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Michelle Pillow
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Affaire de Coeur Interviews

Michelle Pillow

Superstar author with over 70 books, multi-published and multi-genre, Michelle Pillow takes prolific to a new level. Not only is she multi-published, Michelle's books are available in several different languages including Spanish, German, Japanese, and Thai to name a few. Michelle gifts her readers with several choices from her multi-genre best-selling books from historical and contemporary romance to futuristic, paranormal, and fantasy.

Michelle is also *Affaire de Coeur's* September Calendar Girl

Welcome, Michelle. Thank you for chatting with us.

AdC: Do you have another job other than writing?

Michelle: Everything I do relates to writing. For example, I co-own The Raven Books with author Mandy M. Roth. I'm also a photographer, though most of the time I'm so busy with writing deadlines I don't get the opportunity to shoot as much as I'd like.

AdC: If I came to your home and looked inside the refrigerator, what would I find?

Michelle: Hopefully, you'll find it clean. LOL And French Vanilla creamer. I'm grumpy in the morning if I don't get my coffee the way I like it.

AdC: Where do you like to go when you want to run away?

Michelle: My dream is to travel to every country in the world. I still have a ways to go. A lot of the time when I want to run away it's to a beach in the tropics, margaritas included.

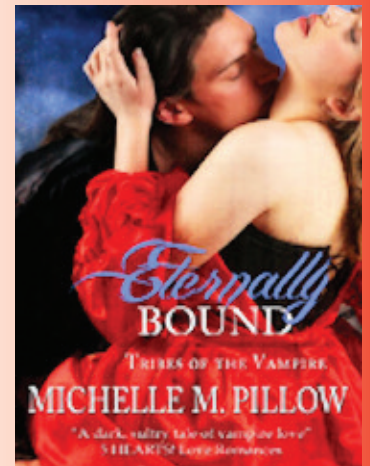
AdC: Do you have a social/political cause you are passionate about?

Michelle: I support several causes. One I'm very passionate about is animals—spaying and neutering discount programs, trap/alter/release programs for cats, supporting animal shelters, and stiffer punishments for animal cruelty. I'm very protective of living things that can't protect themselves—animals, children, etc. I also support end hunger campaigns, especially with children. No child should ever go hungry.

AdC: What is the best advice anyone ever gave you?

Michelle: Love yourself.

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AdC: Tell us your latest news. Current projects?

Michelle: I always have several projects going at once. I recently finished the redesign of my website, www.michellepillow.com. I'm really proud of it. Another new thing is many of my books will be released in audio version over the next year. I'm very excited to have some great narrators on board for the books. As for writing, I have more futuristics planned in the "Dragon Lords" series (and spin off series-"Lords of the Var," "Space Lords," etc.). The futuristic multi-series are hands down reader favorites.

AdC: Considering that you have written a gazillion books for a gazillion different genres and another gazillion different series... How do you do it???

Michelle: Lots and lots of coffee. It helps that I love what I do. Also, reader emails are always encouraging whenever I start feeling worn out. I have the greatest readers. I'm very lucky.

AdC: Easiest and hardest thing about writing?

Michelle: Getting lost in the research is the easiest, but not always the smartest when you're on deadlines. The hardest can be the long hours. It's not just sit and write a book. There's also marketing and promotions, maintaining the websites, narrator auditions, formats, research, contract negotiations, appearances, etc. I can't complain, though, I love my job. I'm very lucky.

AdC: What inspired you to write your first book?

Michelle: It was just something I had to do. I always loved telling stories, whether with my camera or words.

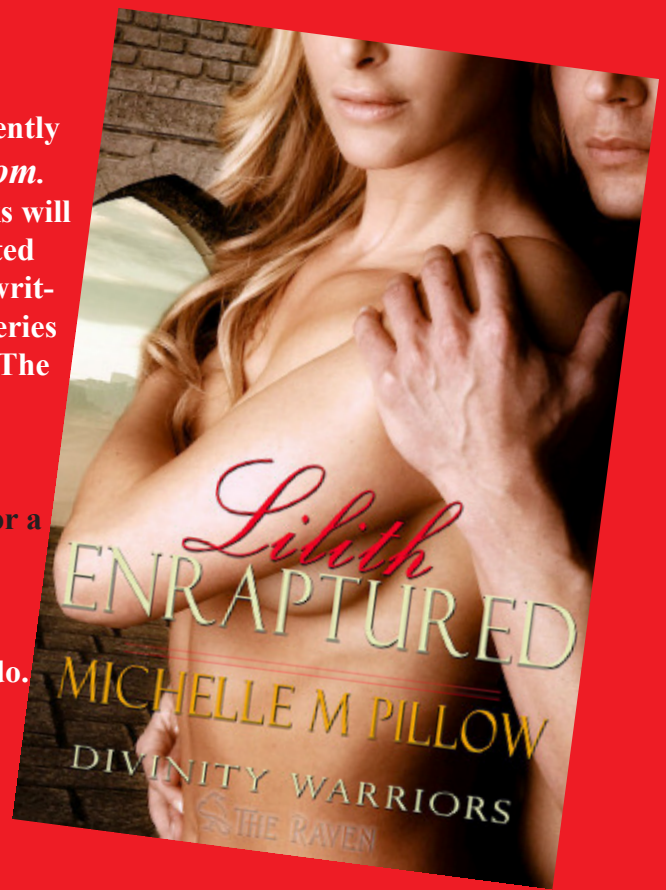
AdC: Do you listen to music while you write?

Michelle: No. I have television on for background noise. If it's too quiet I can't concentrate. If it's music, I start singing instead.

AdC: We understand you have a publishing company as well as working for a magazine...tell us more.

Michelle: I co-own The Raven Books (www.TheRavenBooks.com) with author Mandy M. Roth. It's a small indie press where we've republished the second and third editions of many of our books that were taken out of contract with our traditional publishers. It was one of the best decisions we've ever made and I have no complaints. The hours are much longer, but I love it!

I also do interviews and write investigative pieces for *Paranormal Underground Magazine*. It's fun to get invited out on paranormal investigations. I've gotten to spend the night at a Historical Museum, the Orpheum, a vaudeville theater, and Old Cowtown Museum.



AdC: Name one actor/actress you would love to get naughty with?

Michelle: I was just in a lively discussion earlier today about how we'd so marry David Bowie as Jareth. LOL Though I'm not sure that's the answer I'd give to "naughty," I did admire his eye shadow.

Daryl Dixon from *The Walking Dead* is my Apocalypse Husband. If stuff goes down, I'm hooking up with him for the end of world.

AdC: Any life experiences tangled in the storylines?

Michelle: I tend to plan storylines and characters over what I feel like researching. I was interested in entomology (bug science) and from that *Bit by the Bug* (Random House) was hatched.

I also take research trips to really learn about the area I want to write about. Experience is as important as imagination.

AdC: What books do you have on your favorites shelf?

Michelle: *Travels with Charley* by Steinbeck, *Pride and Prejudice* by Austen, *Immortal Ops* by Mandy M. Roth.

AdC: If you could say one thing to the next generation of authors, what would it be?

Michelle: Do your research from quality sources—research the industry (both self-publishing and traditional), research your book, how to market, contract law, everything. In this case, knowledge really is power. The more you know, the better position you'll be in. Even with an agent, you need to know what you're signing. Even if you write futuristic off world fantasy, books that are based in some reality are more believable. Research is so important.

AdC: What would you like to say to your readers?

Michelle: I love you all. Thank you for your kind emails, your support, and for buying my books. Without you, I don't have a job and I love my job. Thank you!!

Thank you, Michelle, for taking the time to visit with us.

Visit Michelle's website www.michellepillow.com

Join her on Facebook www.facebook.com/AuthorMichellePillow



Do Unto Others

By
Samantha Walker

“Another chilly day,” Catherine thought as she jogged along the dirt pathway. Three days before Christmas, it was supposed to be chilly. Christmas brought sadness, especially when she recalled how, with all her training, she could do nothing but watch her mother waste away almost eight years ago on Christmas Day. Her father slipped away two weeks ago from Alzheimer’s, leaving her completely alone, and she dreaded, even feared, the solitude.

She hated jogging, but as a Nurse Practitioner, she knew the value of challenging the body and the mind. Jogging was better than going to 24 Hour Fitness where people ogled and with their eyes criticized both the quality of the workout and the body that was supposed to benefit from it.

Not that there was anything wrong with her body. At thirty-eight years of age, she could hold her own with anyone. But she was so critical of herself, she failed to see all of her assets and there were many. Tall and slender with a lovely face and long black hair, she was unaware of the traffic she stopped when she walked by and the long looks from men of all ages.

She had been out of the dating game for almost ten years so that she could take care of her parents. They hadn’t wanted her to sacrifice herself; they wanted grandchildren, but she had been adamant, trusting their care to no one else.

The path was rocky and plagued with redwood tree roots. Not paying heed, she stumbled, and before she could stop herself, fell to the ground.

Quickly assessing herself, she wiggled her legs, found them pliant and painless, and sent a silent “Thank you” to the heavens. She dusted herself off and mentally vowed she would pay more attention. She was about to start running again when a movement in her periphery caught her attention. Though this was Oregon—with its abundance of species in the parks, it was still spooky to meet one on a running trail. They weren’t usually close to the edge of the trail. Another movement caught her eye, and with a surge of courage, she walked to the edge and peered downhill into the ditch. She gasped.

Near the bottom of the steep path, partially shielded by plants and thick vegetation, she could make out the form of a dog. Covered with mud and emaciated, the dog lay struggling at first, then lay its head down, whimpering. Blood was spattered in splotches, but Catherine couldn’t tell from that distance where it was from. Obviously, it had recently fallen down the hillside, but judging from the old blood, it had come in contact with some of the wild, more fit animals....and lost.

“Walk away,” she told herself. She didn’t like dogs. That wasn’t quite true. Years ago, when she had not been allowed to keep a puppy she had found, she vowed never to have another one, a vow she had kept. But this was no pup. It was an older dog who had probably seen its best years. “Leave it,” a voice said, but an old adage spoke even louder, “Do unto others.” “Does that apply to abandoned dogs?” she wondered. The way it looked now, this poor thing wasn’t going to live anyway.

Without giving it further consideration, she pulled her smart phone from her pocket and started to make calls. Vet appointments were available if she could only get the dog to her car. But her car was at least three miles behind her, and the dog was in a ditch that would require her to go downhill. And it wasn’t going to walk. She glanced at it again. It looked pretty helpless and now it started to shake. That did it. With one swift movement she removed her jacket, then sat on the ground, ready to slide down the hill.

“Miss, are you all right?”

She was so startled that she fell back and almost plummeted down the hill, but a pair of swift hands grasped her shoulders and stabilized her. She had not seen him coming along the path and his presence here was unsettling. “Where did you come from?” she demanded.

He stared into the mesmerizing green eyes that were currently flashing fire at him. “You’re welcome.”

She felt a blush creep up her neck. Under normal circumstances, she did not have to be reminded of her manners. She looked up at him, made a quick assessment and deemed him harmless. “I’m sorry. You scared me. I didn’t see you before I sat down.”

A twinkle entered his eyes. “And why, may I ask, are you sitting there?”

This time she felt her cheeks flame. “Ah, well, there’s a dog down there and...it doesn’t look very....”

“Lady, are you nuts?” he asked. “How do you know that dog doesn’t have rabies?”

“It doesn’t,” she said dryly, turning her attention back to the dog. “I’ve seen rabid animals, and that poor thing is nothing like them. It’s hurt; it’s hungry. It’s exhausted. It probably has been fighting for its survival since it was dumped here. I’ve been trying to get help, but to no avail, so I was going to go down there and get it myself.”

“That’s a kind thing to do,” she heard him say. The sun was directly over his shoulder and into her eyes, and she could not tell whether he was making fun of her or not. “Many people would just leave it. By the way, I’m Jeff Bennington.” He extended his hand. “I’m new to this area.”

She shook Jeff’s hand. “I’m Catherine Green.” She started to get up only to find herself lifted to her feet. When she reached her full height, she still had to tilt her head

back to look into his face. Up close, she could see that his chiseled face was handsome with devilish hazel eyes. A thick crop of curly auburn hair peeked from beneath a baseball cap. “Can I help?” he asked, interrupting her inspection of him.

Flustered, Catherine lowered her eyes and cleared her throat to cover her embarrassment at her unabashed scrutiny of him. “Why would you want to...your skepticism about it being rabid and all?”

Jeff shrugged. “Do unto others, I suppose.”

She had looked away, but at those words, her head whipped around. “That applies to a dog?”

“I suppose it applies to all creatures.”

She had to stop herself from staring at him. “What is wrong with me?” “If you can think of a way to get this dog to my car... I’ve called everyone I can think of, and they will help, once I get it to them.”

He looked over her shoulder at the dog. “If it is as you say, I should be able to bring it up.”

Judging his physique, she didn’t doubt that he could. “Let me go down first and see what it’s like.” Again, she found herself sitting on the ground easing downward. When she reached the dog, she took several cautious steps toward it, then sat down beside it while she assessed it from nose to tail. The dog’s eyes moved about and at one point glanced at her. When it did not make an aggressive move, she gently touched its ear. “Hello, girl,” she said in a soothing tone. “You look like you could use some help.” She stroked it softly. “Will you be a good girl and let us help you?”

The blood-covered, matted dog did not have the energy to wag its tail, but this time looked directly at her. “Good.” She cupped her mouth with her hands. “Come on.”

Jeff reached her side in no time and could not help but marvel at her gentle approach to the dog and the relationship he saw budding between them. “Well, I’ll be darn. She’s already beginning to trust you.”

She smiled, and Jeff felt his heart stumble. Never had he been so instantly attracted to a woman.

They two managed to carry the dog up the hill. When they reached the trail, two uniformed men stood waiting.

“Did you call for help?” one of them asked.

“Yes, I did,” she said. “This dog fell down the hill, and I needed help to get her back up so I can take her to a vet. Yours was one of many I called.” She patted the dog which was now wrapped in her jacket. “This nice gentleman did it for me.”

“We’re park officers. We get calls like this all the time, though with most aban-

doned dogs, they want us to take them.” He looked between the two. “I’ve taken so many dogs home my wife threatens to throw me out if I bring another, but I always say, ‘Do unto others.’ Can we give you a ride somewhere?”

