covers and stuff on there, because he was so proud of them. And while I was out of town, he just created this huge poster because he wanted it near his desk because he thinks it's so cool.

And bless him. And I will tell you that I think part of the reason, a good part of the reason why I held out... We didn't marry, it's not super late in life, but I was 29 when we got married. No, I was





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30. I was 30 when I got married.

Part of the reason I held out for someone who was really loving, and respectful, and just thought I was amazing, is because of reading romances. Because I can tell you the model of marriage and relationships that I saw growing up would not have made me sort of hold out for that.

And you know, obviously there have always been romances that have relationships that I would not want, that I may consider coercive or whatever, but there's always been at least a lot of romances where there is mutual respect between characters, and where they're genuinely, sincerely loving, and even when they make mistakes, it's not mistakes made out of some intent to harm the other person or because they're mean.

It's just because you're human, so you make mistakes, and you have your own backgrounds you're coming with, and it makes things difficult.

Two people coming from different lives intersecting, there are going to be things that have to be worked out. That's just the way the world is. But it's a lot easier if you respect and actually like each other, and so it was important to me that I not get married to anyone who I didn't know in my heart really liked me.

Not just loved me, not just wanted to have sex with me, but liked me, and also respected me, and I think romances gave me that. I mean, I'm very grateful for that.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. I love that so much. I grew up with divorced parents, so I never really had an example at





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home of what a thriving relationship looked like, and I started reading romance probably, I think I was like 19 or 20, something like that, and the idea that you could be delighted that you could see a person every day and be happy to see them was such a refreshing thought, right? It was such a refreshing idea.

And I also got married later, in my 30s, and it was very much that idea of like I'm not going to settle. If I'm alone, that's fine. I had to come to that moment of like, "I could be alone and I'd be okay." And I did want to share my life with someone, and I did have that desire, but not if it wasn't someone, like you said, someone that I was like delighted to see.

So, in the morning, when we wake up I'm like, "I'm so happy you're here today." And even one of the things I teach is like are you sexy besties? Are you roommates, or are you sexy besties? And a lot of people are like, "Oh, let's see. The sexy and the besties. We got to work on one of those."

And it's like I think that idea definitely was inspired and supported by some of the beautiful stories that I read. And I love the idea that we can have something in our culture, in our cultural narratives, in the way we grew up, that serves us even if there's pieces of it that don't.

Olivia Dade:
Right.

Maggie Reyes:
You can say, "You know what? I want some fat women represented as sexy, beautiful, brilliant, wonderful humans to have as the main characters of stories. I want some dude with ADHD and a dude with dyslexia and all these things." That wasn't represented before. That doesn't mean





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the whole thing doesn't work. It's just like we're going to bring it to what we want it to be now.

Olivia Dade:

And I want to make sure I make clear, because I am not... This is not entirely new ground that I'm treading. There are other authors who have had fat main characters. Talia Hibbert, if you haven't read her books, you would love her books. The Brown Sisters Trilogy. There's Rebekah Weatherspoon.

I mean, the book *Bet Me* by Jennifer Crusie, who had a fat heroine, that's from like the '90s, so it has occurred before. I didn't love always the representation in some of the earlier books. It wasn't super common, but I'm not forging entirely new ground. This is sort of standing on the shoulders of other people who have done their best to sort of have body diversity within romance.

And I should note that my third book in the series, both the main characters are fat, so he is fat as well. They both, again, it's no self-loathing. They both are fat, and sexy, and attracted to each other. He's a big, bearded, thick-thighed Viking, and I love him so much.

But right, so I'm not the first, but I want to make sure that there are different options for readers out there who might be vulnerable in the area of sort of body image and struggling with that, and they won't be hurt reading my books, and hopefully some of them might feel a little bit better seeing themselves on the page, because representation is really powerful.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. I love that so much, Olivia. It's so good. A lot of my listeners have a dream in their heart,





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whether it's a better marriage, a different career, something that they're working on that they want to create, and I'd love to know a little bit about how you think about being a writer.

Was it just the most natural thing ever? Did you have to put a line in the sand and say, "This is my dream and I'm going for it?" Could you sort of walk us through making a dream come true from your perspective as a successful author in the world, like where you are now?

