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InD'tale

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Magazine

Plus

A Complete Guide
to YA Fiction:

Andy Peloquin

Self-Editing: The Magical
Words, Delete and
(gasp) Add!

Julie L. York

The Legend of the
Spiralling Cedars:
Episode 7

Natasza Waters

Writing Retreats:

S.L. Carpenter

Quinn Loftus

Discovering the Depths of
Positive and Imaginative
YA Reading

Fun with Animals as Characters!

Mindy Neff

Pen-Names - Your Personal Brand

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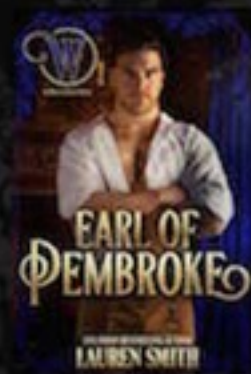
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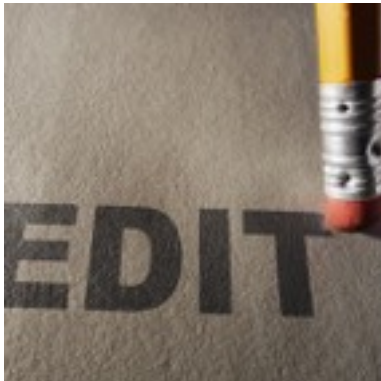
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Editor's Note



Good grief! Is it March already?! I swear if I had a dime for every time I thought, "Where is the time going?" I'd be so rich we all could retire and sit on a beach reading (or writing) all day! Maybe it's the shortened month of February or the fact that the first week of the month we moved my son out of the house and off to college that has forced me to face the fact that time really is precious and what we do with it every moment of every day is much more important than we often admit.

More than ever I'm confronted with the choices of accomplishing something good, something better, or something best. There are so many good things I can do each day. There are many things I can do that may be even better. But, there are also things that would truly be *best* if I did. Those seem to be the hardest because they aren't always the ones I would naturally choose or want to do. Like, stopping to talk to the widow next door or taking the time to write a letter to a friend I haven't talked to in forever. Because, let's face it, all those "good" things pile up fast and furious if we don't stay on top of them. Still, the true joy and peace that comes at the end of the day when even one of those "best" things has been taken care of is immeasurable. And, I've decided, those are the very things that make everything else worth the work. I hope that each of you, as time flies so quickly by, will join me in taking a moment each day to find the very *BEST* thing to do. Imagine how amazing this world could be as a result!

Smiles,
TJ Mackay

Contributors



Adele Downs

Adele Downs is the award-winning author of more than 20 romance titles, including those written under another pen name, and a former journalist with hundreds of articles to her credit. When not writing in her home office in rural Pennsylvania, she can be found reading a book on a Delaware beach, taking photographs, or riding in her convertible. Visit Adele Downs and learn more about her books at <http://adeledowns.com>



Andy Peloquin

2017 RONE award winner for his book, "Lament of the Fallen", Andy is, first and foremost, an artist - and words are his palette. Fantasy is his genre of choice, and he loves to explore the darker side of human nature through the filter of fantasy heroes, villains, and everything in between. He is also a freelance writer, a book lover, and a guy who just loves to meet new people and spend hours talking about his fascination for the worlds he encounters in the pages of fantasy novels.



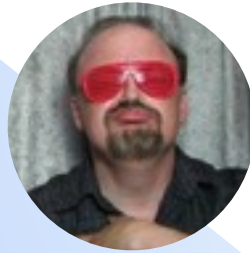
Mindy Neff

Mindy Neff is the award-winning author of over thirty novels and novellas. She is the recipient of the National Reader's Choice Award, the Orange Rose Award of Excellence and many others. Originally from Louisiana, Mindy moved to Southern California where she met and married a very romantic guy a little over thirty years ago. They blended his three kids and her two, and have been living happily (if a little insanely) ever after.



Julie L. York

Julie is an author, graphic designer, editor, and mom - though not always in that order. She also teaches English to adult and incarcerated students. She was born and raised in the East Bay Area, California, graduated with a B.A. in English, minoring in Business Computers...got married and had children. Then, completed a Masters of Fine Arts in Media Design. Oh and did she mention she is a voracious reader? Thanks to iBooks and the Kindle App, Julie has consumed thousands of eBooks and claims reading is her first love.



S.L. Carpenter

A lifetime Californian, Scott Carpenter lives the ordinary life of a husband and father. Humor has always played a large role in his life, and he enjoys making people smile. His stories range from the outright absurd to the deeply poignant, and his mastery of the short story format is undeniable. If asked, he'll describe himself as just another guy. His many fans will tell you that his writing paints quite a different picture.



Natasza Waters

Natasza grew up on the beautiful West Coast of British Columbia. After finishing school her life took a drastic twist, and she began a lifelong working relationship with the marine industry. After a twenty-year hiatus from her creative writing, the stories swirling in her mind began to swim and she threw them a life ring. She is now the bestselling author of more than 9 award-winning books.

QUINN Loftis

Discovering the
Depths of Positive
and Imaginative
YA Reading



Okay, let's all admit it, upon seeing Quinn's picture you thought we were actually interviewing a teenager, right? Nope! She just has the genes of an angel. She is actually a married mother of three who has lived a life that fosters a wisdom only the most experienced usually attain. That wisdom and sensitivity to the emotions and trials of others, especially young people, as well as her unique ability to foster hope and encouragement in even the worst of situations, is what sets her apart in an ocean of YA offerings. She is candid, open and incredibly sweet. No wonder she harbors such a large loyal and devoted following!

InD: Oh my gosh Quinn! When researching you, I realize you have fans that are rabidly devoted!

QL: I do. I feel very blessed that I have such amazing fans. They are fantastic!

InD: All fans love the characters of their favorite authors' books but yours stand out because they know so much in-depth stuff about your characters. Is that kind of disconcerting?

QL: Some days it is very disconcerting because I think, "Oh crap, what if they find some kind of inconsistency?" I have a girl that does what I call my book bible. Basically she breaks down all of my theories and keeps everything straight for me like the important dates, the ages of the characters, the character stats, all that kind of stuff. When you are ten books into a series it is extremely easy to forget stuff. My readers know my books better than I do! It is unbelievable. I have this one reader who has done a genealogy of my wolves! Now, I'm worried that I might forget something! I am scatter-brained. I'm afraid that I'm going to describe a certain character one way and then five books later find out that I changed his appearance. Having fans so involved is amazing but also terrifying.

InD: Ten books in and they still know every character, of every book, of all ten books. All of their personalities... Good heavens! It is an incredible blessing for you but it is also an incredible responsibility, I would think.

QL: Yes. It is.

InD: You live in Arkansas. Did you grow up there?

QL: No I am from Texas. I'm actually a military brat. My parents were Air Force. We were stationed in New

Mexico, California, San Antonio, then we ended up in Greenville, Texas, which is where my mother is from. It is her hometown. My grandmother was diagnosed with early Alzheimer's when I was twelve so we went home to help take care of her. I graduated high school in Greenville, which is forty-five minutes northeast of Dallas. All of my family still lives in Texas but I moved to Arkansas after I graduated from high school.

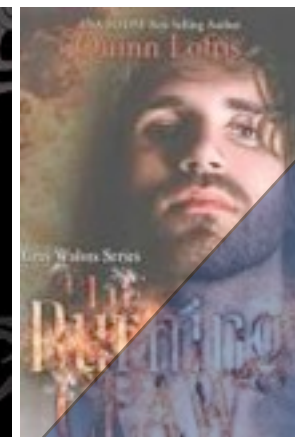
InD: Why?

QL: I needed a change. A pastor and his wife mentored me in high school and they offered me a place to live. So I went to live with them for a year. I went to a community college because I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. It's also where I met my husband so I stayed.

InD: Was it good or bad being an Air Force brat?

QL: I think it was good and bad. Good simply because I learned how to make friends quickly. We moved every three years. Bad because I was in a bubble. We lived on base and that is a very secluded lifestyle. You have everything you need on the base. You have the commissary, a mall, bowling alleys and movie theaters. You don't have to leave if you don't need to. In the military you are sheltered in a lot of different ways. It is a very different lifestyle. When my parents retired from the military they had to set us down and talk to us about racism. My father is Puerto Rican with very dark skin. He adopted me but I'm obviously not Puerto Rican. At the time, I didn't even know what racism was so they had to prepare us because that wasn't something we had experienced. It was a good thing because after moving, I had some friends that said they couldn't be friends with me because I have a black dad.





At the same time, though, I met some very amazing people while my parents were in the military who are still my friends even now.

InD: So when your family left the military and you realized there's another world out there. What was that like?

QL: It was different. I don't think civilian lives are as close knit. When we lived on base I was in kindergarten and I walked to school. The base was safe with no restrictions. They have a youth center you can go and play at anytime. Then we moved out of that and things were not that way. Of course I moved into a small town where everybody knew each other and had gone to school their whole lives together. It was kind of intimidating but again I had moved a lot so making friends wasn't a challenge for me.

InD: Were you considered an outsider or were you more enveloped because they knew your mom and your family?

QL: I would say more enveloped because my grandfather's family were all from Greenville for many generations. So a lot of people accepted me. There were a couple of teachers still at the high school from when my aunt went to school there.

InD: Because you write YA, what was it like for you being that age?

QL: Well in my Grey Wolf series, the three best friends, are actually based off my best friends in high school and they know that those characters are them. I remember being at Jamie's house one night hanging out and thinking that somebody needed to write a book about our lives because we were just crazy. Basically in a small town there isn't much to do so on weekends we would have a bonfire out at my house. My brother would hook his truck to a trailer with hay on it and we would have hayrides almost every weekend. There was nothing else to do. And, what do you do when you get bored? You go roll [toilet paper] somebody's house or yard.

InD: Are you still really close to those friends?

QL: Not as close as I would like to be but we do talk on Facebook. Devon, Jens character has read some of the books but we just all got busy with our lives. We all have kids.

InD: Are the characters in your Grey Wolf series pretty much like your friends in real life or did you take their names and just loosely base them?

QL: They are pretty similar. Jackie is really a blend between me and Lisa. Lisa was kind of like our mom. She's very levelheaded, the one that would say, I don't think we should do this..." Devon is Jen, a very outspoken person. I remember thinking, "I wish I could say whatever I want the way that Devon can." Whatever is in Devon's head just comes out. So yes they are very much alike. Jaimey is Sally's character. She was a very quiet person but incredibly intelligent. She was one of the smartest people in our class but a very sweet spirit. So yeah, characters stay pretty true to their personalities in real life.

InD: You have this wonderful talent when writing your series of hooking somebody so they don't want to stop reading. That doesn't always happen with series. Did you intentionally create each book that way? And, how do you keep each book's storyline unique and different especially after book 10!

QL: I would love to say that it was intentional but I am not that talented. I think sometimes it is just God's grace. I think that my books are very character driven. I write for their relationships. That's why teenagers read. So my attention is always on what I can do in the relationships that teenagers, as well as adults, can relate to. Or, explore something they might be dealing with in real life. It's not just for the entertainment value but what I can do to help and somehow teach a lesson. Whether it's a situation with a parent, friend, boyfriend or girlfriend, how can I help encourage? I'm always trying to reach my readers in a deeper way that helps them attain a value. That has evolved in the course of my seven years of writing. It wasn't something that I initially knew how to do.

InD: A person can learn so much reading stories about other people and how they deal with things, explore different relationships in different situations and grow from them. Sometimes those are lessons people would not learn any other way. You do a very good job of that.

Okay. Let's go back. You graduated from high school and you decided that you wanted to get out



and explore a little bit. So, you move to Arkansas and go to college. You said that you didn't know what you wanted to do with your life. Did you have any ideas?

QL: There are not a lot of things that I am good at. I'm a hands-on type of learner. So I was horrible at the college-type learning. I made decent grades, there was just nothing that I thought, "Oh, I want to do that!" I didn't want to be a teacher. I was not good at math and science - although I kind of wanted to be a nurse. I have always wanted to be a writer but being a writer was like being a movie star to me. It happens to a small, select few and you have to know the right person. So I didn't pursue it because I didn't see a future in it. A year or two after living in Arkansas I met Bo, who is now my husband. People asked me why my books have that Insta-love. Bo is why. I met Bo on August 3, 1999 and we were engaged on September third of 1999 and we were married in December 1999. We freaked our family out.

InD: So, tell me how that happened for you!

QL: I had moved out of the couple's house that I lived with and had a roommate. She and Bo had apparently dated at one point before I knew her and they were friends. He came over one night to show her his new truck. Jenny, my roommate, introduced me to him. She said, "this is Quinn, my

roommate" he looked at me and asked, "What is your last name?" I said, "Trouche" then he said, "What's your middle name" and I said, "Allison" and he said, "Okay, *that* name's normal." He thought my name was really weird. After he left, Jenny and I were sitting in our apartment and I said, "I am going to marry that man." She just laughed but I said, "I'm not kidding, I'm going to marry that man!"

InD: Why did you say that?

QL: Initially, I thought he was hot, but there was just something about him. I was drawn to his personality. I had dated a guy in high school for two years. When you date somebody for that long you kind of compare everybody to him. In college I had dated a few guys and I compared all of them to this guy. But, when I met Bo, I didn't even think about the other guy! He came over the next day to hang out and asked me on a date but I said that I was going to be gone for ten days to a leadership training camp. But, if he was still interested when I got back I would go on a date with him. We ended up talking on the phone the whole time I was gone, which was really cool, because it forced us to get to know each other without any pressure. I had a list of standards I had written in high school that I wanted in a husband. They were not things that were compromise-able to me. I literally asked him these things. He probably figured it out but he met

those requirements and I fell hard for him.

InD: Now that you're married, what is his take on it all?

QL: We laugh because when Bo met me. I was about 100 pounds and super tiny. I had really, really short pixie-cut hair. I was an athlete, a gymnast and had played soccer for eight years. It is funny because I met a couple of his ex-girlfriends and they were voluptuous girls and not small (he likes meat on his women)! He also loves big long curly hair. So now, eighteen years later, I asked him what it was about me that he liked back then! His joke is, "I saw that you had potential"! Another thing I love about him is his sense of humor. I guess what he tells me is the same thing that I felt about him. I just knew. I met him at the exact moment that I was supposed to meet him and he says the same thing. He proposed thirty days later so... yeah.

InD: Was it a shock that he proposed that soon?

QL: No. We actually talked about it. We both knew this was the one for us so our mentality was why wait? We were nineteen when we got married. We were both sophomores in college so it wasn't easy. I quit school because I didn't know what I was doing with my life. I married this wonderful man but I had no clue what I wanted to do. About eight months later all hell broke loose. I went through some severe bi- polar crap. Other people hear me brag on my

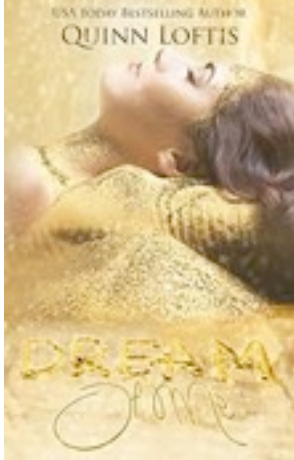
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husband a lot. I don't do it to be redundant. I brag on him because he really is an amazing man. He stuck with me through the first 4 1/2 years of our marriage. I put him through hell. Not intentionally, I was sick but I ended up in a mental hospital because I tried to commit suicide twice. We were young. He was taking eighteen hours of college credits and working three jobs yet he stuck it out with me. I would not have blamed him if he had said, "I can't do this, it's too much." but he didn't. So when I say that I married one of the best. I mean that I really did.

InD: So it was great for the first little while and then you discover you are bipolar? Tell us about that.

QL: I woke up one morning and literally could not stop crying. It was weird. I had no reason to be depressed. I know people that have depression and they describe it as feeling like you're never going to be happy again and that is the truth. You just literally cannot think that you will ever be truly happy again. It was frustrating for me because I had no reason. Our marriage was great and we were not having problems. Nobody had died. There was just no circumstance to cause that extreme reaction. I talked to somebody in church who hooked me up with a Christian counselor but it took several years to get a diagnosis. Usually what happens with bipolar disorder is they only see you when you are depressed so you're diagnosed with clinical

depression. But, it's not until you are in a manic phase that you start doing the really stupid stuff. That's when they finally decide there's something else going on besides just depression. I think it was two and a half years before I was finally diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

InD: So in those 2 1/2 years did they give you medication for depression and in the high part of it you were fine?

QL: No. The problem with manic (or the high part) is that a lot of people think it's just extreme happiness but it is not. Usually people who are in a manic phase are very irritable and testy. Little things can cause you to just lose it. Like if I couldn't find my car keys I would rip the house apart screaming ridiculously. A person in a manic phase also often spends large amounts of money. I would charge a lot of money on the credit card. I was horrible. I went through lots of jobs. In one year I had twenty-two W-2s. I was never fired from a job, I would just quit. The interesting thing is that a person in a manic stage can be very charismatic and a lot of people who have a mental illness are very intelligent and they know how to interact with people. When I was in some control, I knew how to answer questions in an interview and get a job. That was not difficult. What was difficult was when the emotions got out of control and the mania started interrupting my everyday life. I couldn't consider what my actions might cause. You don't think that through.

InD: Because you were married very, very quickly did Bo realize that there was something not right going on? Or did he think "Oh my gosh! This is just her personality."

QL: No. He knew something was wrong because I had never acted that way before. Another problem is that once you get the diagnosis you still have to deal with the meds. Finding the right medication and combination is hard. I hate switching medications. It is terrifying because it can take a couple of months for it to get into your system to see if it's going to work. Psychiatric meds tend to have a lot of side effects. We're talking about dealing with the chemicals in your brain that alter your personality and so it is scary to mess with. About three years in I found a psychiatrist that I really, really liked and trusted. He got me on a really good med combination. The one that I still take today - fifteen years later. One of the things that he did that made a massive difference is that he had Bo go to counseling with me. I didn't want to be depressed or be manic. I didn't want to make stupid choices and do embarrassing things. But no amount of telling myself, "Don't do that!" would cause me not to do it.

InD: If you could snap out of it you wouldn't be in it in the first place.

QL: Yeah. So he went to counseling with me to learn about it. He is really good, even now,



years later he will say "I think you need to call your psychiatrist" when he notices my mood changes. He can tell when I am not quite myself. A lot of the time it is as simple as getting exercise and some sleep. That makes a massive difference. I wrote "Call Me Crazy" partly because I was dealing with my own emotions during that time in my life. Also because there is such a horrible stigma around mental illness and people don't understand it. It is interesting to know that, because of MRI'S and CAT scans, they can look at the brain and see that there is a difference in a person with mental illness versus a person without one. A person with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder's brain looks physically different than a person without it. It is just confirmation again that there is a physiological problem with our body that causes this disease. For me it was confirmation that I am not crazy. There is something that my body is not producing. It is kind of like



having diabetes. Your pancreas stops producing insulin. It's the same thing but it's just in your brain.

InD: Since you have been on medications, have you ever fallen back into it again?

QL: I have never gotten to that extent again. In that time period of my life I was terrified of ever going back to being that person. It is a very humbling and humiliating experience to live in your mind and not be able to explain why you did that. Bo would ask, "Why did you do that? Why would you attempt suicide?" I couldn't explain it. I don't know why. There was just an extreme amount of emotional pain. There was nothing that physically caused it. There was just unbelievable amount of emotional pain and I couldn't process it. Now I know my symptoms and pick up on things when I'm getting depressed. I can say, "Okay, am I sleeping enough? Am I exercising enough? Am I taking care of myself?" I still see my psychiatrist once a year for my med checks. He won't adjust my meds if I am not exercising enough or sleeping enough because those are two things that create serotonin and endorphins, the chemicals in your brain that you need. When I start to get manic I can tell because I am more outgoing. I talk a lot faster. I get a lot more done. But I have to pay attention.

Thankfully I have a husband that can pick up on the signs when something is not right. I have not had to have my meds adjusted in five or six years. Again I am very blessed to have my husband and a support system, which is massive when you have a mental illness. I have an amazing church that has stood by me and then my faith in God that take care of me.

InD: What does Bo say about it now looking back?

QL: He doesn't talk about it much. It is very hard. People who know

me now say, "There is no way that you are bipolar!" But of course he knows all of me. He is very good to say it wasn't that bad. I would say, "Oh please! you are being kind. It was very bad." He has told me a couple times that he would do it all over again. I thought that was pretty amazing.

InD: You do have a wonderful husband when he can say eighteen years later that he would go through all of that again. Is that one of the reasons why you waited awhile to have kids?

QL: Yes. I wanted children when we first got married but Praise God that he knows what you need. A child would have been horrible. Psych meds are hard with pregnancy. You run a really high risk of problems so we waited. Not only that but when we got married we barely knew each other. Our first year of marriage was more like courting. We both came from divorced homes and didn't know what a healthy relationship looked like so we went through many years of marriage counseling. We were determined to make our marriage work, though, we were not going to give up. We were married 7 1/2 years when I got pregnant with Travis. It was a blessing because by that time we had a firm foundation. Children definitely change the dynamics of a home very quickly. After I had Travis I was not going to have any more. I was a terrible pregnant person, just horrible. But, about five years after he was born I decided I could do it again but then we couldn't get pregnant. We decided to try adoption. My books allowed for that to happen. So thank you readers! Adoption is not cheap. Many people have to take out loans because it is very expensive up front. We were picked by one family for a little girl but that fell through because the mom backed out. That was almost like having a



miscarriage. It was horrible. Then they called us and said, "You're going to have a little boy in about four weeks!" That was pretty awesome. It is different than finding out that you are pregnant and having nine months to prepare. When we got him he was two months old. We named him Donovan. Right after I found out that I was pregnant with Gus.

InD: How wonderful! So you had the three, how far apart in age are they?

QL: We have a ten, 3 1/2 and a 2 1/2 year-old.

InD: Wow! There are so many stories where people are in the same situation that you were. They adopt one and then get pregnant within a few weeks after. At what point did you decide that you were going to write?

QL: Around 2009 Bo bought me a Nook for my birthday and I started downloading free books. I started wondering, "How in the world can all these books be free or ninety-nine cents? How is the publisher making any money on these?" So I googled it. It came back with all of this information about self-publishing. I had never even heard of it before. So, I really started looking into it. One of the first books I read was by Amanda Hawking, who was an author who went from being a nobody to selling something like 1 million books in a year as a self-published author. I read some of her books

and found out about her story. Then I told Bo, "I think I am going to write a book." He knows that my follow-through is not always great so he didn't think anything about it.

InD: How long had you been married at that point?

QL: We have been married almost 10 years.

InD: So you had children at that time...

QL: Yeah our first one was three. Bo was an attorney but was actually in the process of joining the FBI and I was a nurse. By my third book, though, I was able to quit working and write full-time. He now works running all the business side of my writing. He's one of my editors. I always tell him I write good books but he makes them great. He takes care of my website, he reads all the contracts. But he's also busy helping with the kids. When we had two infants at one time that sort of changed the dynamics of my writing and my energy level. He took over a lot of that for me.

InD: You have a lawyer for a husband that can take care of all that messy business stuff! What a blessing that is! You said that you were a great beginner but not good on the follow-through so how did you finish that first book?

QL: Well, I was working as a clinic nurse and both of my surgeons had gone on vacation and I had nothing to do other than answer

phone calls from patients. That's when I had the idea to write a book. I immediately wrote down the three names of the characters. Jackie, Jen and Sally and briefly came up with their backgrounds. Then, I just started writing. I wrote "Prince of Wolves" in like seven days.

InD: How did the storyline come about?

QL: When I was in high school there were not a lot of YA books. So, I loved and had been reading paranormal books like "Twilight". I got immersed in that genre but I was really tired of reading the same formula of guy meets girl, they hate each other then they like each other. I wanted to find something different but I couldn't. So that was one of my motivations. I loved shifters and werewolves are my favorite type of paranormal creatures so I knew I wanted to write something with those in. And, I took from personalities that I knew in real life. The character of Fane was initially based off of Bo because that is who I knew. When I go back and read that book now it seems so basic because I was a baby at writing! After I finished it, I really didn't do anything with it for a year. I sent it to our moms to read and of course they said that they loved it but they have to say that. A year later Bo said, "Are you ever going to do anything with that book?" So I made a terrible cover and uploaded it. I thought my family would buy it because they feel sorry for me and that would be the end of it and life will go on.

InD: Did you put it up for free or for ninety-nine cents because that is what you loved about the other books?

QL: Yes I priced it at ninety-nine cents. Because I was a new author, I didn't expect people to spend a bunch of money on me.

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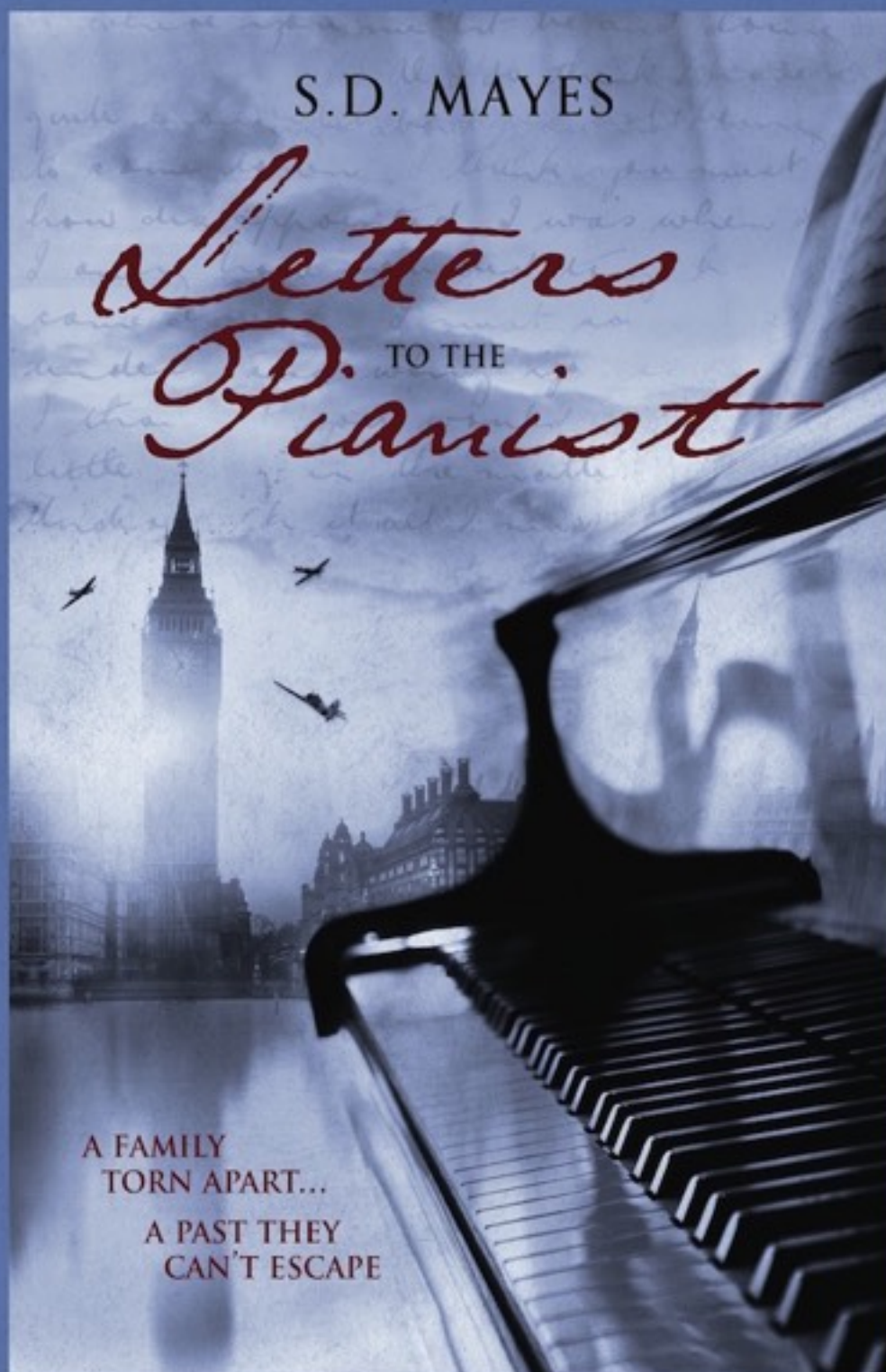
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InD: So you publish it and what happened?

QL: Well, I put it up June 29 and I sold twelve copies. I'm pretty sure it was all of my family. Then the next month, July, I sold ninety-five copies and I was ecstatic because I don't know ninety-five people so there were people who don't know me who bought my book, that was pretty amazing! At the end of July I got an email from a lady, who is now author Georgia Kate. But, at the time she was just a reader. She wrote, "I have read your book I really enjoyed it but your cover is terrible. My husband is a graphic design artist and he is making a cover." I said, "That is awesome, how much do I owe you?" She said they didn't want me to pay, they were going to give it to me. I uploaded the cover in July after selling ninety-five books and in August I sold about 1,300 so that proved to me how massively important a good cover is for a book. I was shocked! I did not have a website or anything at that point. I remember getting emails and messages on Facebook asking when the next book was coming out. I'm thinking, "There is no next book!" Bo said, "Well I guess you better write it!" So I wrote "Blood Rites" in about a month and put it out. By January 2012 I was publishing the third book and that was when I quit

working and started writing full-time.

InD: Those first two books had made enough that you could quit work? That is awesome!

QL: Yeah. A lot of it was the market at that time. The market in this day and age is so flooded it is SO much harder to be seen as a new author. It doesn't matter how talented you are. It takes a lot to stand out from other authors. I think Amazon gets 5000 or so uploads a week, which is insane. There is like 4 million books on Amazon right now. In 2011 there was a million. So it has become a much more difficult market to break into.

InD: But you have been able to maintain it through ten books of that same series plus branch off into others and still keep a massive following who are very loyal and dedicated. Your books carry a very hopeful, love conquers all message. I think teenagers and the YA market really want to believe that can be found in today's world. They want to believe love can endure and you give them that. I also noticed that you sound like a YA person writing it. I believe these characters because it doesn't sound like an adult writing about teenagers. It sounds like teenagers writing about themselves. Are you

consciously thinking that or is that something that is natural when you sit down to write?

QL: I think it comes natural. My husband will tell you that I am a seventeen-year-old in a thirty-eight-year-old body. I remember very vividly what it was like to be a teenager. It sucked quite frankly.

InD: That was part of the reason why I asked you what your high school years were like!