There it was again. “Thank you so much. I would love a ride to my car.”

Once they reached her car, they loaded the dog into the back seat. Jeff jumped in beside it. He wasn’t about to let Catherine get away. “Just in case the dog needs help staying on the seat.”

“Thank you so much.” She felt her heart thump. “I really appreciate this.”

They arrived at the Emergency Vet in less than 10 minutes during which they cordially exchanged information. She learned he owned a small airline company and was relocating there to establish viable routes. When he learned of her profession, it all made sense. Saving things was in her blood.

After turning the dog over to a tech, she asked, “What’s going to happen to her?”

“She’s pretty run down, but she looks salvageable, but with no owner, no one to pay for her care, and at her age…” the tech left the rest unspoken.

She and Jeff looked at each other. “I’ll pay for her care,” she said. “I’ll take care of it,” he said simultaneously.

They smiled at each other.

“Great! We need to observe her for 24 hours and give her shots. Give me your phone number, and we will call when she’s ready. Do you have a name for her?”

“Not yet,” they answered at the same time. They laughed.

“Let’s decide on a name over coffee.”

Catherine couldn’t believe her ears. She suddenly felt shy. “That sounds like a great idea.”

The next day her phone rang. “Have you picked her up yet?”

“Not yet.”

“They said she would be ready by noon, and it’s 12:15.”

Catherine laughed at his impatience. “You’re worse than an expectant father.”

“I’ll meet you there,” he said, and before she could think about it, he had hung up.

“We’re here for Noelle,” they said at the same time. That prompted a broad smile from both of them.

The desk clerk smiled, too. “I insist upon paying,” he said. He handed his credit card to the clerk all the while looking at Catherine. “If things go as planned, I owe that dog.” That brought a flush to Catherine’s cheeks.

Returning the card, the clerk said, “I’ll go get her.”

“I’m nervous,” she admitted. “I know nothing about dogs. I don’t know if I can

care for her.”

“I’ve seen you at work. You’ll do just fine, but here’s a little something to help.” He thrust a Pet Store bag at her, filled with everything she needed, including a pink name tag.

“Thank you. We owe you.” She felt a sudden sadness stemming from the fear she would never see him again. “What are you doing tomorrow for Christmas?” she found the nerve to counter.

He shrugged. “I’m at the Four Seasons. I may just walk around the city... sightsee.”

Never having asked a man for a date, she braced herself. “How about private tour guides? Starting off with brunch at my place? Noelle and I can take it from there.”

“I thought you’d never ask.”

Suddenly the clerk returned with a beautifully groomed lady in tow.

“Why, she’s lovely!” Catherine said as she rushed over to pet the dog.

“As is her owner,” Jeff remarked as she pretty blush rose.

“How old did the vet say she was?”

“Around seven or eight, just beginning senior citizenship,” the tech answered. “At this age, she wouldn’t have been adoptable. Why did you decide to take her, if you don’t mind my asking?”

“Do unto others,” Jeff and Catherine said at the same time. “It applies to dogs, too.”

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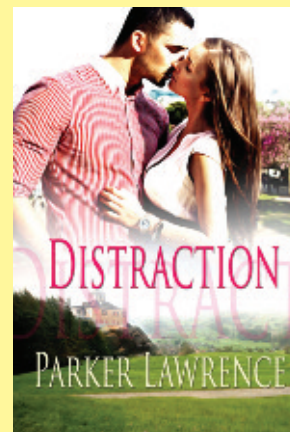
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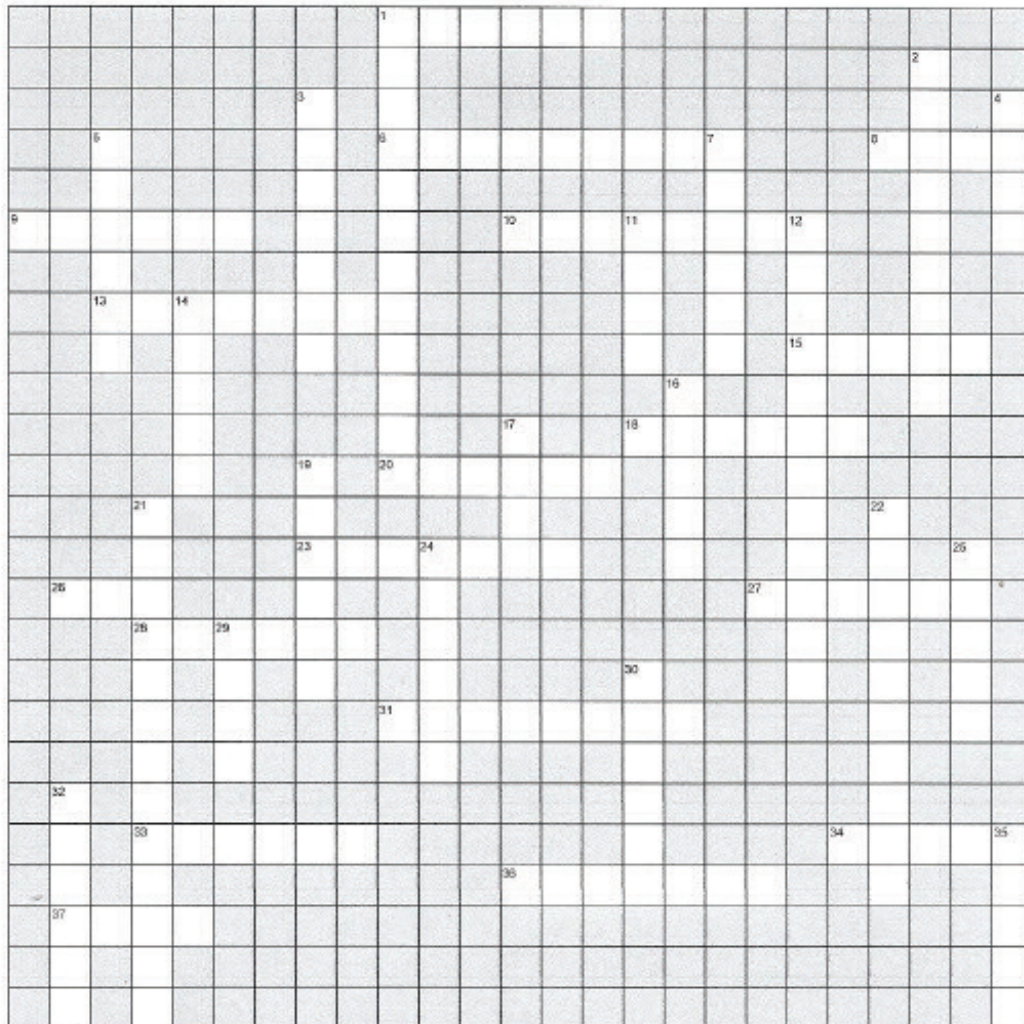
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PUZZLER

Snow Bound

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EclipseCrossword.com

Down

1. Movie about a Jamaican bobsled team.
2. Condition of fingers/toes when it's too cold.
3. Norsemen, men familiar with snow.
4. The simplest of snow vehicles with a smooth bottom.
5. The snowman they sing about.
7. Alpine sport.
11. Worn over the face to prevent burn while sporting in the snow.
12. Shaun White's sport.
14. Foot apparel for the snow.
16. Snow after rain hits it.
17. The ride to the top of the mountain.
19. Sport played with a puck.
21. Snow is a form of this.
22. Continent of snow.
24. Vehicle for fun ride in the snow.
25. Build-up of snow.
29. Removal device, snow ____.
30. As white as the ____ snow.
32. Seward's folly.
35. An individual piece of snow.

Across

1. Ski resorts are sometimes in these buildings.
6. Underwear for cold areas.
8. Preferred fabric for the cold.
9. Apparel worn over the fingers in the snow.
10. Four-year sport event in the snow. Winter ____.
13. Sled with a curved end.
15. Snow ____, a Disney character.
18. Type of skiing.
20. Old-fashioned snow ride vehicle.
23. Average weather condition in an area.
26. This kind of skating requires blades.
27. Season when most snow appears in North America.
28. Snow-____ mountains.
31. Snow storm.
33. Northern lights, seen in the snowiest areas.
34. This apparel goes around the neck.
36. Consequence of slamming on the brakes in the snow.
37. To slide sideways on snow.

international december holiday scramble

1. ZAAAKNW
2. KHANKHAU
3. XGNOBI
4. TSSCHAMRI
5. RAPLE RABHOR

ENCRYPTION

ESP I AWEBS SPK WZIVEPK AN AW

SBUXW UGF UJ NPLAF

KWBBT IABPNFKEN FU EVV ESC FU EVV
E LUUS CPLAF!

Lucy Monroe's *Sneak Peak*

MILLION DOLLAR CHRISTMAS PROPOSAL **Harlequin Presents - November 2013** **© By Lucy Monroe**

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Excerpt CHAPTER ONE

“You want me to find you a wife? You cannot be serious!”

Vincenzo Angilu Tomasi waited for his personal administrative assistant to close her mouth and stop making sounds like a dying fish gasping for water. He'd never heard her talk in exclamation points, wasn't sure she was capable of raising her voice even.

Fifteen years his senior and usually unflappably confident, Gloria had been with him since he took over at the NY branch of Tomasi Commercial Bank more than a decade ago.

Enzu had never seen this side of her. Had not believed it existed and would be quite happy to put it behind them now.

When she didn't seem inclined to add anything to her shocked outburst, he corrected, “I will provide these children with a mama.”

Although he was third generation Sicilian in this country, he still gave the old-world accented pronunciation to the word.

His niece, Franca, was only four years old and his nephew, Angilu, a mere eight months. They needed parents, not disinterested caretakers. They needed a mother.

One who would see them raised in a stable environment unlike what he had known as a child or had been able to provide for his younger brother. Which, yes, would mean the woman would have to become his wife as well, but that was of negligible consideration.

“You can't possibly expect me to find them that. It's impossible.” Outrage evidenced in every line of her body, shock dominated Gloria's usually placid-whatever-the-circumstances expression. “I know my job description is more elastic than most, but this is beyond even my purview.”

“I assure you, I have never been more serious and I refuse to believe anything is beyond your capabilities.”

“What about a nanny?” Gloria demanded, clearly unimpressed with the compliment to her skills.

“Wouldn't that be a better solution to this unfortunate situation?”

“I do not consider my custody of my niece and nephew an unfortunate situation,” Enzu told her, his tone cold.

“No. No. Of course not. I apologize for my wording.” But Gloria did not look like she had an alternative description to offer.

In fact, once again, she seemed to be struck entirely speechless.

“I have fired four nannies since I took custody of Franca and Angilu six months ago.” And the current caretaker was not looking to last much longer. “They need a mama. Someone who will put their welfare ahead of everything else. Someone who will love them.”

He had no personal experience with that type of parenting, but he’d spent enough time in Sicily with his family over there, he knew what it was supposed to look like.

“You can’t buy love, sir! You just can’t.”

“I think you will find, Gloria, that indeed I can.” Bank President and CEO, the driving force behind both the expansion from a regional financial institution to a truly international one and founder of his own Tomasi Enterprises, Enzu was one of wealthiest men in the world.

“Mr. Tomasi—”

“She will have to be educated,” Enzu said, interrupting further ranting on his assistant’s part. “A bachelor’s degree at least, but not a PhD.”

He didn’t want someone who was driven to excel academically at that level. Her primary focus would not be on the children, but her academic pursuits.

“No doctors?” Gloria asked faintly.

“They hardly keep hours conducive to maintaining the role of primary caregiver for the children. Franca is four, but Angilu is less than a year old and far from being school age.”

“I see.”

“It goes without saying the candidates cannot have any kind of criminal record; I would prefer they be currently employed in an appropriate job. Though the woman I choose will give up her current job in order to care for the children full-time.”

“Naturally.” Sarcasm dripped from Gloria’s tone.



That at least he was used to.

“Yes, well, no candidate should be younger than twenty-five and no older than her mid-thirties.” She would have to be his wife as well.

“That narrows down the pool significantly.”

Enzu chose to ignore his assistant’s mocking words. “Previous experience with children would be preferred, but is not absolutely necessary.” He did realize it was unlikely an educated woman in a career now, unless it was one related to children, would have experience with them.

“Oh, and while I will not immediately rule out someone who has been married previously, she cannot have her own children that would compete with Franca and Angilu for attention.”

Franca had already experienced enough of that sort of neglect and Enzu was determined she never would again.

“The candidates should be passable in the looks department if not pretty, but definitely no super model types.”

The children had already been subjected to the beautiful, but vain and entirely empty headed Johana as mother and step-mother.

His brother Pinu's taste in women, from his first serious affair which had resulted in Franca and a mother who had been only too happy to walk away once Enzu met her financial demands to the wife who had died with him in the crash, had been inarguably abysmal.

This time around Enzu would be choosing the woman and he was confident he could make a far superior decision to the ones Pinu had made in that department.

Gloria did not reply to Enzu's completed list of requirements, so he went on to enumerate the compensation package he'd worked out for the successful candidate.

"There will be both financial and social benefits for the woman taking on this new role. Once both children have reached their majority without significant critical issues," he emphasized. "Their mother will receive a stipend of ten million dollars. Each year she successfully executes her maternal duties she will receive a salary of \$250,000 paid in monthly installments. She will receive an additional monthly allowance to cover all reasonable household and living expenses for her and the children."

"You really are prepared to buy them a mother." Gloria was back to looking gobsmacked.

"Hadn't he said so?"

"Ten million dollars? Really?"

"As I said, the bonus is dependent on both children reaching their majority without going off the rails. It will be paid when Angilu turns eighteen, but if one of the children chooses to follow in my brother's footsteps, she will still receive half for the successful raising of the other one."

He did realize there was a certain amount of self-will in path a person chose to take in life. He and his brother's couldn't have been more different, though they'd been raised in almost identical circumstances.

"And she will be your wife as well?"

"Sì. In name at least." For the sake of Franca and Angilu's sense of family and stability.

Gloria stood, indicating she was ready to return to her work. "I will see what I can do."