Olivia Dade:

I am not one of those people who grew up knowing that they were going to want to write books. And I read romances from, again, very, very young. A lot of the time, I didn't actually know what was happening in some of the scenes, but when you're six or seven, I was like, "I don't know. Why is there throbbing? It's very unclear."

But I read them from a young age, but I assumed for a long time that fiction was not where my strength was in writing because I was huge nerd, still am, and I wanted to be a college professor. And so, almost all my writing was academic writing, which I very much enjoyed, because I like writing, but I just assumed I couldn't really do fiction.

And so, I went to graduate school. I was in a Doctoral program. And at some point I got my Master's, I was heading into a semester or two into the Doctorate, and then realized that this dream that I have had since seventh grade of being a professor, my grades were good but I was like, "I don't know if I want to do this."

Like I was watching job talks, and professors, and I was just like, "I don't know that academia is where I want to be." And I think that was a good decision, but it was also a decision that left me





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completely without any sort of anchor because this is what I had wanted to do since seventh grade.

If I'm not going to do that, what am I going to do? And what exactly am I qualified for with a master's degree in history? And the answer is not a lot, so I sort of bounced from a few different professions, like I worked at Colonial Williamsburg for a few years.

I'm from Williamsburg, Virginia, and I worked there in the summers during graduate school, but I started working there full time for a while, which was great, but not enough money to support myself or ever move out from my mom's house.

So, then I started teaching high school history, which was wonderful, but I was working like 70, 80 hours a week, so when I got married and we were going to adopt, we decided that maybe I wouldn't do that anymore because I was really burned out.

So, I tutored, and I volunteered for hospice, and honestly, and I was a full-time mom for a couple years, and frankly I was super depressed because I didn't have a sense of accomplishment anymore outside of my family, and I was... I am someone who needs that.

Not everyone does. They can take that sense of joy and accomplishment in their family and that's what they need in their heart, but that is not who I am. I need and love my family, but I also need a sense of accomplishment outside my family, and I wanted to use the part of my brain that really had not been exercised much since graduate school.

So, I cannot actually tell you. I started going to therapy, because again, depressed. And I can't





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tell you, but I think it shook something loose in me. I was seeing my therapist, who's wonderful. Hi, Cathy. And-

Maggie Reyes:
Thank you, Cathy.

Olivia Dade:

And you know, she directed me to a couple of Brene Brown videos about sort of getting yourself back in the arena, and sort of making yourself vulnerable, and taking chances, and at some point something shook loose in my head where without thinking about it ahead of time, because if I thought about it I probably wouldn't have done it.

I sat down and wrote a scene, like in a romance set in a library, because I was still working at the library, and I was like, "That was..." It wasn't good, but I was like, "That was kind of fun." And one of the best parts about it for me, frankly, was that as depressed as I was, when I was writing I was immersed in someone else's life, and their thoughts, and their situation, and it gave me a break from my own head.

And I would emerge from it and feel like all the clutter in my brain had been moved out because I had spent hours not in my own head, which was a real relief to me, frankly. And so, then I was like, "Well, might as well try to start writing a book," and I did, and it was lacking what is technically called a plot, but-

Maggie Reyes:
Love it.





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Olivia Dade:

Turns out you need one of those, but it had a lot of banter, and it had some really good sex scenes, and I was like, "You know what? Next book I write is going to have a plot." And that book actually sold, which it shouldn't have, because it's not that good. But it did.

And suddenly I had a six-book contract and was learning actually how to write good books, and that was sort of the start of it, and it turns out that a lot of what... The reasons I was restless in all those other jobs, part of it was frankly that sometimes I got bored.

The beauty of writing is that every book is different. Every book requires me to research different things. It's different characters. So, even though it's the same process fundamentally, it feels different each time, and you can write... I wrote a futuristic romance. It's not published, but I wrote one too.

I could write one with mystery elements. There's almost anywhere I can go. And it stretches me, and I can try to improve every time, and it feels different every time. And it's wonderful. I mean, it made me feel like myself again after not feeling like myself for a long time.

Maggie Reyes:

That's so incredibly powerful. I love how you just normalized the first time we do stuff, it's just not going to be our best work, and it doesn't matter. And I work with a Business Coach, and we sort of launch programs and things, and she's like the purpose of launching the first thing you launch, whatever your thing is for whoever's listening, the purpose of the first one is the second one.