QL: High school is just a little blink in your life but you don't realize it at that time because it is your whole world. I in no way want to belittle the fact that the character and/or the reader are in high school and everything seems massive right now. That's reality. Every human being goes through that when they are a teenager. Every decision about a guy or girl or teacher or parent or whatever seems like the whole world ends on that. That is just a part of our perspective. Our comprehension is still growing. You can't really change a teenager going through that. It is a natural process of things in the way our bodies develop. I hope to be open to give different options or guidance. You were talking about love conquering all and one of my biggest pet peeves in YA fiction is the mentality of following your heart. I hate that saying. If I followed my heart it would not have led me to Bo. It would have led me to some very bad situations because that is what I thought I wanted and felt like at that time. So my mentality with the love relationships is that I fully believe that love is a choice. I believe that we fall in love. I also believe there is infatuation and lust. That is necessary to draw us together but the long-term relationships that last twenty-five, forty-five or more years is because they chose to love each other through their crap and I don't want my characters to be

perfect. There is no such thing as a perfect man. I really want to convey to my teen readers that yes, you can find the one for you because I found the one for me but that doesn't mean it is going to be easy. Bo is a wonderful, wonderful man but he is still a human being. We both have moments of great selfishness and don't put the other first. But then we have moments of giving grace when those times occur. So you have to *choose* to love on most days. You have those highs where you feel, "Oh, I'm so in love with you!" but most days you're like, "Ugh this is work loving you, but I am going to do it." Making that choice, that commitment. It is not all romantic. It's silly sometimes. I am passionate about helping teen girls understand they don't have to have a formula that sitcoms give us or the one they see at home that isn't working. There is a better way if they go into it with the mentality that love isn't going to be easy but that doesn't mean that it isn't going to be great.

Ind: A lot of the YA offerings in the last two or three years has become very cynical. Kids are dealing with divorce and the repercussions along with so many other things more than ever before and we see it cycle through a very cynical life-view in YA which has been a bit discouraging. We know that is real life but it's nice to give kids some hope! To help them understand if you work at it, you can find joy and happiness even though life may not be the way you want it to be at the moment. I really think that is something that stood out with your writing. When you started writing that very first book did you consciously say you were going to do a YA or did it just come out that way?

QL: I knew I wanted it to be YA. I've always had a heart for teenagers. Again, I love my parents. But, I had a very tumultuous relationship with them as a teenager. Our children are our legacy. We leave our values with them and hopefully they are able to overcome whatever crap is laid in their laps. But as authors we have another kind of legacy and that is our books. What are our responsibilities especially as authors? What is my name going to be attached to in 100 years? Because in the digital era it is almost impossible for all of the books to be gone. If you write a book and put it out there it is out there forever. The scary part is how many people are going to read that book and be influenced by it? I think when you stop to think about it, it changes your level of responsibility when you're writing a book. Just because you can doesn't mean that you should. So I think that for a YA author, I want what I'm giving to these young people to impact them in a positive way and hopefully make them

better people and lead them in a better direction. There are so many YA books out there that are so unhealthy. It is kind of scary. I also think the integrity and the character of the author is attached to that forever. We still read Jane Austen and she's over 100 years dead. That is scary to me.

Ind: Especially in the YA genre because you are dealing with readers that are still developing. They are still determining what their opinions are and where they are going to go in life. Are you helping them to be better and have a better life? Are you influencing them for the good?

After the Grey Wolves series you decided to do something completely different in the Elfin and the Sandman series. In the Sandman series, you have a really interesting and creative twist! You've taken the Sandman legend and turned it into a paranormal story. Were you reading to your kids at night and it popped into your head?

QL: I've always loved legends and I love the notion of the Sandman. But, it has always been more of a horror story. I looked it up and there has never been any sort of romance with him. I decided to make a good love story out of him! Of course, we would want him to be sexy and attractive. Then, I wondered what is his purpose? Does he just give people dreams? I felt like there needed to be something greater. I started thinking about how God has used dreams over the course of generations to influence people. So, I thought it would be cool to put a new twist to it. Book 2 was extremely hard to write. It was a lot darker than book 1 and it deals with something that I felt very convicted to write about which is the question of why do bad things happen to good people? That is a very hard question to explore. But I love the take on the Sandman. I think that is really cool legend. I would love to do others. I have been thinking about Jack Frost. He seems kind of cool. I think he could be viewed as a very mysterious and attractive hero.



InD: I think they're wonderful and a really new and creative thing. You also have a new book that's a historical?

QL: It is! It is a YA historical romance.

InD: Oh my gosh! That is cool. What made you decide to decide to write historicals?

QL: Well Clean Teen Publishing reached out to me and pitched me something historical. They said what about Vikings? They are kind of big right now. So I started writing down a plot. It has a little bit of fantasy and a bit of a magical twist to it. It was a lot of fun to write. I am working on book 2 right now. I love the characters!

InD: Now, just for fun - When you are not writing what are you doing?

QL: Reading or playing with my kids. Sometimes both at the same time.

InD: Favorite food?

QL: Ice cream. Is that a food?

InD: That is a desert! You have to have a food, too!

QL: My favorite food is any sort of pasta. I love pasta.

InD: Favorite time of day?

QL: Night. When everyone else is asleep.

InD: Do you write at night?

QL: It depends. If I'm on deadline I will write at night. I require me time, I have to decompress. My little ones go to bed at seven, my middle one goes to bed at 8:30. My husband goes to bed between ten and 11:30 so when they are all in bed I need the quiet time.

InD: What is your favorite color?

QL: I like green because I am a redhead.

InD: Your favorite place in the world?

QL: The Caribbean. I would love to go to a gorgeous beach like Hawaii, too, because I have never been. I have been on cruises but I like to go to the beach and just chill for about a week. That would be nice.

InD: Okay, bucket list. What would you still like to accomplish?

QL: As a writer that ambitious side of me wants to make the lists again. I know I have been successful and I don't want to belittle that but you always want to do better - to go to the next step. I would love to make the New York Times. As far as my personal life, I would actually love to explore all fifty states and not just drive through them.

InD: Any advice for up-and-coming authors?

QL: If you haven't read Stephen Kings "On Writing" read it. It is brilliant. Don't buy into the "You can't read in your own genre while you are writing." That is a mistake. You should be reading all the time. Always be learning. Don't ever think that you have achieved it or that you have gotten there or that you know everything that you need to know because once you hit that point you are done. So always be learning. Always be getting better.

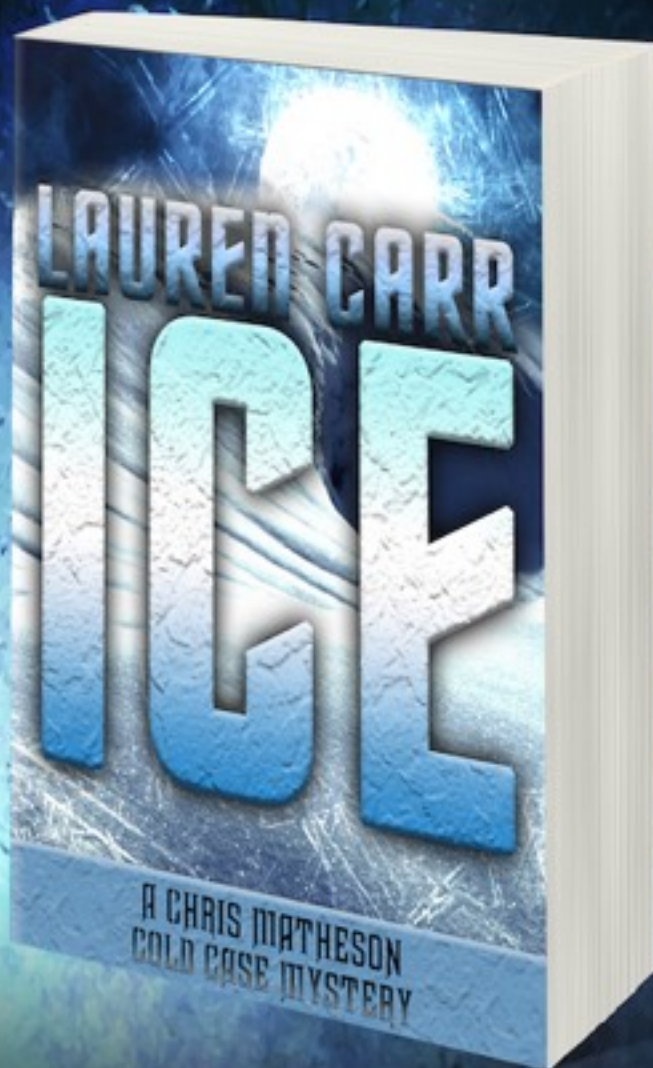
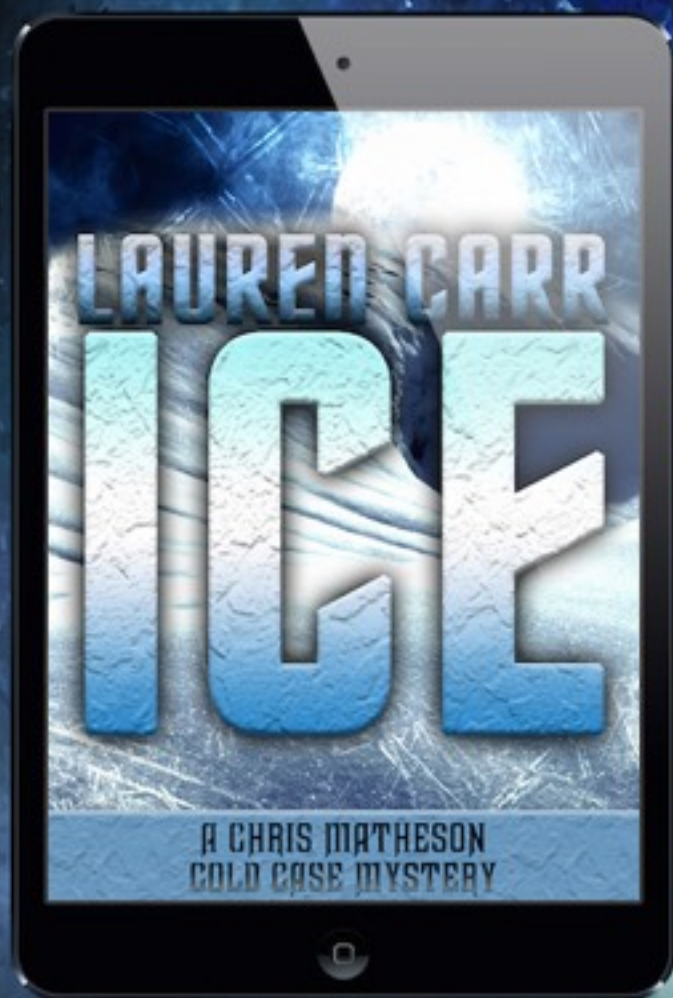


They say no good deed goes unpunished.

Such is the case for Chris Matheson.

When Sandy Lipton and her unborn child disappear, the court of public opinion finds young Chris Matheson guilty. Decades later, the retired FBI agent returns home to discover that the cloud of suspicion cast over him and his family has never lifted.

With the help of a team of fellow retired law enforcement officers, each a specialist in their own field of investigation, Chris Matheson starts chipping away at the ice on this cold case to uncover what had happened to Sandy and her baby and the clues are getting hot!



"Lauren Carr's books are never boring, that's for sure... Her series are addictive, so be ready to read more than just one book!" - Laura Fabiani, Library of Clean Reads

"Carr continues to up the stakes when you read her books."

~ Glenda Bixler, Book Readers Heaven

Candy Cane and Cookie Crumb attended my high school in suburban Pennsylvania. The girls spelled their names with more flourish than the letters I used here, and Candy's legal name was Candice, but the consequences of their too-sweet identities remained the same—no one took them seriously.



Despite good looks and stellar academic achievements, the girls remained the brunt of jokes throughout their teen years. Rumor had it Cookie got married right after graduation just for the name change.

When the time came for me to choose a pen name after I sold my first book in 2006, I remembered how Candy's and Cookie's names undermined their abilities. Any temptation I might have had to adopt something quirky disappeared as I considered my choices.

My publisher advised me to be original without being complicated. "People aren't going to find you or your books if they can't [easily] look you up online, or

they keep saying to themselves, 'What was that author's name?'" Many adult readers also consider single-name pen names to be pretentious or silly—there are people who will not read these authors."

Penny C. Sansevieri, CEO & Adjunct Instructor NYU, Author Marketing Experts, Inc. says, "When choosing a pen name, consider this: "Does it sound a lot like someone famous? I've talked with a few authors who have taken pen names that are super similar to well-known authors, thinking that 'by accident' they'll get associated with these brand names. This is really a bad idea for a variety of reasons. It's tough to compete with big names... I think they'd really be facing an uphill battle. Second, there might be legal issues

By:
Adele
Downs

involved in picking a name too similar to a big superstar author so just tread carefully with that.

“Branding is important—how do you want to be known? Remember that ideally this pen name will follow you throughout your career so don’t be too focused on the current book. You’ll want to think broader than that. Think long-term. You might love the idea of your pen name right now, but how will you feel about it after five years? A cute or super sexy name now might not work as you grow in your career, so keep that in mind.”

Christopher Keeslar, an editor and cover artist with an extensive background in both traditional and digital romance publishing, has these suggestions for authors: “When choosing a pen name, I would aim for the following characteristics:

Simplicity. You don’t ever want to intentionally choose a name that is difficult to pronounce, spell or that sounds contrived.

Memorability. This is why people end up choosing alliterative names.

Appropriateness to your market. Aim for a name that conveys your ultimate envisioned brand. If you write Regencies, go with Anglo names. If you write erotica comedy, Yum-Yum Buttersworth is just fine.

Distinctiveness. You want a name that is fresh despite feeling familiar. This may be the toughest part. You don’t want to be confused with another author, though you want to infuse the reader with almost immediate familiarity.”

When deciding on a domain name for a pseudonym, Penny C. Sansevieri adds, “Stay away from anything that you have to hyphenate, because I think most folks forget the hyphen. If you’re really set on a name that you love, but there are several other sites with the same name, consider adding the word ‘author.’ So, SallySmithAuthor.com could work. Everyone knows this, but I’m going to repeat it anyway: keep it simple. You can’t rely on folks remembering odd name spellings, like Jeniffer instead of Jennifer.”

Be smart, not clever about a pen name.

Many authors choose a fictitious professional name when their real name is hard to spell or remember. After Carolyn Matkowsky (Gambling on Love series) published her first book with Avalon under her real name, a romance magazine poll called her an “up and coming author.” But the attention came with a misspelling. “While I was grateful for the nomination, I didn’t get the promotion from it that I should have. That’s when I decided I needed an easier name. I chose Cara because it’s a shortened version of Carolyn, and Marsi because it’s short and easy and reflects my Italian heritage.” When Cara turned to indie publishing, her simple name choice made it easy for readers to find her books.

Ashlyn Chase (Phoenix Brothers series) offers a more whimsical reason to create a pseudonym. “I think a pen name is essential, but it’s also fun to reinvent yourself. Some Native American tribes rename a person after they get to know them. Why not give yourself the name you wish you were born with?”

Some authors are lucky to be born with an ideal author name for their chosen genre. Tamara Lush (Constant Craving series) is a prime example. She says it’s “the name my 1970’s hippie parents gave me. I didn’t change it when I married, mostly because at that point, I had a recognizable newspaper byline (I’m an AP reporter in my day job). As a romance writer, I thought long and hard about a pen name. But there were a few reasons why I decided to stick with my real name.

“One, I sometimes write about sensitive topics as a journalist. I didn’t want anyone to ‘discover’ anything





lives. Sometimes an author will change or add a pen name when switching genres, or for a fresh start after a career bump or a long absence from publishing. Reinvention is a major motivator. The choices we make are as personal and individual as the names we choose.

There are far-reaching benefits or consequences for choosing a pen name wisely or poorly. Whether adopting yours for the first time, adding a pseudonym or changing one, your pen name and your brand will become inextricably bound.

about me. I didn't want people to think that I write steamy romance in 'secret.' I'm not ashamed of what I write — I'm very up-front about it with colleagues, sources and strangers. I have no children and my family is embarrass-proof. I even approached my employer before I published, asking my editors if they had a problem if I wrote under my real name. They said no, I could do whatever I wished.

"The second reason was social media. I already had widely established social media accounts under my real name. The idea of writing, publishing, marketing and launching new social media accounts under a different name was too much to handle. There's only so many hours in a day.

"And the third reason: my name's perfect for a romance author. Why change it?"

USA and NYT best-selling author Marie Force (Gansett Island series) trademarked her name and her series names to protect the brand she created. She released her erotic romance Quantum series under the pen name M.S. Force, but returned to the name her readers know best. She says, "My pen name served its purpose and has since been retired."

Author Laura Florand (La Vie en Roses series) also prefers using her real name. "I'm a little too far down this particular choice in my career to switch to a pen name now, but who knows in the future? I do wish that factor of being afraid of what people might think wasn't so present in the decision. But my bottom line so far has been: It's your book. Own it. Be proud of it. Take credit for it. And I think there's something very important about that ability to assert the whole you that outweighs the advantages of a pseudonym. Not that I have never had doubts about the choice!"

Authors who use a pen name often want to keep their professional identities separate from their personal

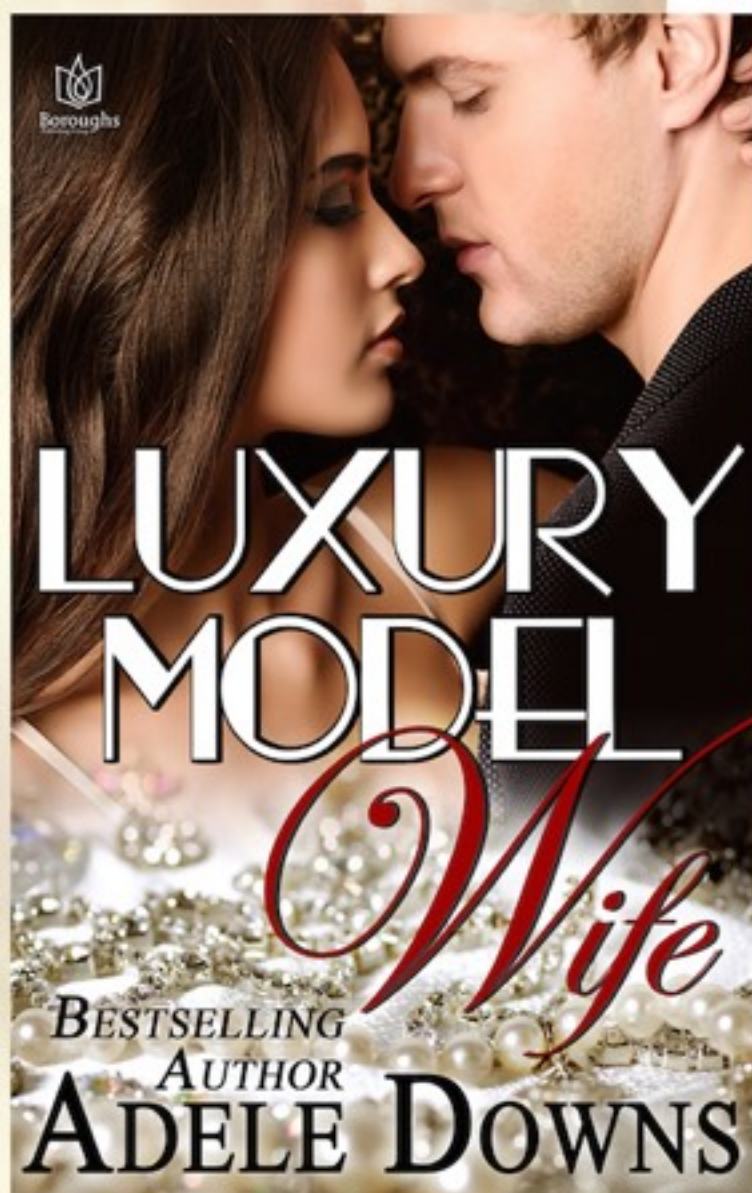


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Fun With Animals as Characters



When I was a kid, I was horse crazy. Pictures of horses on my wall, charm bracelets with horses, little horse statues all over the dresser, a stick horse to gallop around the back yard, you name it, I had it. Although I never actually got a horse of my own, I still love them, so I write about them. And not only horses, but animals in general.

I love using animals as secondary characters in books. They can be our best friends. They're non-judgmental and cute as all get out. They're funny and silly and have no idea they're such a source of laughter and entertainment for us. And don't tell me they aren't smart. I'll bet you're just like me—you have to spell words because your pets know exactly what you're saying! W-a-l-k. T-r-e-a-t. (Mine learned how to spell that one so we had to start spelling c-o-o-k-i-e). The animals we know in real life can impact how we write books.

Growing up, my family moved a lot, so I didn't get to have a pet until I was a teen. His name was Joe, a very spoiled Beagle who slept under the covers with his head on my pillow. Joe was scared to death of our swimming pool and couldn't understand why I would willingly jump into what he considered nothing more than a scary water dish—a huge scary water dish!

My best friend lived behind us and whenever I'd go visiting, Joe would climb the ladder at our back fence and stand there with his sad little face resting on his paws as he peeked over the top of the block wall, waiting for me to come back home. Joe was also a very patient listener and was privy to all my teenage angst. He never judged me or told my secrets. He taught me about unconditional love.

As an adult, the dog love of my life was Harley—a little white Maltese fluff ball who we soon began calling "Happiness Harley" because that's exactly what he was. Especially on the motorcycle. He rode in a backpack in front of me—between myself and my husband—outfitted with goggles and a Harley Davidson leather hat. It was so fun to watch the other drivers around us. You know how you look around and people have these intense, serious, sometimes angry expressions on their faces when they're driving? They'd look over and see this cute little dog, ears flapping in the wind, wearing goggles and peeking out between us. Guaranteed smiles and laughter every single time.

Animals naturally touch our emotions in such special ways that they make great additions to almost any story. Often, they become larger-than-life secondary characters with their own personalities,



By:
Mindy
Neff



sometimes even taking center stage in a book, and that's not always by accident.

When creating the main characters in a story, authors strive to make them feel as real to the reader as possible, creating people who you could fall in love with or imagine as your best friend or even your worst enemy. These characters have childhood memories, a belief system born of that upbringing, goals and dreams and friends and family, and that family can include animals. If we're going to take the time and care to make our human characters leap off the page, we must strive to do the same with our animal characters.

We don't always choose our animals, sometimes they choose us, and that often happens when creating a character in a book. As an example, Simba, an Irish Wolfhound-Lab mix is a big Scoobie Doo dog who outweighs the heroine—a five-foot-three-inch veterinarian—by a good forty pounds. Of course, he has no idea how big he is, or that he shouldn't sit in your lap, or on the dining room chairs.

You see, Simba has a backstory of his own. He was an abandoned dog who was raised with a litter of kittens and he doesn't realize he's a dog. Loyal as they come, he's big and goofy and filled with so much love and exuberance, you can't help but laugh at him, especially with his penchant for walk-by licks. Like a chocoholic sneaking sugar, Simba sneaks licks.

As fun as Simba is, he's still a rescue animal who might not have had a chance if fate hadn't stepped in. An Irish Wolfhound mix isn't the cutest dog in the pound, which makes it much more difficult for them to find their forever home. However, in contrast to outward appearances, this breed is generally introverted, reserved, and kind. Rather than guard the house, they will guard their humans. Simba became the perfect rescue animal for a broken-hearted heroine and a little girl who was wounded, shy, and cautious. Simba had no formal training as a therapy dog, but that's exactly what he became, and isn't that the case with most rescue animals? They are therapy in one form or another. We rescue them, and they rescue us right back.

Trained working animals, such as K-9 dogs, can also be the perfect character to add to a story where our heroes have been injured in the line of duty. Authors don't always just plunk a stereotypical animal in a book merely for the sake of it. Like our human characters, we need to give our canine characters a backstory and a reason to be there. What if our German Shepherd is a forcibly retired K-9 officer? Wouldn't she be the perfect character to pair with a hero who can no longer do the job he was trained for? The similarities would create a certain comradery between the hero and his dog if both had been forced to give up something they loved.



Those high energy dogs require a lot of commitment and training and in the wrong hands, can be very misunderstood, and even scary, making them a prime candidate for surrender. Creating fun character traits for this particular breed of animal gives us another way of seeing these beautiful animals and adds enrichment and originality to the story.

Characterization isn't just for dogs and cats. Horses have their own personalities as well, and as authors, we need to match them up with the perfect human character in order to give the reader a satisfying experience. Sometimes the mentor in a story isn't the "wise old woman". It can be the hero or heroine's animal. A character that comes to mind is Miss Helen, a beautiful buckskin

mare who's been abused and has given up on life, until she meets a southern belle with a slight fear of horses but an even bigger determination to bond with society's throwaways. The healing in this a story—for both the horse and the heroine—relies on characterization and backstory, created not only for the heroine in the story, but for the horse as well.

There's a reason why we respond so strongly to those animal videos on Facebook and YouTube, right? Cute goats jumping around, dogs and cats acting silly, raccoons sitting on the furniture and parrots dancing to Elvis. They don't know they're making us laugh and bringing such happiness to our day. They're just being themselves. As authors, we have the perfect opportunity to add smiles and feel-good emotions to our readers through the rich characters we create, both human and animal. We all need best friends and love, and our sweet animals can be both.



*Money can buy anything. Can't it?
Those brash Americans with their dollars and their charms
learn that money can buy anything...but love.*

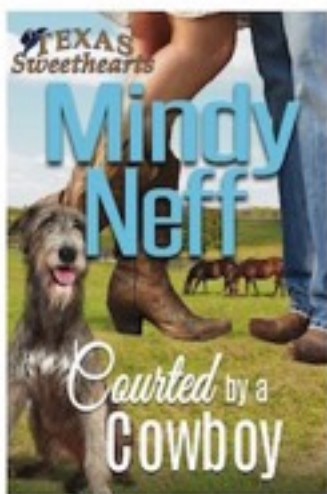
CERISE DELAND

THOSE NOTORIOUS AMERICANS



TEXAS *Sweethearts*

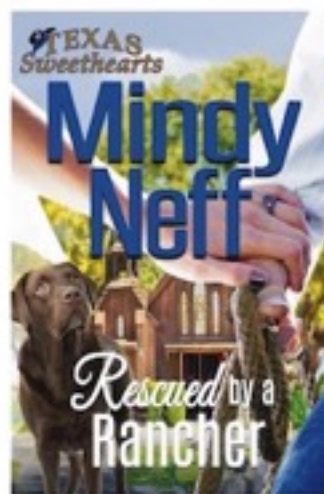
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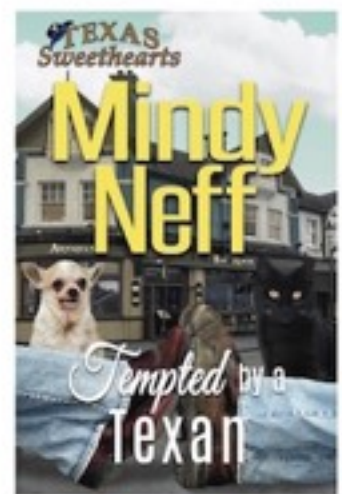
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A COMPLETE GUIDE to YA Fiction

Young Adult, or "YA", fiction has become hugely popular in the last decade, to the point that many readers will exclusively read YA Fantasy, Dystopian, Historical, Contemporary, and Science Fiction. But what is YA fiction? How does it differ from Adult fiction, and what does it have in common?

Young Adult Fiction in the Past

Young adult literature has existed for more than two hundred years. Since the 1800s, there have been many works that appeal to young readers, including:

- "Swiss Family Robinson" (1812)
- "Alice in Wonderland" (1865)
- "The Jungle Book" (1894)
- "The Chronicles of Narnia" (1950)

These stories, while not written specifically for a younger audience, contained themes that appealed to younger readers, between the ages of 12 and 18.

The Rise of YA Fiction

By the early 1990s, there was a concern that young adult literature would lose the interest of young readers. Then came along the book that changed it all: "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone". The book was praised for not only its maturity and complexity, but its ability to appeal to a broad range of

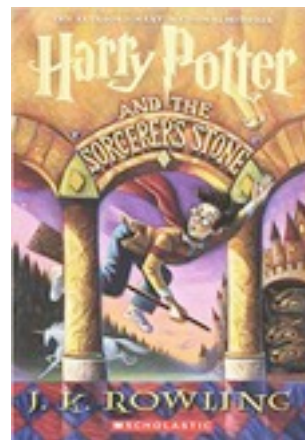
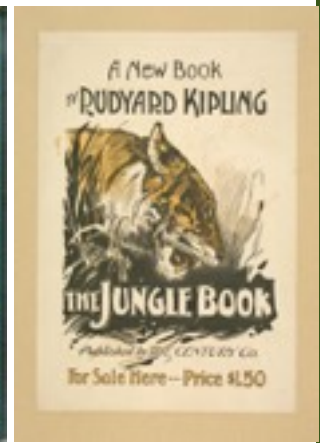
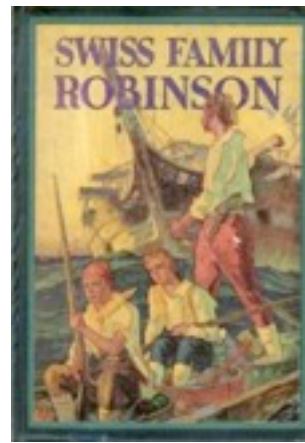
readers. The adaptation of the books into movies, which saw blockbuster success, added to the interest of young and adult audiences into YA fiction.

Suzanne Collins solidified the trend with her "The Hunger Games" trilogy. Further offerings like "The Maze Runner", "The Divergent Trilogy", "The Fault in Our Stars", "The Giver", the Percy Jackson novels, and "The Mortal Instruments" soon drew young audiences into every genre—from Science Fiction to Fantasy to Dystopian to Romance to Historical fiction. New novels are being released on a yearly basis, drawing young readers into more "niche" genres like Techno-Thrillers, Cyberpunk, and even Contemporary Christian fiction.

The Hallmarks of Young Adult Fiction

Like with many genres of fiction, it's nearly impossible to precisely define and outline every aspect of what makes a book YA versus Adult or "New Adult" (NA). Many Young Adult books include adult themes, while many adult novels feature young adult

By:
Andy
Peloquin



protagonists. A large number of series cross from YA to adult from one book to the next, or simply include YA, NA, and adult elements throughout.

However, for the sake of clarity, here are a few of the elements common to the Young Adult genre:

A Young Adult protagonist. Harry Potter was 11 years old when he received his invitation to Hogwarts. At the age of 16, Katniss Everdeen volunteered to take her sister's place as tribute. Hazel Grace Lancaster from "The Fault in Our Stars" is a 16-year old cancer patient.