"I have every confidence in your success."

She did not look reassured.

Well that could have gone better.

Audrey brushed impatiently at the tears that wanted to fall. When had crying ever made a difference? Neither her tears, nor those of her twelve year old brother had made a difference to Carol and Randall Miller six years ago. Pleading had only been met with disgusted impatience and implacable resolve unhindered by any emotion, much less love.

Maybe she should have waited a few weeks until Christmas and asked then. Weren't people supposed to be filled with charity during the Christmas season? Somehow, she didn't think it would make any difference to her parents.

Audrey should have known they weren't going to change their minds now. She'd been an idiot to think that Toby being accepted into the prestigious Engineering School's Bachelor of Science program at MIT would make a difference.

But she hadn't even asked for any financial assistance, just a place for Toby to live while he attended school. If her parents didn't want him commuting to the MIT campus in Cambridge from their Boston home, they could have provided living accommodations in one of their many real estate holdings throughout the city.

They'd categorically refused. No money. No help in any way.

Wealthy and emotionally distant, Carol and Randall Miller used the carrot and stick approach to parenting with an unwavering conviction in the rightness of their opinions and beliefs. When that didn't work, they washed their hands of what they considered failure.

Like they had with her and Toby six years ago.

It had nearly broken her brother to be rejected so completely by his parents, but he'd come back from the abyss stronger and determined to succeed and be happy. And at twelve, he'd had more certainty about what he wanted to do with his life than Audrey had at twenty-seven.

She had no grand plan for her life, nothing beyond raising Toby to believe in himself and to be able to realize his dreams. Audrey's own dreams had been decimated six years ago.

She hadn't just lost the rest of her family when she took Toby in six years ago. Audrey's fiancé had broken up with her. That hadn't been ready for children he said, not even a mostly self-sufficient twelve year old boy.

When her parents withdrew their financial support, Audrey had been forced to take out student loans to finish out her third year at Barnard, but her final year had been well beyond her means. She'd had no choice but to transfer her credits to the State University of New York and complete her degree there. She'd had to get a full-time job to support herself and her brother. Time and money constraints meant that it took her nearly four years of part-time online coursework to finally get her Bachelor of Arts in English Literature.

Her parents had been right about one thing. It was a supremely impractical degree, but she wasn't sure she would have finished university at all if she hadn't been studying something she loved so much. Her coursework had been her one break from the stresses and challenges of her new life.

She and Toby had that in common. They both loved learning, but he was committed to excelling in a way she never had been.

With determination her parents should have been proud of, Toby had earned top marks in school and worked on gaining both friends and confidence in his new environment. He'd said he was going to be happy and her brother was one of the most genuinely joyous people she knew.

She couldn't stand the thought of him losing that joy once he realized they simply couldn't make MIT happen.

It wasn't fair. He deserved this chance and Audrey just couldn't see any way to give it to him.

Only the best and the brightest even got considered for MIT and those who truly stood out among this elite group were accepted. The private research university accepted fewer than ten percent of their applicants for incoming freshmen and transferring from another school was almost impossible.

Which made any plan that had Toby attending a less expensive state school to begin with and moving on to MIT such a remote possibility as to not be considered on at all.

Toby hadn't just gotten accepted either, he'd won a partial scholarship. It was a huge deal. His high school administration and counselor were over the moon, but not Carol and Randall Miller.

They hadn't softened their stance toward their son one bit. The one question they'd asked had been if Toby still claimed to be gay. When Audrey had assented, they'd made it clear they wanted nothing more to do with their youngest son. Ever.

Worse, they'd offered her both a return to the family fold and an obscene amount of money, more than she would need to help Toby get to MIT, with two caveats.

The money could not be used for Toby and Audrey had to sever all ties with her baby brother.

That so was not going to happen. They were family and to Audrey, that word meant something.

But all the will in the world wasn't going to pay for Toby to live his dream and attend MIT.

He wasn't eligible for federal financial aid because until the age of 25, their parents' income would be used to determine his need. Even if he had been, MIT was a very expensive school. Four years of text books alone would pretty much wipe out what Audrey had managed to save for his college expenses over the past six years...

More to come in 2014...

Dare I Dream Again ?

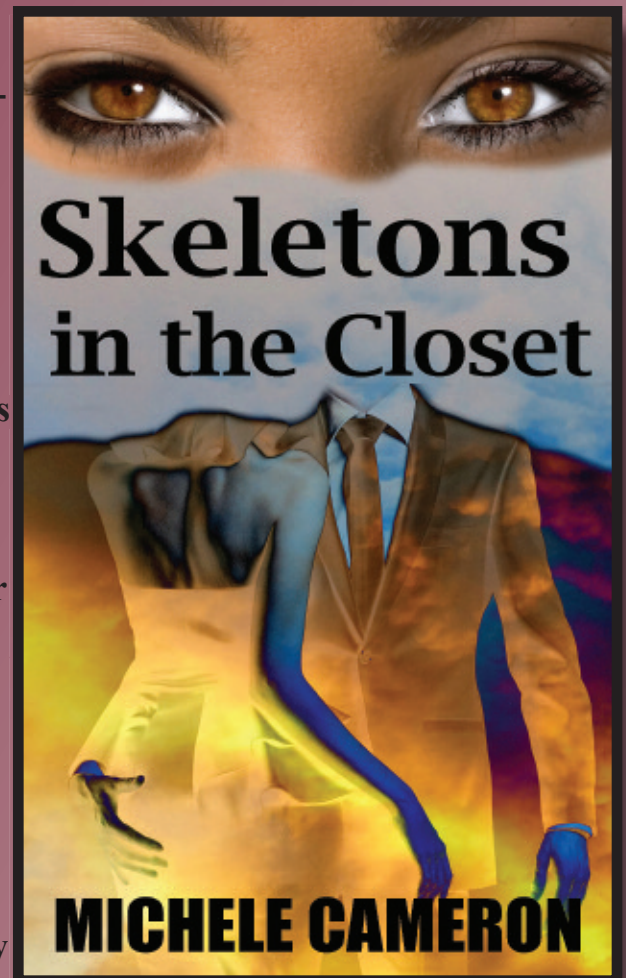


After being on hiatus since 2010, I'm back trying to relive one of the loves of my life. That is being a published author. You see, I'm the author of *Never Say Never* (Genesis-Press, Inc. (2008), *Moments of Clarity...* (2008), *When Lightning Strikes!* (2009), and *Unclear and Present Danger* (2010). Trust me, my absence was not of my own design. Life got in the way. I became very discouraged by the publishing industry. But it wasn't because of the hard work it takes to put out a book. Not even the fans that weren't fans and their sometimes hurtful critiques. I got disheartened by the process. If you've ever had a dream and accomplished it, you expect there to be smooth sailing after that. And then you wake up.

Let's just say that the phrase "writers write, but authors make money" is an apt description of the real world for people that love to write. But money isn't the end all or be all of my existence. I'm a full time English teacher in Orlando, Florida, so I have a steady paycheck. And just let me say that when it comes to teaching, I used to absolutely Love my job. Now I enjoy it.

The recession sent rippling effects through all aspects of the economy. People weren't buying the printed word the way they used to. Have you noticed how skimpy your newspaper is? But things are looking up! We're moving out of this slump and slowly recovering.

During my absence I had a lot of family drama. My dad got ill and passed away September 2012. Preceding that devastation I call "the worst experience of my life," my family had a rough time trying to keep him safe and comfortable in the nursing home. (Not our choice for his residence by any means.) Tending to my mother and trying to help her through losing the love of her life, a woman that had been married to him for fifty-seven years, was no small feat, and moving the only grandchild of the family from Atlanta to Orlando, well, I'll kindly call it another fun thing to do. Whew! I'm really glad the continued

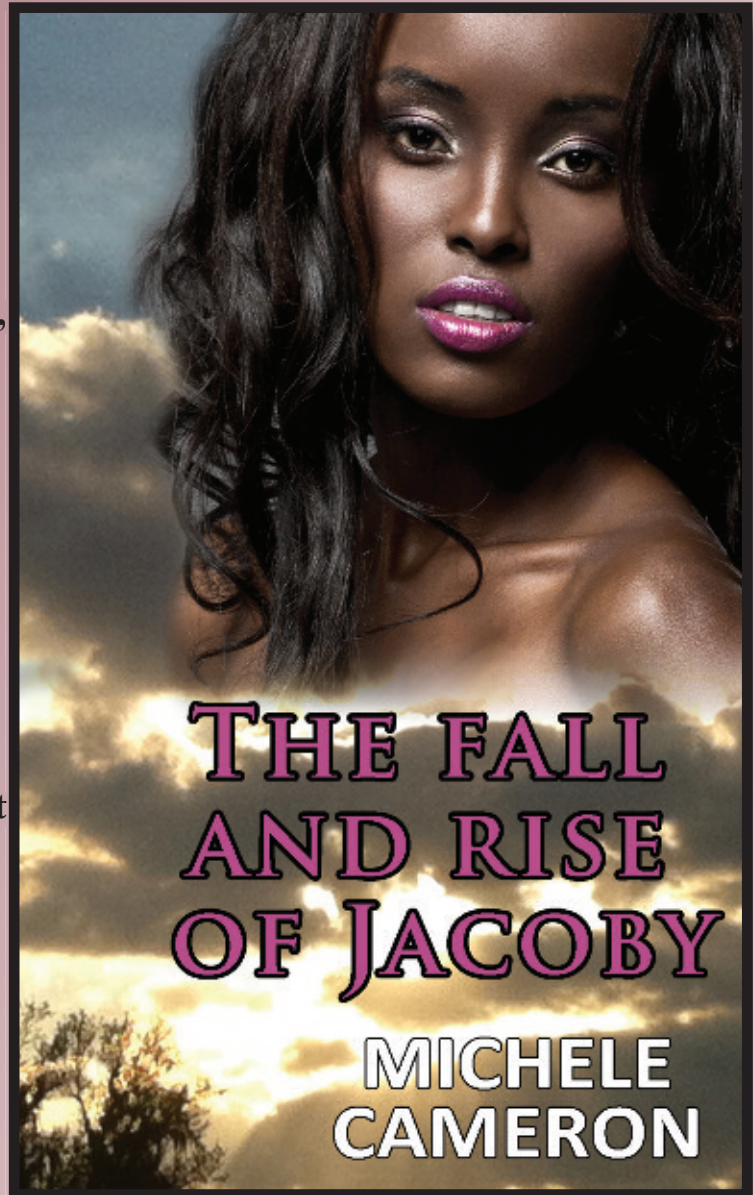


But when I could I continued to write. I just didn't have the time to smooze and get someone to publish me. You see, in the book industry there are phases. Vampires took over the world and preyed on innocent, normal people. Now S and M is the latest. Did I write that correctly? You see, I wouldn't know. But alas, there are some people that like just a little, old-fashioned romance novel that makes you feel good and everything in the world is perfect and tied up in a neat little bow. Uh-oh! I don't write that kind of book either. What in the world am I going to do?

I've decided just to go ahead and do me. I released my latest novel *Eyes That Lie* September 24, 2013. It's my third interracial. The novel deals with forgiving people who have deeply hurt you so that you can move on and be happy, and also recovering from an incident that made you not want to go on living. My next novel, *The Fall and Rise of Jacoby*, will be released January 2014. I just want to say that a lot of women will commiserate with the main character. The problems that the main character deals with will make you think of either something you've dealt with past or present or someone very close to you lives this sort of life. You often wonder why they stay in such a dysfunctional mess. Maybe my novel will make you understand it a little better. In the spring I will release *Skeletons in the Closet*. Don't we all have them? If you've ever met the perfect match, the true love of your life, but you couldn't make a go of it because of interference from your past, then this is the novel for you. I feel really good that I'm back on the horse. It's exciting and I want to hear from you about my latest creations.

Michele Cameron can be reached on Facebook, Twitter, and her website is

www.michelecameronauthor.com





AdC's Bookshelf



Haunting Melody

An antique musical doll, cranberry-stained sheet music and the machinations of an eccentric, stupidly-short witch with a fondness for Elvis throw Melody Flynn through time to the 1919 Ziegfeld Follies.

www.flofitzpatrick.com



Blood Art

Nikolai must at all cost, protect Devane Redding from the ancient demon, who wants to possess him once again, and destroy his only chance at happiness with the sculptor he loves above all.

www.mjustes.com



DYLAN'S WITCH

He burns for the beautiful witch, and when the case takes him to her door, long-denied emotions erupt in a conflagration of lust.