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The purpose of the first book is to just get through writing that one so that you can write the next one and know, "Oh, I might need a plot. That might help." We don't really discover that until we've written one that's like, "Oh, here's what's missing."

And I think for all of us, it's just so useful to remember whatever dream we hold in our heart, or whatever is next, whatever next chapter we have, like it's okay that it looks messy, and isn't a full book, and it's just a scene, and it's just a chapter, or whatever that is for each person.

It's like that's how we get started and the fun is the journey, right? The fun is like I'm sure you love talking about your books now, but the fun is when you're building the world, and creating the things, and that is the whole point. So amazing.

Olivia Dade:

It can be hard, too. I'm a perfectionist. It's not a good thing. It's hard for me to do things that I know I'm not good at, so the really good part about when I started writing is I didn't realize how bad it was. So, I was like, "This is amazing." And then I was like, "Oh."

Maggie Reyes:

Maybe not.

Olivia Dade:

I started trying to very deliberately and consciously sort of work on the areas that I knew were weak spots for me, and that is very satisfying for me, to sort of say, "You know, my descriptions need to be better, so this book I'm really going to focus on that. This book, I want to make sure that my characters' personalities are really distinct." And I work on that in that book. And that's





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great fun for me, but yeah, I didn't know at the time.

Maggie Reyes:
Love it.

Olivia Dade:

I would like to tell you that I was like, "This isn't perfect, but I'll put it out there." I was like, "No, this is awesome."

Maggie Reyes:

And isn't that the best? I was reading an article in Ink Magazine about high-achieving people and it's like this increased level of optimism, this almost delusional level of optimism, of like, "This is amazing," is necessary to just create new things and put things in the world.

And then we can course correct as we go and I always tell... I think I'm a former perfectionist, but probably I still have some perfectionist tendencies, but I work with a lot of perfectionists and I'm like think about Microsoft. We're on Microsoft 11. Features, and like bugs are worked out, and new features are added all the time. They didn't wait to have the perfect thing to launch it. They just keep updating it.

Olivia Dade:

One thing that I say to myself and say to my husband too is don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

Maggie Reyes:





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My husband says that every day, Olivia. The perfect is the enemy of the possible. This is one of his phrases.

Olivia Dade:

Right. So, I mean it's one of my things that I'm working on, because I'm still in therapy. One of the things I'm working on is learning the fine art of half assing things. I'm still not that great at it, but I tend to be an all or nothing person and I'm working on trying to see shades of gray and saying, "Sometimes it doesn't have to be the absolute best you could do."

Sometimes, just good enough is good enough. You could be that it's okay that I'm sometimes just the world's okayest mom, not the world's best mom. Or the world's okayest whatever I'm doing. And I think a lot of times we are a lot harder on ourselves than anyone else who cared about it would ever dream to be.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. I love that. So, everyone pay attention. It's okay to half ass. What are you going to half ass today? Half ass something in honor of Olivia. Okay. That's like everybody's life coaching homework today.

Olivia Dade:

And if you're already half assing something, stretch yourself and try to quarter ass it. See how that feels.

Maggie Reyes:

See how that feels. And I always say with gentleness, don't overwhelm yourself. Don't overwhelm





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your nervous system. If quarter assing feels like you will die, then go just right before that feeling of death. Just right before.

Olivia Dade:

In all seriousness, right? I have trouble with seasonal affective disorder and I'm living in Sweden now, and the winters are really hard, and sometimes I wasn't showering as often as I could have, because again, I was depressed.

And one thing that my therapist said was she's like, "Okay, so you feel like it feels too much to take a shower." She's like, "How would it feel to go in there and just turn on the water? How would it feel to go there, let's just say you just wash your hair? How would that feel? Or you just stand beneath the water. You don't have to do anything else."

And most of the time, of course, when I'm in the shower, then I just go ahead and just wash up all of me, but the fact that I know there's an option to half ass it, or quarter ass it, or just sit beneath the water and not do anything, that helps me sort of do the thing, right?

Maggie Reyes:

Yes. Yes.

Olivia Dade:

That that is an option. It doesn't have to be all. And it's easier if you're not expecting everything from yourself. If you just say, "If I just do the littlest thing, that's okay." It'll be much easier to do the bigger things.