Young Adult novels typically feature a "young adult protagonist", usually between the ages of 12 to 18, though some can stretch into the early 20s. The fact that the Point of View (POV) character is usually a young adult ensures that the story is told from the viewpoint of someone making the transition from teenager to adult.

Adults will usually play background, supportive roles, but will rarely be the primary protagonists. The location will also typically be those familiar to young adults—often some form of school reflective of junior high or high school. The Wizarding School of Hogwarts from "Harry Potter" and Battle School from "Ender's Game" are two prime examples.

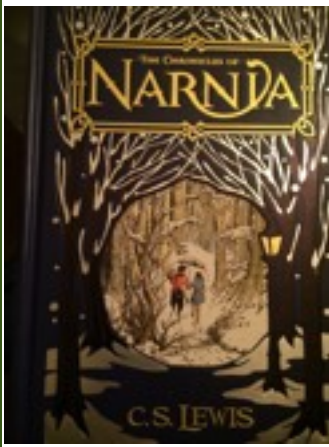
A "young voice". This is one of the clearest distinctions between Young Adult and Adult fiction, though it can be surprisingly hard to recognize.

In Adult fiction, the character (even a teenaged one) will usually have accumulated a great deal of experience, so the "voice" of the story typically speaks from this experience. Teenagers in Adult fiction often sound and act more experienced and confident. A good example of this is Celena Sardothien from Sarah J. Maas' "A Throne of Glass" series. While the character is a young adult (18 years old), she has lived a hard life as an assassin.

In Young Adult fiction, the characters will typically be written without years of experience, and thus they will be seeing many things in the world for the first time. Like Katniss Everdeen, they may have a specific skill that comes in handy, but they are unfamiliar with the ways of the world at large (as evidenced by Katniss' relationship with President Snow).

The "voice" of the character will be young, with the questions, thoughts, and anxieties experienced by a young adult.

Scope, complexity, and length. Pick up an Adult fiction novel like "A Song of Ice and Fire" or "The Stormlight Archives", and you find yourself dealing with universe-changing, world-spanning epics featuring dozens of characters and a complex plot. In



Fantasy and Science Fiction, the length of the book can trend upward of 120,000 words—in some cases rising as high as 200,000 or 300,000 words.

Young Adult fiction, on the other hand, tends to have a narrower scope and less plot complexity. Young Adult novels tend to be character-driven rather than plot-driven, so the focus is on the character, their development, their immediate surroundings, and the consequences of their actions. While there are novels of young adult protagonists saving the world, they tend to be less complex and world-spanning than Adult fiction. Though there are exceptions to the rule, Young Adult fiction usually falls within the 50,000 to 90,000-word range.

Young Adult issues. The issues dealt with in Young Adult fiction often appear in Adult fiction, and adult issues often show up in YA fiction. Seeing as many young adults face the same issues as adults, it makes sense that these themes will arise in both fiction genres.

However, Young Adult fiction will usually tap into the most common coming-of-age themes:

- First kiss
- First boyfriend/girlfriend
- Sexuality/virginity
- Alcohol/drug experimentation or first use

- Bullying/Cyber-bullying

The stories may include older themes—such as religion, divorce, death, politics, and others—but they will be approached from the perspective of the young adult.

Young Adult fiction will very rarely feature graphic content of any sort—violence, sex, and swearing are kept to a minimum.

Maturation and growth. All great novels are structured around some sort of character development. After all, a character that doesn't grow or change is boring and will quickly lose the interest of readers.

However, in Young Adult fiction, the protagonist will usually mature from traits that are seen as childish (example: selfishness, self-centered behavior) to more "mature" traits (example: selflessness, self-sacrifice). In modern Young Adult fiction, the "coming of age" has little to do with the actual age of the characters and more to do with their maturity and growth throughout the story.

The satisfying ending. This is the most important hallmark of Young Adult fiction.

Let's be clear: not all endings are happy. In "The Fault in Our Stars", the romantic interest Augustus ends up dying from cancer. Tris shatters the peaceful structure of "Divergent", leaving things in a mess that they will have to clean up.

But all Young Adult fiction will have a satisfying ending, one that reflects hope, optimism, resolution, and a chance at a brighter future.

Hazel from "A Fault in Our Stars" ends the book by saying she is happy with her choice to fall in love with Augustus even though they both knew the chances of a happy ending were non-existent. Tris ends the "Divergent" (movie) series having declared her love for Four, with the hope of a better future for all of those living within their city.

Conflicts tend to be resolved, antagonists eliminated, and the overarching issues driving the story dealt with (Lord Voldemort is defeated by Harry Potter). Though the endings may be bittersweet, there is a bright, hopeful tone that allows the reader to walk away from the series content in the adventure they've just completed.

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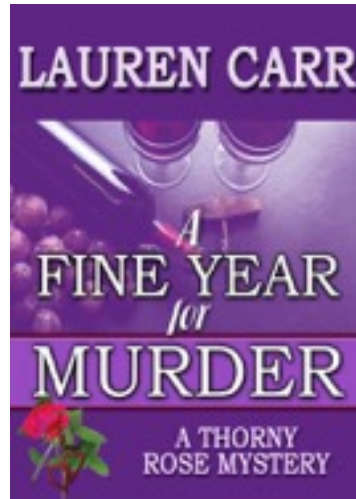
"A quirky, witty, amusing tale."

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RISING STAR SPOTLIGHT



Lauren Carr

You're a prolific mystery writer with over 26 popular novels under your belt and you're a West Virginia girl! Have you always lived in West Virginia?

Yep, I'm a West Virginia girl born and raised—by way of Ohio and Washington DC...Actually, I lie.

I was born in East Liverpool, Ohio, across the river from Chester, West Virginia, which is where I set the Lovers in Crime Mysteries. I was only born in East Liverpool because Chester didn't have a hospital. Hancock is in the smallest county in West Virginia. I was the youngest of four children and the first one in my whole family, including parents, grandparents, etc, to be born in a hospital. My family claims that's why I'm different from the rest of my family. They mixed up the babies at the hospital.

I was raised on a farm which explains my love of animals. After my father passed away, my mother, and I moved to Lordstown, Ohio. From there, I moved to Washington, DC. where I worked as an editor for the federal government for ten years. I met my husband, Jack, on a blind date. He was a Navy officer assigned to the Pentagon.

We honeymooned in Harpers Ferry, which is in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia. Jack fell in love with the area so we bought our mountaintop home in West Virginia—literally fifteen minutes from the bed-and-breakfast where we honeymooned. The commute to Washington was grueling, though, so I quit to pursue my dream of being a mystery writer.

Is writing a career you originally chose to pursue?

Writers are born to write. They're storytellers. Yes, there are technical things that every writer must learn to succeed—like proper grammar and punctuation—but you have to be born a writer.

Here's how you can spot a writer. Ask them, "How's your day? How did you meet your husband?" Anyone who is not a writer will tell you "Fine" and "We met on a blind date." End of conversation.

But a writer will grab you by the throat with a hook and then proceed to tell you in detail who, what, when, where, why, and how then establish characters, setting, motives, and include a beginning, middle, and end with a smashing climax

Writers are always writing. Even if their day job is waiting tables or working as a stock broker, they are spinning tales in their minds. It's what they do, even if they aren't able to make a career of it.

For many years, mystery writing was a hobby while I did editing. I didn't actually start writing mysteries full time until after I had my son in 1998.

What drew you to writing mysteries?

My late mother. She loved murder mysteries. The libraries in Chester had to import books from other libraries for her because she read every book in the mystery section.

My fondest memory is curling up next to her in bed at night and she'd read Perry Mason to me. Out of four kids, I'm the only one who shared her love for mysteries. It was something special that we had between us. She was my perfect reader. I'd send my books to her to read before publication. She had never been to college, but she knew about murder mysteries.

Tell us how you research your plots...

Google and YouTube! Also, I love to watch criminal documentaries like Forensics Files. I could watch those all day long. I also have some friends in law enforcement—including a former homicide detective. Research is so much easier than it used to be. Back when I was writing my first mystery novel, I needed some procedural information concerning a homicide. So I dialed the local police department, not the emergency number, and got an officer on the phone. Immediately, I proceeded to tell him the situation. "I've got this dead body, and he's been murdered and..."

"Excuse me," the officer interrupted me, "did you say you have a dead body?"

"Yes, and he's been murdered. So, when you get here, what's the first thing you do?"

"Where are you?" he asked.

Suddenly, I realized that I was so anxious to ask my question that I failed to tell him that I was a writer doing research. I immediately hung up the phone and closed the blinds. I spent the rest of the day peering out the window to see if the police had traced the call!

Do you know the villain before you start the book or does he or she reveal themselves to you mid-story?

I most definitely know the killer before I even start writing! But that doesn't mean the killer can't change. For my book, "Blast from the Past" I had finished the book and sent it off to the editor. That night, I woke up and suddenly realized the killer was someone else. I emailed the editor and did a rewrite. That is the only time that has happened.

Having said that, the killer has often changed mid-stream. My books are character driven. When your characters don't start directing you while you're writing, then they aren't fully developed. So if the character starts nagging me to go in a different direction while I'm writing, it's a good thing. Sometimes, during that process, a character will reveal him or herself to be the killer instead of the one I started out with.

But, that is not to say that I will always listen to my characters. I also know how I want the book to end. While the killer may change, I intend for the book and the characters to end a certain way. If one or more of the characters interfere with my ending, then I will replace the character. Once, I fired a congresswoman because she didn't work out. How many of us can say that?

Do you diagram and plot a story or just start and see where it goes?

I write loose outlines. I'm what's called a plantser. That means I plot the book, but I also write by the seat of my pants. Writing the outline just sorts it out in my head. Most of the time, the characters take over and I end up straying away from the outline anyway.

Tell us a little about your famous Mac Faraday character...

Mac Faraday is a great guy. I have a great love for him. He is the anchor for three of my mystery series. The characters for the Mac Faraday, Lovers in Crime, and Thorny Rose mysteries all cross over from one series



to the other because the principle characters are family and friends.

I introduced readers to Mac Faraday in my third book, "It's Murder, My Son". Mac was a homicide detective working and living in Washington, DC. He had been married and had two grown children. His wife left him after twenty years for another man—leaving him with only their maxed out credit cards. On the day that his divorce became final, he inherited \$270 million and an estate from his birth mother.

Mac knew that he had been adopted as a baby, but he never tracked down his birth mother. He discovers that she was Robin Spencer, the American version of Agatha Christie. She had given birth to him as an unwed teenager. Mac also learns this his birth father was Patrick O'Callaghan, who had gone on to become Spencer, Maryland's police chief.

What does Mac do? What most of us would do. He retires and moves to the estate his birth mother had left him. Mac also inherits his mother's German shepherd, Gnarly, the only canine to be dishonorably discharged from the United States Army. Gnarly fans learn his story in "Candidate for Murder", an amusing look at today's politics and media.

So what about the hugely popular Thorny Rose mysteries?

The Thorny Rose mysteries is an off-shoot of both the Mac Faraday and Lovers in Crime Mysteries. It features Murphy Thornton (Joshua Thornton's son) and Jessica Faraday (Mac Faraday's daughter). I introduced them to each other in "Three Days to Forever."

Murphy Thornton was just a teenager in my very first book "A Small Case of Murder". Jessica Faraday is only mentioned until readers meet her in "Three Days to Forever" when she arrives in Spencer for her father's wedding to his lady love.

By the time she meets Murphy Thornton, she is ready ready to apply to medical schools to become a forensics psychiatrist. They are newlyweds in "Kill and Run" and still adjusting to married life in "A Fine Year

for Murder". In "Murder by Perfection" (coming this summer), the honeymoon is over. But love does conquer all.

I push the envelope more with the Thorny Rose Mystery series. In their twenties, Murphy and Jessica are more passionate—sexier. While I still close the door on the love scenes, this young married couple is a bit friskier. Also, these mysteries have a bit more techno-elements.

You seem to be a lover of animals as well. Tell us about that.

I can't help myself. I'm a farm girl. It was not a conscious decision on my part, but I have animals in every one of my books. And, like all animals I have had, they have their own distinct personalities. Mac Faraday's Gnarly is a fan favorite. He was based on our Australian shepherd Ziggy who passed away from canine cancer at four years of age. I was heartbroken. Gnarly's sister, Morgan, had been adopted by another dog breeder, Vicki. One of her puppies, Sterling had been adopted by a family who lived one state away. In the midst of a nasty divorce, neither parent wanted the responsibility of the German shepherd so the wife surrendered him to the county animal shelter. Eleven days after Gnarly passed away, we brought Sterling home. It was totally meant to be. We bound immediately. Sterling is featured in "Ice", my new release.

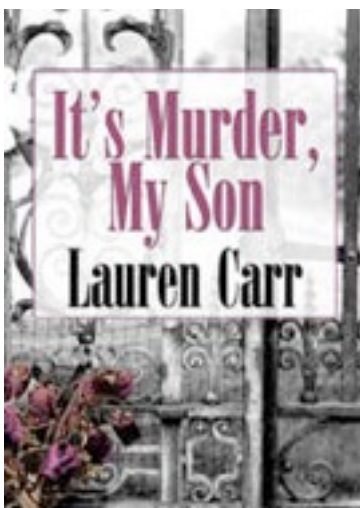
What are your plans for the future of your series and characters?

As my new series title suggests, the Chris Matheson cold case mystery series focuses on cold cases. Chris belongs to an amateur group of law enforcement retirees who work on those cold cases that keep them up at night. They call themselves the Geezer Squad. With each installment, we will focus on a different squad member's cold case. However, Chris Matheson will be the anchor.

Any new and exciting plans for the future in both your writing and in your personal life?

My goal is to keep off the streets and out of trouble by filling up my writing schedule. I am working on four series, but I seem to only be able to manage three books a year.

I am currently working on two books that I expect to be released early summer and another this fall. Look for the third Thorny Rose Mystery early this summer and a Mac Faraday Mystery this fall! As for my personal life—there's a Hershey bar downstairs with my name on it. After that, it's anyone's guess!



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Writing RETREATS



There is a magical place in a fantasy world where all you see is sunshine and rainbows. The streams are flowing with crystal clear water you can drink from. It hasn't been touched by humans so there aren't any weird glowing chemicals in it or anything. You may find some odd tastes because of the animals bathing upstream...but I digress.

Anyway, the skies are blue, the air is fresh, and only the sounds of nature are surrounding this beauty. This is what all authors picture when they are planning a getaway to a "Writer's Retreat".

Then reality sets in.

The fun part of writer's retreats is you are completely immersed in your element. Weird people like yourself who eat, think, drink, and have extreme passion for writing. You know, the crazy people. Your "tribe", as they say.

Unlike a convention, retreats are usually smaller and you plan them like a mini-vacation to focus all your energy on writing the next "50 Shades of Gray" series...or "Gone With The Wind". Whatever type of writing you prefer. So, you decide where and when and hopefully find a few writers to join you and begin the real fun part - planning the whole shebang.

Speaking from experience, the prospect of getting away from things like the bills to pay and family to support, really helps get your creative juices going. No more screaming kids wanting to be fed, the dogs



needing to be walked, picking up clothes trails from everyone, falling into the toilet at night because the darling husband left the seat up...again. You're thinking about it aren't you?

For most people, the financial part of a getaway causes the most issues. Hiding your pennies to pay for it. Not buying that cute purse or the extra blueberry muffin at Starbucks. That's probably the biggest challenge of them all. That, and what to wear. I mean even though a wardrobe of various pajama pants and T-shirts are fine with you, you can't be seen in public like that. Unless, of course, it's Wal-Mart.

At least it's an excuse to get a couple new outfits since you have saved money for this and lost some weight from not eating. Also, you have to be presentable to the other writers. Of course, they are all doing the same thing. Heaven forbid you buy the same blouse. Oh, the humanity! Since your retreat is only three days, I am sure eight new blouses will do it...maybe nine.



Some of the retreats are only a few-hours drive away. Others can be a long flight. Like cross country with those dreaded layovers and the overweight Armenian guy next to you with body odor and flatulence smelly enough that a fly would avoid him. Those are the fun flights. But I am getting distracted.

Destination is key. Try to pick a place where you can relax and focus. Just like the people you want to go with, choose wisely. You don't want to end up someplace with loud crowds partying like 1999 all night, unless you are invited. That or a hotel where the couple next door decide to have a marathon time in bed and the headboard is banging against the wall all night.

So, you make a checklist. Clothes, check. Travel, check. Hotel, check. What to write...uhhhh. That is a question you will ponder over and over. Like most writers, you think you need to have everything planned out. All the sticky notes stuck around your computer for story plots and reminders. Personally, I don't really plan out the entire story when I go away to



write. There may be a little bit of an outline but I prefer to just let things flow. Less stress and when your mind is as scrambled as mine is you have to let it out to play sometimes.

Now that you have completed your pre-plan-stress, you are off to your rendezvous with friends and words. Watch out word counts, you are going down!

Now you are there and ready. You have your computer set up in a small nook. The view is breathtaking and the entire place eases your tensions and the stress has left your body. It is quiet, calm, and peaceful. You walk over with a fresh brewed cup of coffee and sit down. Your heart tells you that this is how real writers spend their day. You stare at your screen and take a deep breath. This is it. It is your time to write.

After thirty minutes you have written twelve words. Actually, it's eleven because you had the word "the" in there three times. Maybe you need a break. Forcing creativity is a tough thing. You are

trying to make something from nothing - it is a true art form to begin with. Like a blank canvas, you are painting a story with words.

One of the awesome parts of a retreat with other writers is you can sit and just be yourself. Even though you want to write, sitting around and talking has its perks. As does laughing at stories about family and embarrassing things that happened at the supermarket. You can let your guard down because you find that a lot of writers have the same fears and phobias as you do. Your thoughts may wander and your focus may dwindle but there are benefits, too. You may have had a personal goal of 30K words on one idea, but after sitting around and looking at photos of your favorite stars and the things you would do to them, you find your ideas start to blossom. The cobwebs all start to fall away and the little flying purple people in tutus drinking Fireball and cream soda that give you your inspirational magic are kicking into overdrive. (Hey, everyone has their own little inspirational beings. Mine just happen to be little purple people...don't judge.)

The retreats I have been on have all been pretty awesome. My reasons for going may have been to

write a lot, but I usually end up getting inspired by the other writers and seeing how they excel in their craft. I play off of others and get more ideas and rejuvenated from getting away.

So, after you have your little getaway from the reality of daily life, your mental batteries may be recharged and you find yourself back at your cluttered desk and asking yourself, "What am I going to write next?" As you smile and remember all the amazing ideas from the trip, you find yourself typing away in a noisy house, with kids scrambling around, the hubby snoring with the television blaring, and the cat laying across your lap.

In the real world, this is your retreat.



“Lonestar’s Lady”

By DEBORAH CAMP

Lonestar.

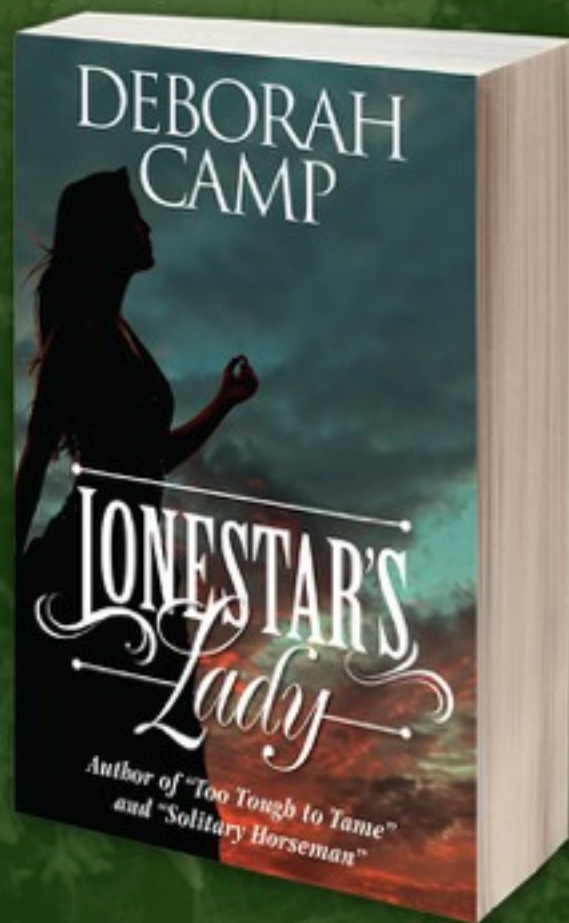
His name fit him perfectly. It fed every fantasy that Gussie Horton had conjured about Indians and forbidden love.

His neighbors whispered that he was a murdering half-breed, which was true. But Gussie believed in second chances, and more importantly, her heart told her to believe in Max Lonestar.

Was she a fool to hitch her wagon to his star? Would he be her one, true love or her final downfall?

Look for it on Amazon!

https://www.amazon.com/Deborah-Camp/e/B001HOGDMW/ref=sr_tc_2_0?qid=1504893649&sr=1-2-ent



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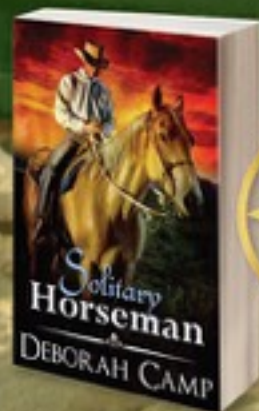
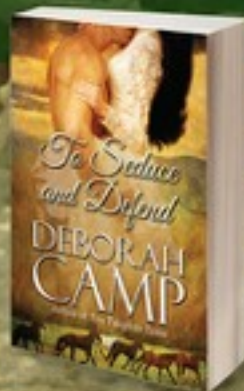


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“The author does a beautiful job of capturing the readers’ interest, building full characters, while telling an intriguing story.” – Romance Authors That Rock

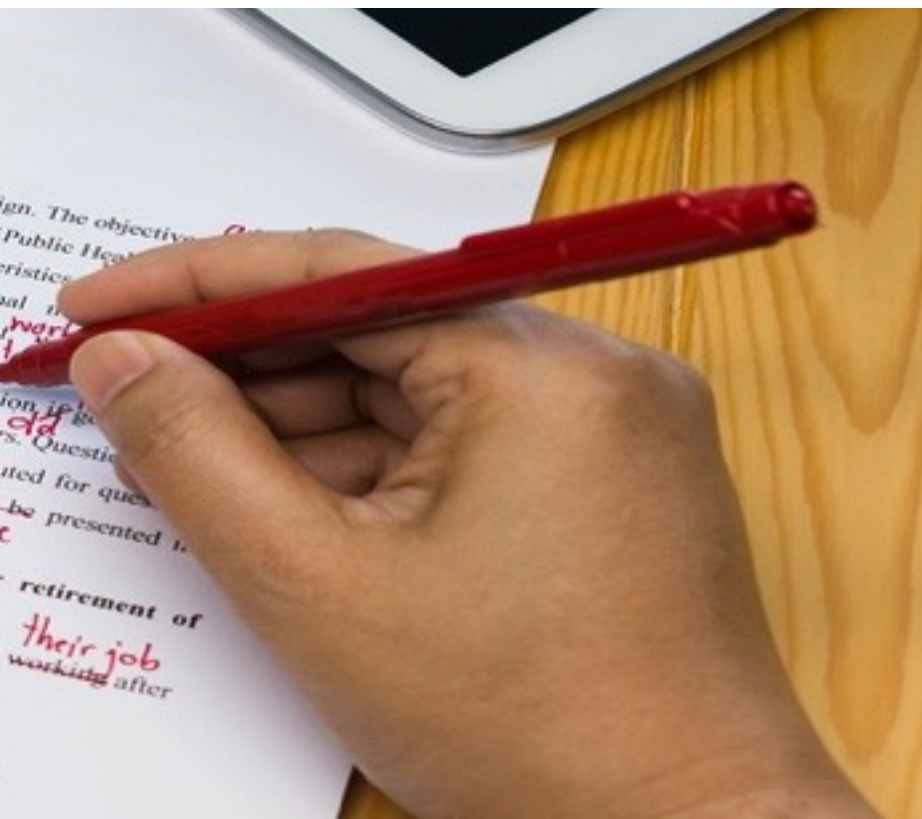




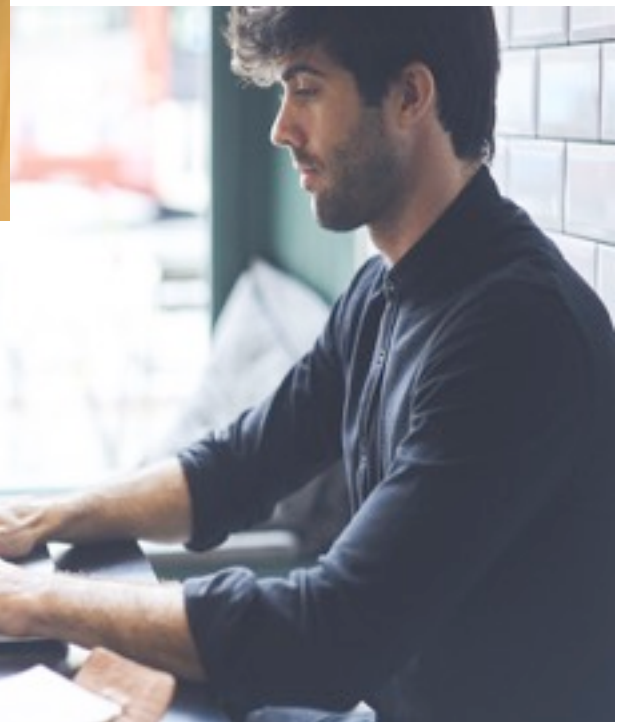
Self-Editing: **The Magical Words, “Delete and (gasp) “Add”!**

Have you taken a moment to go through your already written stuff and find some weak areas? Good! That is an amazing step. Really! Even if your writing was not 100% complete, using last month’s information to take a long, hard look is doable. And, to be honest, preferable. It’s easier to learn along the way than to go back through a “finished” manuscript and have to pull it all apart.

By:
Julie L.
York



You are aware of that sticky point that just won't budge. Or the beautiful, but lengthy, description of a real place you have to have in there because it's close to your heart.



publish, you can't get those hours back and you wonder if there even was an editor.

Chances are, there was an editor. But not all editors are created equal. A grammar Nazi typically does not make a good content editor, and putting editor in your social media profile, does not a qualified editor make.

What the author of that awful book forgot is that it ALL needs to be 100% coherent, every piece, every line, every paragraph. The parts must equal a complete whole. Fiction has to make sense when we're done reading. Every bit of it. It's why we say truth is stranger than fiction because fiction has to make sense...reality often doesn't make sense. And that's why readers—and other authors—get so mad about poorly written stories. They don't make sense, and in a world of confusion, we want something to just be plain sensible by the end.

You know your story best, and somewhere deep down, you know what needs to leave. You are aware of that sticky point that just won't budge. Or the beautiful, but lengthy, description of a real place you have to have in there because it's close to your heart. No one can go back after a few weeks or months, and re-read a maze of a story and not know there's a problem. But we're stubborn creatures. We want what we want.

Well. If we want readers, then our own egos need to back off. (Notice a trend about egos and authors?) We don't always know what's best. Know what your plot and sub plots are - by heart.

What IS the point you are trying to make? Sometimes we try to stuff too many plot points in. Stick with one main plot, and no more than two sub plots. And anything that gets in the way of those, destroy!

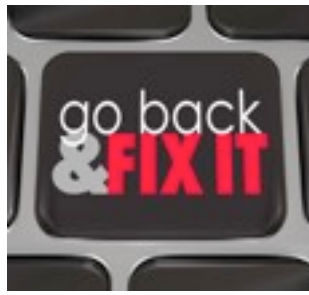
Here's a great How To. It's lengthy, but then, this is a journey, not a sprint. Write out your actions/details for each scene on 3x5 cards and put them in the order they are in the book. Notice, not chapter, scene. Can you take any cards out and still have the main storyline remain untouched? That part can get deleted. Do the same with characters. Does someone only show up in one scene? Get rid of that person or make them a generic person—no background story, no details. Same with descriptions. Cut and gut.

There is an amazing blog post I found a few years back, and it still holds true today: "The 5 Most Common Writing Mistakes that Break Reader Immersion" by Jefferson Smith. He does a bit of research into what pulls readers out of the stories. He calls them WTF moments. No, I'm not joking. He does.

I'd encourage you all to read it, he has charts and everything, but the gist is this—it's problems with the story and the storytelling caused the most WTF moments, not grammar or punctuation.

So, when you're editing, your first priority is to the story. The plot. Which includes the character arc. If you base your story on the journey of the character, their feelings, highs and lows, you'd better make sure you have no record skip moments. Seeing the forest through the trees means you will have to take a step back and forget, so you can approach it with fresh eyes. Once again, walk away.

Be brutal. If a scene, or just a lone paragraph, is not absolutely needed to move your characters and storyline forward, kill



it. This includes overly descriptive descriptions. Really, we don't need to know every ruffle's detail or just how fancy the vamp's mansion was. Too many details are as bad as not enough. OK, that's not true. Too many details are worse than not enough—readers will lose interest and page flip or close the book. Bore them, and they're done.

If you can't stand to hit that delete button, cut it out of the document and save it in its own document. It may happen that it can be used later, or possibly in a completely different story altogether. Most of our ideas are amazing, but sometimes certain pieces should not be in the same plot.

When people post about editing, they mean they are taking a machete to their innards and gutting their tales. They are being story-killing monsters, but are not doing so willy nilly. There is method in this kind of madness. Next month we'll get specific about the kind of details to keep track of to help with your editing. In the meantime, use this on your current WIP to tell if it's necessary to your story, or if you need to get your katana on.



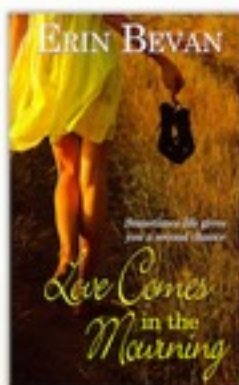
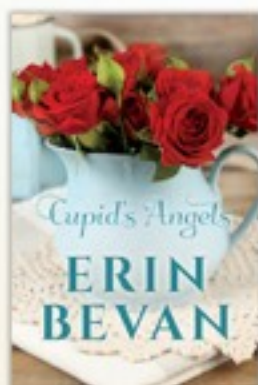
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InD' introduces Madelle Morgan



About Madelle :

At 10 I wrote fan fiction (Penny Nichols mysteries for kids) and decided to be a writer. Instead of taking an English degree, though, I studied civil engineering and worked in the Arctic for five adventure-filled years. That inspired my debut romantic suspense, *Diamond Hunter*. It stars Petra Paris, a gutsy geologist whose life is threatened by diamond smugglers. Not that I encountered murderous smugglers, but, like Petra, I did fly across the tundra in small planes.