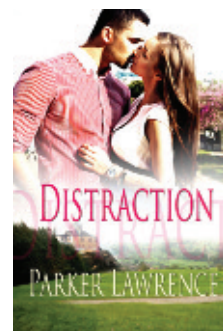
www.jorystrong.com/



Divinity Warriors 1: Lilith Enraptured

Betrayed by Divinity Corporation, Lilith wakes up in a primitive, uncharted dimension. But her initial fears of becoming a slave become all too real when a warrior of god-like proportions claims she's his new woman.

www.MichellePillow.com



Distraction

Family secrets, a gorgeous man with a wounded heart, and a young woman who is determined to get exactly what she wants...

www.adcmagazine



Dragon Lords 6: The Stubborn Lord

Futuristic Romance - After several failed attempts at finding a bride, it's hard to get excited about yet another festival. No matter how honorable he tries to live, it would seem fate thinks him unworthy of a fated marriage--that is until now.

www.MichellePillow.com

Coming in January 2014

Adair, M. *Be Mine Forever*, **Montlake**
Alexander, C. *Dead Shifted*, **St. Martin's Press**
Barnes, S. *The Scandal in Kissing an Heir*, **Avon**
Beckstrand, J. *Huckleberry Hill*, **Zebra**
Boyle, E. *If Wishes Were Earls*, **Avon**
Bybee, C. *Single by Saturday*, **Montlake**
Connelly, C. *The Wedding Favor*, **Avon**
Davis, E. *Dare to be Wild*, **Strebor**
DeStefano, A. *Love on Mimosa Lane*, **Montlake**
Devon, C. *Love Your Entity*, **St. Martin's**
Ivy, A. *Born in Blood*, **Zebra**
Kelly, V. *Secrets for Seducing a Royal Bodyguard*, **Zebra**
Krentz, J. *River Road*, **Putnam**
Murray, K. *Busting Loose*, **Brava**
Quinn, K. *The Lion and the Rose*, **Berkley**
Terry, C. *Sweetest Mistake*, **Avon**
Wilde, L. *Somebody to Love*, **Avon**
Bradshaw, N. *Champagne Life*, **Strebor**
Brody, F. *Murder in the Afternoon*, **St. Martin's**
De La Motte, A. *Buzz*, **Atria**
Jansson, A. *Killer's Island*, **Stockholm Text**
Lafferty, L. *House of Bathory*, **Lake Union**
Watterson, K. *Buried*, **Tor**

Coming in February 2014

Anderson, C. *Walking on Air*, **Signet**
Arend, V. *High Seduction*, **Berkley**
Ashley, A. *Night's Promise*, **Zebra**
Burton, J. *Melting the Ice*, **Berkley**
Cane, E. *The Cowboy of Valentine Valley*, **Avon**
Dare, T. *Romancing the Duke*, **Avon**
Dawson, J. *Take a Chance on Me*, **Zebra**
Eden, C. *Burn for Me*, **Brava**
Frank, J. *Hunter*, **Zebra**
Galenorn, Y. *Crimson Veil*, **Jove**
Maxwell, C. *The Bride Says No*, **Avon**
Palmer, P. *Wulfe Untamed*, **Avon**
Sivec, T. *Shame on You*, **Montlake**
Ballard, M. *Miss Dimple Picks a Peck of Trouble*, **Minotaur**
De La Motte, A. *Bubble*, **Emily Bestler Books**
Harris, G. *The Arnifour Affair*, **Kensington**

COMING SOON



CONTEMPORARY

All That I Desire

Francis Ray
St. Martin's
Mass Market
978-1250023827

Fans of the late Francis Ray will regale in *All That I Desire*, her last book. The Taggart/Falcon/Grayson and Friends series continues as Ruth Grayson sets out to maintain her spotless record of match-making.

Now that her children are all married, Rio Sanchez has a feeling that he is her next target but adamantly maintains Mrs. Grayson's record will finally be broken. He is not the home and hearth type. Abandoned as a toddler and raised in orphanages, he has made his own way in the world. Not knowing his heritage has taught him to only rely on himself. Not even the enticing Skylar Dupree will make him think otherwise.

Skylar has been the event planner for Navarone Resorts and Spas for two years and in that time has been in the presence of Rio, chief of security. She highly values her job but takes a chance on letting Rio know she is ready, willing and able. The assignment of her career, the charity auction of over a million dollars in artifacts, paintings and other assorted items, is the event of the year. The rich and famous from afar will be there by invitation only. Some folks will do anything to be in attendance, but under Rio's thorough scrutiny, certain people are ruled out, and some even uninvited. But some of those folks will not accept no--and so the drama begins with lies, breaching of security and attempted murder.

Visuals of red clay mountains and succulent regional dishes bring an authenticity, not to mention the lavish lifestyles of the ultra rich African-American Falcons and other families. There are a great many more related individuals who need a story, and we will miss not having them told. We will treasure our memories of the consummate writer of romance, Francis Ray.
Dera Williams

Back in Service

Isabel Sharpe
Harlequin Blaze #771
Mass Market
978 0373797752
****1/2

Kendra Lonergan is a grief counselor, having decided to use the experience of losing her parents to help others. But her latest job may be beyond her. The most human of the powerful Cartwrights calls her and asks her to help her brother Jameson, a man who tormented her all the way through school. Because of this cruelty, she snickers at how he got his injury (he tripped over a cat!), but her assignment is to pull him out of the depression he has fallen into during his recovery, and she will do her best to help him.

Jameson knows the family expectations. Cartwrights excel in the Air Force and stay in for the full twenty years. Now that plan is in jeopardy and he's wallowing in stasis... until Kendra walks through his door. She pulls him out of his depression and gives him hope that the girl of his youthful dreams can actually be his.

Isabel Sharpe's latest emotionally complex tale pairs two grieving people and gives them a full bodied love story. Their emotions are fully explored, and lucky readers reap the results. Jameson's sister is featured in a moving secondary love story that has its own emotional hurdles.

Heather Nordahl Files

A Callahan Christmas Miracle

Tina Leonard
Harlequin American #1473
Mass Market
978 0373754779
**

Galen Callahan has watched his younger brothers marry and procreate one by one. He never expected to marry, but pretty Rose Carstairs has caught his eye. He and his only unmarried brother take Rose to check out a cave with a small opening. She finds some astonishing things, and then they are nearly caught trespassing and need to flee in a hurry.

As he becomes certain Rose is the one, he decides to marry her before she becomes pregnant, something his brothers have not achieved. They marry, and she soon becomes pregnant with triplets. Now Galen can think of nothing but finding a place for Rose to hide so she can stay safe. But Rose isn't going anywhere, and she will fight for the safety of her babies.

Tina Leonard's latest tale of the incredibly fertile Callahan clan continues the Callahan family's efforts to protect themselves from their rogue Uncle Wolf. It also continues to feature thin characterization and inane dialogue. Readers who have enjoyed the series so far are sure to like this one.
Heather Nordahl Files

The Christmas Cookie Collection

Lori Wilde
Avon
Mass Market
978 0062136305

Two years ago, Lori Wilde wrote three holiday themed novellas set in Twilight, Texas, a special town for high school sweet-hearts. Now they are presented in one collection, along with a new novella.

First we meet "Carrie." Carrie MacGregor impulsively married Mark Leland very young, but they had the marriage annulled. Now he's back in town with a reality show bent on proving that the town magic is a myth. All the while it hurts her to look at Mark because her love has never died. And he discovers, to his shock, that even under all the Hollywood gloss, his heart has not changed. This is a heartwarming holiday tale.

Raylene Pringle's husband left her after he learned she had a child before they married, a child she gave away. Shannon Dugan comes to town to meet the woman who abandoned her and is surprised to like her. As she hides her identity, she falls for Nate Deavers. While "Raylene" is this novella's title, it's really Shannon's story.

Christine Noble has just learned that the car accident she suffered as a teen has left her unable to bear children. Then widower Eli Borden strolls back into her life with the family she's always wanted. It takes more than yearning to make things work. "Christine" is a sweet and thoughtful tale.

"Grace" rounds out this collection as Flynn and Jesse from the first Twilight, Texas, title ("The Sweethearts" Knitting Club") endure a most challenging Christmas Eve. Both sad and uplifting, this sweet, short story epitomizes the Christmas spirit.
Heather Nordahl Files

Cowboys & Angels

Vicki Lewis Thompson
Harlequin Blaze #775
Mass Market
978 0373797790
****1/2

Months ago, Trey Wheeler was in an accident. He was rescued by a mysterious woman who got him to the hospital, then disappeared. He has vague memories of blonde hair and blue eyes, but it was her voice that lingers with this guitar playing cowboy. He tried for a long time to find her but now has almost given up. When he hears her unmistakable voice in a store one day, he will not rest until he connects with that voice's owner.

When Elle Masterson saved Trey, he called out for a recent girlfriend while in his unconscious state. She does not want to be a rebound girl; nor does she want to be involved with someone who will develop a deep attachment. This ski instructor spends six months of the year in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and the other six months in Argentina. She's nowhere near ready to settle down, but Trey makes himself impossible to resist. Now she must make sure she does not break his heart.

This first full length holiday tale in Vicki Lewis Thompson's long running "Sons of Chance" series serves up an absolutely delicious cowboy in Trey. The story is compelling as well, both to long time readers and first timers, though those who already feel a connection to the Last Chance Ranch will find the most enjoyment here.

Heather Nordahl Files

The Cowboy's Christmas Surprise

Marie Ferrarella
Harlequin American #1478
Mass Market
978 0373754823

Holly Johnson has loved Ray Rodriguez for almost as long as she can remember. He sees her as just a friend, using her as a sounding board for his interactions with an eternal revolving door of women. Her only consolation is that he never stays with a woman very long, and it's unlikely that she'll lose him to one of these women.

Ray sees Holly as nothing but a friend until one night when she dresses up for a night out, which is unusual for her. Now that he's truly seen the beautiful woman Holly is, he has a hard time thinking of anything but her. But she leads a very busy life. She works full time at the diner and takes online classes at night, all while caring for her disabled mother and acting as mother to her niece. She doesn't have time to fool around, though she'd love nothing more than to fool around with Ray. Holly has to deal with the fear that even if he does want her, she'll lose him eventually.

Marie Ferrarella winds up the Rodriguez siblings' stories with charming playboy Ray's tale. He's not very deep, but he is quite likeable, and Holly is a sweet and sympathetic heroine. Readers will enjoy this as a standalone, but will get the most out of it if they've followed the "Forever, Texas" series.

Heather Nordahl Files

A Cowboy's Christmas Wedding

Pamela Britton
Harlequin American #1476
Mass Market
978 0373754809
****1/2

Cabe Jensen and Saedra Robbins have never gotten along. She always seems to say the wrong thing, annoying him. But underneath the arguments is a tension of a different sort. She finds him attractive, but knows he's not likely to respond. He lost his wife and brother in a terrible accident and nearly lost his teenage daughter as well. Cabe has been unable to move past his grief and has lived in a sort of suspended animation since his wife's death.

The last thing Cabe wants is to have Saedra underfoot, but Cabe's best friend is marrying Saedra's best friend here at the ranch so he's stuck with her. Christmas is coming, and every minute brings more painful memories of the people and the life he's lost. His hormones, at least, are urging him to move on with Saedra. She is more than willing to join him as long as their relationship never transcends sex to reach their emotions.

Pamela Britton's latest is a sequel, but readers won't need to read *A Cowboy's Pride* to enjoy this one. Her prickly hero and heroine are empathetic, and Cabe's daughter is a radiant joy. The emotions feel real here--joy as well as pain--and Saedra's and Cabe's physical connection feels genuine.
Heather Nordahl Files

Driving Her Wild

Meg Maguire
Harlequin Blaze #773
Mass Market
978 0373797776



Steph Healy used to be a cage fighter, but now, as she nears thirty, her body is beginning to break down so she quits and looks forward to settling down somewhat. Her dream is a life of financial security so she hopes to date doctors and lawyers who never have to struggle from paycheck to paycheck. She does not want another working class guy like Patrick Doherty, the incompetent electrician who is hazardous to her health!

Patrick isn't usually this clumsy, but Steph makes him nervous, and he keeps having little accidents around her, hurting her almost every time. He's always been a straight shooter, and he makes his feelings clear. She does as well so he knows he has little chance of anything more than sex with her. But he has to keep trying.

Fantasy men are fun, but sometimes it's a treat to read about a hero you could actually meet in your neighborhood. Patrick is that hero. He is adorably honest, awkwardly sweet, and devastatingly sexy, as well as a mind blowing lover. Readers will love watching Steph slowly lower her guard to Patrick and appreciate the honesty from both lead characters.

Heather Nordahl Files

Foreplay

Sophie Jordan
William Morrow
Trade Paperback
978 0062279873



Pepper is scarred by her wretched early childhood. She dreams of a life with Hunter Montgomery, her best friend's older brother who has a blessedly normal, loving family. Now he's broken up with his girlfriend, and it's her chance to get her dream man. But she's a virgin with very little experience. How on earth can she catch his eye?

Pepper's friend Emerson knows what to do she needs to find an experienced man to teach her foreplay. The local bar features a hot bartender who would likely be happy to show her the ropes. She reluctantly hits the bar with her friends, and she's shocked to discover that her prospective instructor is the same gorgeous young man who helped her when her car broke down on a recent night. No matter how tough Reece seems to be, using him in this way is liable to lead to broken hearts, especially factoring in a case of mistaken identity.

This dream of a novel is everything New Adult romance should be. Sophie Jordan takes a sympathetic, wounded heroine and pairs her with an awesome hero who will leave readers sighing. Reece is so amazing, readers will have no idea how anyone could resist him, and their hearts will bleed for him as he clearly suffers from Pepper's dreams of a perfect future with someone who is not him. This tale is not for younger readers because of language and descriptive sexual situations.
Heather Nordahl Files

Forgiving Lies

Molly McAdams
William Morrow
Trade Paperback
978 0062267740

In this New Adult tale, we meet Rachel Masters and Kash Ryan. Rachel is a college student with pain in her past. Her parents died years ago, leading her to be essentially adopted by her best friend Candice's family. She used to have a crush on Candice's cousin Blake, but she's not so into him anymore. She finally agrees to one date so Candice will stop pushing him at her, but then he rapes her and Candice does not believe her.

Enter Kash, an undercover cop assigned to the area to find a serial killer before he strikes again. He doesn't want a relationship because of the secrets he keeps, but he falls hard and fast for Rachel, and soon he's fighting to get past her walls. She tries desperately to keep him out, but everything about him feels so right. Then Blake begins to stalk her.

Rape survivors take heed of this trigger warning: In the rape scene in the second chapter, the author's vivid description makes Rachel's feeling of helplessness all too real. Rachel and Kash are well written, convincing characters, and both their love and their pain have a visceral impact. Unfortunately, this tale ends on an agonizing cliffhanger that may have readers cursing the talented Molly McAdams' name.
Heather Nordahl Files

Hard As It Gets

Laura Kaye
Avon
Mass Market
978 0062291240



Becca Meritt's brother is missing. She needs Nick Rixey's help, but when she seeks him out at his brother's tattoo parlor, he sends her away. Rixey has a bad feeling about her situation and feels guilty about sending her away, so he keeps watch on her house. It's a good thing he does because she walks into a break in one night. She knows how to protect herself, but she's in over her head.

Rixey takes her to his apartment over the tattoo parlor, as her house will not be safe until her locks are changed. Even then she won't be safe because her enemies are more than ordinary house breakers. When someone tries to kidnap her from her work, her injuries scare Rixey into making sure Becca doesn't leave his sight. It's time to call in his old military team, who has every reason to hate both Rixey and Becca.