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Maggie Reyes:

I love that so much. And one of the things that I teach my students and my clients is do the simplest thing first. There's some narratives in personal development are like, "Do the hard thing. Climb the mountain and then everything else will be easier."

And I'm like the opposite. I'm like, "What feels like the simplest, smallest, most doable part of whatever is in front of you? Do that first and then experience the completion of that." Like experience having turned on the water, and being a person who turns on the water, and then that helps you do the next thing.

Olivia Dade:

Right. It's momentum. It's inertia. If you're doing stuff, you tend to keep doing stuff. If you're not doing things, you tend to keep not doing things. And yeah, I go for low-hanging fruit first, and then that gives me sort of the momentum and the confidence then to do the harder stuff.

And again, some people, maybe some people aren't anxious, or don't have depression issues, so maybe they can go in there and do the hard stuff first, but I can tell you that if you're struggling, sometimes you just need to see, like you said, what can I do that will make it feel easier to do other things?

Maggie Reyes:

Yes. I love that question. What can I do that will make it easier to do other things? That is the question of the day. So good.

Okay, so one of the things I love to do in my interviews is ask a question from The Questions for





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Couples Journal, and everyone listening, I just literally opened the book to a random page and this was the question that came out, and it was the most perfect one, and it is what was your favorite fictional character growing up?

Olivia Dade:

Growing up, I would say that again, I was reading adult books very, very young, but the one sort of book that was geared toward kids that I just really... I glommed onto, was *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* by Elizabeth George Speare, which is one of the books that I call a romance with training wheels, and it's about sort of...

It has a romance in there, but she's younger, but it's about sort of finding your place, and persecution in the community that she's from... Is she from Barbados? But she was sort of seen suspiciously by the townspeople, and I don't know that I saw myself in her, but it certainly was a story that gave me a sense of there's a young woman who's doing brave, adventurous things, and doing it with the support and the love and the respect of someone else in her life.

In that case, it was a boy. And I loved that. Her, that she was central to the story, and her intelligence, and her bravery, but that she had a partner in that who would support her, and I loved that. I still love that. Here I am, I'm 45, so almost four decades later that's still the story I want to read, and it's still the story I want to tell.

Maggie Reyes:

The power of stories. It's amazing. Stories can change our lives. Our own stories. What is the story we want to tell about ourselves? The stories that we read, the stories that we see ourselves reflected in. I think it's a beautiful way to wrap up this episode, to just really sort of marinate in





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the power of stories, both the fictional stories and also our own story. So beautiful. Tell people how to find you. Let's make sure everyone can follow Olivia Dade from today forward.

Olivia Dade:

My website is OliviaDade.com, so O-L-I-V-I-A-D-A-D-E.com, and so you'll have links to all my books, and some bonus material if you read my books, and there's like deleted scenes and things like that if you're interested.

There's content guidance if you're worried that something in there would be upsetting to you, you can look to sort of see what's in each book so that there are no surprises if that's a concern for you.

I'm also on Twitter, and that's my sort of social media home, so I am @OliviaWrites, so Olivia W-R-I-T-E-S, all one word, writes. And that's really my only social media, because I decided that it was better to have one that I was happy with and that I felt good about than do a bunch that I basically never visited, and so I'm really just on Twitter.

And you can always email me, and my email address is olivia@oliviadade.com. But my books, they're on Amazon, they're at Barnes and Noble, they're other places too.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah, so we'll definitely link to her website, to her Twitter, and to the books on the show notes for this episode, so you can definitely find her, and read her, and enjoy her books. Thank you so much for saying yes.





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I have to tell you, it's a dream come true for me to just have you on and be able to just spend time in your presence, and we just... I'm so grateful on behalf of everyone who listens to this episode, but personally I'm so grateful. Thank you so much.

Olivia Dade:

And like I said, I'm honored that you thought of me and that you wanted to talk with me, so thank you. And thank you to everyone who listened to me ramble. I appreciate that.

Maggie Reyes:

Go tweet Olivia if you loved this episode and had fun. Go tweet her. I am not on Twitter. I have a Twitter handle that I never use, so I'm not on Twitter, but go tweet her. Let her know. Send her some love. Okay, thank you everyone. We'll be back next week, or in a couple weeks actually, with more ways to help make your marriage stronger.