Growing up, my sisters and I were lucky to spend summers at my grandparents' cottage in Canada's Muskoka lake district. It's where many rich and famous people own fabulous waterfront homes. Being neither rich nor famous, during my teenage years I worked as a chambermaid and clerk at Muskoka summer resorts.

Decades later, my passions for Muskoka plus Hollywood, dogs, and music came together in the upstairs/downstairs premise for the Hollywood in Muskoka romance series: beautiful people in the Hollywood film industry vacation in Muskoka and fall in love with regular Joe and Jane service providers.

Hollywood: Who agrees Chris Hemsworth is the sexiest man alive? I had his hunky Thor bod in mind when I created Halden Armstrong, the A-list Hollywood actor and bridegroom in *Caught on Camera*, a romantic comedy. Everyone in Halden's wedding party will have their own love story.

Dogs: The dog characters in my novels are all in the family. Mopette, the white fur ball on the cover of *Caught on Camera*, was inspired by my teacher sister's Bichon Frise. Titan, the German shepherd in *Seduced by the Screenwriter*, is a literary twin of my cop sister's retired K9.

Music: Every movie has a soundtrack, so why not romance novels with a Hollywood theme? For each, I create a free YouTube playlist that follows the characters' emotional journeys—the rapturous highs and heartbreaking lows. When cued by a song title inside the chapter, readers click to listen to the song that accompanies that scene. Every time readers listen to the novel's playlist, hopefully they will reconnect to the characters' emotions at that point in the romance.



<http://madellemorgan.com/>

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NATASZA WATERS

THE LEGEND OF SPIRALLING CEDARS

Episode 7

"Rachel's veins constricted into thin lines. Pure terror froze her limbs. The creature huffed. Slowly, she kneeled. Based on dominance and submission, animals showed subjugation to the strongest in a pack. She bowed her head. Garrett mimicked her movements. With a fleeting glance, she saw he still gripped the weapon in one hand.

If Mary could communicate with the creature, maybe she could too. "We need your help." Harry's humongous feet shuffled closer. He grunted, then touched the top of her head, tapping twice and grunting again.

Slowly, she raised her gaze and swallowed thickly. Its language was indistinguishable. A series of grunts and low growls. The flashlight she'd dropped, splayed light across his hairy toes and illuminated a few square feet of coarse ground. As she raised her head, she spied his thick muscled legs. Terrified, but awestruck as well, her gaze traveled up his thighs to his belly, across his torso to firm pectorals. She kept going until she met his dark brown eyes in a face caught in transition between human and ape. Leather like dark skin covered his features and a low jutting brow flexed as he looked down at her. Thick fingers similar to an ape, ended in sharp nails. He tapped on her head again.

"What's he doing?" Garrett whispered.

"You think I know?" she hissed.

She reached out, hand trembling and touched his knee. Sasquatch tilted his head to watch her movement. Gently, she tapped his knee twice. Inquisitive eyes locked onto the rifle, and his brow tightened.

"Drop the weapon," she said.

Garrett placed the rifle on the ground and then grasped her left hand.

Another grunt.

Slowly, very slowly, she stretched her right arm to retrieve the flashlight. Harry watched her movement, but didn't react.

She fingered the flashlight, rolling it into her palm and then turned the light toward the markings on the wall.

"Help."

Harry growled and thumped the slate rock with his fist, following the light as it moved over the petroglyphs.

"Help," she said again.

"In Rachel's heart, she knew the howl was a warning. They had to move quickly, but part of her wanted to run away from the park, not into it. 'Did he look like a hoax to you?'"

Harry grunted.

She nodded. "We need help."

Harry mimicked and bobbed his head, though he didn't have much of a neck.

Suddenly, Harry's gaze shot toward the entrance of the cave. A low growl rumbled in his chest. Rachel shone the flashlight toward the exit.

Harry struck his chest with a hard thump of his fist. She shone the light near him, and he slapped the wall with a hand three times larger than a man's.

"What's he doing?" she asked.

Garrett's arm swept across her back and guided her hand aiming the light toward the slate. "What is that? Looks like water...maybe a waterfall."

"A waterfall. The Emerald Falls?" She met Harry's gaze. "Emerald Falls?"

Harry only had to take one step, his stride so long. He stood beside her and tapped her head. A low musical

tone hummed from his throat. Outside the cave, a wolf howled. Harry answered. Loudly.

Garrett's arm curled her into his chest and they covered their ears.

For several beats of her heart, she didn't move. Safe in the cocoon of Garrett's arms.

He slowly released her. "He's gone."

His warm breath brushed against her ear. Directing the light ahead of them, the cave was empty.

"Let's get out of here." Garrett helped her to her feet.

In Rachel's heart, she knew the howl was a warning. They had to move quickly, but part of her wanted to run away from the park, not into it. "Did he look like a hoax to you?"

"Not a hoax."

He entwined his fingers with hers, and she followed until they reached the entrance to the cave.

"This way," he said.

Garrett cut a straight line into the brush, away from the howl. They reached the truck within fifteen minutes. Without her consent, he cut her off and stepped into the driver's seat.

"What're you doing?"

"Get in," he said harshly.

A dirty look wouldn't get her far in the dark, so she yanked the passenger's door open and hopped into the seat.

With a flick of his hand, he started the engine and backed out, making a quick two-point turn and racing down the narrow road.

"Turn right, here."

He ignored her instructions and turned left.

"You missed the turn."

He didn't look at her, his rugged, masculine profile fused with intent. "We're leaving the park."

"I'm not leaving this park," she said sternly. She reached for the wheel, and he gripped her wrist to stop her.

"Listen to me, Rachel. This is too dangerous. I'm taking you out of here, now."

"And how will you find the Falls without me?"

"Every park sign I've seen says Falls and points south."

"Wrong waterfall. That's Ruby Falls. It's easy for all the visitors to reach at the end of Beaver Trail."

"Where's Emerald Falls?"

"Watch out!"

Garrett hammered on the brakes, and she threw out a hand to stop from smashing into the dash.

Somebody didn't want them to leave, she thought, gazing at the enormous tree laying across the road.

She thrust open the door, pulling her flashlight at the same time. Running to the end of the tree, she shined the light across the jagged end. No human could break a cedar tree at the base. She stepped closer. The trunk had snapped from stress. The end splintered. Only

something as large as a mining truck could force a trunk to crack, but not like this. It had split at the base where ground met wood.

Garrett remained in the pickup, which meant he was seriously pissed. She stepped into the headlights. "Now it's Plan B and it's going to be my Plan B," she shouted over the rumble of the truck.

The door squeaked open, and he joined her. His eyes glinting with anger. "There's another way out of this park. There's always a service road. Where is it?" he said roughly.

Since she'd met him, Garrett kept his calm and had been a rock she could lean on. Suddenly, he'd turned dark and dangerous.

"I need to retrieve something from headquarters and try to reach my staff."

His fist came down on the hood of the truck. "If you don't leave now, you will probably end up dead. I don't want you dead!"

Her breath came in stuttered pants. Adrenaline spiking, she raised her gaze to the road that sloped upward and would take them out of the park. Through the very tops of the trees she saw the flash of red lights. The cavalry had arrived.

"Walk up the road, Garrett. You have no reason to stay. Find your team and go home."

His jaw set into a hard line. "I'll find my team, but you're not going anywhere without me."

Out of the darkness as if it bore wings, a man landed on the hood.

The thump startled both her and Garrett. He moved quickly and thrust her behind him. Like their summer fire alerts, extreme danger prickled the hairs on her neck.

A wrap made of animal skin, tied at his waist, covered his male parts. Native markings covered his body. He looked feral with black, silky hair and eyes dark as pitch. She knew the wild men of the Squamish Band, and he wasn't one of them. His arms bulged with taut muscle and his torso rippled in a hard plate covered with tawny skin. He looked strong, but not strong enough to push over a spiralling cedar.

"Leave the park," he growled.

Garrett raised his hand. "We're leaving."

The wild man pointed at them. "You leave. She stays."

Garrett's chin dropped like a dog about to attack.

Rachel lay her hand on his broad back, his muscles tensing beneath her palm.

"She goes with me."

"Need some help?" Booker said from behind them.

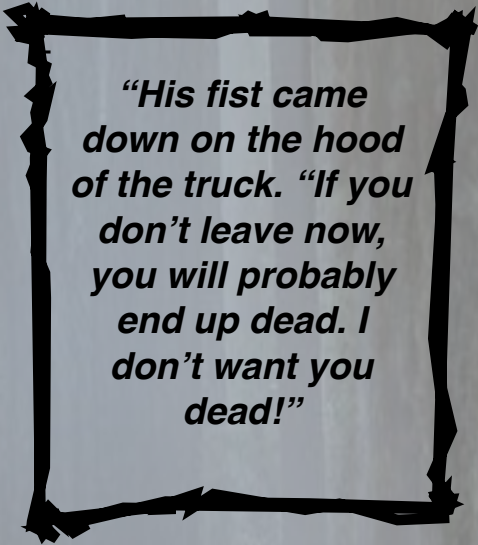
Gunfire erupted and Garrett threw her to the ground, rolling them behind the felled tree for cover. Several weapons fired at the same time, but he kept her head tucked into his chest and wouldn't let her look.

A roar of anger echoed in the forest. When all went silent she peered over the tree, her fingertips digging into the bark to settle her popping nerves. She squinted as flashlights shone in her eyes and men approached.

"Good timing, men." Garrett rose to his full, overbearing height and she scrambled to her feet. With their rifle barrels resting across their left arms, Tigg, Cork, Booker and Crack looked like they'd walked straight out of a combat picture of warriors in the Middle East.

Tigg nodded. "Managed to convince Sarah's father, who happens to be a sergeant in the RCMP, that we'll handle this. If we fail, they'll come in." He reached over his shoulder and pulled another rifle out of a shoulder belt and tossed it through the air to Garrett. "Cops gave us some extra gear and weapons."

Booker stepped forward. "Ranger Crossing, hear you



***"His fist came
down on the hood
of the truck. "If you
don't leave now,
you will probably
end up dead. I
don't want you
dead!"***

have some trouble with the wildlife. We're going to give you a hand."

"She's leaving," Garrett said tersely. "Let's walk her up to the gates."

"Wrong again, Lieutenant. I'll accept your help, but this is my park. Is that understood?"

The team, standing in a line, looked rather amused. Garrett's steely eyes came to rest on hers.

Before he replied with an argument, she had more to say. "Save the battle of the sexes for another day. I know the way to Emerald Falls. It's not marked. It's a dangerous trail. We'll need climbing gear. You don't have that. I do."

Tigg and Crack wandered closer. "Time's a wastin', Lieutenant. Whether you like it or not, I think Ranger Crossing is Onscene Commander on this mission." Booker walked past and jumped into the back of the truck, Cork close behind.

She shook her head. "We need light. There's no way to traverse the trail at night. It's far too dangerous. You

can sleep in the ranger's accommodations for a few hours, then we'll head out."

Garrett didn't look happy, but he followed her without a word. She had no doubt, he had plenty.

Back at headquarters, Rachel showed his team the men's cabin. Garrett's pulse raced the entire time. His emotions tumbling between anger, concern, and something as primitive as man itself.

"There's a bathroom, shower, and the beds are already made. Get some rest," she said.

He stalled for a moment, watching her walk toward another cabin fifty feet away.

He followed.

Reaching the tiny porch, she turned. "Why are you following me?" She removed her ballcap and released her hair from its ponytail. His body tensed in response, seeing her thick locks unravel over her shoulder and down her chest. "I need a shower and sleep. So do you."

When he didn't speak, she took a step backwards, their gazes locked in fiery combat. She reached behind her for the doorknob. When he took a step closer, her beautiful eyes softened with a smoky glow. Garrett's heart hammered in his chest. With a twist of her wrist, she opened the door and backed into the dark room. When she reached for the light switch, he intercepted her hand.

"I don't...I don't need a guard."

Without looking, he gripped the door and closed it behind them. The smell of leather and old wood assailed his senses. But neither of those scents overpowered her essence. Something about her drove him to distraction. Made him tremble with unrestraint.

"I'm not going to argue my decision." She stood her ground, her chest lifting with deep breaths.

He stared into her eyes. "There's only one decision to make, Rachel."

He shifted to within an inch of her. She waited.

Sliding his hand down her arm, he brushed the skin on her wrist, and found her elevated pulse. His had passed his running rate.

When her full lips parted, he had his answer. His hands crawled through the silky strands of her hair and his lips met her mouth with a hunger only she could satisfy, only to find her hunger turned him feral.



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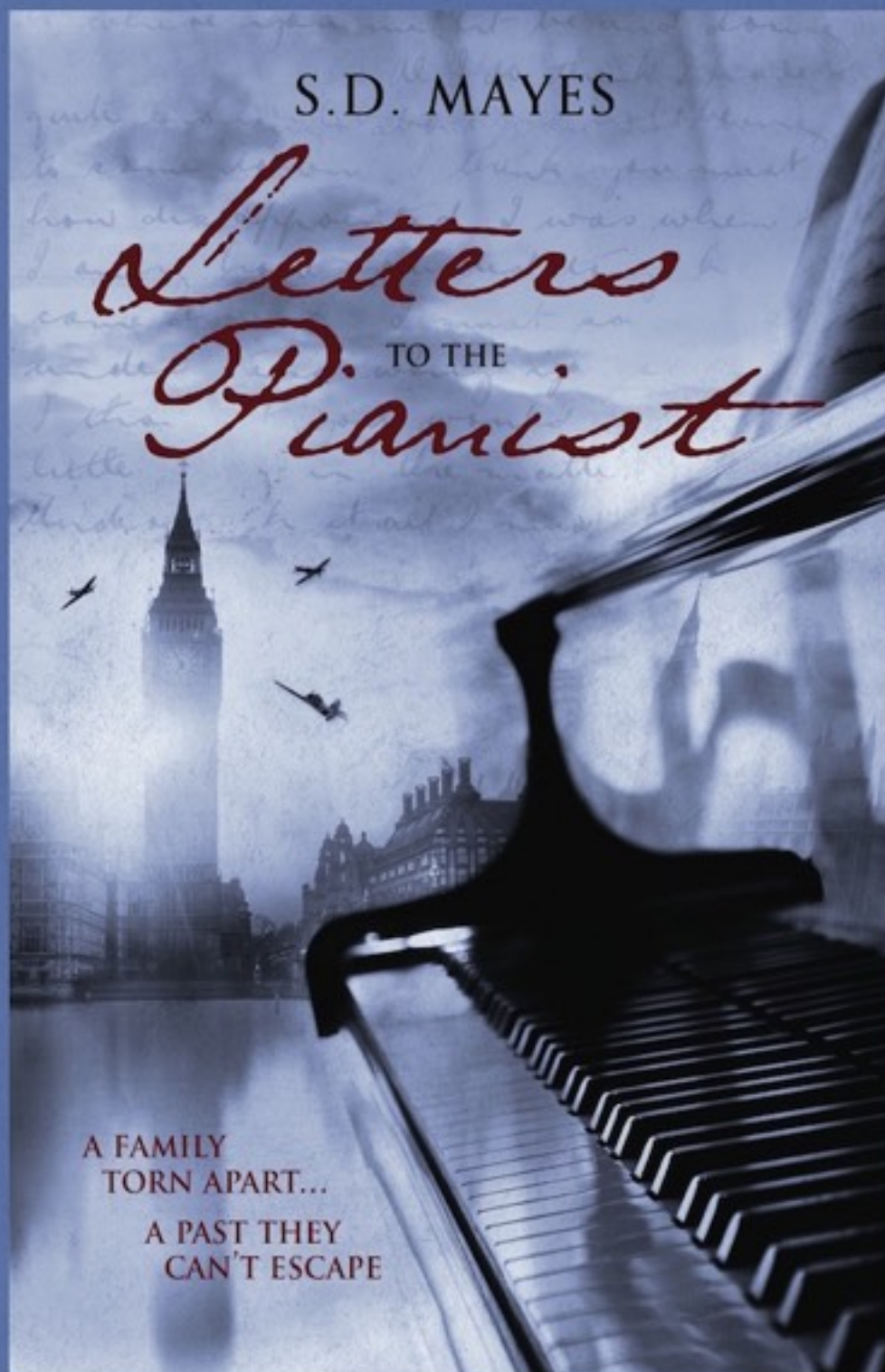
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We also rate the "Steam" or sex factor so readers can enjoy whatever level they are most comfortable with.

The criteria is as follows:

1 Steam Kettle = Nothing but kisses

2 Steam Kettles = Passionate kissing,

3 Steam Kettles = Sex but the door is closed

4 Steam Kettles = Slightly steamy sex with some description

5 Steam Kettles = Steamy sex with somewhat graphic description

Those books receiving a 4.5 or a 5 star review will also be awarded the "Crowned Heart" for excellence. This symbol will be seen beside the review in the magazine.





Sweet Vengeance (The Duke of Rutland Series Book 1)

Elizabeth St. Michael



Lady Abigail Rutland has never worked a day in her life. She has everything she could ever want, but yearns for adventure. Little does she know that her life is about to change. At a party, Abigail is kidnapped and forced onto a ship. She wakes up and discovers her hair has been shaved and she is wearing men's clothing. She must maintain the illusion that she is a cabin boy to avoid being discovered by the captain. Captain Jacob Thorne is a famous privateer who despises the nobility and is desperate to free his cousin from an English prison. However, when he discovers that his cabin boy is actually a lady, he realizes he could use her to his advantage to free his cousin. How will he trade her if he is falling in love with her?

Be prepared for adventure on the seas in this historical romance! War between England and the Colonies is escalating and major historical figures make an appearance. The details are accurate and captivating. There are times when the dialogue is a bit rough and seems very stiff. In addition, sometimes the way Abigail and Jacob interact with

each other does not seem very realistic and often blown out of proportion. However, the whole cast of characters are witty and animated. Although serious themes, such as abuse and slavery, are discussed, there is also a hint of humor to lighten the mood. This charming love story will enrapture readers who enjoy history and adventure!

Amanda Hupe



Lonestar's Lady

Deborah Camp



Augusta (Gussie) Horton has travelled to Pear Orchard, Arkansas with the hope that she can find happiness and stability as a mail-order bride, but upon her arrival, she learns that her intended has landed himself in jail. Penniless and homeless, she finds herself without resources in the small town. Soon she is introduced to social outcast Max Lonestar and it appears that they can help each other. Gussie needs a home, and to fulfill his dream of owning a ranch, Lonestar needs a bride. Gussie and Lonestar reach for the chance of happiness in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges that threaten to end their marriage before it even has a chance to begin.

"Lonestar's Lady" is a nice western romance with a plucky heroine and mysterious and misunderstood hero. In this regard, there is nothing remarkable or original in the plot. Much of the conflict between Gussie and Lonestar result from misunderstandings that are contrived to further the plot. As such, there is less emotional investment in the fate of the characters, and the story is somewhat formulaic. The villain of the piece is rather one-dimensional and his motivation obvious. What makes "Lonestar's Lady" a pleasure to read is Ms. Camp's descriptive and lively prose. Well-written dialogue adds color and depth to otherwise flat main characters. In this regard, "Lonestar's Lady" qualifies as some nice light reading with a cup of tea on a lazy Sunday afternoon.

Gwenellen Tabet

Better Than Bryon

Judy Carpenter



REGENCY: At 27 years of age, Hermione has finally obtained permission from her father to enter London's society to find a husband. At the very first ball of her coming-out season a scandal forces her to marry a man she views as a boor. Her opinion is only further confirmed when he dumps her at his home and leaves! Left to her own devices, Hermione makes dear friends with the hired staff and upon her husband's return obtains an annulment. She rapidly flourishes without the weight of a neglectful husband, but fate steps in at the last moment to show her exactly what she is missing.

HISTORICAL

This touching story shows the ability of love to blossom with patience and kindness and proves that a friend's advice truly is worth taking. Unfortunately, the majority of the characters are so remarkably two-dimensional the reader can see straight through them. With nothing compelling to hold the audience's attention it is difficult to follow Hermione's journey. There are grammatical mistakes that cannot be overlooked, such as spacing concerns where quotation marks are used. Sadly, there is no climax, not even a small bump of one. There is a solid beginning and ending but the middle simply seems to float away. However, kudos must be given to the following of "old spinsters" instead of young hot-to-trot fillies.

Yannie Sorensen



Daring Widow: Those Notorious Americans, Book 2

Cerise DeLand



Marianne Roland has survived an abusive husband, a civil war and the horrors found nursing in a field hospital. When she travels to London with her extended family, she is excited by the possibilities that Europe offers. Andre Claude Marceau, the Duc de Remy and Prince d'Aumale finds

himself enchanted by the young widow and ready to show her the emotional and artistic potential hidden in her heart.

Ms. DeLand has envisioned a historical romance that centers on the heroine coming into her own with the support and love of the hero. As such, it is a refreshing departure from some of the tired tropes in the genre. Ms. DeLand's writing style is very readable and flows well. However, the story arc revolves around easily preventable miscommunications and misperceptions between Marianne and Andre that are not in keeping with their characters and relationship to that point. There are also problems with editing: wastebasket is "waist basket". There are obvious errors with the French language, and mistakes such as "pardon e moi" instead of "pardonnez moi" and "moi ouci" instead of "moi aussi" bring the reader out of the story. Although the story line of "Daring Widow" is interesting, the reader cannot help but feel that Marianne's back-story would have made a far more compelling novel. "Daring Widow" does a great job of expanding the boundaries of historical romance heroines in new directions.

Gwenellen Tarbet

Stars in Their Eyes

Pema Donyo



Owen Matthews is in Paris, trying to make the right connections in the literary scene and get his writing noticed. It has been six years since he left Los Angeles and the love of his life to pursue success. When he takes on the task of writing a screenplay for

his friend, he hopes that this might just be his big break. Iris Wong is determined to break through the racism and follow her dream of becoming a famous actress. When she is offered the leading role in a silent film, she jumps at the chance and is determined to do it well. However, she is shocked when she comes face to face with someone she once loved — and he is working on the film too. Will their love rekindle as they chase their dreams?

This is a short, sweet read with good descriptions of 1920's Paris. The plot is two lovers who are following their dreams and come together when they are working on the same project. It moves at a brisk pace due to the short length of the book but it is still a very enjoyable read with a beautiful setting. Readers will be able to get through this book in one sitting. "Stars in Their Eyes" is a book that will leave readers feeling warm all over, and is the perfect mix of beauty and passion. Pema Donyo has written a well-researched and descriptive historical romance.

Lynn-Alexandria McKendrick



Light of My Heart (Duke of Rutland #2)

Elizabeth St. Michel



American Rachel Thorne has traveled to England to visit family — and to search for a suitable husband. Her sister-in-law, Abby, has arranged for Rachel's introduction to society. When she arrives, she is introduced to Lord Anthony, Abby's brother, who is to accompany her to society balls and dinners. When their first outing ends in the bushes after an "accident", Lord Anthony and Rachel are suspicious of the circumstances. A dead body and more "accidents" follow them. There is also the rising attraction between them — as scientists, they love to involve themselves in research, which brings them so much closer together. They must discover who is trying to murder whom.

"Light of My Heart" is set in 1779, and is packed full of mystery, romance, and action! The story proceeds quickly, with the author deftly intertwining science and history in the midst of leaving clues as to the identity of the murderer and his motive. Mysterious characters lurk about in the background, watching and waiting, and questions keep building until the mystery is

finally revealed. The reader will find the answers quite surprising!

Jodi Martines



The Wicked Rebel (Blackhaven Brides #3)

Mary Lancaster



Lady Arabella Niven is firmly on the shelf. Having been sickly her whole life, she has little chance of living long, let alone happily. However, she will not be bartered away to a man her father's age for that man's political gain. Punished for refusing the man's proposal, she and her two aunts land in Blackhaven, a place of waters like Bath. The notorious Captain Alban has pulled his ship in for repairs, and nothing prepares the hardened sailor and the cough-racked old maid for the spark that will fly when they meet. He can no longer hide from his past, and doubts he can make her his future.

Set during the time of Wellington and privateers, this charmingly unusual tale of love when it is not thought possible is a breath of fresh air. The main characters are not in line for Dukedoms or Earldoms, though secondary characters are. Bella and Alban are strong and their own people, though typical for the times. Their attraction is fast, though it feels

natural, a progression full of conversation and understanding, and intrigue. There are random antiquated words thrown in for no apparent reason. He goes against his sailor's nature to show her respect throughout, so the last few chapters having explicit sex scenes takes away from their journey, and his growth. The setting and characters are sure to be ones any reader will enjoy visiting often, and as this is a third book, new readers and those already in love with this town will find plenty of heartwarming tales and full personalities to spend an afternoon with.

Julie York



Love's Courage (The Brentwood Saga #3)

Elizabeth Meyette



Jenny Sutton leaves Virginia for New York without telling her love, Andrew Wentworth, after she receives word that her father has been gravely wounded. Even though there is a high risk of danger, she must go to him. When she arrives, her father passes away but she also discovers that he was in league with a spy network for the Patriots. She decides to continue her father's work and help the cause. Back in Virginia, Andrew Wentworth is

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too late to stop Jenny but is determined to find her. The only way he can safely get to her is by being a messenger for the Patriot cause. They find each other, but there is suspicion surrounding Jenny and her family. Can Jenny and Andrew find a way to be together without being discovered as spies?

This historical romance set during the American Revolution is absolutely breathtaking! The author whisks readers away to a time of courage, danger, and adventure. The history behind the story is on-point. It is wonderful to see actual characters from history make an appearance, like Ben Tallmadge, who was a part of the Culper Ring, one of George Washington's most successful spy rings. Jenny and Andrew will do anything for love, but as they fall into the spy rings, they discover how important they are to their country as well. All the characters are well developed — multi-faceted and compelling. Their dedication to their country and to each other makes this novel stand out. No reader, especially American Revolution buffs, will be able to put this book down!

Amanda Hupe



The Secrets of a Viscount (The Widows of the Aristocracy Book 3)

Linda Rae Sande



Godfrey, Viscount Thorncastle, is at his wit's end. He has sent a post to the widowed Lady Elise Lancaster asking her to marry him, but he has not heard a word from her in reply. When she visits him he attempts to discuss it, but the torch he has carried for more than two decades causes him to botch things up terribly. Elise is incensed and leaves, slamming the door behind her without giving him an answer to his proposal. Meanwhile, Adam Comber, Viscount Breckenridge has a bet on the books at White's that he will marry before his next birthday. While looking out the window he spies a beautiful girl who sparks his interest. He asks her to marry him and she agrees. The young girl thinks it is a lark, but Adam is serious.

"The Secrets of a Viscount" is a lively story of unlikely lovers falling in love and the journey they travel to get there. The descriptions of the characters are divine; it is easy to imagine the appearance of them all. It is difficult to keep track of the characters and their relationships to one another, however, which

takes away from the story. It is hardly believable that a man could ask a girl on the street to marry him and have the relationship come to full fruition, but it makes for a great tale! The secrets revealed make this a twisted story indeed. A true page-turner, "The Secrets of a Viscount" is very difficult to put down.

Belinda Wilson



The Bride Price

Quenby Olson



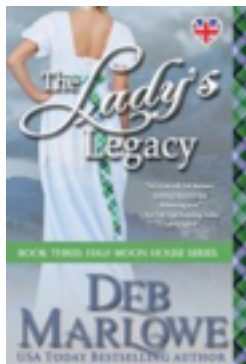
During her first London season, Emily is unwillingly caught up in the arms of Lord Winthrop, Viscount Marbley. Although she is fighting to get away from him and his kisses, they are seen and a gossip spreads the news throughout the ball. Her reputation in ruins, Emily's father sends her away from London, telling her a husband is waiting for her at home and she will be married shortly. Handsome William Hazlitt has always loved Emily and only hopes that she will learn to love him, too. Only a farmer, he has little to offer the eldest daughter of Sir Richard Collicott. Emily must learn the ways of a farmer's wife, a life without servants. Unbeknownst to Emily and William, Viscount Marbley has acquired their

HISTORICAL

farmland and now he is more than ready to pursue Emily relentlessly.

"The Bride Price" is rare in that it is a "riches to rags" story, but with a happily ever after. Emily's father, Sir Richard Collicott, pushes the story forward in a major way, but one only gets to know him on the very surface. Viscount Marbley lacks depth for such a key player. At times, the characters seem two-dimensional, their emotions suppressed. However, Emily and William are vibrant and strong, able to stand up to anything thrown at them. A real page-turner, this regency is something different for fans of the genre.

Belinda Wilson



The Lady's Legacy

Deb Marlowe



Known as 'Flightly' for her quick wit and nimble feet, Francis Headley may have just the tools needed to reunite the infamous Hestia Wrist with her long-lost son. But "lost" is just what Rhys Caradec wishes to be. Having no interest in his parents' feud, the painter wanders where inspiration draws him. When Flightly finally finds him, their attraction is immediate and undeniable. But will she be able to

bring him around, or will their differences be too great? With their convoluted circumstances and danger lurking around every corner, how could there ever be room for love?

A delightful regency romance with a unique premise, "The Lady's Legacy" is the third installment in Marlowe's Half Moon House series. The beginning drags as the reader is brought up to speed from the previous novels, but despite having many references to events in the previous books, it is not necessary to have read them to enjoy this story. Francis and Rhys are far different from the ton couples typically found in historical romance. Francis is more of a street rat than a lady, with a refreshingly optimistic view on life, while Rhys is happiest following his muse. Together, their chemistry is tangible with a natural progression to love. Their differences, however, lead to many frustrating scenes particularly when Rhys' prejudice leads to misconceptions. Filled with both intrigue and romance, "The Lady's Legacy" is a charming read with a strong female lead and an epilogue that will have the reader begging for more!

Arec Rain



Anne and Charles: Passion and Politics in Late Medieval France: The Story of Anne of Brittany's Marriage to Charles VIII

Rozsa Gaston



Anne is only eleven years old when she inherits the Duchy of Brittany. Born to rule, Anne has no intention of marrying anyone less than a ruler himself. However, Brittany is threatened by war on all sides and in 1488, more than one suitor would claim the lovely Anne and all her fertile lands for themselves, including Charles VIII of France. Charles offers her one last chance to preserve Brittany's independence. - marriage to him. Determined to be a good wife and Queen, Anne is everything Charles needs. Yet despite the love they share, Charles is haunted by bad habits he cannot shake, and foolish dreams of conquest. As Anne and Charles' shared passion leads to pregnancies one after another that end in disaster, they begin to wonder if fate is really so cruel and if their dream of children will never be fulfilled.