The amazing Laura Kaye launches her "Hard Ink" series with this awesome tale. Readers, if you don't like intense, detailed love scenes, please step slowly away from the book. But if the idea of seriously luscious love scenes gets your blood pumping and you don't mind some salty talk, this is your book. The plot is brilliantly crafted, full of twists and turns and brimming with palpable danger. Best of all, there's a generous cast of delicious heroes, all of whom will hopefully get their own stories soon.
Heather Nordahl Files

Her Last Best Fling

Candace Havens
Harlequin Blaze #774
Mass Market
978 0373797783

Blake Michaels is home in his tiny Texas town after some tough times in the Middle East, having endured captivity and injury. But he's no hero and does not want to be treated as one. This may not be the right time to get involved with a woman, but one catches his interest right away as she struggles to put a gigantic dog into her vehicle. It's just a matter of time in such a small town until he learns her name and pursues her.

Macy Reynolds never expected to find herself in Tranquil Waters, Texas, but she has become the owner of the local paper because of her uncle's death. She planned to sell it, but a cheating ex drives this big city girl to claim her inheritance while licking her wounds. The locals are anything but welcoming, but she's still making a home for herself here, albeit an occasionally uncomfortable one. She volunteers at the local animal shelter and is adopting a dog. Blake starts out as a story for the paper. But he will become much more to her.

Candace Havens' latest features sympathetic characters and some unexpected plot turns, but the absolute highlight of the tale is the Great Dane Harley, one of the most extraordinary dogs to grace a page.
Heather Nordahl Files

His Christmas Sweetheart

Cathy McDavid
Harlequin American #1474
Mass Market
978 0373754786
*****1/2

Miranda Staley has been trying to catch Will Dessaro's eye for a long time. She sometimes sees flashes of interest, but he's shy and hard to get to know. Besides, she has her own daily struggles. She runs Harmony House, the only senior care facility in Sweetheart, Nevada.

Despite the challenges, she loves her work, but money is tight and getting tighter. Still, she can't stop trying to find her way into Will's heart.

Will keeps to himself for a good reason. PTSD and crippling panic attacks keep him from opening up to anyone. But bright, bubbly Miranda is hard to resist, much as he tries. And her background in nursing gives her more insight into his struggles than he'd like her to see. This is one relationship that will not be easy.

Cathy McDavid's second title in her "Sweetheart, Nevada" series stands alone, though characters continue from the first book. This is not easy reading, but the characters' struggles with financial hardship and emotional trauma will melt even the hardest heart. And the wonderful characters, both lead and secondary, make this a must read tale.

Heather Nordahl Files

The Mighty Quinns: Dex

Kate Hoffmann
Harlequin Blaze #777
Mass Market
978 0373797813
****1/2

Dex Kennedy is an Irish documentary filmmaker who has no desire to work at the moment. His partner was shot and killed right in front of him on their last film, and now Dex is drowning in a morass of grief and guilt. But Marlie Jenner has a project, a documentary piece on legendary Irish novelist Aileen Quinn, and only Dex will do. He does not know what Marlie wants at first—he thinks she's a teacher looking to rent from him—but after some anger runs its course, he agrees to work on the project.

Marlie might be a little too emotionally invested in this project because Quinn is an author who means the world to her. She is determined to make this work though Dex has different ideas about how the documentary's story will flow. Marlie is also initially determined to stay all business with Dex, but their burgeoning attraction won't stay in any box. They give in and revel in glorious sexual satiation, but Dex learns he has a secret, one he needs to keep from Marlie, at least for now.

Kate Hoffmann's latest may hinge on a coincidence, but she makes it work through strong characterization, a solid plot and appealing relationships. Readers will love this whether they've read other "Mighty Quinns" books or not, particularly if they enjoy Irish tales.

Heather Nordahl Files

Naughty Christmas Nights

Tawny Weber
Harlequin Blaze #778
Mass Market
978 0373797820

Hailey North needs the contract to create exclusive lingerie designs for Rudolph's Department store in order to keep her business going. She's in the running, but unfortunately, she's in competition with one other designer, one whose designs are slick, sleazy sex to her soft romance. The choice will be made in part by the tall redhead who will model the winner's lingerie. Hailey has heard a rumor that the model's agent is here at the Christmas costume party she's attending. She hopes that the sexy Grinch across the room is her target.

In a case of mistaken identity, while Hailey thinks Gage Milano is a model's agent, Gage thinks the same of Hailey. In reality, they are the competing designers, which they eventually discover to their dismay. However, they have already lit the fuse on their explosive desire, and it's a challenge to put this genie back in the bottle.

Tawny Weber's latest has a fairly common plot, but it's the details that make this one stand out. Hailey is a particularly strong and likeable heroine, making this one a fun read.

Heather Nordahl Files

No Desire Denied

Cara Summers
Harlequin Blaze #772
Mass Market
978 0373797769
****1/2

Nell MacPherson's sisters have married two of the Sutherland brothers, and along the way have made progress toward solving a family mystery—the whereabouts of a beautiful set of sapphires that once graced the neck of Mary, Queen of Scots. The earrings have been found, but the necklace is still among the missing. Unfortunately, with interest in the sapphires comes danger, as both of her sisters risked their lives on the way to their happy endings. Now it's Nell's turn.

Reid Sutherland wants nothing more than to keep Nell safe, or so he tells himself. She has received a letter threatening the family if she does not find and turn over the necklace to a shadowy enemy. Reid wants to prevent her search. But if he's honest with himself, he would admit that he also wants her, though he does not believe in love. Nell wants to find the necklace, but she also wants Reid in her bed so she can act out years of fantasies.

Readers recently lost the immensely talented Cara Summers, and she left behind this wonderful final title in her "Forbidden Fantasies" trilogy. Nell is a writer, and she uses her plotting skills to untangle the threads of a two-hundred-year-old mystery. Her irresistible connection to Reid and its inevitable consummation is well crafted.

Heather Nordahl Files

The SEAL's Christmas Twins

Laura Marie Altom
Harlequin American #1480
Mass Market
978 0373754847
****1/2

Mason Brown never wanted to be back in Conifer, Alaska, but he has been named in his ex wife's will and needs to be at the reading. He wants nothing from Melissa, especially after she cheated on him with his best friend, who became her second husband, then died with her in a plane crash. He is horrified and angered to discover that Melissa left her infant twins to him in her will and wants to wash his hands of the whole situation—particularly because he shares custody with Melissa's little sister.

Hattie Beaumont is shocked to gain custody of her twin nieces, but this shock is the least of her troubles. Her parents, lost in grief, lash out at both Hattie and Mason. As she has had a crush on Mason forever, the current situation makes her feel like her old yearnings to step into her sister's life have become sickeningly true, even more so because of Mason's surprising desire for her.

Laura Marie Altom pens a moving tale full of raw, painful emotions. Her lead characters wrestle with grief and anger, as do her amazingly well drawn secondary characters, particularly Hattie's parents. Best of all, this book may be part of a series, but it completely stands alone.

Heather Nordahl Files

Second Chance Christmas

Tanya Michaels
Harlequin American #1479
Mass Market
978 0373754830

Justin Cade lost his parents at a young age, then watched his brother lose his wife and child in a car accident. His brother's loss just reinforces Justin's decision to never marry and have kids so he would never suffer such a loss himself. This is why he broke up with Elisabeth Donnelly as soon as she told him she loved him. He has kept his distance since. He is startled to learn that she's getting married and leaving the state. Her twin sister thinks she's making a mistake, so she demands that Justin find out if Elisabeth is truly happy.

Elisabeth chose her fiancé with her head, not her heart. After Justin broke her heart, she never wanted to experience such pain again. Suddenly she is seeing him everywhere, and the god-daughter she is raising is ecstatic to see him. Kaylee is not fond of Elisabeth's choice of fiancé and discontent is brewing. That's not the only thing brewing, as Elisabeth realizes her heart is making the choices after all.

Tanya Michaels' latest is the second story in the "Colorado Cades" trilogy. The characters are empathetic, and readers will really enjoy little Kaylee.
Heather Nordahl Files

A Small Town Thanksgiving

Marie Ferrarella
Harlequin Blaze #1475
Mass Market
978 0373754793

Mike Rodriguez does not want a stranger to be in his family's home for weeks on end. But his father has found journals from an ancestor who was abducted by Native Americans, and he hires a ghostwriter to turn the journals into a coherent book. Not only does he have to put up with having Sam Monroe in the house, he has to pick her up at the airport right away.

Sam lived a lean existence with her mother when she was growing up. Once Sam turned eighteen, her mother married and moved away, leaving her to her own devices. Now a young widow, Sam craves the feeling of being part of a family, and the Rodriguez family is everything she could want a family to be. She loves her work but is disturbed by Mike, who seems to resent her presence. Once he manages to accept having her around, can acceptance turn to love?

Marie Ferrarella's latest in her "Forever, Texas" series is a warm and enjoyable tale. Mike can be a real curmudgeon, but he'll grow on the reader, and the rest of his family (particularly his father) are endearing.
Heather Nordahl Files

A Soldier's Christmas

Leslie Kelly, Joanne Rock, Karen Foley
Harlequin Blaze #776
Mass Market
978 0373797806
****1/2

Three sexy soldiers woo their matches in this tasty holiday treat. Ellie Blake has always felt a connection to Rafe Santori. First he pushed her away. Then he pursued her, only to discover she was engaged. Now he is home from military duty overseas, and they meet in the airport on the night of a blizzard. They both need to get from New York to Chicago; so they share a vehicle and a drive home. Now Ellie needs to tell Rafe that she never got married. Leslie Kelly pens a poignant and passionate reunion tale with "I'll Be Home for Christmas" (****1/2).

Ari Demakis is waiting for Dylan Rivera to come back to Las Vegas because she thinks it's time for their quickie marriage to be dissolved. She loves him, but he shuts her out and barely communicates when he's on assignment with the military. Will they become single for Christmas? Joanne Rock writes a thought provoking tale with "Presents Under the Tree" (****), but the end is a bit abrupt.

When Aiden Cross wakes up, he discovers that he has dengue fever and will be sent home from Africa. He must take time to recover before he can rejoin his men. He does not want to leave, but at least he has Lily Munroe with him. Lily does not want to get involved with Aiden, but their attraction is hard to resist. Karen Foley pens "If Only in My Dreams" (****1/2), where Aiden works hard to convince Lily to take a chance on love.
Heather Nordahl Files

Striking Distance

Pamela Clare
Berkley Sensation
Mass Market
978 0425257357



Pamela Clare's newest "I Team" series romantic suspense novel is about Laura Nilsson, a journalist who was captured by Al Qaeda associated terrorists. Navy SEAL, Javier Corbray spent three exciting and passionate days with Laura, only to hear months later that she was dead. To avenge her death, Javier signs up to bring him in, only to discover that Laura is still alive in his camp. Two years later, Javier's and Laura's paths intersect, and she's in danger again. Their feelings for each other are as strong as ever, despite their time apart. Javier stands in the gap for Laura in the face of attempts on her life, helping to heal her hurting psyche.

Striking Distance is an excellent novel. Clare writes hot, exciting romance along with an intelligent, socially relevant story, appealing to readers who like their romance thoughtful and textured. Laura is strong and courageous, determined to rebuild her life in the aftermath of the horrendous torture she experienced. Javier is fierce, protective and passionate, showing so much tenderness for Laura, who's dealing with intense emotional wounds. Readers will love this sexy, thrilling romantic suspense novel, and root for Laura and Javier to get their happy ending.
Danielle Hill

Suddenly Royal

Nichole Chase
 Avon
 Mass Market
 978 0062317452
 ***1/2

Samantha Rousseau keeps busy. This graduate student teaches and works with birds, all the while dealing with her stepfather's daunting medical bills. She is not amused that a Lilarian prince is disrupting the campus, even if Prince Alex seems to find her attractive. Then his aunt, a duchess, asks Sam to dinner. She thinks the meeting will end in a contribution to her school's raptor center. Instead she learns that she is a duchess.

Sam finds the whole situation hard to believe, having enough to worry about in her life, but with her new status, the *pa-parazzi* will not leave her alone. She is slow to comprehend how her life has changed, just regarding her notoriety as little other than a nuisance. But Lilaria is well known for its superior health care. Maybe she can get help for her stepfather if she accepts her title. However, she still considers Alex to be off limits, as she is an unsuitable mate for a man who will be king.

Nichole Chase's latest launches the 'Royal' series. This tale has a appealing narrator in its heroine, and the plot flows beautifully. The problem is a frustrating lack of description, leaving readers struggling to form an accurate picture of characters, setting, and even the Lilarian language, leaving the story with small but crucial flaws. This is a New Adult title which is suitable for older teens, but be aware of some four letter words and sex scenes.
 Heather Nordahl Files

The Texas Christmas Gift

Cathy Gillen Thacker
 Harlequin American #1477
 Mass Market
 978 0373754816

Eve Loughlin is a high powered realtor, selling lavish properties to the wealthy. Her latest client is Derek McCabe, who frustrates her to no end; so she refuses to work with him. Then her boss, who is also her mother, has a heart attack. To help relieve her mother's anxiety about the business, she must convince Derek to accept her again. He does, but he is far more complex than a simple client should be.

Derek wants to find a house for him and his baby daughter to live in, and he needs to do it by Christmas. But he's not finding a home that pleases him until he realizes he wants a smaller, simpler place, not a seven million dollar home. He finds a fixer upper, only to realize that fixing it up by Christmas is an awfully tall order. He wants Eve in his life as well, but that will also take some doing.

Cathy Gillen Thacker's latest McCabe to get a happy ending is a smoother character than some of his brothers, and his complex family life is intriguing. Eve is a tough heroine whose relationship with her rather pushy mother can be problematic, but the couple's chemistry and Derek's sweet baby will leave you with a smile.

Heather Nordahl Files



HISTORICAL



Bride Gone Bad

Sabine Starr
eKensington
E book
978 1601831453
***1/2

Tempest Templeton comes to Delaware Bend, Texas, with a temperance group, but her enthusiasm outstrips that of her companions. They are appalled when she uses her hatchet on the town's elaborately carved bar. Because of this, they leave her stranded and obligated to serve jail time, but the town's residents see moneymaking potential in Tempest's actions so they instead put her in the town hotel's best room. She has also acquired a protector.

Lucky Deveraux is more than he seems. And so is Tempest, as he learns when she sees a ghost in her room and helps the spirit to move on. Lucky needs her spiritual gifts, but she has her own mission. She is a divorcee determined to find her ex husband so she can get her money back. Tempest does not trust easily, but Lucky has plans for her and has no intention of taking no for an answer.

Sabine Starr's latest features some continuing characters, but can stand alone with ease. Readers who love Westerns and crave something fresh and innovative, pick this tale for your next read! Set in real locations in Texas and Oklahoma, the story begins with the temperance movement, then takes a sharp turn into Native American spirituality from a distinctly paranormal angle. The plot tends to be more interesting than the characters, and the pacing can feel uneven, but overall this tale is highly recommended.
Heather Nordahl Files

The Pirate Bride

Sandra Hill
Avon
Mass Market
978 0062210449
***1/2

Thork Tykirsson is having a last drink with his men before sailing home. He never expects to wake up in a ship's hold with several of his men and a smelly bull. They have been abducted by the Sea Scourge and her all woman crew. The men want to leave so they can wreak their revenge, but first they must figure out where they are.

Medana Elsadottir created this band of piratic refugees with women who are escaping untenable situations in their lives. Medana herself is fleeing a brutal family as well as the possibility of murder charges. She was not behind the kidnapping and is furious it happened. Her women want babies and took it upon themselves to drug and capture potential sperm donors. The men's presence puts Medana into a panic, as it will be hard to keep secret their concealed island home now that so many strangers are here. And the men are unwilling to spread their seed, so the women's plan is doomed to failure.

This latest title in Sandra Hill's "Viking I" series is something of a tale of two halves. The first half of this novel is a morass of angst, with an angry captive and an embarrassed but resolute captor. This environment makes for uncomfortable love scenes. Somewhere along the way a switch is flipped, and Hill's trademark playful humor gets a chance to shine, so this tale ends on a delightfully positive note.

Heather Nordahl Files

The Sum of All Kisses

Julia Quinn
Avon
Mass Market
978 0062072924
***1/2

Sarah Pleinsworth hates Hugh Prentice. Three years ago, he shot her cousin Daniel in a duel. Daniel shot him as well, and the bullet seriously damaged his leg. As a result, Hugh's unhinged father vowed vengeance, forcing Daniel to live in exile until recently. Sarah blames Hugh for the entire debacle, but not as much as Hugh blames himself.

Hugh may be the second son, but his father views him as the son most likely to marry and produce an heir. A nightmarish childhood has left its mark on Hugh, and his lingering leg injury adds to his discomfort in social situations. He does not like Sarah, but now they have been thrown together by her family. They both resolve to endure, but as they get to know each other, they are shocked to realize that they enjoy each other's company.

Julia Quinn's latest starts slowly with a light tone, but the tale plunges to stunning depths in the later half, making for thrilling and emotionally wrenching reading. Hugh is a damaged hero whose past may move readers to tears, and the love scenes are truly awesome. This is the third book in a series, and while it can stand alone, events that drive the plot are strongly connected to prior books in the series.
Heather Nordahl Files

The Wicked Wallflower

Maya Rodale
Avon
Mass Market
978 0062231147

When Emma Avery graduated from Lady Penelope's Finishing School for Young Ladies, she had hopes of making a splendid match like every other graduate. But now she and her two best friends are entering their fourth season unwed. Her beau, Benedict, has not proposed, and it is time to light a fire under him. In a fog of sherry, her friends concoct a scheme: They write a wedding announcement for the paper, but instead of Benedict, the prospective groom is the most wanted man on the market: Blake Auden, Duke of Ashbrooke. This faux announcement was never intended to be sent, but to Emma's horror, it soon appears in the paper.

Blake is stunned to learn that he is to marry a woman he has never met, a woman known as the Buxom Bluestocking or one of London's Least Likely. He can use her, however, as his Aunt Agatha is holding this year's Fortune Games, where the winner becomes her heir... until next year. As he wants these funds to create his Difference Engine, he hopes having a respectable "betrothed" can help his cause with his notoriously difficult relation. He is stunned to realize that he is developing real feelings for his false fiancée.

Maya Rodale launches a new series with this lively and fun romp. The tale can get silly and the language anachronistic, but the characters are appealing, particularly the endearingly crusty Aunt Agatha, and the Fortune Games are a wonderful diversion.
Heather Nordahl Files

When the Marquess Met His Match

Laura Lee Guhrke
Avon
Mass Market
978 0062118172
****1/2

In her disastrous marriage, Belinda Featherstone's heart was broken as was her bank account. She wants no one else to suffer as she has, and she needs money to support herself. She becomes a matchmaker. As she is an American in England, her specialty is helping fellow American girls find happiness in marriage, steering them away from fortune hunters and wastrels. Then she gets an unusual and distressing potential client.

Nicholas, Marquess of Trubridge, needs to get married. His father has just cut off his trust fund, leaving him destitute. Nicholas' wildly toxic relationship with his controlling father has always been bad, but this brings it to a new low. His father is trying to force him to get married, and in this he has succeeded, but Nicholas is otherwise determined to stay as far away from his father's stated preferences as possible. To that end, he approaches Belinda for her assistance, not expecting her extreme hatred of him. She sees him as a carbon copy of her profligate husband, and instead of helping him, she ruins his name in the press. Now his prospects are truly dire. He must convince Belinda to help him while ignoring his attraction to the matchmaker.

Laura Lee Guhrke launches a new series, "An American Heiress in London," with this sterling title. At first, Belinda's past leads her to a knee jerk condemnation, blinding her to Nicholas' character and leading her to hurt him. Her realization of the truth is gradual, making it realistic. The Victorian setting is not vividly portrayed, but most readers will find the strong willed, charming main characters to be ample compensation.

Heather Nordahl Files

"Sabine Starr's books pack a wallop!" – Carolyn Brown





LGBT

Every Drop of My Love

Jane Davitt
Torquere Press
E-book
978 1610405782



North is a vampire who pays people like Steve to let him bite them and feed. Steve works at a blood bank and has had to become immune to the vampires' mind tricks as a result. However, the two find that there is more than blood and money exchanged between them.

This was awesome. The plot was unique and a good new twist on the vampire/ human thing that is so popular now. It is refreshing to read something that had a serious tone but was still light-hearted at the same time. An overall winner in my book.

Lenore Lovecraft

Full Moon Dating Aiden and Ben

Julia Talbot
Torquere Press
E-book
978 1610405256



Stone owns Full Moon Dating, a website for paranormal lovers. His assistant is Adelia. Adelia matches Ben and Aiden on a Jackson Hole trip date. The two werewolves go and enjoy the outdoors and each other on their vacation.

This was a very good short story. The plot was a cute one with the dating service and the matches. That added some detail to the story that made it more believable. The fact that the two men were both shape shifters was a good thing to add.

Lenore Lovecraft

Hunter's Hunt

Chris T. Kat
Torquere Press
E-book
978 1610405775

Hunter is at the Bear Trap looking for his next conquest. He spots Adrian, a twink who looks like he's seeking a Daddy. Adrian is not into the leather scene at the bar, but he is into Hunter. They share one night and part ways, but Hunter cannot get Adrian out of his head.

This was an overall good story. It was short and did not feel like it was rushed. One of the best parts was the family involvement in caring for their vulnerable brother. However, it took too long to get to the more sexual parts of the story.

Lenore Lovecraft

Tattoo You

Willa Okati
Torquere Press
E-book
978 1610404839

Bristol is looking to get his first tattoo and calls Jacob to make an appointment. He is afraid to do it but wants the tattoo very badly. Jacob's lover Donathan has many tattoos, and despite the fear of needles, it's his turn to get the ink. Can he get over his fears and commit his love to his skin forever?

This was an all right story for me. Tattoos are one of my many loves in life and this story had a natural appeal. There was a level of reality to the story, as well, that made it very believable. The only problem was that it seemed to get a little slow in parts.

Lenore Lovecraft

Winter's Trial

Darren Endymion
Torquere Press
E-book
978 1610405201

Cristiano is a werewolf who can feel his true mate calling him. Austin does not know it yet, but he is that very mate. While playing bodyguard for his friend Elena, the two meet. They become connected, and the adventure they are on truly bonds them to each other.

This was an overall good story. There was a web of well-written characters, and the plot was believable. The only drawback was that all the pack politics got in the way of some of the more fun parts.

Lenore Lovecraft

The Young Stud

Sean Michael
Torquere Press
E-book
978 1610405171

Jeff was and has been hired by Devon to fix up his house. Devon is the owner of the home they all live in. Barney is Devon's live-in lover and partner. The young men help Jeff move his boxes into his apartment. Paul, one of the men in the place, works at the Hammer Club that Jeff goes to. Instantly, the two have a bond and since Jeff is seeking a Sub and Paul is one, this is a natural match.

This is one of my favorite authors, and his story did not disappoint me. There was a very real and sincere way that the relationship was revealed to the reader that made it seem realistic. The Hammer Club always manages to get some good stories and romances going between members. However, the best part was that the whole story had a sweet and kind tone to it.

Lenore Lovecraft



Devilishly Wicked

Kathy Love
Brava
Trade Paperback
978 0758265890

Tristan McIntyre was a demon of lust and the editor in chief of *HOT!* magazine, the hottest fashion magazine in the industry. He was gorgeous, rich and extremely eligible. And the leader of the demon takeover for world domination presently being put into place by Tristan and Dippy, Satan's hellhound. The only problem was that Tristan didn't intend on the takeover being an equal partnership, like had been originally planned. Tristan had to find a way to get rid of Dippy, without Satan's knowledge, but in a way that neither Satan nor Dippy would find out until it was too late. And that took a lot of concentration—concentration that Tristan didn't have around his personal assistant, Georgia, or Peaches, as he liked to call her. She was a walking man's wet dream with a Marilyn Monroe figure in a world of stick figure models. And he wanted her like he had never wanted anyone else.

Georgia loved working for *HOT!* magazine. The money was incredible, and her boss was beyond gorgeous. But he flustered her. She knew she wasn't the type that a rich, handsome playboy type who was constantly surrounded by incredibly beautiful models would go for. She wore funky vintage clothing, was a size 14 on a good day and had crazy hair. She was lucky that they even let her work for *HOT!* The only problem was that she was totally in love with her boss but knew he only messed with her for his amusement. He couldn't possibly be serious, could he? Then Georgia was approached by the DIA, the Demon Intelligence Agency, which was undercover in the mailroom at *HOT!*, keeping track of the goings on of the demons upstairs. They needed somebody to keep an eye on Tristan, and Georgia was the perfect choice. But would she be willing to go along with the idea with Tristan constantly trying to seduce her?

Devilishly Wicked is a continuation of Kathy Love's "Devilishly" series and is just as sexy and humorous as her two previous books. It stands alone well, but it does help to read the previous books just to know who the main players are. And kudos to Ms. Love for making the main character a plus size in a world of size twos!

Lani Roberts



Breathe

Lauren Jameson
New American Library
Trade Paperback
978 0451466631



Samantha Collins looked at her exotic emerald green glass sculpture and still couldn't believe that it had been chosen for exhibition at Indulgencia. She had poured all her pent up sexual frustrations into that sculpture but figured nobody would know that secret but her. She had entered the piece on a whim.

Indulgencia was a luxury resort in Cabo San Lucas, where Samantha now lived. But the thing Indulgencia was most famous, or infamous, for was the small exclusive BDSM club, Devorar, that catered to the various sexual predilections of its wealthy clientele. Samantha wanted to see inside Devorar but wasn't sure if she could handle what she might see or find out about herself.

Sexy, rich, and powerful Dom Elijah Masterson watched Samantha very carefully. From the moment he saw her sculpture, he could tell that she wanted to be a submissive but had never indulged in the lifestyle. Elijah owned Indulgencia, along with several other clubs, properties and other things around the country. He had everything he could ever want, more money that he could ever spend, women begging him to dominate them and business interests to keep him busy. But Elijah was bored, and something about Samantha intrigued him.

Lauren Jameson has penned a sexy, romantic how to instruction manual on the BDSM lifestyle with *Breathe*. Elijah is a force to be reckoned with, and Samantha is just the woman to do it. She's not your meek little slave looking for a man to bully her, but a strong, self sufficient woman looking for an equally strong man to love and Elijah fills that role perfectly. This is a love story with super sexy love scenes and lots of understanding that makes it a joy to read all night long.

Lani Roberts



MYSTERY

Blood Art

Margot Justes
Amazon Digital Services
B00FWA8YMO
****1/2

Nikolai Volkov was a vampire and close friend of Leonardo da Vinci. When Nikolai asked his friend to paint a portrait of a woman by memory, he agreed with one condition--to know the story behind it. The portrait was of a woman who continued to torture Nikolai. Lucrezia Borgia was the woman who turned him.

Present day: Devane Redding was at the art gallery when a simply mesmerizing man approached her. Nikolai was thrilled, he met the incredible artist Devane Redding and found himself as attracted to her as she was to him. Instinct told him she was in danger, and he would do everything in his power to protect her. He just need to figure out what or who was threatening his Devane.

Margot Justes sculpted this story like the finest connoisseur--witty, delicious, and an utterly fascinating read.

Lauren Calder

Death Comes to the Village

Catherine Lloyd
Kensington
Trade Paperback
978 0758287335
****1/2

It was the dead of night and Major Robert Kurland was recuperating from a broken leg and was not sleeping well. Managing to get to the window to shut the curtains, Robert noticed a man carrying something large.

Lucy Harrington was directed by her father to pay a visit to Major Kurland. It was not a cherished duty she looked forward to. The major was grumpy and irritable. Understandably so, considering he survived Waterloo, but her patience was being tested. When Robert explained how he re injured himself and why-- she agreed to investigate the odd occurrences.

This is not your typical cozy mystery. It is a well written, spell-binding tale that keeps the reader turning the page with flagrant anticipation.

Lauren Calder

Death, Taxes, and Green Tea Ice Cream

Diane Kelly
St. Martin's
Mass Market
978 1250023087
****1/2

Tara Holloway lost her job as an IRS Special Agent and was now looking for a job. She was wondering who was assigned to her two big international cases when her boyfriend Nick admitted that they had been given to him. Lucky, because Tara was going to go to Japan and India to be a consultant in an unofficial capacity.