A romance for the ages, Ms. Gaston masterfully conveys the passion, heartbreak, and determination of this royal couple. "Anne and Charles" gives a fictional perspective of the only

Queen of France to be crowned twice. In this first book, readers are introduced to a young Duchess with an older and wiser soul. While both Anne and Charles have their flaws, Ms. Gaston masterfully conveys the passion, heartbreak, and determination of this royal couple. With excellent flow, organization, and character development, the only detraction is how much of the fighting and political maneuvering happens off screen. Still, lovers of strong women, kings and queens, historical events, and sensual encounters will find themselves eagerly awaiting the next installment in this series.

Sarah E Bradley



Misfortune of Vision (Druid's Brooch #4)

Christy Nicholas



Fae magic runs heavily in the hills of Ireland, and although Christianity has claimed the land for its own, in 12th century Ireland, the people still respect the old ways. Which is why when Orlagh, the king's seer, foresees war coming her way and is warned to find an heir to the family heirloom that fuels her gift, she determines to warn her king and take on her own quest to find a worthy heir for her fae brooch.

Declan is plagued with bad luck and a lack of confidence. When he stumbles across an Ostmen town and an apprenticeship with the local Blacksmith, he thinks he might have a chance to turn things around. Unfortunately, becoming worthy of success is difficult with war stirring and the fae waiting in the wings.

Told from the alternating perspectives of both Orlagh and Declan, "Misfortune of Vision" is tale steeped in the fantasy of ancient Ireland and is intriguing from beginning to end. The fourth book in the "Druid's Brooch" series, it can be read as a stand-alone tale. The plot is well done, weaving the two tales together without confusing them, and developing the characters, their flaws, and their emotions in a way that makes them feel alive. Still, the romance felt off somehow, despite the sensual lilt to it. And some of the plot and conflict points are predictable. Still, the story has many good qualities, and lovers of fantasy and historical tales combined will find this worth a read.

Sarah E Bradley



A Secret Scottish Christmas

Regan Walker



REGENCY: Nash and Robbie Powell are some of the best agents the crown has. Unfortunately, their latest assignment has forced them to utilize a family trip to Scotland for Christmastide, to hunt for a local lord who has spoken out for reform and is on the run. Capturing him is their duty, but the assignment doesn't feel right to Nash. The introduction of Aileen Stephen sends both men scrambling for her affections, but the young lady's stance on their assignment puts them at odds. Aileen senses danger in the future, but which twin does it follow? And when she uncovers the truth, will the secrets the twins keep result in not only danger but broken hearts alone?

An historical romance set in the time of the Peterloo Massacre and Lord Sidmouth, "A Secret Scottish Christmas" is the fourth book in the "Agents of the Crown" series. Full of historical details and based on real events, the story has a great deal to offer. However, as a middle of the series book, it should be read in order to get the most out of the characters, as little time is given to develop the characters in this tale. The romance while steady was light

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Kathryn Le Veque

and shallow, the action quick, the conflict mostly internal, and the overall plot a bit predictable. Still, the story flows well making this a fun Christmas story fans of historical romance and intrigue can enjoy.

Sarah E Bradley



Satyr's Son (Roxton Family Saga #5)

Lucinda Brant



Lord Henri-Antoine is the heir to a vast fortune, has a loving family, and is generally free from responsibility. Unfortunately, he is also plagued by seizures that leave him exhausted and his family fit to be tied. Lisa Crisp is an orphan living on the charity of cousins who see her only as a burden. Determined to be useful, she assists her cousin's husband in his clinic as a doctor's assistant and letter writer for the poor. After a chance meeting brings Henri-Antoine and Lisa together, the clash between attraction and propriety sends them both reeling. Yet, when their best friend's wedding brings them together once again, their mutual attraction blossoms, but with the difference in their status and a secret Lisa hides between them, can they ever become more than a

scandalous pair or will love find a way?

A romantic addition to the "Roxton Family Saga" this fifth story can be read as a stand-alone but is better read in order to avoid spoilers. "Satyr's Son" is not the typical story for this genre as his illness and her secret provide some twists and add interest. Further, the characters have depth, built up with witty banter and complex emotions, the plot is smoothly developed, and somehow the reader becomes engrossed from the beginning and can't stop until the last page leaves them scrambling for more. There are a few drawbacks, the simplistic conflict, for example, but overall, this is one story that will leave the reader begging for more!

Sarah E Bradley



The Governess Next Door (The Brontë Brothers #1)

Nina Mason



Raphael Brontë fled his proper English home in search of the freedom to become an important painter. Years later, the French Countess he sold his body to in return for patronage is dead, and with her his chance for love, as her will states that if he marries he must forfeit her fortune and

thus the freedom to paint. Prudence Middleton hates being a governess to spoiled children with lustful fathers. A chance meeting with Raphael sparks a part of her she thought had long died. However, her willful charge has set her sights on Raphael and his fortune, and even while Prudence falls for the painter, she remains ignorant of his secret. Forced to choose between his pride and his passion, Raphael risks losing everything, for Prudence cannot abandon her family and if Raphael makes her decide, more than one heart will break.

An historical romance set in the time of the Brontë sisters and their famous stories, "The Governess Next Door" is a play on those classics with more steam and lust wrapped up in poetic and artistic trimmings than a regency ball. The characters have depth and jump off the page with emotion. However, Raphael is hard to like at times, and some of the side character's attitudes and actions don't really make sense. Further, the connections to "Jane Eyre" are so blatant as to make the story predictable and unoriginal in parts. Still, lovers of the classics will find the passion of this tale unforgettable.

Sarah E Bradley



Comes the Winter

Samantha St. Claire

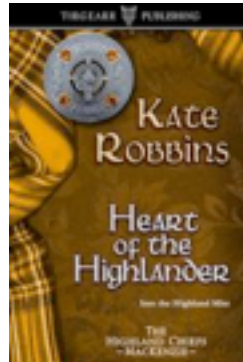


Alena Sommer is not one to allow trouble to stop her from living life. When the child she'd been governess to dies in an accident, she becomes a mail order bride, and sets off to the Idaho Territory to begin again. Unfortunately, tragedy strikes again, and the man she arranged to marry dies before she arrives, stranding her with financial troubles, in a mining town with locals who are steadily leaving the area for better prospects. With a few new friends at her side, Alena determines to find a way to provide for herself. Yet, the Sawtooth Mountains are unkind to those who wish to conquer them, and winters in the area have ruined more than one family. With danger threatening, and the man she relies on most urging her to move on, can she find a reason to stay or will facing winter be more than her heart can bear?

An historical pioneer story and mail order bride tale meshed together, "Comes the Winter" is the third book in the "Sawtooth Range" series. A stand-alone book, this story involves two stubborn people healing from old hurts and finding a reason to live again. While this plot is sweet, it felt

shallow, and lacked the depth or twists to make it engrossing or memorable. Still, the flow is smooth and the characters diverse. Also, the failing mining town provides an interesting setting. Overall, this is a light historical tale with a slow building romance that readers might enjoy on a lazy afternoon.

Sarah E Bradley



Heart of the Highlander

Kate Robbins



In 1435 Scotland, Muren Grey is trying to escape the situation her brother placed her in. Her brother betroths her to another when, in actuality, she is already betrothed. Without a thought for Muren's happiness, her brother promises her to one of the king's men to find favor with the King. Upset with the decision, Muren decides to take matters into her own hands. Trying to find her independence, she hones her skill as a seeker in order to be with the person she loves the most. To do so, she must find a way to dissolve the unwanted betrothal. Rorie MacKenzie, Muren's actual betrothed and someone she loves, is also displeased with the King's decision. Deciding to make one of his own, he will take Muren as his wife no matter the costs. Can

Rorie sacrifice everything he holds dear for Muren?

The story is so engaging and well-written that readers will feel as if they are in it. The book gives quite a good description of clan life and battles and how King James functioned without any remorse. Of course, these story elements are the only real things the reader will find that places them in Scotland. Muren, the beautiful feisty seer heroine, at first endears herself to readers, but her reluctance to be Rorie's wife and see outside herself will annoy readers, making it hard to connect with her. Rorie, the brave courageous handsome highlander, is a magnificent hero that readers will instantly fall for. Even when Muren constantly rejects Rorie, the reader will be on his side, always hoping that he can win over Muren.

Roslynn Ernst



The Viscount and the Vicar's Daughter

Mimi Matthews



Tristan Sinclair, Viscount St. Ashton, is trying to escape the melancholy of his life – as well as the scheming, matrimonial-minded Felicity Brightwell. His world is about to be turned upside-down, though, when a

chance encounter with Mrs. Brightwell's new companion makes Tristan do the impossible: fall in love at first sight.

Valentine March is very much out of place as companion/maid to Mrs. Brightwell. Attending the notorious Christmas party only makes things worse, but when she falls for London's most notorious – and handsome – rake after an earth-shattering kiss, her life gets even more complicated. With their reputations on the line, St. Ashton promises to marry her, but can love overcome revelations and secrets from the past?

"The Viscount and the Vicar's Daughter" is a refreshingly lovely tale about love, redemption, and finding your way home. St. Ashton is a world-weary, one-time rake on the point of losing his fortune. Valentine is an orphan with a secret and a plan to become a missionary in the Indies. Their relationship is built on love-at-first sight, but Ms. Matthews doesn't leave it there, allowing their various circumstances to shape and mold her main characters. Both are sturdy characters with their own quirks, and if there's a drawback, it's that there isn't enough time in this short book to do justice to the various crises the characters face and overcome. That said, Ms.

Matthew's book hits all the right notes and is a refreshingly bright story that reminds the reader that personal change is possible – as is true love at first sight.

Janice Martin



My Reckless Love (Highland Loves, Book 1)

Melissa Limoges



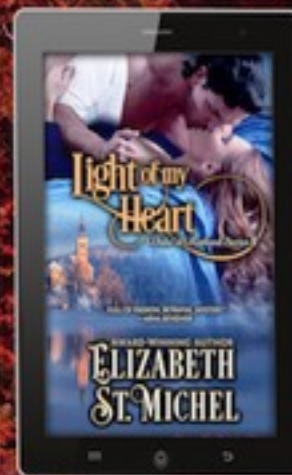
Lady Arabella de Percy must flee her home when her brother is killed, and the holding is taken over by a ruthless and ambitious knight. Her escape attempt leads her right into the arms of Scottish Laird, Calum MacGregor, sent by her uncle to rescue Arabella. Calum is only looking to repay a debt of honor, not gain a new bride, but he's captivated by

Arabella at first glance. Arabella should be afraid of the scarred, daunting highlander—instead she's drawn to him. In the process of saving Arabella, Calum might end up losing his own carefully guarded heart.

"My Reckless Love" is the kind of book that hopeless romantics with a yen for Highland romance will love. Arabella and Calum have strong and appealing chemistry together--both characters that readers will love. Arabella is a woman of her time in the best way, strong and intelligent, not merely a victim of circumstances, but a character with agency and resourcefulness. Calum is absolutely dreamy, a rugged, attractive warrior with a soft heart, loyalty and a capacity for deep and sacrificial love for others, although he thinks his scars are repulsive to women. Together, they are magic. Along with excellent lead characters, a host of fully developed secondary characters flesh out the novel. The villain is hatefully evil, yet no cardboard cutout. Descriptions of life in the 13th Century Scottish Highlands, exciting adventure, and fiery love scenes make "My Reckless Love" a highly recommended historical romance read!

Danielle Hill

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Love in Hiding (Love Beyond Danger #1)

Diane Holiday



Ballet dancer Sarah Cooper is on the run from an insane stalker. She has had to leave everything she holds dear to her heart: her career, her apartment, and her family. Love is the last thing on her mind as she hides from her stalker, posing as a ranch hand at a horse ranch. Former Navy SEAL Bruce Murphy is a rough, standoffish and silent type of man. A widower, he has sworn never to fall in love again; however, he cannot deny the chemistry that flows between him and Sarah every time they are near one another. Bruce notices Sarah is scared and offers to help her but he can only do so if she opens up to him completely about what is happening. Will Sarah be able to risk letting someone into her life who could potentially endanger her? Is the reward worth the risk?

This is a fast-moving, exciting novel. The main characters are the perfect combination of charming and complex. In addition, the secondary characters are meticulously intertwined within the story, so much so that they actually do not feel as though they are secondary. This contemporary romance delivers electrifying heat between

characters with a sprinkle of humor. The suspense is as alluring as the romance, which should keep the pages turning from the beginning until the end. Readers who love romance, suspense, intrigue, and complex characters should be more than pleased reading "Love in Hiding."

Tina Donovan



One Unforgettable Friday (English Village Series Book 3)

Robena Grant

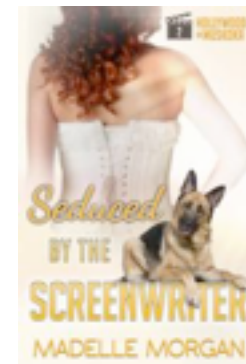


Lizzie York has had a rough few years after being permanently injured in a car accident and becoming fully dependent on her elder brother. She wishes to regain some of her independence and signs a teaching contract at a new school in town, and moves into an on-campus cottage. Suddenly, her brother's old schoolmate, Peter Barrington, shows up in town and they feel an instant connection. Lizzie has not dated since before her accident, and wonders if Peter can handle a woman in a wheelchair. When she discovers that Peter is also living on campus and interested in her romantically, life gets interesting...until a mysterious person attempts to sabotage her,

hoping to ruin all of Lizzie's plans for a new life and relationship.

This story is unique, as it focuses on a woman with a disability. Lizzie is damaged emotionally and struggles physically, making her a heroine a reader can really root for. On the hunt for a better life, Lizzie is determined to gain independence, perhaps to a fault. Peter is a very likable character with his own damage, making him also very relatable. In her pursuit of independence, Lizzie seems to be overly stubborn at times, making decisions that seem irrational or unnecessary, hurting others, and putting herself in danger. At times, the story moves slowly, and the climax with the antagonist felt easily avoidable with better communication. This story has lots of heart and one can only hope for Lizzie and Peter to find a happy ending!

Dahlia Gosney



Seduced by the Screenwriter (Hollywood in Muskoka, Book 2)

Madelle Morgan

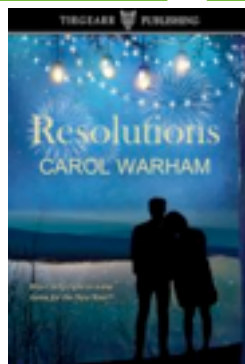


Catrina Turner has left the Ontario Police Force's Marine Division seeking the solitude and quiet life offered by isolated Lake Muskoka. Though she barely admits it to herself, she is running

from the past. Unfortunately, she can't quite outrun the nightmares that haunt her sleep. Chett de Groot, a Hollywood screenwriter whose career has taken a nosedive, holes up in an actress friend's holiday house on the lake. He has to write a blockbuster screenplay to save his career. Neither Cat nor Chett has any interest in a relationship—especially since Cat comes as a package deal with a huge German shepherd and Chett is afraid of dogs. Attraction wins out, but will Cat's inner traumas (and her big-ass dog) and Chett's drive to get back on top in Hollywood keep them from going beyond a quick affair?

"Seduced by the Screenwriter" gives the reader a real taste of the frosty environs of wintertime Ontario with its snow, frozen lake and frigid weather. Cat, a native, takes it in stride, but Chett, from Hollywood, really feels the chill. Cat and Chett's characters are well developed, drawing the reader into their individual plights, while their campy banter keeps the story light and downright fun. Cat and Chett move a little too quickly from antagonism to play-pals and lovers. More tension would have given the plot a more natural feel, especially given each character's initial reticence and deep-seated difficulties. That said, Ms. Morgan keeps the plot moving with humorous situations and dialogue interspersed with exciting and poignant drama. A good read for a snowy afternoon.

Marc Joseph



Resolutions

Carol Warham



Carly Mitchell returns home to her small town on the Yorkshire moors just in time for the New Year. She has several apologies to make—she fled abruptly, leaving her bridegroom and friends wondering what the hell was going on. What starts as a short visit soon changes, however, as Carly agrees to stay a little longer. She certainly did not intend to fall in love with the very handsome and mysterious Dr. Ben Thornton. Tensions reach breaking point and Carly is left wondering if she should just leave once more and never return. However, she is determined not to be that woman again. What will her decision be?

Readers will not be able to put this book down from the second they start. There are many dynamic characters, some good and some bad. The plot is a page-turner and readers will love every moment of Carly's journey. Ben is a sexy-as-sin doctor who no one knows much about, however when he and Carly get together, the fireworks begin. The love scenes are not only sexy, but they are beautifully descriptive. Carol Warham obviously knows Yorkshire well and her descriptions of the area will have readers feeling that they are



really there with Carly and Ben. This book paves the way for Carol Warham and readers will be keen to read more of her work.

Lynn-Alexandria McKendrick



One Last Objection: A Small-Town Romance

(Oak Grove series Book 4)

Nancy Stopper



When Michael Bennett is in his hometown for a visit, he pays a visit to friend-with-benefits Maggie James for a night of hot and steamy lovemaking. When Maggie realizes she is pregnant, she's determined to care for the baby herself. Her parents taught her that she could not depend on anyone, so she will not. Michael is committed to doing right by Maggie, if she will let him. Maggie does her best to keep Michael at arm's lengths and repeatedly turns down Michael's proposals, but when her health takes a turn, she realizes she can't do it alone and needs help. Can Michael prove to her that he is in it for better or for worse?

The prologue is a hot and sexy love scene and chapter one opens with pregnancy tests. Both scenes are well written, with pacing that draws the reader in immediately. Unfortunately, the pace slows as Michael's family enters the story

in a whirlwind of names, relations and hints of backstory. Maggie, stubborn and independent, is highly likeable. Michael, however, is less likeable. His constant hovering and worrying are irritating. He spends so much of his time asking "What about the baby?" and trying to figure out how to get Maggie to agree to marry him that it is hard to see the emotional spark between the two. This is the fourth book in a series involving this family and while it stands alone, it would be helpful to read the series to understand what is happening with all the characters.

Elissa Blabac



Dreams for Tomorrow (A Serenity Bay novella)

Danni Rose



Amber Fuller has earned her accounting degree and is working towards her dream of a CPA and a job in New York City. A summer job at a popular restaurant in her Minnesota hometown turns two-fold, once owner Mason Reed learns of her qualifications. Reeling from the fear that his trust fund will be cut off by daddy dearest, he desperately needs help with the business and makes Amber an offer she cannot refuse.

Will their attraction bring about goal changes?

Once Amber accepts the accounting challenge, she finds herself spending much more time with Mason. Focused on getting his books and finances in order, the extra time spent with the popular chef and restaurateur is sparking a flame neither can deny. Soon Amber will be leaving town for the Big Apple. Mason has been there, done that and likes the small-town life. Each character has family pressure behind their career choices, and life gets complicated the more time they spend together. After convincing Mason's father that his business is profitable, Amber must make one of the biggest decisions of her life; "should I stay or should I go"

Ms. Rose has served up (pun intended) a delightful little read, with an older hero and a geeky heroine, each searching for happiness and acceptance with their respective families. One small detail made the story seem a bit unbelievable: Reservations at Mason's restaurant are booked up 18 months in advance, yet his bed and breakfast is in financial straits. One would think, given his reputation that 'word of mouth' would have steered customers to the B&B. Overall, readers will love how these two unlikely characters connect and begin their path to finding happiness, and how the heart prevails. "Dreams for Tomorrow" is the perfect recipe for lovers of a good HEA romance.

Layne Lancaster

Captured Memories

(Cupid's Café - book 3)

Katherine McIntyre

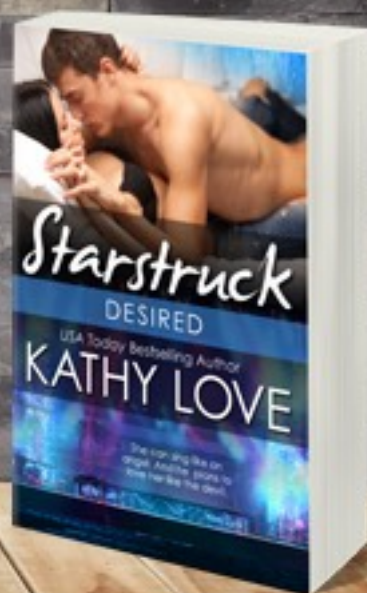


Liv Morozov is broken inside. After being physically attacked and dropping out of college, she finds dating complicated and intimacy nearly impossible. When an invitation to Cupid's Café arrives, she is very apprehensive until she sees her brother's long-lost best friend Zane Parata. Her first and only love, Zane is also awaiting a date after receiving a mysterious invite to the café. An ex-con who battles an alcohol addiction, Zane feels as if he does not deserve love. Sparks fly as these two broken souls find one another again, battling old demons together, one day at a time, including the disapproval of loved ones.

WOW! This book is a refreshing spin on romance! Liv and Zane are anything but perfect, but they are perfect for one another and watching them learn to love and trust again while battling real-life hardships is inspiring. Somehow, Katherine McIntyre has taken two very rough characters and turned them into extremely likable personalities that will have the reader begging them to succeed and find happiness. True, raw emotion drips from the pages, as do vivid details of their world. One feels absolutely invested in the story and characters, turning page after page! More detail on who sent the Cupid's Café invitations would have been a nice detail to tie up loose ends. This book portrays unconditional love at its best and is a fine example of well-deserved redemption. Two broken souls

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Contemporary

are finally repaired, thanks to Cupid's Café!

Dahlia Gosney



She Walks in Moonlight

Jennifer Silverwood



WOMEN'S FICTION: Can Danica put the demons from her past aside and step up to the challenge of being a responsible adult and helping with Peter's two kids?

Once Danica arrives back in the USA to take care of her ailing brother and assist with the duties of raising his two young children, it's day to day if she can stand up to the challenge. The small town she left has painful memories. Her high school classmates labeled her loosey-goosey — not entirely true, but those wounds have never healed. She is Aunt Dani to two small children who look up to her and has a hell of a job to do for her brother Peter, so she licks her wounds and perseveres.

Ms. Silverwood has done a phenomenal job with character development. "She Walks in Moonlight" will suck the reader in from the very beginning, and follow Danica on her path to redemption. Small town America is not the most forgiving, but when push comes to shove, only the strong survive.

Lovers of second chances at love will find this story heart-warming. A small niggling detail is the slow pacing at the beginning of the book, which picks up once Danica comes back to the USA to take care of her ailing brother, Peter. The banter between Danica and 'Adam King' (as Danica affectionately refers to him) is endearing and Ms. Silverwood has done a great job at connecting the dots, giving readers a good look at what happens when you go with your heart instead of your head.

Layne Lancaster



Covalent Bonds

G.G. Andrews, Laura VanArendonk Baugh, Tellulah Darling, Jeremiah Murphy, Marie Piper, Charlotte M. Ray, Wendy Sparrow, Cori Vidae, Mara Malins



This anthology takes elements from worlds not typically visited in the romance genre: geeks. The authors have each crafted their own story about what happens when the covalent bonding process occurs.

Each of the stories is a bit different and takes readers into the world of gamers, computer geeks, movie freaks, comic lovers and grammarly nerds.

"The Hacked" involves a covert operation with an unlikely operative trying to seduce an infamous hacker.

"Addie-cted" brings us a gamer who invites a stranger and fellow gamer into her home

"Issues" involves a gaming convention where the heroine runs into someone she's been trying to avoid.

"Spoilers" has us going to the movies with two fans of horror flicks.

"Rogue Trip" features a missed deadline for delivery of important convention merchandise.

"Critical Hit" has two gaming writers hiding behind their characters, trying to avoid connection.

"Classification of Nerd" is an office romance (boss and employee) with some complications.

"Better than Chocolate" has former high school mates (one of them a bad boy) meeting up again at the candy shelf.

"Girl Meets Grammarian" shows two experts on grammar have very different perspectives on the subject at a lecture.

Overall, this was a refreshing take on romance, proving that nerdy, flirty geeks can be sexy!

Each has its own take on romance and steam. Some of the stories lacked character development and story flow, but the anchor stories (such as "The Hacked") rounded this out to an inventive set. "Covalent Bonds" is the pairing of atoms — and above all, chemistry is ever-present in this anthology.

Layne Lancaster



The Billionaire's Stray Heart (Burke Billionaire Romance Book 2)

Rachelle J. Christensen



Jordan Burke is a billionaire — and a workaholic. He spends his days at the office, suppressing the hurt and pain from the death of his parents. He narrowly escapes being mugged when a stray puppy comes to his rescue. He takes the puppy to the animal shelter, where he meets Madison. There is an immediate attraction. After some thought, Jordan decides to adopt the puppy, Roxie. He knows that a dog is a lot of work, so he hires Madison to help train her. As he and Madison grow closer, he realizes how much of his time is spent working and not enjoying life. Jordan wants more with Madison and to spend more time with Roxie, but how can he balance that with his busy schedule?

It is safe to say that any book that involves dogs will tug at the heartstrings. That is certainly the case with this book! This story is a very quick read but does not leave anything out. The characters both have tragic backstories that affect the way they currently live their life. It is touching that a sweet puppy will be the one to help them realize there is more to life. The story does progress quickly

— so quickly, in fact that it seems a little unrealistic. Jordan makes drastic changes in a very small window of time. Even though Madison and Jordan are dealing with deep issues, their love is a complete whirlwind. However, the concept of not wasting precious life and living life to the fullest is very inspiring. This quick read is touching and inspirational!

Amanda Hupe



Saving Mistletoe

Shanna Hatfield



Attorney Ellen Meade is having a bad day. She walks headfirst into a police horse and rider and does it again later that same day. Each time the rider, Officer Burke Tipton, is not thrilled, but he cannot get her whisky eyes out of his mind. Six months later, Ellen's cousin sets her up on a blind date. She is surprised and pleased to find Burke as her date. She too has been thinking of him since their first collision. On the way to his home, Burke notices a suspicious car at the truck stop and makes a note to investigate should it still be there in the morning. He has no idea the impact that car and its occupants will have on him and Ellen.

"Saving Mistletoe" is a very short, sweet romance with likeable characters. It is refreshing to see Ellen transform from an aggressive criminal attorney to a likeable probate lawyer. Unfortunately, that is all the depth of character displayed in this piece. Burke, although a nice guy, displays very little depth or emotion. Readers should also be aware that the novel itself ends early, with the last ten percent of the book devoted to advertising the author's other works. There is very little to the climax of the story, it ends almost as soon as it begins. "Saving Mistletoe" is a quick, easy pick-me-up and can easily be read in an afternoon.

Belinda Wilson



Diamond in the Rough

Brenda Jernigan



WOMEN'S FICTION/HUMOR:
Kathy Taylor's Aunt Catherine has just died and left Kathy a million dollars, with just one stipulation: she must lose fifty pounds in six months. Her aunt's lawyer, Devon York, has a dress that Kathy must wear to present the Dubois Charity award at Christmas. If the dress fits, the money is hers. Her sister, Tina, repeatedly tells Kathy there is no way she can lose the weight. When she is told she can't, she rebels and becomes

determined to succeed. Until Christmas, Kathy is to have anything she needs, within reason, and the estate will pay for it. Devon, mesmerized by Kathy, agrees to help her achieve her goal. The one thing he had not planned on was falling for her – hard.

“Diamond in the Rough” is unusual, showcasing an average, overweight girl with a fantastic personality and shows her blossom into the beauty she has hidden deep inside. Devon recognizes that beauty long before Kathy's transformation begins. There are many unexpected twists in this journey of self-realization, as Kathy discovers who she really is. The world building is where the story falters just a bit. More detail of Catherine's house and Devon's completed homes are needed, as they play significant parts in the story. Both Kathy and Devon display raw emotion as the story unfurls and the reader is drawn into the tale and into their lives. A beautiful story of emotional growth, readers will need tissues to finish this page-turner!

Belinda Wilson

Someone Like You

Brittney Sahin



Noah has just left the military to go to New York to get close to his daughter after his wife has moved on to another man. Noah goes to work for his sister's interior decorating company which is hired to redecorate Grace's suite, yet sparks fly between her and Noah. Grace battles with her extremely wealthy family, who want her to do as she's told. She

has a demon in her dreams from a trip to Greece, and when her demon starts to become overwhelming, Noah needs to keep her safe. They both fight for different things to make their lives whole, but will they do it together or apart?

Noah is a fantastic character who grows through his adjustment to civilian life. Grace Parker-King is from a family that controls all and has the money to do so. Grace learns to stare her fears in the face and overcome them throughout this love story that also will have readers laughing at various antics of the characters. The conflicts keep coming, but they are realistic and not overdone. At times, the reader may feel like admonishing the antagonists in the story. The plot is not new; it is a “guy from the wrong side of the tracks” type of book. The author's greatness is how the main characters grab the reader's attention and the way the supporting characters help bring the story full circle. This book is a great read and hard to put down!

Laura Dinsdale

House Divided

Jami Deise



Erin is a Democrat. Jack is a Republican. They get on great together at home and work well together, however when they are at work, it is a completely different story. Election Day sees Erin losing her job while Jack becomes the rising star of the TV network. The strain starts to show itself at home and they cannot seem to maintain the difference they once had. Erin

finds solace in Scott, a stay-at-home dad who is just as frustrated with his own marriage. Will Erin and Jack be able to get their marriage back on track?

There are many laugh out loud moments in this book, which is the perfect blend of fun and seriousness. The characters are well written and there are some readers that will love to hate. Jack and Erin are fun characters, it is easy to see why they work so well together, and people will be rooting for them. As the plot moves forward, there are some moments where descriptions could have been better, there are also some “tell” rather than “show” moments that take away from the flow of the book. Author Jami Deise delves into the subject of American politics and manages to explain it well for those who may not know much about it.