Attempting to find a job had been difficult because of the shooting she had been involved with and the reasoning behind the loss of her

job. She received a call from the Department of Justice blatantly hinting that she was being charged with using excessive force to apprehend a suspect. Then she was served and was being sued with the same charges. So much for her trip to Japan.

Death, Taxes and Green Tea Ice Cream is pure Diane Kelly--witty, remarkable, and ever so entertaining.

Lauren Calder

Hijack in Abstract

Larissa Reinhart
Henery Press
Trade Paperback
978 1938383724

Cherry Tucker was an artist and her uncle asked her to come to the police station to do a sketch of a suspect. When Cherry became a bit of a small town celebrity with her art sales, her nemesis Shawna tried to discredit her.

When the man who had witnessed the crime was also murdered, Cherry was determined to track down the killer, do damage control with Shawna's spiteful lies, and keep her career moving forward.

Written with solid characters and creative passion, *Hijack in Abstract* draws the reader into the story with each ingenious stroke of Reinhart's pen.

Lauren Calder

Speak No Evil

Tanya Anne Crosby
Kensington
Mass Market
978 1601831767

Florence Aldridge has passed away, leaving her children to deal with the estate and the many unanswered questions. Caroline was the oldest and knew the responsibilities of the family were firmly planted on her shoulders. Talking to one of the guests after her mother's funeral, Caroline was distracted when Jack Shaw entered the dining room. Jack, the man she almost married.

The will was read and the bombshell was dropped. To receive their inheritance, the girls had to live at Oyster Point Plantation for a full year and fulfill obligations stipulated in the will. The sisters were not happy about the stipulations; all three of them wanted to leave and return to their busy lives. When someone broke into their family's home and friends started to be missing, there was only one person Caroline could depend on--Jack.

This was a compelling story, an intriguing page turning suspense. This reader was anticipating a story behind Jack's cheating and the motive behind the murders. Neither was explained by the book's end.

Lauren Calder



Booty

Apparition: Hungry Ghosts (Book 3)

Trish J. Macgregor
Tom Doherty Associates
Hardcover
978-0765326041



Tess and Ian have lived in the city of Esperanza for many years with Tess' niece Maddie and her partner Nick Sanchez. The problem is Esperanza is not a good place to live. It has become a portal between the living and the dead. In Esperanza, the dead cannot only contact the living and project holographic images of themselves; they can do what we would call spiritual possession. The difference is that, in this story, they can do it on a massive scale. They can take over the whole city if they want to do so. Not every ghost is evil. The evil ones are called Brujos. In the beginning of the story, Tess is chased by Brujos. It could have taken her over but instead decided to play cat and mouse. It took over someone standing next to her and then talked to Tess. Tess could not get away because she could not hide. It just kept on taking over anyone standing close by. Obviously, the world that the Brujos exist in is laid out differently from ours, and they have the advantage. Somehow, Tess and her friends must defeat the Brujos who are planning to do something really bad. But how can these things be destroyed when they exist, but are not alive? Apparition is the third book of the "Hungry Ghosts," but can be enjoyed by itself, without having to read the first two books. This story is very well done.

Paul Zunino

The Final Cut

Catherine Coulter and JT Ellison
Putnam
Hardcover
978 0399164736

The Final Cut is the first book in a suspense series about half American New Scotland Yard Chief Inspector Nicholas Drummond. He travels to New York to investigate the death of his friend and colleague and its relation to the theft of the infamous Koh i Noor diamond, part of the British crown jewels. Together with FBI Agent Michaela "Mike" Caine, he will embark on a near global chase after the Fox, the mysterious and beautiful female jewel thief contracted to steal the jewel by a man who seeks the mystical power that this jewel brings to its destined owner.

The Final Cut is engrossing and energetic with a hint of supernatural lore that keeps the reader turning the pages. Nicholas Drummond has the air of James Bond meets Sherlock Holmes. Mike is intrepid and tough, a good female foil for the larger-than-life British detective, although she felt comparatively one dimensional. Overall, the Fox steals the show with her intriguing back story and narrative. Readers who are looking for a book that bridges the gap between international crime capers with thrilling, almost non stop action adventure and mythical storytelling will appreciate this story; although the lead characters needed further definition to make for a more excellent read.

Danielle Hill

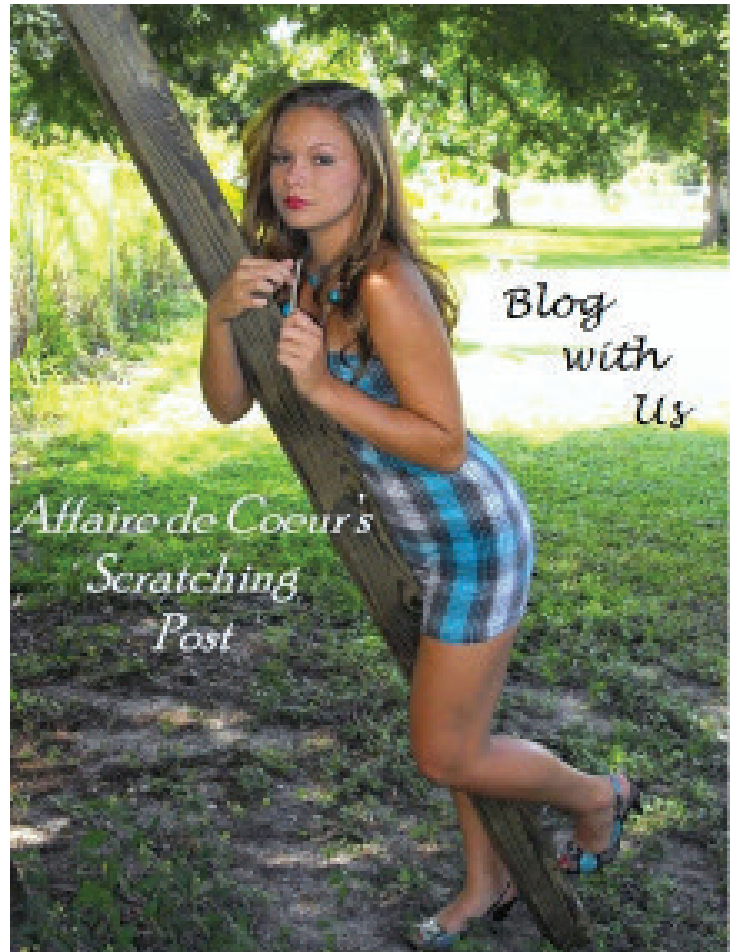
Wild Justice

Kelley Armstrong
Penguin
Trade Paperback
978 0452298811
****1/2

Nadia Stafford was the owner of a wilderness resort lodge and part time contract killer. On a job, she had missed the opportunity to finish the hit. Unfortunately, it was too late; the man had killed his wife, shot his daughter, and then killed himself. Nadia felt responsible. If she had done her job and not hesitated, the woman would still be alive.

Her failure brought back the nightmares, the crazy mixed up nightmares where Nadia relives the night her cousin was raped and murdered. Her friend Jack, knowing how she would react to the woman's death, hunted her down and took her to another case, a very complicated case; to the man who killed her cousin.

Kelley Armstrong has penned an action-packed thriller, drawing the reader into the story with each turn of the page.
Lauren Calder





BONUS

The Cupcake Diaries: Spoonful of Christmas

Darlene Panzera
Avon Impulse
E-book
978-0062305121
***1/2

It's the holiday season, and the ladies of Astoria, Oregon's own Creative Cupcakes have gallons of stress unraveling the joy of the season. A rich man offers to buy the bakery building for a great deal of money, and Rachel, Andi, and Kim wrestle with the idea of what they could do with the money. Andi's husband, Jake, gets a job offer in Washington, D.C. Rachel's fiancé, Mike, is thinking of relocating as well.

But first they need to make it to Rachel and Mike's Christmas Eve wedding, which promises to be an elaborate affair. Unfortunately, a malicious thief who calls himself the Grinch has targeted Creative Cupcakes, and Christmas cheer is in short supply. And hiding in the cupcake shop and nearby is abandoned foster child Max, who has a friend in Andi's little daughter but trusts no one.

Darlene Panzera's latest does not stand alone as it is a follow-up to earlier titles in the "Cupcake Diaries" series. The ladies of the bakery do not have an enjoyable holiday season, and it understandably wears on their nerves. Rachel sometimes seems shallow and unkind, leading readers to care less about her happy ever after. But readers will be pulling for Max to get his happy ending.
Heather Nordahl Files

Dare to Be Wild

Eden Davis
Strebtor Books
Trade Paperback
978 1593093433



Livia Charles had a new lease on life—literally. She was a breast cancer survivor, on the tail end of 49, divorced after 23 years of marriage, and was celebrating her new perky, perfect 36 C's that she had paid for after her double mastectomy. Now her girlfriends were have a coming out party for her and her new breasts and determined that the sexual drought she had been going through deserved to be over. They were going to make sure that the conservative Ms. Charles finally got out of her comfort zone!

When Livia realized what her friends were up to, she was totally embarrassed and uncomfortable. She was raised Catholic and had been a virgin when she got married to her sexually unadventurous husband. Now, 25 years later, she felt good, looked good and decided to listen to her outrageous friends. They had her make up a sexual bucket list of all the things she had ever wanted to experience. She was to try and complete the list before her 50th birthday in a few weeks. Livia thought when she met handsome, adventurous 32 year old Mitchell on a nude beach in St. Bard, the things on her list would definitely start getting crossed off!

This reviewer had never read any of Ms. Davis' works, but after reading *Dare to be Wild*, I would like to congratulate her on filling a badly neglected niche in the romance novel genre. Her older female/younger male erotic theme is well written with deeply involved characters that are more than just sexual freaks. She lets the reader know that

it is okay to explore your more adventurous sexual side, no matter your age or his age, and to do it without guilt or judgment, just safely. Her novels feel like she is speaking to every sexually repressed middle aged woman who ever read a romance novel and thought, "That's nice, but a fantasy." Her books let you dare to dream and know that anything is possible.

Lani Roberts

Dare to Love

Carly Phillips
CP Publishing
Paperback
978 0989311281
****1/2

For Ian Dare the only thing worse than discovering that his father has another family on the side is the pain of knowing that his father chose that family over Ian's. Now, years later, Ian is still struggling and determined to be the kind of man his father was not: responsible, upstanding, and hard working. What he will not be is the kind of man who allows anyone close enough to break his heart again. Until, that is, Riley Taylor walks into the room, and Ian is instantly attracted to the beautiful woman with lush curves and mesmerizing eyes. The woman who also just happens to be on the arm of his half brother, Alex Dare, Riley's best friend.

There's no love lost between Ian and his father's other children, and when circumstances force Ian and Riley together, tempers flare, sparks fly and passions reach a boiling point!

Dare to Love is a steamy contemporary romance that might also be considered romantic suspense. It's a passionate, exciting, poignant story, and a fantastic start to Ms. Phillips' new "Dare to Love" series. Fans who enjoy their romance novels with emotionally charged stories and characters do not want to miss this book!

Mallory Lane

Deadshifted (Edie Spence Book 4)

Cassie Alexander
St. Martin's
Mass Market
978 1250037947
****1/2

Edie is a nurse. She's a human, but due to her previous job at a hospital for paranormals, she knows way more about the supernatural world than she wishes she did. Her boyfriend Asher is a shape-shifter. He can assume the appearance of anyone he touches.

Asher has booked them on a two week vacation cruise. Once they're on board, Asher spots someone he knows. Nathaniel is an extremely evil man, and he has a grudge against Asher. Fortunately, he's never seen Asher's current form.

During breakfast, a young boy becomes violently ill. He's taken away, never to be seen again. He's just one of many. Soon more people are sick than are well. Asher is positive that Nathaniel is causing the epidemic. Now he's just got to figure out what he's done and how to reverse it. There are rumors of a ship coming to evacuate the sick people, but the people on the "rescue" boat have a different agenda.

This is a continuation of a series. It is not imperative that one read the previous stories before reading this one, but it is strongly advised. Despite explicit sex and foul language, it's a really good book.

Sheila Griffin

Highland Master

Hannah Howell
Zebra
Mass Market
978 1420118810

Banuilt's Laird by inheritance, widow Lady Triona McKee, struggles to keep her people safe and well after illness hits them hard, killing many. A neighboring kinsman plots to take her land from her by sabotage and force, making it even more difficult. A surprise visit from a cousin brings a knight into her life, who changes everything she knows about men and herself as a woman and a Laird, and what she wants from life.

Strong-willed, smart, and dedicated to her people and Banuilt, Triona lives a duty filled, pleasure free life. She has only seen the worst of men neglect, abuse, and dominating control. Brett is the first man to treat her as an equal, with respect, but also with genuine desire she is unable to resist, along with his handsomeness and sexual appeal.

Haunted by his first love, Sir Brett Murray is cynical and cautious in his interactions with women. He's so drawn to Triona's strength, compassion, and beauty, that helping her protect Banuilt becomes a deeper need to be worthy of her and win her heart.

Eclectic and well developed characters and a well written blend of humor, action/adventure, suspense, and steamy romance make *Highland Master* thoroughly entertaining.

Lacy Hill

If Only

Cherise Sinclair
Loose ID
E-book
978 1623003975

When she's not spending her time as a trainee at the popular BDSM club, Sally Hart, the Shadowlands' sweet but sassy submissive, puts her computer hacking talents to work hunting The Harvest Association, the human traffickers who enslaved her friends. The Harvest Association is being taken apart, slowly but surely, and it's the slowly part that Sally wants to change. The way she sees it, the cops and Feds can't get the job done, so she'll have to.

Working within the constraints of the law, FBI special agents Galen Kouros and Vance Buchanan are frustrated with how slow the investigation into who's behind The Harvest Association is going. But the law is the law, and they don't want to do anything that might compromise the work they've put into it so far. In their off time, these very sexy, very dominant co tops work at the Shadowlands and would love nothing more than to play with Sally. After she's brutally attacked by her ex and put into the agents' protective custody, they finally get their chance! Now, if they can just get her to trust them!