Lynn-Alexandria McKendri



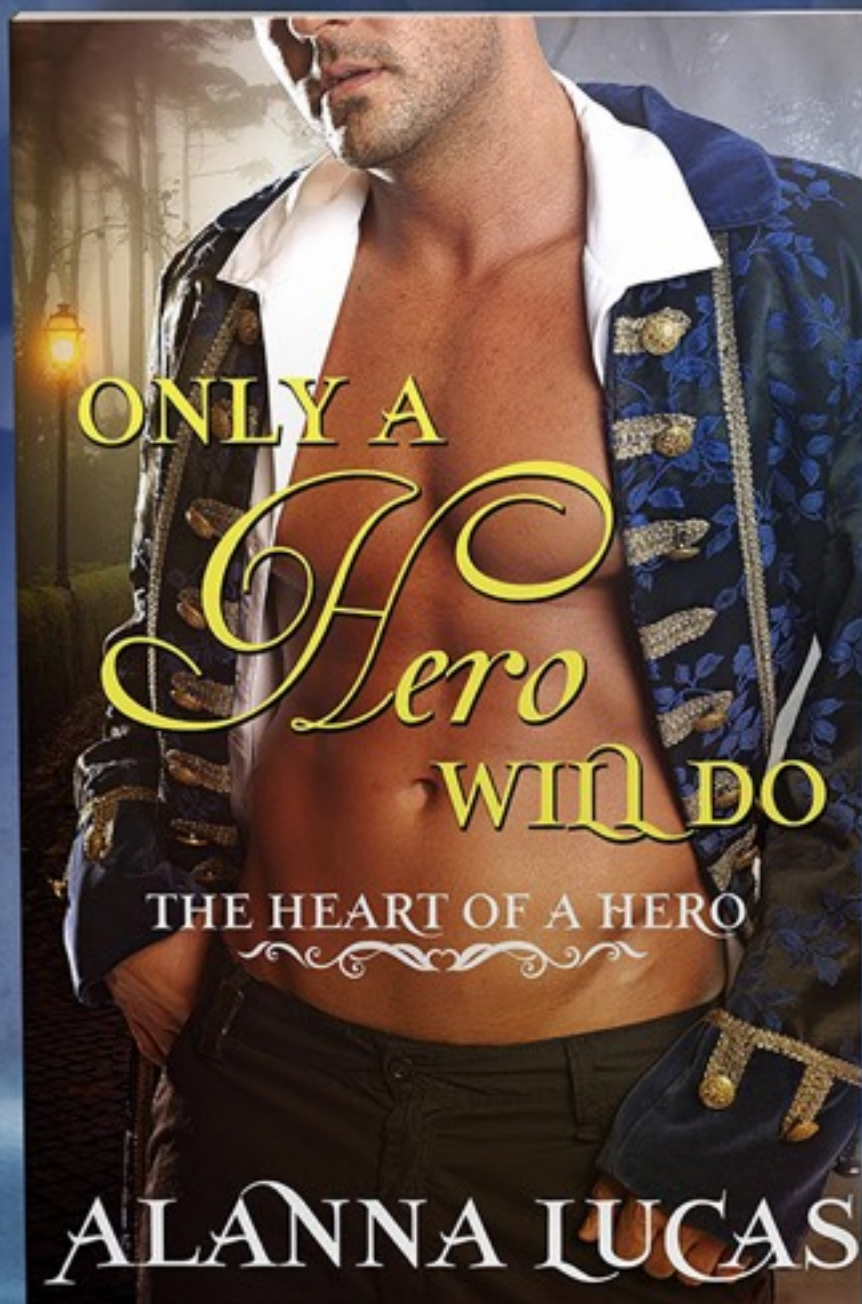
Their Christmas Miracle

Lynne Marshall



Tracy and Hunter work well together. Hunter owns a small restaurant in Charity, Montana, while Tracy makes pies out of his kitchen when not working at the hospital. Their business relationship grows when they are asked to cater a wedding

A beautiful, feisty heiress. A dashing, enigmatic, ex-army captain. They must work together to defeat dark forces threatening Britain's monarchy. Elizabeth Atwell can break any code – but will she also break Grant Alexander's heart?



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~N.N. Light

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together. There is just one problem, Tracy and Hunter have a thing for each other, but don't know the other feels the same way. When Hunter's cousin dies, Hunter is left to raise his baby. Now faced with the decision of how to juggle their new business arrangement, their feelings for each other, and a new baby, Tracy and Hunter have some decisions to make, some of which could change their lives forever.

If one is looking for a sweet book that never ceases to surprise, then "Their Christmas Miracle" is a perfect read. With interesting characters and fun plot twists, readers will not get bored learning about Tracy and Hunter's story. One issue with the book, however, is that it rehashes the same information, retelling it to the reader again and again. The repeating information also causes a bit of confusion making readers mix up what has happened between different people, which hurts the overall flow of the story. By cutting out repeated information and adding more depth to the characters, the author would allow readers to better identify with the characters, in turn, creating a better connection between the reader and the characters. Overall though, by switching between Tracy's and Hunter's perspectives, the book gives readers a splendid view to enjoy the action while exploring the complex issues of life and love.

Hannah Hurdle



Betting on Cinderella (Cinderella Romances #2)

Petie McCarty

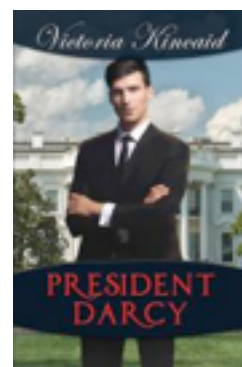


Garrett Tucker was practically raised by his grandfather. When he gets the call that his grandfather, the "Prince of Vegas," has died, he immediately takes over his grandfather's last venture, a rundown casino in Biloxi. With signs that someone is embezzling, and an old rival is invading the casino, Garrett has plenty to fill his plate, especially since the main suspect in the embezzlement is a woman he falls for at first sight. Andi Ryan has a life back in Florida, but when her godmother calls in need of help she heads to Biloxi right away, only to discover things are worse than she suspected. Taking a job at the Bayou Princess casino should allow her to watch over her godmother, but it looks like someone is trying to skim funds and blame it on her! Can Garrett and Andi uncover the perpetrators or will lady luck desert them in the end?

The second book in the "Cinderella Romance" picks up shortly after the first book leaves off and focuses on a new couple in a modern take on an old fairy tale classic. The plot is smoothly laid out and the main characters are developed, however, the story is rather predictable, the rest of the

cast flat. Even the action and danger are minimal. Still there are a couple of minor twists, and the romance if nothing to gush about is sweet and feels right. Overall, "Betting on Cinderella" is a winner for someone looking for a low risk read.

Sarah E Bradley



President Darcy

Victoria Kincaid



President William Darcy has no interest in dating while in office. Unfortunately, as someone both wealthy and in power, dissuading women from trying, has become almost automatic. However, when a chance encounter in a back hallway causes Darcy and Elizabeth to collide, nothing will ever be the same for either of them. Red Cross worker Elizabeth Bennett never wanted to come to the White House ball in the first place. Yet, in stopping her sister from embarrassing herself, Elizabeth herself ends up in more than one awkward situation that culminates when the president insults her, and it ends up all over Twitter. Elizabeth eagerly hopes for things to blow over, but as the duo continue to meet and things heat up, keeping their feelings quiet might not be in the cards.

Contemporary

A contemporary retelling of “Pride and Prejudice”, “President Darcy” is a cute if unrealistic take on the classic. As a retelling, most of the plot, characters, and scenes are pulled from the original, but there are a few things that have been sped up or maneuvered to allow for the focus to remain on William and Elizabeth. Yet, in this process, a few things are awkward or unrealistic, such as the secret service forgetting to clear a women’s restroom, or even the entire set up with Wickham. Still, despite the lack of originality and thus predictability of the tale the story is cute, and lovers of the classic should still get a kick out of this rendition.

Sarah E Bradley



The Girl I Didn't Marry (Jessie & Nick #1)

Annabelle Costa

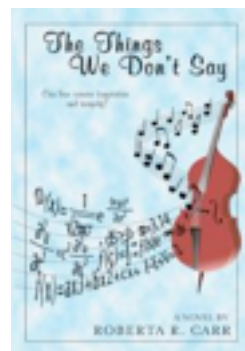


From the moment fourteen-year-old Nick sets his eyes on Jessica Schultz, the new girl at school, he knows that she is the girl he will marry. Their easy friendship quickly develops into a high school romance even though her father fights it from the beginning. Nick’s family has ties to the mob and, living in Bensonhurst, New York, that is the last thing Mr. Schultz wants near his daughter. Nick knows that he must wait

patiently for Jessie to turn eighteen and wait he does — for years, until the day he is the victim of a crime that changes his life forever. He pushes Jessie away and withdraws from the world. Will Jessie be able to break through Nick’s incredible stubbornness or has their chance for love been taken away forever?

“The Girl I Didn’t Marry” is a fast-paced, page-turning novel that will keep readers on the edge of their seats from beginning to end. The characters are well defined and engaging. Readers will be involved in the lives and innermost thoughts of each character while silently cheering for them to conquer all of the obstacles surrounding them. This novel ends on a cliffhanger; readers beware! The second book of the duet is already available for purchase, however. Those who enjoy young love, laughter, angst, and life-changing situations should fall in love with this novel.

Tina Donovan



The Things We Don't Say

Roberta R. Carr



WOMEN'S FICTION: Lilia Bennett-Parker is a talented young musician who’s just been offered the opportunity of a lifetime: a chance to play cello for a Californian symphony orchestra.

Taking the chance means leaving behind not only graduate school and her cozy Boston apartment, but the love of her life as well. True love can survive distance... Right?

On paper, Matthew Campbell has it all: a beautiful woman he wants to marry, a booming business with his three friends, and a loving family. When he surprises his girlfriend, Lilia, by buying a house for them to share, she has a surprise for him as well – and it’s not a happy one. When Lilia moves out west and becomes involved with new friends, cares, and a suspiciously attentive and attractive composer, Matt is convinced that his world is falling apart. Love is supposed to be easy. What do you do when it isn’t?

Ms. Carr writes a sweeping modern epic about two young lovers, separated by distance, damaged by their lack of communication, and tested by real-world problems. It’s a timely, heartfelt, at times heartbreaking story that’s hampered by work-a-day prose. Though the characters grow and mature in realistic ways, the story-telling is lacking in necessary depth and feeling to really bring home the drama. There is one enormous plot twist, for instance, that is introduced and summarily dismissed in three sentences, making the reader stop and think, “Wait, what just happened?” Which is too bad, because this story is a good one – with a little more time and care in the presentation, it could yet be a great one.

Janice Martin

Hearts Unleashed

Paris Wynters



Katie Locke is running the family ranch while she heals from the trauma of a brutal assault that left her physically and emotionally scarred. The last thing she wants is a new foreman, but at her father's insistence, she hires Major John Rathborne for the position. John has emotional and physical scars of his own from his days in Afghanistan. Home from his tour of duty, he has been searching for his Koda, his canine companion from the war. To his surprise and delight, he discovers Koda is Katie's companion and is living happily at the ranch. It is also clear that Katie resents John and he struggles to hide his past relationship with Koda and win Katie's trust.

"Hearts Unleashed" tackles the issue of post-traumatic stress disorder in an empathetic and respectful manner. Ms. Wynters does a good job of portraying the daily struggles that challenge survivors in a world that can seem empty and cold. Katie and John are both suffering in silence and isolation and the reader is taken on their journey as they learn to trust each other and regain their footing in the world. The narrative does suffer from some editing problems and at times, the story lacks focus. Additionally, the character of Peter is too one-dimensional, and has little or no redeeming qualities. As such, he adds little to the story other than to provide a convenient point of conflict for Katie and John to overcome. Overall, though, "Hearts Unleashed" is a good story and Ms. Wynter's prose is very readable.

Gwenellen Tarbet



The Party Crasher

Erin Bevan



Event Planner Kit O'Hare is trying to prove to her father, her new boss, and herself that she's more than just the party girl she used to be. But when an unfortunate accident while playing the Easter bunny lands her, not only on the hottest guy at the town's Easter celebration, but in the celebration cake in front of the mayor and his wife as well, she can kiss her career plans goodbye.

Brant Fuller has other ideas. Smitten with the woman behind the Easter Bunny mask, he makes an instant decision: he hires Kit to help him plan the launch of his new tavern. But Brant hasn't been totally honest with Kit and his secret may be the undoing of their burgeoning relationship. When the truth is revealed, will love be able to withstand it?

Ms. Bevan's story is short, sweet, and funny. Strangers at the start, Brant and Kit fall for each other fast and hard, yet it's a believable progression (credit to Ms. Bevan, for this is tricky to do in a novella of this length). The support characters, especially Brant's man-crazy cousin, are strong enough to make the reader hope there's a series in store. The humor falls a little flat in some places and the family drama, which was interesting and

complicated in the beginning, clears up a little too easily. Nevertheless, this novella is a sweet treat that will keep the reader entertained and wishing they could visit Fuller's Tavern.

Janice Martin



Risking it

Angela Quarles



Jane the librarian is given a challenge by her best friend Claire. She's taking time off work and taking a road trip north through the sights and scenes of Florida and ending in Atlanta. She is to document her trip in a journal and include photos to prove she's hit all the allocated spots. Claire is attempting to help Jane purge a guy from her system who Jane thought she had a connection with a few months ago. Jane learned he's a player and things ended as quickly as they started.

Aiden owns a bar and needs to get to his hurling tournament in Atlanta. The cards are stacked against him, though, because he needs transportation but with his shoestring budget there are not many options. His luck changes when he spots Jane at a service station headed out of town. Now is his chance to make another move and find out why she never

Contemporary

contacted him after their first meeting.

"Risking It" is an entertaining read from the first line. Ms. Quarles has created an interesting challenge with the road trip Jane must take. Aiden, the reason for the trip, ends up too coincidentally always popping up. Readers may find it a bit unbelievable. More history of Jane and her upbringing may assist readers to embrace her personality. Even so, "Risking It" is a humorous read with plenty of sparks and a second chance at love after some miscommunications. The alternating points of view are done well. Getting a glimpse from both sides always moves the story along. A pleasant, quick and comedic read!

Viola Robins



Last Words

Shari J. Ryan



Amelia is torn from her home and brought into a concentration camp. In the depths of cruelty, she finds unexpected compassion. Decades later Amelia asks her granddaughter Emma to read her diary to tell a story kept quiet until now. She is fighting for her life and wants Emma to know what she has been hiding all this

time. She tries to teach her that love can come at unexpected times, and when it does you should seize the moment. Emma's grandmother plays matchmaker from the hospital bed for her and a handsome doctor. All the while Emma is learning about Amelia's true love. It helps her reflect on how to find and capture love for herself.

"Last Words" is a delectably haunting tale that profoundly proclaims the hope of true love. A daring story that intricately weaves two time periods together seamlessly. The weighty subject matter is expertly balanced with aspects of endurance and love with humor that is entertaining. The characters are well developed and distinctive, making it so readers will be thinking of them long after the story is over. The romances are poignant, with tantalizing secrets. A few flaws detract from the story. There are biological facts that are not accurate. At the beginning of the book, the portrayal of the Holocaust lacks depth. There is a subplot that is out of place and not needed. The narrative, however, is compelling and brings a unique perspective to history that will leave the reader contemplative.

Jessica Samuelson

Start Your Engines (Racing Hearts #1)

Jim Cangany



Brad Thomas' racing team needs a new driver and much to his dismay, the boss chooses Gabrielle Marquez. Gabrielle was the cause of a crash ten years before that killed Brad's best

friend and caused him severe injuries, ending his racing career. Gabrielle knows that getting Brad to trust her again will not be easy, but as their professional relationship begins to improve, their mutual feelings for one another resurface. Someone is sabotaging races and it could cause Brad's team to lose the title. Gabrielle has the chance any driver would take in a heartbeat, but she has to choose between her career or her rekindled feelings for Brad.

Jim Cangany has written a very sweet story with the excitement of racing and the added bonus of mystery. The plot is a rekindling of old romance set in the daring world of motor racing, and the author has clearly done his research. There is a perfect blend of facts and story. A lot of "will they, won't they" adds to the page-turning nature of this book as well as wondering who is sabotaging races. This is a great book and it will be exciting to read other books by this author.

Lynn-Alexandria McKendrick



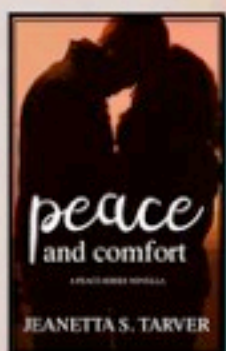
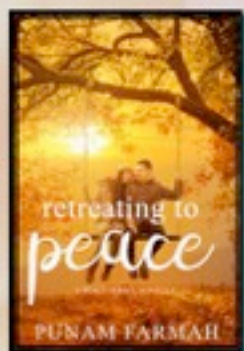
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CLEANLY SPICY
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The House Adelia Built

Mya O'Malley



Hope is an agoraphobic recluse with the charge of looking after and directing tours of Amity Lighthouse. Her roommate, co-worker, and friend Tracy is happily engaged and planning to move from the lighthouse, but before she does she manages to introduce Hope to a man named Clooney. With Tracy leaving and her relationship with Clooney becoming stronger, Hope's insecurities and fear gain steam, manifesting themselves as visions of a woman dying at the lighthouse. As she tries to gather historical information about the lighthouse, she learns that only she and Clooney hold the key to what the premonitions mean and how to progress.

"The House Adelia Built" is a thriller that will keep the reader guessing and turning pages faster than their eyes can absorb the words! The past and present seamlessly merge as confusion turns to dawning horror, shock, and plain fear for the characters. Most of the characters are well drawn, with a backstory and motivation for moving forward, however, the two love interests are simply handsome enigmas. Nothing is really known of them and they are written as perfect,

with no other details than the "sweetly in love" version. The lighthouse is not described well which leads to it not being thought of as having a role to play. Be that as it may, this is definitely one story to keep around and share with as many persons as possible.

Yannie Sorensen



Lure Of the Bear

(Aloha Shifters: Jewels of the Heart Book 3)

Anna Lowe

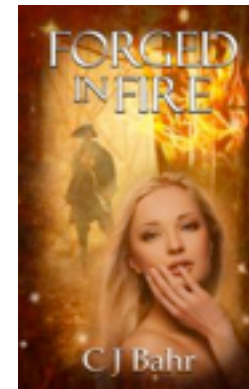


Police Officer Dawn Meli has a lot on her plate. A celebrity wedding, a tropical storm and a gem have her stress levels at the max. There is something also added to the situation with Hunter, a bear shifter that she can't stop thinking about. He stirs something deep inside her that threatens to awaken her wild side. Hunter has adored Dawn for years and when she is threatened, he will stop at nothing until that person is ripped to shreds. He will risk anything for her, including the secret he has held close to his chest for years. Will they give into their feelings for one another?

Set in the gorgeous surroundings of Hawaii, Anna Lowe has created a searing hot alpha male shifter who has adored Officer Dawn

Meli for years. The sexual tension between Hunter and Dawn is electric and the love scenes are passionate and hot. With a briskly moving plot, there will be some furious page-turning going on. Readers will be yelling at their e-reader for Hunter and Dawn to get their act together. This is the third book in the series and for those who have not read the others, they will be keen to go back and read the previous books while looking forward to more installments in the series.

Lynn-Alexandria McKendrick



Forged in Fire (The Fire Chronicles #2)

C J Bahr



TIME TRAVEL: Beth Leighton is an American who moved to Scotland to marry the love of her life, or so she thought. One bad decision turns her world upside down as she is hurled into the past, awakening just as a highwayman is robbing a stagecoach... in England! How she ended up in England 200 years in the past is a mystery to her, until she meets an archangel who gives her an important mission. She must recover a cursed stone if she wishes to get back home. Christopher "Kit" Locke, a highwayman with a damaged

soul, is the only person who can help her retrieve it. Yet, he prefers to work alone, having no interest in Beth or her plans, until she works her way under his skin. This strange woman with a strange language may just be the salvation he has been waiting for.

The story is fast-paced with action and adventure from page one, along with several laughs as Beth tries to blend in, most unsuccessfully, in 18th century England. The book starts seemingly where book one left off. However, readers just picking up this book may be confused about who the characters are, what they are seeking, and why. More background information would help a first-time reader of this series. Though well written with vivid details and great research on the time, editing errors are just frequent enough to pull one from the story more than once. The struggle between Kit and Beth is amusing and entertaining, making the reader laugh frequently and cheer when they finally let their guards down!

Dahlia Gosney

Forged Alliances (Tribal Spirit, Book 1)

Katherine McIntyre



Set in today's rural Pennsylvania, "Forged Alliances" follows the alphas from two packs of shifters —humans who can shift into animal forms. She is a wolf with an iron will; he's a cocksure mountain lion with a bad attitude. When Dax, the mountain lion alpha, arrives in Sierra's wolfish territory, sparks fly. He needs her help to solve some deadly problems in his territory, but

mostly his smug, irritating personality manages to piss her off. As their love-hate relationship moves into high gear, it is a race to see if they fall in love before they kill each other, or someone else does it for them.

"Forged Alliances" will definitely appeal to the reader who likes rough and tumble stories told in a gritty, no-holds-barred prose style. Ms. McIntyre has fashioned an enjoyable tale with the cadence and tone of a lively barroom brawl. Her eye for detail brings the forests and back road dive bars into sharp focus. The main characters are well crafted, though Dax's character, with his past traumas, is developed more fully than Sierra's. Her "shattered past" does not get enough play, and the secondary characters seem a bit flat. The plot starts quickly, driven by the characters, but bogs down in places. The sharp-edged banter between Sierra and Dax, however, will keep readers engaged and caring about the Red Rock and Silver Springs packs and their alphas.

Marc Joseph



Every October

Aubree Lane



Zoey Harris is not prepared to go quietly into that dark night. Every October since her untimely death, she visits her daughter Amy who can sense her presence. However, time is running out for the reluctant spirit and she has been given an ultimatum by the spirit world: move on. She must reconcile herself to her own demise by the end of Halloween night. She is given the ability to communicate with her family and must wrap up her emotional business or be trapped between worlds forever. Moving on is so much harder than she ever could have predicted.

Ms. Lane is to be commended for her creative and original perspective — writing a story that deals with death and mourning. However, Zoey is self-centered, lacks empathy and is incapable of putting other's needs ahead of her own. She sexually invades her husband Caleb's psyche in what amounts to a rape scene. "Every October" attempts to be witty and humorous, but frankly, Zoey is such an unpleasant character that any attempts at wit and humor fall like stones. After nearly killing her brother-in-law, she becomes annoyed with him for being angry

with her. The secondary characters are so one-dimensionally good or bad that the reader feels no emotional attachment to them. The story lacks focus and continuity and is difficult to read. However, as a writer, Ms. Lane has talent. With the right story, the reader can look forward to reading more from this author.

Gwenellen Tarbet



Shifter's Pride (Spirit Walker's Saga Thrillers Book 2)

Laura Hawks



SUSPENSE/THRILLER: Feather Woods is devastated when she visits her best friend but finds her brutally murdered instead. When the police arrive, Detective Shaw recognizes Feather as a girl he knew many years ago. He is concerned about the brutality of the murder, as is his partner Apple Shade — especially when there is another murder, and a victim who also knew Feather Woods. How is she connected to all of this? Detectives Shaw and Shade are spirit walkers and are aware that this is not an average murder. Feather and her brother Raine are shifters. Concerned that Feather is now in danger, the shifters must work with the

detectives to find the murderer. Can they do so without falling for one another?

This book is not for the faint of heart; it will definitely get the reader's blood pumping! Detective Shaw and Feather Woods have amazing chemistry, as do Detective Shade and Raine Woods. The story jumps back and forth between different times in order to provide more of the characters' backstory; at times, these transitions are not smooth. The villain of the story is quite terrifying and sadistic, although the motive may seem unrealistic to readers. Even so, Ms. Hawks has done a wonderful job at building heart-racing suspense! This Native American paranormal story is a quick and intense read!

Amanda Hupe



The Vengeance of Snails (Penny White Book 4)

Chrys Cymri



Penny White is a priest on sabbatical in Caer-grawnt. With her is Clyde, a humble snail shark she fostered since it was a baby. She knows it is special because unlike other snail sharks, it can talk, sing, and fly. The snail sharks are as big as German Shepherds, and have rows of shark teeth hidden in their bellies. They eat

dogs and babies. Clyde is much smaller: domesticated, he only eats small animals. While in Caer-grawnt, a group of flying lemurs kidnaps Clyde to parts unknown. It is up to Penny, her fiancé Peter, brother James, the gryphon Morey, and the dragon, Raven, to rescue and bring Clyde home.

"The Vengeance of Snails" is a delightful adventure with a unique array of extraordinary characters, both human and mythical. It is a religious tale full of moral teachings yet at the same time avoids being preachy. "Vengeance" starts slowly and it takes a while for the reader to become enmeshed in this enthralling story. Too much time is taken setting up the premise for the adventure. Several ideas are hard to believe because they go against most popular folklore, such as baptized vampires roosting in the church ceiling. Penny and Clyde are the only characters who have any real depth and emotion in the story. A truly different kind of story, author Chrys Cymri brings to life many varied creatures guaranteed to captivate.

Belinda Wilson

VAMPIRES WANT YOU.
IN A GOOD WAY. PROMISE.

Got blood?



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TAMI LUND, JULIA MILLS, KRISTEN STRASSEL
EVER COMING, SKYE JONES, ROSALIE REDD
SUSAN GRISCOM, TL REEVE



Dark Wine At Sunrise (A Hill Vampire Novel Book 2)

Jenna Barwin

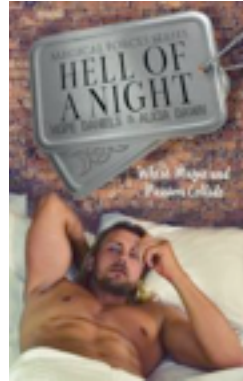


MYSTERY: Cerissa yearns to feel Henry's fangs in her neck so they can become blood mates. It would mean they couldn't be kept apart which is a strong possibility. With Henry healing from an assassination attempt, the assassin in a coma, Cerissa must work out why someone wants Henry dead. Being together is against ancient vampire code and even her own people are not happy about the march. But Cerissa is determined to be with Henry and become his mate. She won't let anything stand in her way.

From the first line, this book draws you in and keeps you prisoner until the end. The characters are fabulously written and the relationship between Henry and Cerissa is searing hot. Readers will feel their passion radiating off the page. There is enough information to fill in any blanks for readers who maybe haven't read the first book. The plot moves along at a good pace and speeds up in various parts which made it go much quicker. There will be many readers who will want more from this author. Jenna Barwin can tell a story and creates characters and situations

that are both engaging and enthralling. A paranormal romance worthy of the genre. Sensual, sophisticated and sinfully addictive!

Lynn-Alexandria McKendrick



Hell Of a Night

Hope Daniels,

Alicia Dawn



JT Kirkland is born into battle magic, yet he wants to serve his country in the Navy. Tessa Windham is leaving Kansas to make her way as an agent for the American's Witch Council. The two meet in the big city but are ripped apart, only meeting up 50 years later. The world in the 80's is vastly different than when they met, yet they find each other again. Unfortunately, Tessa has no memory of him or the time they had shared together all those years ago.

The story is unique and has an interesting plot. JT wants to trigger Tessa to remember him, and Tessa wants to be with JT in every way, and their flirtations are written beautifully. The vast number of characters all contribute to the great story of how Tessa's past is tied to all the conflicts that are happening in the present. The story is hard to

follow with the jumping back and forth between past and present, and the conflicts are not resolved leaving a cliffhanger ending. The emotions and situations jump from mole hill size to mountainous, without much buildup to draw it out. The book has a warning for audience 18+, which should be heeded due to the content of dark magic and sacrifices. A good book for the witchcraft genre.

Laura Dinsdale



Shattered Warrior (Dark Warrior Alliance, Book 1)

Brenda Trim, Tami Julka



Detective Orlando Trovatelli is a Dark Warrior, and when it comes to love, he isn't the smartest shifter around. When he arrives at a friend's house, a female friend he believes should be married to him rather than to her abusive husband, he can't believe she is dying along with her unborn child. He does everything in his power to save them and makes a promise to Jaidis to take care of her child.

Ember, a CSI for the realm police, enters the crime scene and her eyes laser focus on Orlando. He is the sexiest male she has ever seen. Watching his devastation over the loss of his friend is hard, and she wants to comfort him,

which she finds really weird since she just met him. Time passes and feelings begin to bloom, but is Orlando able to set aside his past and let love grow?

"Shattered Warrior" is the 11th book in the Dark Warrior Alliance series and stands alone. Orlando is hot, sexy and all alpha. Ember starts out great but ends up being totally selfish and rather unlikable. Scenes between Ember and the Vampire Queen are confusing, and some emotions aren't explained at all, leaving one scratching one's head. Some transitions between chapters are rather abrupt. The other issue is that there are way too many characters to keep track of. There are quite a few editing issues, one being Ember's name not being capitalized every time it's used. Setting those things aside, if one likes shifters, demons and such, this book is one to enjoy!

Lynne Bryant



Queen of the Night Guild (Queen of Thieves, Book Three)

Andy Peloquin



DARK FANTASY: Ilanna of House Hawk, unsurpassed thief of the Night Guild, suddenly finds herself alone, having lost everything she held dear in a deliberate, alchemical fire that

destroyed her home, her family, and most of her will to live. But when Ilanna discovers a traitor in the Night Guild, she sets out on a dangerous and painful journey of remorseless retribution against the feared Bloody Hand of Voramis.

Fixated on revenge, Ilanna battles dukes, thugs, and even fellow members of the Night Guild. Picking off her enemies with painstaking determination, Ilanna uncovers a depth of depravity that rocks her very core.

Brilliant! A fascinating and superbly written tale of loss, tragedy, despair, hope, and love. The details of this dark and gritty world created by Mr. Peloquin will stun and please the reader on every level. Dark and heavy, light, and humorous, this intense story has it all. "Queen of the Night Guild," book three in this exceptional series, will pull the reader in from the very beginning and not let go. The reader will reel with an emotional hangover. Character development and plot building are golden tickets in this story. The writing, creativity, and editing are splendid. This story is not for the faint of heart, and it is not a romantic tale, but epic fantasy at its finest. The reader will delight in falling in love with Ilanna, a true heroine in every sense of the word.

This story must be read in the order it was written as it is not a standalone novel.

Tiffany Landers



A Vampire's Unlikely Alliance

Tena Stetler



Stefan Talltree is a Native American vampire, and a former assassin for the Vampire Council. Nowadays, he spends most of his time as a DJ at a local radio station in Whitefish, Montana. Then, one fateful night changes his entire life when he meets Brandy Shaughnessy, a park ranger. Brandy, however, has a few secrets of her own. When Stefan is reluctant to enter into a relationship because he has had his heart broken before, Brandy is unwilling to give in to her feelings as well. This mutual reluctance leads to a lot of drama and tension between the two of them.

The core of this story is romance, and the book also offers a look into a fascinating fantasy world crafted by author Tena Stetler, filled with warlocks, demons, witches, vampires, you name it. While the book can be read as a stand-alone, readers might feel more connected to the characters (especially the side characters, who apparently already appeared in earlier books) after having read the previous parts of the series. The insta-love part can also be off-putting for some readers. All in all, it's a decent paranormal romance read.

Majanka Verstraete



Midnight Magic (A Ghost & Abby Mystery Book 1)

Jo-Ann Carson



Abby Jenkins is a janitor in a haunted house, not only that, she has taken on a side job as a paranormal private investigator since she is able to see things others can't. Speaking of things most others can't see...her ghost of a boyfriend, Eric the Viking. Eric has taken on the task of trying to find a way to become alive again so that he can be with Abby. Meanwhile, Abby is hired to find some missing diamonds in a run-down mansion called Graystone Manor. How hard could it be? Turns out to be a lot more difficult than she imagined, but she will have Eric by her side to help her, and hopefully together they can find the diamonds, and Abby will get paid for her first PI job.

What a unique take on the paranormal, not to mention, a very cute story. Abby is lovable and charming. Eric is the typical hot alpha male, even though he's a ghost. Speaking of which, it's a bit unbelievable that a living woman would fall in love with a ghost when they can have no physical contact (for the most part). There are also a few things that are left untied as this is the first book in the series. Readers will need to

read the next books to find their conclusions, making the ending of "Midnight Magic" somewhat disappointing. If one doesn't mind waiting to find answers, this is a wonderful, fun paranormal read!

Lynne Bryant



The Mortal Fires (Undercover Elementals #2)

Anna Durand



Lindsey Porter isn't just a mere mortal; she has been gifted with powers even she isn't aware of...yet. She destroyed a sylph king and was granted powers beyond her imagination. She is also in love with Nevan, who is now the reigning sylph king, and there are a lot of supernaturals who aren't happy with the fact that a mortal might someday be queen. When young women who bear an uncanny resemblance to her start turning up dead, not only is she in danger but so is the one who holds her heart. She and Nevan must work together to find out who is trying to destroy Nevan and steal her powers. When Nevan is near death, Lindsey must rely on those closest to her to help her discover the extremely powerful entity who is slowly destroying her soulmate.

Sylphs, oracles, fae witches and more...oh my! "The Mortal Fires" is book 2 in the Undercover Elemental series and stands well on its own. A few things might be clearer having read the first, but it's not necessary. This is a heavily character-driven story, maybe a few too many characters to keep track of. One of the side characters, Max, steals a lot of the story with his lovable antics. The world building is wonderful and Ms. Durand has a vivid imagination, one that will suck the reader right in and make them feel a part of that world. Sit back, relax and enjoy the undercover elemental's world.

Lynne Bryant



Dream Eater

K. Bird Lincoln



Koi Pierce is attempting to come out of her shell. After years of avoiding people and the inevitable skin to skin contact that gives her flashes of their intense dreams, Koi has determined to finish her degree at Portland Community College and get a life. Unfortunately, her younger sister needs help, as their father's Alzheimer's continues to deteriorate his mind and in the middle of caring for her father, Koi attracts the attention of a professor with disturbing dreams,

and a handsome stranger with the same rare Northern Japanese dialect as her father. Can Koi come to terms with her abilities or will her continual denial leave her at the mercy of the Kind and all those who would threaten her family?

An urban paranormal tale with a mixture of native mythologies, "Dream Eater" is the first in the "A Portland Hafu" series and a new twist in a genre full of vampires and werewolves. Focusing on the Japanese myths, Koi is a half Baku or dream eater, and as such provides plenty of emotion, and drama all on her own. The story is full of action, as the author builds up this new world and keeps Koi and the reader guessing. Although the pace isn't always steady, the romance and ending feels rushed, and the motives of the professor are never really clarified, there are plenty of interesting moments to set this series up as one worth keeping an eye on.

Sarah E Bradley



Karma Debt: The Awakening, Book One

Jeanne McNamee

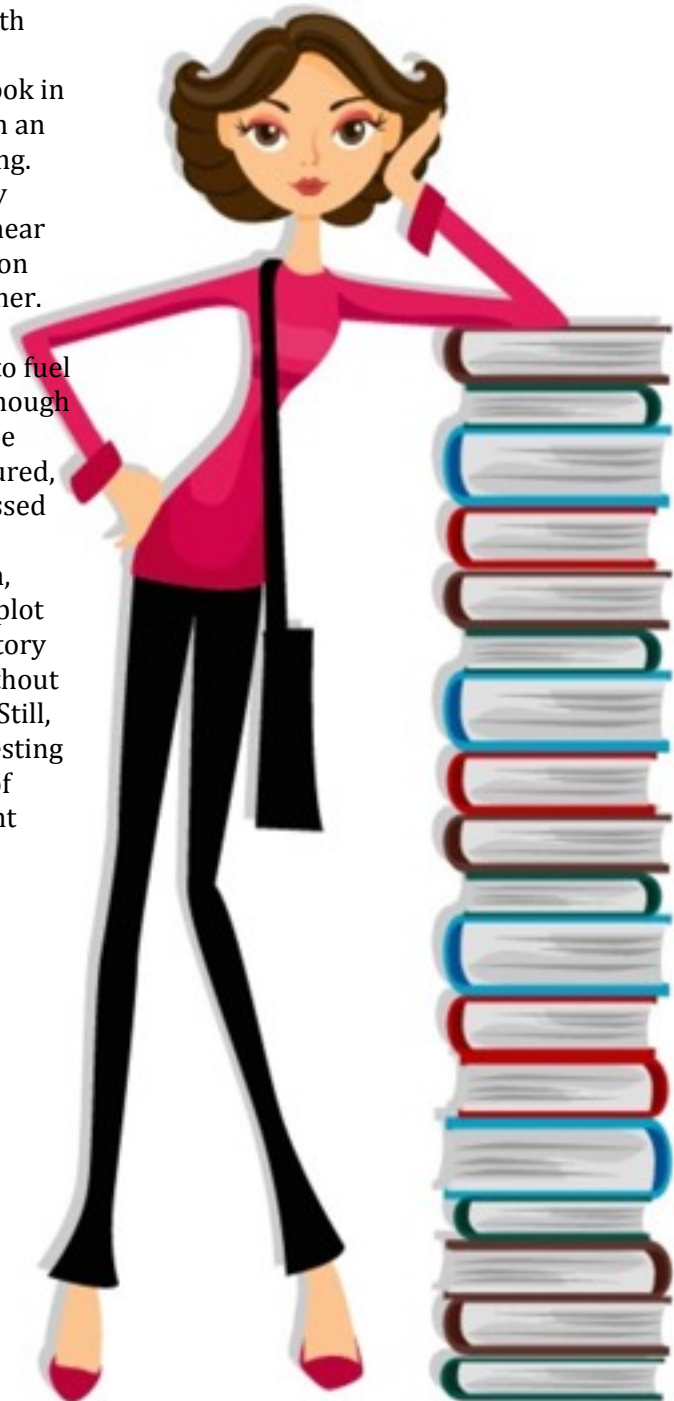


Donovan doesn't recall anything before waking up in a hospital room and seeing Doctor Josephine

Kenneth by his side. His family is ecstatic, so when he mentions a barely remembered conversation with a black-winged angel, they chalk it all up to a miracle and move on. Josephine is equally relieved that her patient has recovered from his motorcycle accident. So, when they meet a year later and sparks fly, they decide fate is giving them a chance. Is this all just chance, or did Donovan make a deal with an angel for more?

A contemporary romance with hints at divine intervention, "Karma's Debt" is the first book in "The Awakening" series, with an almost cliffhanger-type ending. An intriguing setup, the story begins with Donovan being near death, and Josephine calling on the debt she feels God owes her. The romance is developed steadily with enough steam to fuel a locomotive, and a steady enough pace to cross the country. The tragedies Josephine has endured, however, are repeatedly glossed over, without the emotion attached to reel the reader in, except for in one scene. The plot is also predictable, and the story thus feels like all buildup without the big conflict taking place. Still, the story has plenty of interesting points to build on, and fans of contemporary romance might want to give this one a try.

Sarah E Bradley





ANDY PELOQUIN

CHILD OF THE NIGHT GUILD

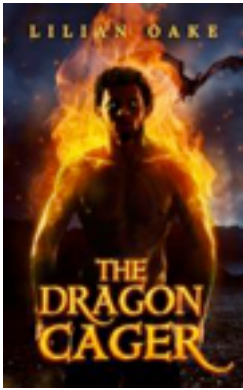
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THIEF OF THE NIGHT GUILD

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The Dragon Cager

Lillian Oake

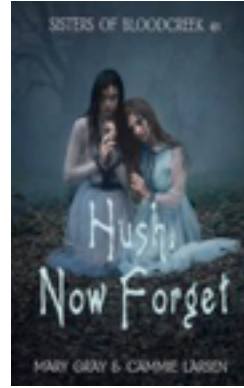


FANTASY/HISTORICAL: Evie has found herself exiled for crimes she has not committed, due to the governor's son, Arthur. She is taken out of the village close to the mountains and left to die, but she is rescued by a dragon cager by the name of Lachlann. As she regains her strength and health, she needs to revisit all the folklores she has ever heard regarding cagers and how they apply to Lachlann and those with him. Eventually he is able to win her trust and agrees to help her find her mother and brother. The journey is fraught with perilous adventures and mishaps requiring each to question not only themselves but also each other.

This new and fascinating tale will rivet the reader's attention and light their imagination on fire, making them both gasp and laugh aloud. The characters are all well developed and well rounded. Readers will bond with some and loathe others. Unfortunately, there are two points that cannot simply be ignored — the story is supposed to take place in the England/Scotland area, though the writing is obviously American English. The second place for pause is the sometimes confusing

and chaotic world building. However, there are not many stories capable of leaving the reader bereft when finished reading, yet this unique book does just that.

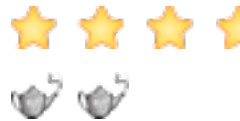
Yannie Sorensen



Hush, Now Forget

(Sisters of Bloodcreek #1)

Mary Gray, and Cammie Larsen



PARANORMAL: Sisters Frost and Eva Abrams are on a school field trip to San Antonio to see the Alamo. While the class is supposed to be learning history, Frost and Eva are more interested in locating Albert Knox, a handsome man with a tendency to chop his women up and put them through a meat grinder. Knox also happens to be a spirit entity known as the Blurred One. While trying to figure out how to lure Knox to them, Frost and Eva run into Raylan, a hunky ghost hunter, and Leo, a ghost who has a history with Frost. Unfortunately, their attempts to lure Knox to them are more than successful and Knox develops an obsession with Eva. With the help of their ghost hunter Aunt Maggie, Frost and Eva have to work with Raylan and Leo to banish Knox for

good, before he takes those they love with him.

From the very first pages, this story is off and running, without a lot of build up. Frost, Eva and their Aunt Maggie are wonderfully drawn, feisty women. The dialogue these three characters have with one another really brings the story to life. Unfortunately, there is a lack of background information needed to explain the novel's mythology. The questions are answered, eventually, although not necessarily directly. Overall, this is a very solid first book that combines paranormal and Christian themes in a unique way that makes for a very entertaining read. A warning to readers, this book contains scenes of abuse and violence that may be disturbing to some readers.

Elissa Blabac

Crash Course

E.A. West



INSPIRATIONAL: Angie is 16 years old and has been kicked out of her father's home. She goes back to living in Virginia with her mother who has remarried and has two little boys. Brady, a boy from her mother's church, tries to befriend Angie, but she is used to the party crowd, and Brady and his friends are clean teens. Angie has a choice to make: either believe herself to be a better person than the person she has become or keep going on the same way and continue disliking herself.

"Crash Course" is a great story about overcoming one's self-doubt. It's a remarkable story that holds the main character's issues

up for all to see and shows how hard she must work in order to change who she is. Angie's character grows a great deal throughout the story and in a natural way that connects the reader to the story. Brady is more of a supporting character throughout the story; even though he is Angie's love interest in the story, he enhances Angie's story rather than his own. Their friendship is sweet and real, telling each other their real struggles and helping each other to overcome them. When friendship turns into something more, it is written as a clean romance. The beauty in the story is the integral part most characters play in Angie's journey of self-discovery.

Laura Dinsdale



The Switch

A.W. Hill, Nathanael Hill



Jacobus was content with his life. Sure, he wished his parents didn't fight and that the girl he had a crush on liked him back, but he didn't have any real complaints. That's why, when he and his friend Connor pull the switch in the little red house, he is so shocked to suddenly be switched into a universe that is not his own. Traveling from universe to

universe, he discovers new pieces of himself along with incredible worlds he couldn't have ever imagined. With the help of some new and old friends, he must make his way back home, however, the home he's searching for may not be the same for all of them. Along the way, Jacobus and his friends not only discover the truth about the universe, but in turn, the truth about themselves and the only life they thought they'd ever live.

"The Switch" is an incredibly inventive telling of the classic science fiction styled book. With excellent world building, or universe building, it's easy for the reader to feel as if they're part of Jacobus' journey traveling through the multiverse. However, there's a tendency in the book to repeat the same information about how the universe works, and the reader can get bogged down in all the jargon and explanation. Moreover, some characters suddenly seem to know things or have connections to each other that don't always seem plausible in the world that has been built, including Jacobus' sudden understanding of what is happening to him very early on in the story. Despite this, the story is still compelling, full of rich detail and complex characters.

Hannah Hurdle

Endless Change

P.D. Workman



Parker is the oldest child, and the one his mother relies on. So, when Parker sees Dakota fending for herself in the streets, he can't help but extend a hand, offering to get her off the streets and back in

school. Dakota seems eager to go to school, to make friends, and make up for a childhood full of abuse. Unfortunately, the adults all sense something wrong with Dakota, her ever changing stories, and the way she seems to pull Parker along. Warning Parker away doesn't work. Something about her draws him in and makes him want to protect her. If he pushes, she might run, but with all the questions surrounding her, when the truth comes out, it doesn't just surprise, it explodes.

A contemporary take on one of the darker sides of life, "Endless Change" addresses homelessness, abuse, molestation, abandonment, and a myriad of other issues. Parker is a fixer, while Dakota is a user. The plot is well done, keeping the reader guessing the truth about Dakota for a while, and leaving them torn between how Parker sees her, and the reality. The depth and complexity of the tale set it apart from most contemporary tales, but the romance is hard to define because Dakota and her associated crimes leave the reader spinning. Overall, this is the kind of book to get a reader thinking, the kind of book that should be on a book club reading list at the least.

Sarah E Bradley

Make it Count

Tamar Sloan



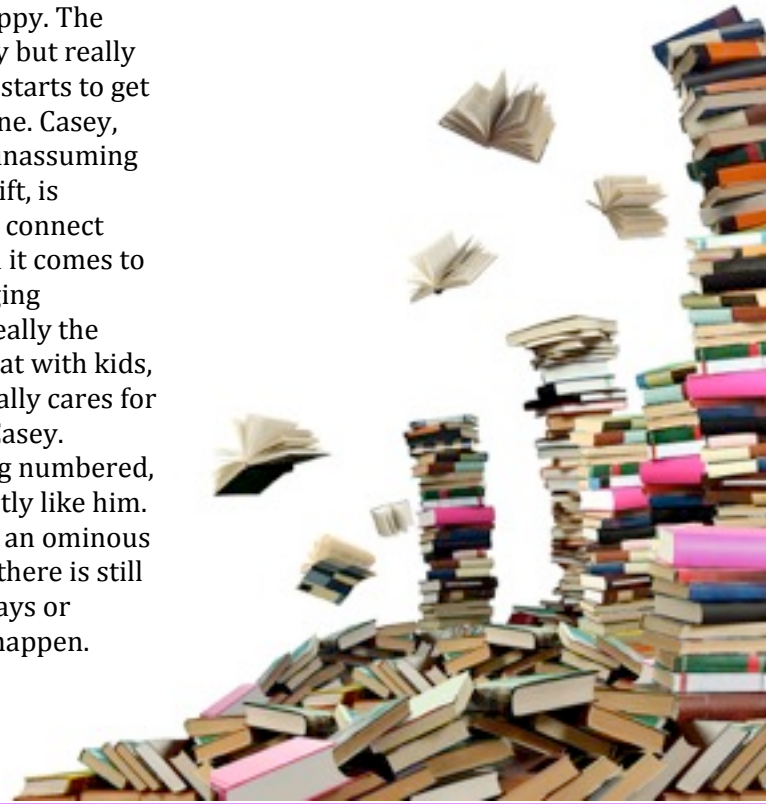
PARANORMAL: Casey Morgan knows numbers and has a gift: she knows how many days a person will live just by touching them. The gift has isolated Casey from people and keeps her at home instead of at a real school.

Still Casey manages to live a semi-normal life at home. She has family that she loves, a little brother Harry who annoys her and a mother who pushes her. When Casey meets PJ Sullivan, suddenly she is doing things that normally she wouldn't do, like meeting people at therapy, taking Harry to a dirt track to ride a motorbike and spending time with PJ. The more time Casey spends with PJ, she can't help but slowly fall for him. When Casey finds out how long PJ has to live, will Casey be able to stop his death.

The chapters, being listed by a character's allotted number of days, is a little different than normal chapter numbers. There were places in the story, however,

where other characters' number of days interrupts the reader, making the story choppy. The story builds up slowly but really takes off when Casey starts to get out of her comfort zone. Casey, the shy, introverted unassuming heroine despite her gift, is someone readers can connect with, especially when it comes to her feelings of belonging somewhere. PJ was really the perfect hero. He's great with kids, a good person and really cares for everyone, including Casey. Despite his days being numbered, the reader will instantly like him. The story might have an ominous tone throughout, yet there is still hope that changing days or destinies can or will happen.

Roslynn Ernst



New Adult



Swing Vote: Safe Harbors #3

Donna K. Weaver



Marine and Cobra helicopter pilot Marc North was on a humanitarian mission when an IED exploded and shattered both his leg and his relationship. After spending a year in physical and psychological therapy, Marc is eager to fly again. He and his

Marine buddy, Ike, have teamed up to start a business flying tourists on sightseeing tours around Southern Utah, using Ike's family home as their base of operation. Marc is looking forward to meeting Ike's brothers whom he has heard so much about. However, "Terk" is not a brother at all, rather she a fiery haired beauty named McKenzie Terkildsen. McKenzie has taken over as caregiver for her two younger brothers after the tragic death of her mom and step-dad. Although wary of another male in the house, McKenzie warms to Marc's handsome looks and good heart, but is that enough when ex-girlfriends and civil unrest threaten both their relationship and their very lives?

As a wounded veteran, Marc has more than enough reason to be angry and bitter, but thanks to the work he has done with his

therapists, he is remarkably open and stable. It is refreshing to read a novel that portrays mental health in such a positive light. McKenzie is a sweet mother hen who wants to help those around her. Both kind and caring people, Marc and McKenzie are a natural fit and their bittersweet story keeps the reader engaged. Although this is the third installment in the Safe Harbors series, it not only stands alone very well, but also hints at other gems that may be found within the series.

Elissa Blabac

BESTSELLING AUTHOR NATASZA WATERS

*A cup of romance
with a twist of steam*





Barefoot Bay: SEALED with a Twist (Barefoot Bay Kindle World)

Kiersten Hallie Krum



Grant “Twisted” Sisti is a Navy Seal and a psychologist who is struggling with his own post-traumatic stress disorder after the violent death of one of his teammates. He is unprepared for the attraction he feels for the mysterious hotel maid he finds skinny-dipping in his pool one fateful night. Skylar Thornquist met Grant in another life — before she changed her identity and took a maid’s job in Barefoot Bay. Hiding from her family, she must fight her attraction to the Navy Seal whose attentions threaten to expose her identity.

“Sealed with a Twist” combines romance with adventure to create a very readable story in which Skylar and Grant struggle to break free from the legacies of the past. The heat and attraction between Skylar and Grant is believable and well written. However, the character of Skylar embodies the cliché of the “rich girl who breaks from her controlling powerful family”, and is therefore predictable. The antagonist of the story is also a one-dimensional character with no redeeming qualities and functions only as a

plot device to propel the story forward. The final conflict faced by the two lovers near the end of “Barefoot Bay” is unexpected within the context and timing of the novel and is confusing. “Barefoot Bay” features a great hero and sensitive and well-researched treatment of Post-Traumatic-Stress Disorder.

Gwenellen Tarbet



Off the Grid for Love

Rena Koontz



McKenna McElroy has finally gotten rid of her no-good boyfriend. Unfortunately, he took all her possessions, her money and her identity with him. To add insult to injury, she is the victim of a robbery at the bank where she works and must fend off the unwelcome advances of her supervisor. Undercover FBI agent Jake Manettia encounters McKenna after the bank robbery and cannot resist his deep attraction to her. Working deep undercover means that he shouldn’t get close to McKenna, but his heart overrules his head — putting them both in danger.

“Off the Grid for Love” is a thriller with an engrossing story line. Ms. Koontz does a nice job of weaving separate story lines into a strong

narrative. These seemingly disparate story lines sometimes cause confusion for the reader, however, and require some extra effort to keep track of the action. However, Ms. Koontz pulls through at the end and combines the story lines together for a satisfying conclusion. With a well-paced story arc, Ms. Koontz effortlessly builds tension and suspense and concludes her story with a surprising twist at the end. McKenna and Jake are well fleshed-out characters whose relationship progresses believably and naturally. With great prose and well-written characters, “Off the Grid for Love” is a thriller that will keep the reader engaged from beginning to end.

Gwenellen Tarbet



Made (The Trinity Book 2)

J.L. Lora



Gia Corey is part of a triad: a sisterhood sorority of sorts, who have built a business to deal with the corrupt underworld, taking out the members of a powerful New York cartel with a phone call. Murder and corruption are her world. Trusting people is not on her list of things to do. There are but a handful of people she trusts and the one man she is attracted

to, sexy playboy Noel McClean, is not one of them. There is one evil demon from her past that still haunts her. Will she take him out and finally free herself?

Gia's evil ex-boyfriend Declan will stop at nothing to get her back. When she faces a prison stint for a crime she did not commit, she is convinced Declan is behind it. She has fought her attraction to Noah McClean. He tries to convince her that she needs him, but she thwarts his attempts, denying herself happiness until she can take down Declan. Eradicating Declan becomes her priority and she must do this alone, even if it could end her life.

Lovers of romantic suspense will love Gia and her besties (much like the Angels of Charlie's Angels) who will stop at nothing to protect their own. The story progresses well, but stalls out mid-way, once Gia is released from prison. Details revealed early in the story need to have the dots connected, but it isn't a deal breaker. Ms. Lora does a great job with her character development, and the ending will leave readers fist pumping Gia, our heroine.

Layne Lancaster

No Good Deed

Susanne Matthews



All Alexa desires is independence and to be free from a controlling and abusive relationship. Taking the risk to run from her fiancé, she stumbles into a different kind of nightmare when she witnesses a crime. The last thing Mike needs or wants is to watch over a stubborn woman, but determined to find the man responsible for his wife's murder, he takes on the

job of protecting Alexa. The deeper the two dig into the case, the more questions and danger emerge, forcing Mike and Alexa to rely on one another, not just to solve the mystery but ultimately to survive.

"No Good Deed" takes readers on an action-packed, suspenseful journey from the first chapter until the final climax. Alexa's great strength and determination in the beginning draw the reader into the story. Her personality turns abrasive and far too stubborn when Mike enters the scene, causing Alexa for a time to become a highly unlikeable character and driving down the pace. Mike is not a typical hero, but his flaws and determination will endear him to readers. In the midst of fighting with one another and struggling to trust the other's story, Alexa and Mike come to a middle ground, allowing the plot to move forward. In the end, the twists and turns rather than the relationship between Mike and Alexa are what keep the reader engaged and turning the page.

Amy Cefoldo



Mirror Image

CJ Warrant

CNF: Due to the content in this book, InD'tale is unable to review this novel as it contains scenes of graphic sexual violence.

Layne Lancaster/Marc Joseph

The Whispered Tales of Graves Grove

J.S. Bailey, E.D.E. Bell, Mark Anderson, Matthew Howe, Travis Perry, Dakota Caldwell, Caitlyn Konze, S.R. Betler, Raymond Henri, Avily Jerome, Elise Manion,

Cathrine Bonham, John Turney, Mackenzie Flohr, D.M. Kilgore, Deanna Fugett, Kelsey Keating



Readers beware, there is absolutely nothing romantic about any of these tales. In fact, if one does not like creepy, skin-crawling, keep-you-up-at-night "Tales from the Crypt" style stories, do not read this anthology. However, readers who love thrillers, suspense, mysteries set in the deeply dark side of life, and the Crypt Keeper is your spirit animal, have come to the right place, and will discover an entire town to nosh on.

Each "chapter" is actually a short story by a different author. Each story revolves around Graves Grove, a middle-of-nowhere Canadian town. The founder makes a deal with...something...and because of that, nothing is normal, though everyone acts as if it is. Each tale focuses on just a tiny portion of weird creepiness that pervades this place. Some of the characters will be met again and again, while others are one hit wonders. The setting and description of it remains solid throughout, a true accomplishment with so many penned words.

The stories might have been better served if they were in chronological order; jumping from time to time makes the collection less cohesive. Some of

the stories read more like “first chapters” rather than complete short stories, causing severe double takes when said tales come to a crashing halt, never to be picked back up. This town drives a few of the locals a bit crazy. The townsfolk didn’t just drink the Kool-Aid — they willingly had IV drips and replaceable bags. If stories such as this are up your alley, hang on to your drip pole, you will not soon —if ever—forget these characters or this town.

Julie York



Broken Ground (The Jay Porter Series)

Joe Clifford



Jay Porter knows that Adam and Michael Lombardi are corrupt, he just can’t prove it. At an AA meeting, he is approached by Amy Lupus who asks for his help finding her missing sister, Emily. Jay does a little private investigating on the side even though he’s not licensed and has been warned by the local PD not to investigate the Lombardis. After doing some checking around to see if he can find Emily, a journalist intern looking into a possible conspiracy involving toxic soil, he learns that there is far more going on than a missing

young lady. Things begin to become clearer when he realizes the death of his brother 5 years ago and Emily’s disappearance may be related, and his old nemeses may be involved. Will he be able to prove it this time?

“Broken Ground” is part of the Jay Porter series but stands well on its own and is written in first person point of view. Mr. Clifford knows his way around an angst-driven character. Maybe a little too well. Jay Porter, at least in this story, isn’t very likeable. He’s surly, negative and just never has a positive, happy moment. Well... unless he’s having sex with a woman he’s only just met. In the story, Jay says he realizes he’s happy, but one never sees it. Due to the negativity, it’s somewhat depressing, the ready never gets away from the angst, trepidation and unease that is Jay Porter. Even still, Mr. Clifford’s writing is wonderful and worth the time spent.

Lynne Bryant



Best of Luck

Corinne Scott



Crew Costa has made a name for himself with his popular chain of faux-Irish themed pubs. When he decides to open Number 13 in the

Bronx, where many authentic Irish pubs are already established, he makes a lot of enemies. Among them is Siobhan O’Brien, daughter to the founder of The Lion O’Brien. The pub is everything to Siobhan, who is counting on it winning the St. Patrick’s Day Pub Crawl. The lead-up to the Crawl includes competitors pranking each other. For Crew and Siobhan, however, the prank quickly becomes expensive and personal. Can Siobhan and Crew put their trust in each other to explore their mutual attraction? Or will the rage brewing between the pubs go too far and put everyone in danger?

“Best of Luck” is a fast-paced romance with secrets at every turn. Packed with drama from page one, it is both humorous and suspenseful. That being said, the drama almost becomes too much. It seems a new development pops up on every page and the characters can be over the top in their responses. It is lust at first sight for the leads who are passionate but lack conviction. Siobhan easily abandons her focus on the family pub once she develops interest in Crew. The story is also full of clichés, from the way Crew states “Siobhan isn’t like other women” to Siobhan’s sassy yet promiscuous black female waitress. Even so, Ms. Scott has an easy style that has the readers flying through the pages with a story that grabs the reader and doesn’t let go until the very end.

Arec Rain



Last Rights

Ava Bradley



It is March of the year 2224 when John Smith wakes up in a hospital with memories of fighting, but when and where, he can't remember. As John is evaluating what state his body is in, the door bursts open and a woman, Fallon Monroe, along with a small boy, who is a clone, enters his room. John doesn't know why, but it is suddenly his mission to protect the woman and child at all costs. John escapes the hospital with Fallon and the clone, whose name is Jamie, with minutes to spare. They are being chased by the government, New Rights Evangelists, regular citizens and even the military. It is a race against time for Fallon, Jamie and John to find safety and security in a world of danger. That's if love doesn't end up killing them first.

The story moves quickly, filled with lots of action, nail biting suspense and romance. The reader will definitely enjoy the fast pace. The book is set in the future, but very little about the time period is alluded to or explained. John, a soldier with PTSD, has looks that are somewhat vague, but he is someone the reader can sympathize with and really like despite his demeanor. Fallon is a

good, strong heroine, but her behavior doesn't seem to fit her profession. Still, readers will be able to relate to her. With each scary close call, readers will feel compelled to find out if the characters can finally be safe and find their happily ever after.

Roslynn Ernst



The Consultant

Tj O'Connor



Jon Hunter is called home by his brother whom he has not spoken to in fifteen years. If Kevin needs his help, he must be in some deep trouble. Jon makes it home just in time to stumble upon some shady dealings. Gun fire erupts, and suddenly Kevin is in Jon's arms speaking cryptic phrases and apologizing right before he takes his last breath. Terror attacks and plots are taking place on US soil. Can Jon find out who killed his brother before he himself gets killed? Can he run interference between terrorist cells and make sure the bad guys don't do more damage? He has much work to do in very little time and keeps getting plucked out as one of the suspects.

"The Consultant" will grab readers attention immediately and keep them engaged to the very last page. The hero in this

tale is Jon Hunter, a crafty ex military, ex CIA agent turned 'consultant'. Mr. O'Connor pens quite a character with Jon. His snarky comments and quick comebacks lend quite a fun twist to a crazy terrorist storm. Mr. O'Connor also gives such great descriptions that readers have a front row seat to the action, and the story's ties to current events are well written. Although he packs a lot supporting characters into the book, all are nicely placed, and the Indiana Jones type ending gives a satisfying sense of closure. The suspense, mystery and drama are very well played, and readers will not set this book down until the very end.

Viola Robins



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Rescuing Prince Charming (Alien Contact for Idiots Book 4)

Edward Hoornaert



SCI-FI: In “Rescuing Prince Charming,” protagonist Desdemona Johnson, aka Dusty, leads a pretty ordinary life as a tech writer. When saboteurs try to bomb the prototype of Earth’s first starship, she finds herself at the wrong (or as it turns out, ‘right’), place at the right time to save the starship. And when a mysterious, drop-dead-gorgeous Kwadran turns up out of nowhere to help, Dusty can’t help but feel attracted to this enigmatic stranger. That is, until the stranger turns out to be Reese Eaglesbrood, an alien prince yearning for a chance to redeem himself – and the perfect way to do so seems to be by rooting out the saboteurs determined to destroy his latest project. However, the moment Reese meets Dusty, he realizes her very presence could jeopardize his mission.

The world-building in “Rescuing Prince Charming” is phenomenal, and the science-fiction aspect works very well. Without being too complicated or falling into the trap of endless technical descriptions, Edward Hoornaert crafts a believable, entertaining

sci-fi world that both Dusty and Reese are part of. The romance in the story is very intriguing as well, and while both characters are interesting on their own, the chemistry between them is what truly drives the story.