If Only is the eighth book in Cherise Sinclair's "Masters of the Shadowlands" series and another excellent installment. This story brings to a close the hunt for the people behind the human trafficking organization who have been kidnapping submissives from BDSM clubs all across the United States and selling them into slavery where many do not come out alive. The Shadowlands world Ms. Sinclair has created is often fun, giving readers the perfect balance of humor and erotic passion. However, this particular story tends to be on the darker side. The explicit sexual situations might border on the taboo for some readers, but fans of more intense BDSM romances are sure to enjoy this story!

Mallory Lane

A Killer's Field

Susan Elizabeth Alvis
Devine Destinies
E book
978-1771113359
***1/2

Despite her better instincts, Kristen McMurray goes along with her boyfriend's less than-romantic plans to spend Halloween night in the Texas Killing Fields. It's a choice she soon comes to regret when she and others are stalked by a psychotic group of men hunting and killing humans for sport. While running for her life from her boyfriend Denny, whom she thought she could trust, she discovers faith and courage she didn't know she had and a purpose for her life.

The first person narrative draws readers into the story with Kristen's wit, sarcasm, and wry humor. Kristen is an easygoing young woman who deals with whatever life throws her way with humor, but she finds that some situations require more from us. Denny comes across as shady and unlikable for most of the novel, giving off vibes that should make Kristen question his motives a bit more. Nevertheless, her actions ring true for a young woman searching for acceptance among her peers.

Featuring taut suspense, nice description, action, and character development, *A Killer's Field* is a fast paced, and creepy novella that creatively explores the journey from the person we are to the person we are meant to be.

Lacy Hill

The Officer's Prey

Armand Cabasson
Gallic Books
Trade Paperback
978 1906040826



Captain Quentin Margont is tasked to catch a brutal murderer of women -another officer- in this historical thriller set during Napoleon's Army campaign for Russia. Translated from its original French, *The Officer's Prey* is a compelling, well plotted mix of mystery and military fiction.

The juxtaposition of Napoleon's ill fated invasion of Russia with procedural aspects of catching a deranged would be serial killer succeeds. Readers with an interest in military history will appreciate descriptions of the inner workings of various army companies and the resulting cultural fusion from the dictator's conquering/inclusion of various European countries and their forces into his massive army. This is integral to the process of Margont's hunt for a murderer in the ranks because he must use his knowledge of army workings and human psychology to ferret out a manipulative and clever culprit, who is destabilizing with each murder. Such a large scale conflict seemingly precludes a close study of characters, but the author succeeds in presenting a microcosm of humanity from that campaign as Margont works with his friends and colleagues to survive each battle and to sort through a list of suspects.

The Officer's Prey is recommended for military history and mystery readers.

Danielle Hill

Striking Distance

Pamela Clare
Berkley
Mass Market
978 0425257357
****1/2

Navy SEAL Javier Corbray and TV reporter Laura Nilsson had spent an intensely passionate, no-strings-attached weekend together in Dubai, but by the end of their time together both had decided they wanted more. They never got the chance, though, because while reporting a story, Laura was kidnapped live on the air and was thought to have been beheaded by Al Qaeda.

Javier has seen a lot in his fourteen years as a Navy SEAL, but nothing could prepare him for the unexpected outcome of one mission in particular--the rescue of Laura Nilsson, the woman he and the rest of the world had thought dead for the past eighteen months, the woman he'd never stopped wanting, never stopped caring about.

Now that she's home, Laura is moving forward, putting the pieces of her life back together, but she's determined to find out who kidnapped her, and why. Javier will do whatever he has to do to protect her from those who want her dead.

Striking Distance is the sixth book in Pamela Clare's romantic suspense "I Team" series. It's a gripping story that takes us deep into the heart and mind of a woman who has endured almost two years of rape and mental and emotional torture. It's not always an easy story to read, but Ms. Clare handles the subject of rape with compassion, giving Javier and Laura a truly beautiful, well-deserved, "happily ever after." Pamela Clare is one of the great voices in the romantic suspense genre, delivering compelling, entertaining stories that pull readers in and keep them there, start to finish. Fans of slightly darker romantic suspense will definitely want to read *Striking Distance*.
Mallory Lane

Torn

Monica Murphy
Avon Impulse
E book
978 0062289360

Marina Knight is pretty sure she recognizes the hot playboy she meets one night, and she knows for sure when he introduces himself. He's Gage Emerson, and he's trying to buy property her family owns, including the bakery she runs with her aunt. He's hard to resist, but she walks away.

He finds her at her bakery after sending flowers to apologize for an unintended slight towards her family. They don't really like each other, so why do they have sex in the bakery's office? Soon their attraction transforms into a relationship, but he's still keeping secrets. Can a connection started this way turn to love?

This short novel is the second title in Monica Murphy's "Billionaire Bachelors Club" series, but it stands alone. The tone of this tale, told in first person from both the hero's and heroine's points of view, is somewhere between new adult and erotica. Both characters are immature and do not communicate well with each other. But the tale is an appealingly smooth read, so fans of romances between a billionaire and an innocent will find much to enjoy.
Heather Nordahl Files

The Wedding Date

Cara Connelly
Avon Impulse
E book
978 0062282231

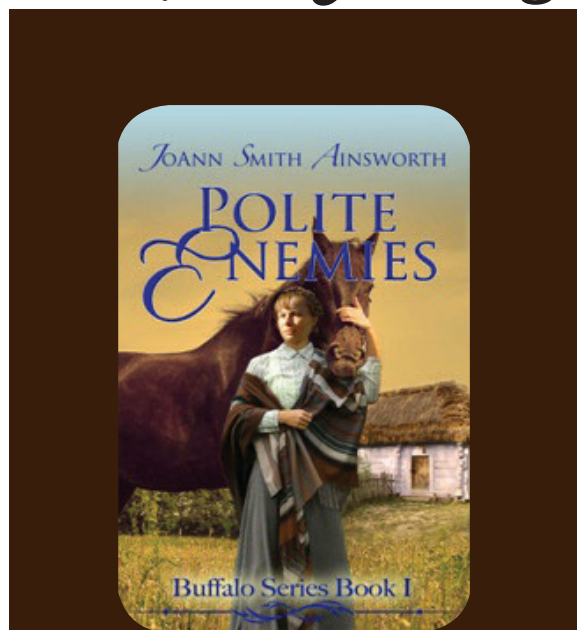
Julie Marone lost her beloved fiancé because of a brain tumor, an experience that left her with an enduring rage and disgust toward doctors. She's a realtor who specializes in finding the perfect home for couples, as she has a gift that is somewhat paranormal in nature. Her latest client does not fit the mold, and she ought to avoid him. Not only is he a single man who's aggressively flirting with her, he's also a doctor.

Cody Brown is a transplanted Texan in Boston, and his smile seems to have the power to make women do whatever he wants them to do. But Julie works hard to resist the dreamy ER doctor. He's delighted that his job does not put the usual gleam of avarice in her eyes, but her hatred of doctors dominates her to an irrational extent. He'll need to work to win her over.

Cara Connelly pens a prequel novella to her "Save the Date" series. Her hero is a delightful charmer, and while the heroine's issues hold her in a tight grip, her issues do make sense. The Boston setting is used to strong effect, and the characters' chemistry is marvelously undeniable.

Heather Nordahl Files

POLITE ENEMIES (1895 Wyoming)

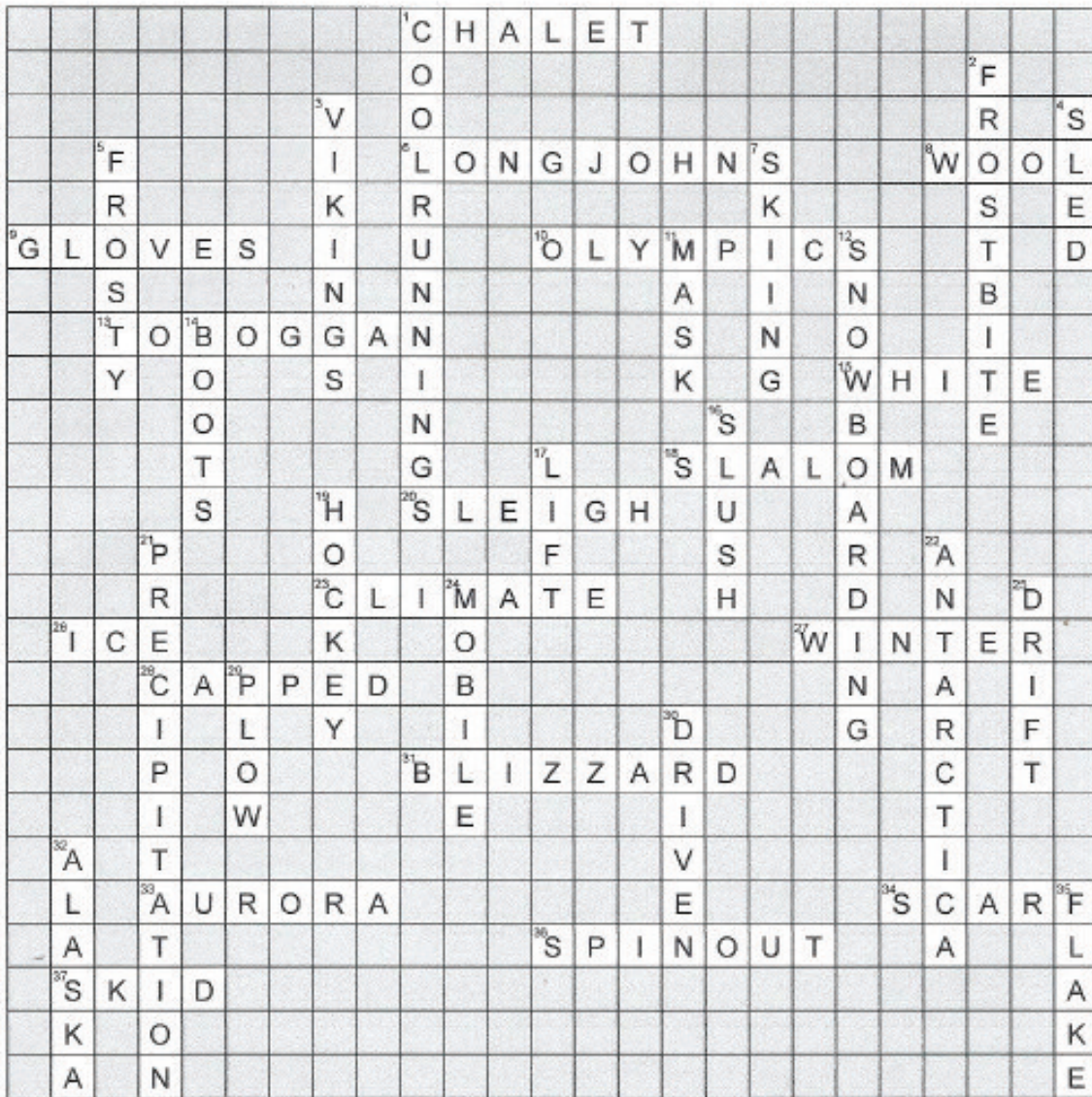


Middle-aged Ida and Jared find love when they least expect it.

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Snow Bound

Louise B. Snead



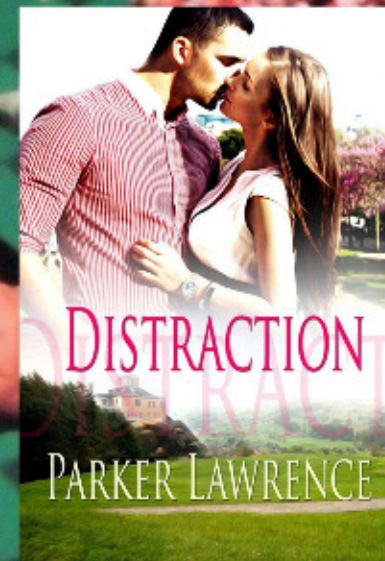
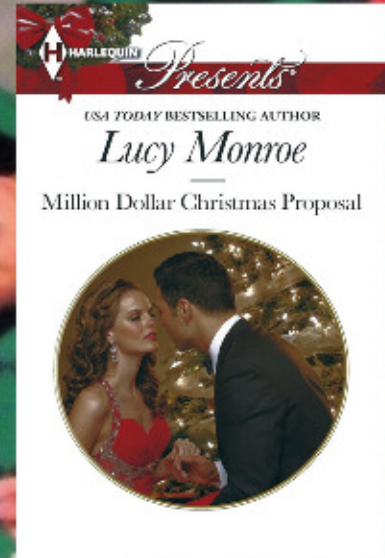
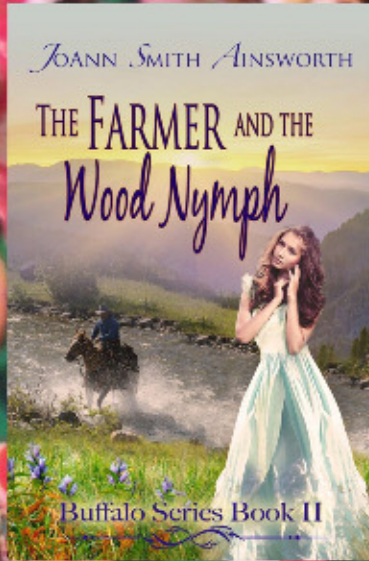
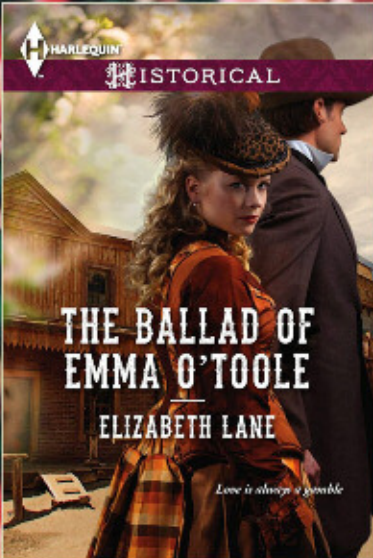
international december holiday scramble

1. Kwanzaa
2. Hanukkah
3. Boxing
4. Christmas
5. Pearl Harbor

ENCRYPTION

And I heard him exclaim
as he drove out of sight
Merry Christmas to
all and to all a good night!

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