Majanka Verstraete



Serengeti Valor: The Apprentice, #5

E.G. Manetti



Through ruthless plotting, planning and much ambition, the powerful Lucius Mercio has finally elevated his cartel, the Serengeti Group, to the third wealthiest and most influential in the twelve systems. None of it could have been accomplished, however, without Lillian. The bond-slave he purchased three years ago has shown a loyalty, diligence and intelligence Lucius has never encountered before. As a reward, Lucius goes against all protocol and appoints Lillian the highly sought after honor of conservator. But as his enemies grow, and disaster strikes at the very heart of his empire, both Lucius and Lillian are tested to the breaking point. His cartel is under siege and none may stay alive long enough to see who the true villains are.

Wow! This series just keeps getting better and better! Ms. Manetti develops each character and plot line with such exquisite nuance that the journey of discovery is a delight to enjoy. This book may be hard to read as a stand-alone but few are more deftly written or more excitingly addictive. The worlds are intricate and realistic; the characters are both heroic and flawed. The star that shines brightest, however, is Lillian. Her journey is well worth every cent paid to purchase each of the five books in this series so far. For some of the very best in Science Fiction action and romance, “Serengeti Valor” and the Apprentice series stand undefeated!

Ruth Lynn Ritter



Scandalized by My Prince (Linked Across Time #8)

Dawn Brower



Dr. Aubriella Byrne rushes to Kent to discover what has happened to her beloved cousin, when a glance in a mirror reveals the most handsome man she's

ever seen. Knowing somehow that he is from the past and that he needs her, she leaps through the mirror and back in time to help. Killian Lynwood, Earl of Thornbury and private bachelor has no idea why Aubriella is on his lands or what happened to her, but something about her makes him want to protect her. However, Aubriella knows something she won't tell him, and keeping the Earl out of danger without revealing the truth is getting trickier by the moment. Telling him the truth might save his life, but it could also destroy the budding love between them. Will their secrets keep them apart, or will trust save the day?

Another addition to the "Linked Across Time" series, "Scandalized by My Prince" is the eighth book

and thus should be read in order to prevent major spoilers. In addition to the spoilers though, this book feels rushed from beginning to end, jumping right in and taking off like a shot, leaving the characters shallow, the romance forced without much development, and the pace so quick the tale feels like a novella instead of a full-length novel. However, there is enough steam in this tale to bring Aubriella and Killian together and fans of the series will undoubtedly enjoy seeing past characters return. Overall, a light and quick time travel romance.

Sarah E Bradley



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Season of Deception (The Seasons, Book 2)

Sara Jane Jacobs



Amanda Jarvis has a successful career as a model. Yet, the day her childhood friend and long-time crush, Tyler, kisses her and leaves her before deploying as a Navy Seal, Amanda is crushed. Phoebe Garrison doesn't want her only niece settling for a nobody like Tyler, when she could have someone like the protective billionaire Eric Bridwell. Using Tyler's deployment to her advantage, Phoebe intercepts phone calls and letters, leaving Amanda adrift. Eric isn't going to waste a second at a chance with the beautiful woman with a heart of gold. As things develop between Amanda and Eric, Tyler is left alone and uncertain if his best friend has moved on. When Phoebe's meddling comes to light Amanda has a choice to make, the man she's loved since childhood, or the man who has supported her as an adult?

A dramatic contemporary romance, "Season of Deception" picks right up where the previous book leaves off. That said, the romance in this book is done in such a way as to make the ending almost unforgivable. The romance between Amanda and Tyler all takes place in book one, whereas

Eric and Amanda come together in this book so well that readers will be forced to choose Team Tyler or Team Eric. The problem is that the conflict feels forced in places and doesn't feel resolved. Further the "bad guy" feels unnecessary. Still, the overall plot is well done and readers will find this book worth adding to their to-read list.

Sarah E Bradley



The Rood (The Marylanders Book 1)

Donna Hechler Porter



HISTORICAL: Thomas McQueen returns home after two years of executing vengeance on those who killed his wife and child. Expecting to find his family, he instead finds a young woman trying to bury her brother. After helping her, he decides he cannot leave her alone, and brings her along to Baltimore Town where his family has fled. Elizabeth does not know if she can trust Thomas, but she has a hidden past as well. She is half-British and half Acadian and is not accepted in the town. Thomas does all he can to protect her from those who would harm her, but his past soon catches up with him. He knows what he must do, but leaving Elizabeth turns out to be more difficult than he imagined.

"The Rood" takes the reader right into the heart of the French and Indian War. Danger is rampant and no one can be trusted. The history is wonderfully accurate and the writing immerses the reader in this treacherous world. The characters are well written and developed, with pasts that really affect their decisions throughout the story. However, there are points where the pace dragged on a bit. The characters do not trust each other and that subject comes up quite frequently. However, it is clear that Elizabeth and Thomas are captivated with one another. Not only are they passionately in love with each other, but they lean on their beliefs to help them through all the adversity they face. Readers will love watching this beautiful romance overcome all odds!

Amanda Hupe



Season of Hope

Sara Jane Jacobs



Amanda Jarvis lives on an isolated mountain with the house next door being vacant. There are no kids her age around. She prays the house will be filled with a friend preferably a girl, but when it ends up being a boy, she is okay with it. Tyler Armstrong and his mom fit right in with Amanda's family, and they grow up together.

As high school graduation nears the reality that they are going to part ways is hard for them. Tyler recognizes that his feelings for Amanda have grown. As he goes into the military, she goes to New York where she becomes a model managed by her overambitious aunt, Phoebe. Amanda and Tyler try to figure out how they can keep their relationship going with both of them chasing their dreams.

“Season of Hope” is a coming of age story that is encouraging and refreshing, with a hint of romance. It's sweet that Amanda is so accepting of Tyler at the beginning, and he is just as accepting of her. The relationship between the two is comfortable and radiates off the pages. The supporting characters add intricacy. The small-town setting in the beginning is cozy. The conflict that ensues with whether or not they will become something more is interesting. Their journey encompasses a long passage of time that could have been a little more condensed and focused. The storyline is a bit scattered, and the pacing is disjointed. A favorite romance trope is sure to delight many.

Jessica Samuelson



Scions of Azazyel: War in Heaven

R.K. Wheeler

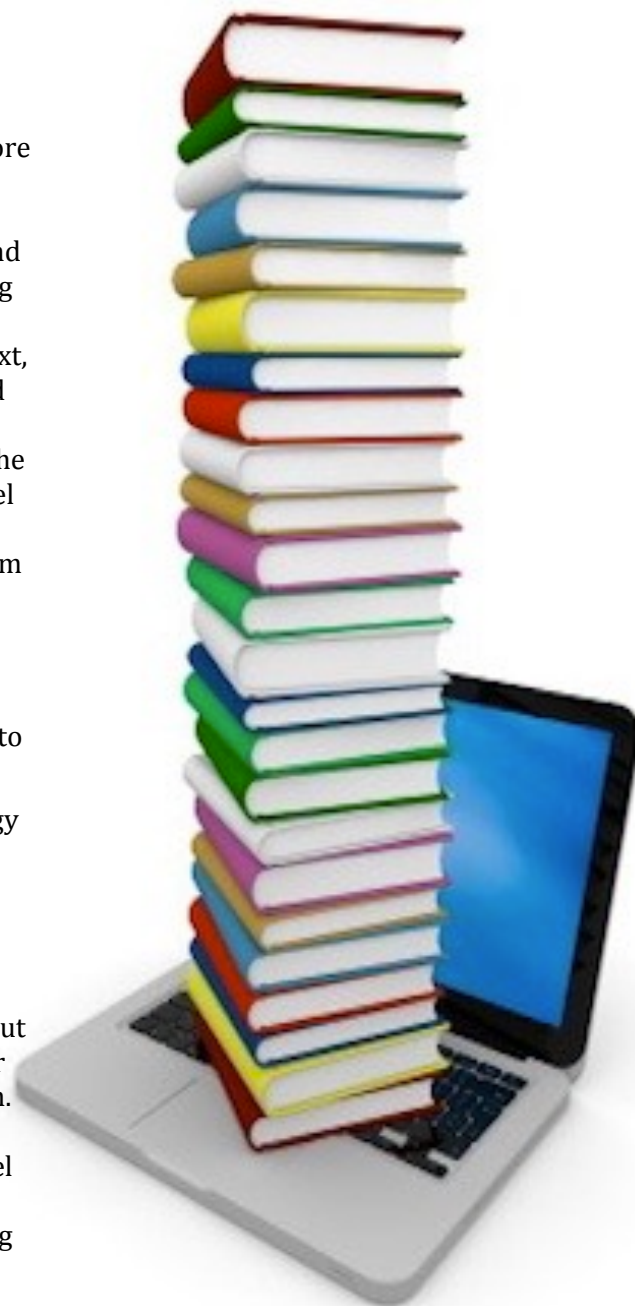


PARANORMAL/SUSPENSE/THRILLER: Archangels Gabriel and Raphael are on a mission to find the children of Azazyel before the Battle of Armageddon hits. This mission takes them to the surface of Earth, to its depths and beyond, facing many perils along the way. As their journey takes them from one danger to the next, they pick up an interesting band of characters, from humans to gnomes, dwarves and a fairy. The closer they get to finding Azazyel the more dangerous their task becomes, ultimately leading them back to the garden where it all started. R.K. Wheeler mixes mythology, religion, and many different beings and races into one story creating a new world to explore beneath the Earth.

An interesting take on mythology and religion, “Scion of Azazyel” takes the reader on a journey beyond the realm of Earth and back again. The deep research into Greek mythology and Christianity is evident throughout the story; however, Mr. Wheeler rarely makes each story his own. The plot line in the beginning seems clear enough, find Azazyel before the vampires, but the farther into the story, everything

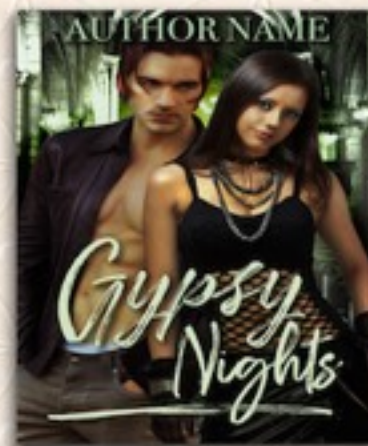
becomes muddled, leaving the reader wondering where the story is going. The biggest strikes against the story are the countless typos and an obvious lack of editing, giving the impression of a first draft not a final manuscript. In the midst of the flaws, with an intriguing premise, Mr. Wheeler has the potential for creating an interesting new series.

Amy Cefoldo



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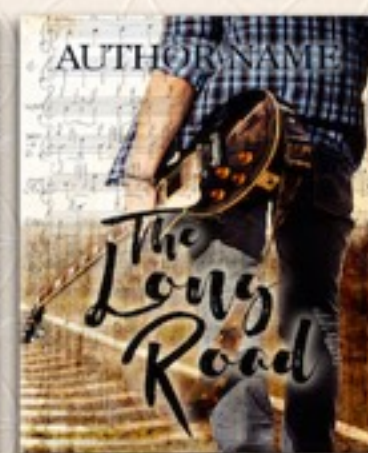
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A Photograph of Love (Hell Yeah! Universe)

Tina Susedik



Trudy Selucas is a hospice nurse who has seen too many people die. She takes a vacation to Texas in order to try to unwind and pursue her photography hobby. She finds herself in a most awkward situation while on the hunt for perfect nature photographs: her pants around her ankles and a rattlesnake ready to strike her bare bottom. Lincoln Phister comes to the rescue, but he is an angry man who gets on Trudy's nerves. His siblings see something special in Trudy and immediately take her under their wing, and into their farmhouse as their guest. As Trudy and Lincoln spend more time together, they learn that they have much more in common than they originally believed. Will Trudy break through Link's anger to see the true man inside? Will Link help Trudy realize that death is a part of life?

This novel is a well-written, fast-paced story about the differences in people that may actually bring them closer together. The characters are easy to connect with and each is independently likable. Readers will pull for them to make the final move to bring

them together. There are times throughout the book when they do not seem to connect in the way a romantic couple should. Each holds back from each other in a way that is frustrating for the reader at times. One scene in particular will have readers laughing aloud; the descriptions are extremely detailed and readers can visualize exactly what is happening. The story offers friendship, family loyalty, laughter, tears, mystery, and love. This is a definite read-worthy novel.

Tina Donovan



Six Dogs 'til Sunday (Mae December #6)

Lia Farrell



Mae December, a well-known and well-liked member of Rosedale, believes she is safe and over her former fiancé Noah West. As she scouts locations for a film, she comes face to face with Noah's ghost, just months before her marriage to Sheriff Ben Bradley. Before long, unsavory people from Mae's past, which connects to the location, start cropping up again and Sheriff Bradley steps in to protect her. However, in doing so he stumbles across a large ring of drugs, lies, and betrayal involving members of the community. To

move forward and close his investigation he must trust Mae, his detectives, and his own feelings.

"Six Dogs 'til Sunday" is an ambitious read, with characters who work very hard to get the reader to like them. For the most part they succeed. There is no character development save for two exceptions, and one of them was a complete sideline from the main plot. This story is all over the place with its introductions; the audience meets everyone in the first couple of chapters with no way to know who is important. Perhaps this is because "Six Dogs 'til Sunday" is the sixth and final installment in the series. In any case, it is virtually impossible for new readers to follow along if they start here — and this affects the rating. However, a strong point in the book's favor is that author Lia Farrell clearly sets out her protagonist's perspective, and for this, it deserves kudos.

Yannie Sorensen



River Whispers

Rachelle J. Christensen



The tragic loss of his wife Gina and infant son in a horrible car accident has traumatized Jack Bentley. He is trying to stay strong for his five-year-old daughter,

Hallie, who has not spoken for weeks about the loss of her mommy and brother. Jack is relying on his mother-in-law, Helen, to help him take care of Hallie when he has to go back to work. He is plagued by reoccurring dreams of his wife, who keeps telling him to save his son. Gina's best friend Emily is having the same dreams. Events start to occur that bring Jack, Emily, and Hallie together to try save his baby son. But will those nagging dreams go away- or will Jack start listening to his dead wife? Is he going crazy?

Readers will love this book when the tears start to fall and emotions run high. Rachelle Christensen weaves the characters of this story together in unexpected ways. She also brings to light how much a parent's love is never ending. Jack's continuous insistence that his son is dead brings grief to the forefront sometimes a little too much. But readers will be sucked into a mystery so thick they will not be able to stop reading until the very last page! A very compelling action-packed mystery!

Jodi Martinez



The Lion of the South

Jessica James



HISTORICAL: In "The Lion of the South", Julia Dandridge returns to her childhood home, only to discover that everyone and everything she once held dear, has been affected by the civil war raging through the country. She wants nothing more than to save her brother, but to do so, she'll have to uncover the secret identity of The Lion of the South, a mysterious figure. Unfortunately, no one knows who he really is. But as Julia uncovers who the Lion actually is, he's already walking into the trap Julia helped set for him. If Julia wants any chance at redemption, she'll have to do whatever it takes to save him.

Filled with historical detail, this book transports the reader more than a century back in time, to the civil war era. The author obviously did a lot of research to be able to describe the setting so vividly and accurately. The connections between Julia's present and past are an interesting touch, and the romance is clean, although rather predictable. The book on the whole is fine but not all that original, and the narrative sometimes rambles off into complex, detailed descriptions that slow down the plot

immensely. However, readers looking for a simple, nice, clean romance with a touch of mystery set against an historical backdrop will find exactly that.

Majanka Verstraete



Death at the Midnight Dragonfly

Susan Boles



With the return of an old crush and his mysterious new sleep study, Lily Gayle's hands are already full. When a neighbor winds up dead on the front porch of the Midnight Dragonfly Inn, however, Lily Gayle takes it upon herself to solve his murder. Things get even more complicated, however, when a pair of boxing gloves shows up at the scene of the crime. Now, with one of her friends potentially being charged for murder, Lily Gayle, along with her cousin, the local sheriff, and her best friend Dixie, must work to find the real killer, all while maybe trying to rekindle an old spark she once thought would never start a fire.

Lily Gayle's spunky can-do attitude makes "Death at the Midnight Dragonfly" a quick and fun read that will make one smile from beginning to end. However, the book does have its problems

with incorrectly formatted dialogue and grammar mistakes galore. Moreover, the ending of the book feels rushed, leaving readers with more questions than answers. One is how exactly the real killer committed the murder; another is the weird connections between the sleep study and the people in town. There also does not seem to be much motive for the murder, leaving readers wondering why the killer committed the crime. Lastly, the book ends without any real resolution. The ending builds toward a big revelation and then just finishes in a somewhat anticlimactic ending. On the other hand, the book has a charm all its own, and readers will truly enjoy following Lily Gayle along on another adventure.

Hannah Hurdle



Summer's Squall

Amy Schisler

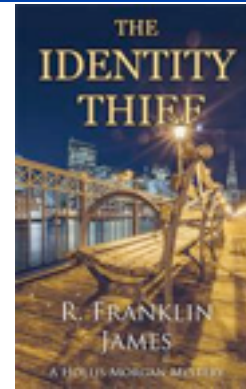


Abe Lankton is a busy Baltimore police detective, but when his cousin calls in a favor, he can't turn her down. Unfortunately, his investigation has little to go on other than his cousin's concerns and the victim's fear. Yet, there is something about Summer Cooper that makes him want to look deeper. Summer isn't sure why someone is stalking her, or if it's

just a series of pranks, but as fear continues to threaten to overwhelm her, she finds herself wanting to trust Lank with more than just her safety but also her heart. Unfortunately, she has more than one scar to hide, and with little evidence to go on, Lank needs a reason to stick around. Can Summer open up about her past or will Lank be forced to leave without his heart?

A contemporary romance mingled with a slow building mystery, "Summer's Squall" is unique among its fellows because the mystery is executed in a realistic manner including the detective questioning the victim's place in it. Further, the romance builds slowly, and at a reasonable pace. There are also some twists to the mystery that keep it from being solved too quickly but still reasonably. However, the overall pace is slow and even the mystery takes a while to get moving making it feel long. Still, the characters have depth and the story feels vivid enough to be a Hallmark mystery movie. Overall, a winner for fans of contemporary mystery and romance.

Sarah E Bradley



The Identity Thief (A Hollis Morgan Mystery – Book 6)

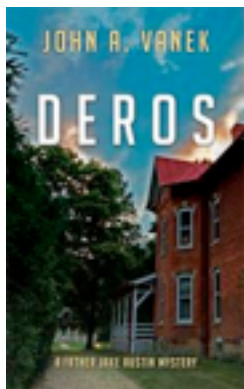
R. Franklin James



Hollis Morgan, probate lawyer and human lie detector, is about to make a leap from probate law to criminal law. Her first client is Justin Eastland, an alleged identity thief, now being accused of murder. Meanwhile, Hollis also takes on a probate case, one that is a little more complicated than usual, as it involves a client in the witness protection program, trying to work out the details of her will without blowing her cover. On a more personal note, Hollis slowly accepts that her fiancé, John, must return to field work, and she finally returns to the Fallen Angels Book Club after a lengthy absence.

The "Identity Thief" is an absorbing mystery with brisk pacing and sharp dialogue. Readers will appreciate the original plot, which is clever, packed with intrigue, and one or two intense life or death scenarios. The probate case is as interesting as the criminal case, with all the threads coming together nicely. However, the criminal case left a few minor strings dangling, omitting some finer details some readers may wonder about, especially seasoned mystery lovers who may

Julie Whiteley



John Vanek



Father Jake Austin is a member of the Camillian Order currently assigned to his hometown of Oberlin, Ohio. He is back just in time for his class reunion with peers who can't believe he has entered the priesthood. A series of suspicious murders plague the graduating class. A strange confession piques Father Jake's interest about what is going on. He is fighting the demons of his past that torment him from the Vietnam war. He struggles to stay present, working to find out how to reconcile his past with his present all the while piecing together who is behind the murders. He has to solve the mystery while convincing the Bishop he is not a liability.

The novel is aptly named and fascinates the reader page after page. The mystery is intriguing, with an edge of darkness that keeps things interesting. The main character, Jake, is delectably complicated and conflicted. The controversy of his profession is entertaining. It is especially interesting that Jake wrestles with his past and present that is the priesthood. There is an array of supporting characters that add excellent depth. The historical elements are accurate, impressive and different layers of conflict add a captivating complexity. "Deros," the debut of a new series, leaves the reader with a favorable impression of what is to come. Jake is a little hard to relate to in the beginning, making it hard for readers to engage at first. The story is provocative, however, and in the end will keep the reader engaged.



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Family Secrets

(Whispering Pines Mystery)

Shawn McGuire

Narrator: Sandra Murphy



MYSTERY: Jayne O'Shea's life is in shambles. She has just quit her job as a cop and left her long-time boyfriend. She feels utterly lost, and hopes that tending to her grandparents cabin will give her the space and time she needs to think and heal. When she arrives at the Whispering Pines cabin, she discovers a dead woman and her cop instincts immediately kick in. When the local sheriff comes along, he doesn't seem remotely interested in solving the case, so Jayne takes it upon herself to investigate. She soon learns that the village is a safe haven for those who practice Wicca — her late grandmother among them. Who murdered the young woman? It is hard to tell with so much mystery lurking in Whispering Pines.

"Family Secrets" is filled with suspense and mystery! Since all the locals practice Wicca, they make for fabulously unique characters! This book also sheds light on the Wiccan religion, and the author does a wonderful job researching all of those aspects. The local characters are all very enjoyable. However, Jayne O'Shea falls short in comparison. There are times where she would say she would not judge, then turn

around and be judgmental. Unfortunately, her character doesn't seem to develop at all, even at the end she tends to have an over-critical attitude.

The narrator was adequate. There are times when there should have been more urgency in her voice. The mellow tone of her voice turns suspenseful moments into average moments. However, the narrator does very well with the tones of the different character voices. Overall, this was a fantastic and unique mystery! There is no romance in this story, just pure mystery. Be prepared for twists, turns, and a shocking ending!

Amanda Hupe



Rogue's Call

(The King's Riders #3)

C.A. Szarek

Narrator: Ruth Urquhart



FANTASY: Lady Elissa Durroc has lived in the King's household since her family died when she was young. She is also an elemental mage, which means she can control all the natural elements. However, the same dark mage who killed her family also wants her powers. In order to protect her, the King sends Elissa to Castle Greenwald to choose a husband. Since she is in danger, Sir Alasdair Kearney is assigned to protect her at all times. Alasdair is a strong

knight with no intentions on ever marrying — that is, until he meets Lady Elissa. They are drawn to each other but Alasdair knows she must marry one of the chosen suitors. He wants to protect her from the dark mage without losing his heart.

This medieval fantasy is intriguing from the very first chapter and moves at a great pace. The author's world building is fantastic; she has created a mystical and magical land. This world has it all — magic, sword fights, wolves and romance. Elissa and Alasdair are enchanting main characters! Their chemistry is smoldering, despite the fact that they desperately need to work on their communication. It is impossible not to root for Alasdair and Elissa. It is also wonderful to see supportive characters so diverse and complex. Elissa and Alasdair often lean on those around them and it makes for wonderful storytelling!

Listening to the story is quite enjoyable as well. The narrator makes perfect accents and tones for each character and clearly displays their emotions. The narrator's voice also expresses the perfect tones for all situations in the story. Overall, this story will leave the reader wanting to dive into the previous books in the King's Riders series! It is definitely an epic ride.

Amanda Hupe



Live for This

Kathryn R. Biel

Narrator: Lori Prince



WOMEN'S FICTION/CHICK-LIT: A trigger warning for rape and drug abuse with detailed descriptions.

After a horrible relationship, Samirah finds herself homeless in an unfamiliar town with nowhere to go and no one to turn to. When Michael encounters Samirah, for reasons he cannot explain he is compelled to help her, thrusting the two into an unlikely friendship. For the first time since an accident that left him paralyzed, Michael feels as if he can make a difference in someone else's life, and he is determined to not give up on her. Through Michael's kindness, Samirah begins to wonder if she can overcome her past and maybe find someone she can finally trust.

"Live for This" is a great story about how, even in the midst of brokenness, healing can come in the unlikeliest of places. One's heart breaks for Samirah but warms with the kindness Michael showers upon her. Michael, paralyzed from the waist down does not shy away from life. Instead, he is determined to embrace it, handicap and all. Ms. Biel paints a great picture of a man who will not let a physical injury hold him back. The

friendship between Samirah and Michael grows naturally and the chemistry between the two drives the plot in a beautiful way. Readers will embrace them fully, root for them to find healing, joy and love in the end.

Lori Prince, for the most part does an excellent job of portraying the characters. The only hindrance to her performance is her male voices, jarring the listener out of the story for a time. The emotion Ms. Price puts into the characters will envelope the listener into the story, bringing more to an already impactful story. Along with a great recording quality, and a good performance by Ms. Prince, "Live for This" makes for an intriguing and worthwhile listen.

Amy Cefoldo



The End of Miracles

Monica Starkman

Narrator: Jane Oppenheimer



SUSPENSE/THRILLER: Margo and Steven have struggled with infertility, trying everything to get pregnant but with no success. Weeks after their doctor explains there is nothing else to do, a miracle happens: Margo finds herself expecting. The next few months are filled with excitement and joy until the unthinkable happens, plunging Margo into a deep depression with no idea how to emerge from the darkness

surrounding her. "The End of Miracles" explores one woman's journey with deep heartache and how far she will go to have what she wants.

Ms. Starkman paints a heartbreaking picture of what could happen to someone in the face of great tragedy. She does a good job of bringing out the emotions of losing a child, not holding anything back. The relationship between Margo and Steven is beautiful, with Steven standing by his wife through it all. The issues come first with the book blurb giving away the plot, twists, and direction of the story, taking away all mystery for the reader. In addition, Margo's character arch is rather unrealistic and her derailment comes far too quickly. Overall, "The End of Miracles" speaks on a topic not addressed enough, possibly helping other women to talk about their hurts before it is too late.

Jane Oppenheimer portrays the heavy topics smoothly, giving a technically flawless performance. Although the audio quality and recording are presented without a hitch, the topic of the story may not make the best choice for an audiobook. Ms. Oppenheimer does little to differentiate between characters, so when perspective changes it is difficult to keep straight who is talking. The emotions represented throughout the novel are inconsistent, at times being over the top while at others not giving the listener enough. Overall, for the right audience, "The End of Miracles" can be an interesting listen.

Amy Cefoldo



Alexandria: Book Two in the Sword of Agrippa Series

Gregory Ness



TIME TRAVEL/SCI-FI/METAPHYSICAL: Caesar, Cleopatra, her half-sister, Samia, and Agrippa are eager to explore a tomb of the pharaohs. They discover dozens of tablets that they all know of, but have never seen. Caesar is fascinated with maps and finds an impressive example in the main chamber. The quartet is unable to explore the sealed rooms, and come up with a theory that the inner room doors will open if the outer door of the pyramid is closed. Samia and Agrippa volunteer to be closed within the pyramid.

Roy is a leading consultant in the study of dreams. He studies and records peoples' dreams on a TV monitor while the subject is in a sensory deprivation tank. He is also studying his own dreams, which he believes are past lives known as samskaras. Roy, too, is fascinated with maps and sees himself in ancient Rome ushering in a new era.

"Alexandria" is a thought-provoking novel featuring two stories in one. The first story is set in ancient Egypt, the second in the near future. At first, the two stories have little in common, but

Caesar's explorations of the pyramid and Roy's visions of the past bring the two together. Due to the shortness of the piece (only six chapters), there is little in the way of plot or character development. "Alexandria" does not work well as a standalone novel; readers need more information needed from the first in the series in order to appreciate this book. "Alexandria" is unique and fanciful, best read after "Antioch: The Sword of Agrippa Book 1".

Belinda Wilson



Just Like the Bronte Sisters

Laurel Osterkamp



WOMEN'S FICTION: Jo Beth and Skylar are typical sisters who share the same passion for skiing. When Jo Beth suffers an accident that crumbles her Olympic dreams, she leaves Colorado and her sister, to move to Brazil in search of a new life for herself. Upon meeting Mitch, Jo Beth's life has several ups and downs, all of which come to a dramatic end. With nowhere else to turn, Mitch makes his way to Colorado and directly into Skylar's life. Skylar does not trust Mitch, yet something causes her to continue to see the good in him. Will she be able to look past the warnings

from her sister and build a life with Mitch or will everything be turned upside down once again?

"Like the Bronte Sisters" is a contemporary romance with a hint of fantasy included. It has a strong emphasis on various literary novels that, unless the reader is familiar with these classics, may be distracting. The story is not told in the same format: it switches from a point of view for one character to a narrative of another character. It is difficult to connect with either sister completely due to their unusual relationship. Although the story moved at a slow pace, it did offer suspense, twists and turns, and a surprise ending which should be enjoyable for many readers.

Tina Donovan



Happily Ever After Collection (A Timeless Romance Anthology Book 20)

Jessica Day George, Julie Wright, Sarah M. Eden,

Julie Daines, Heather B. Moore, Annette Lyon



FAIRYTALES: Elise is relieved to escape the grips of her step-mother when she is sent to the new world to marry a Count. Isa is happy to meet Thomas Rumble

who ends up helping save her life from a greedy king. Gretel dedicates her life to one of servitude to an enchantress who spares her father, then she meets Hansel who is determined to free her for good. Ros is determined to find work and finds it with the owner of Black Fern. But she can't tell if he's man or beast. Scarlet ventures out one night to help save one of her mom's patients. August steps in to protect her from the wolves that terrorize the village. Stella and Patrick work together to make beautiful roses. The Snow Queen captures Patrick, and Stella rushes to free him.

"Happily Ever After" is an elegant collection of captivating tales that are enjoyable to read. Every story is well-crafted, and it is impressive how cohesive all the

stories are with six different authors telling them. It is bright how each tale contains elements of familiar tales yet is revamped to be unique. The characters are distinctive and memorable. The world building is well done and believable. The anecdotes are concise with exact precision no feeling like anything's rushed. The twists and turns take the reader on a fun journey over and over again.

Jessica Samuelson



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PRESENTS

A portrait of author Kristen Ashley, a woman with long blonde hair, smiling. She is wearing a white top and a gold necklace. The portrait is tilted and set against a dark teal background with a subtle pattern.

KRISTEN ASHLEY

A portrait of author Denise Grover Swank, a woman with long dark hair, smiling. She is wearing a black top. The portrait is tilted and set against a light beige background.

DENISE GROVER SWANK

A magnifying glass with a black handle and a silver rim, focusing on the text inside its lens.

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