

July-August, 2019

Affaire de Coeur

Bringing You 38 Years of Honest Reviews

Summertime is Conference Time

AdC Covered the Space Coast and Capital City Conferences



Reviews!

Reviews!

Reviews!



Teri Riggs--An author who delivers a HEA



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Email address: affairedecoeur@adcmagazine.com

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Getting a Website



Pamela Ackerson

Building your website can be easy or hard, depending on what you decide. There are free websites out there you can use that let you copy and paste, creating a pleasing eye-catching page. When I first started in the industry, the Internet wasn't around. However, the moment I had a chance to create a page, I did. I had an AOL home page. When I realized that just having one home page wasn't enough, I expanded my reach and found one of the free websites available that was easy to use.

Learn to do it yourself. When you start selling a reasonable amount of books, you can find a web designer. You don't have to spend a lot of money on a designer. There are plenty out there who'll create a page for you without asking for an arm and leg.

In the last several years, I broke down and purchased www.PamelaAckerson.com.

If you have the funds, you can purchase a www.YourName.com or www.YourName.net. Many have a copy and paste feature. If you're clumsy, fearful, website challenged, you should hire someone to do it. Ask them to make it user

friendly so you can go in and tweak if you need to. It's important for you to be able to keep the page active, functional, and fluid. If you have to wait for a webmaster to update your page, it can cost you sales.

I know I've neglected my personal website and I don't want you to make the same mistakes. Websites need to be pleasing to the eye. The reader must be able to associate your books with your page. Try not to put too much information on one page. It'll look cluttered.

There are several things you can do to make your website awesome:

Enticements need to be added to the page. People love free or discounted items.

Keep in mind that your website's one big, awesome advertisement and marketing tool. If you look at it that way, you'll succeed in making it a great page for your readers.

- * Use a pleasing and uncomplicated background image that either accents your books, letting the reader know what you write, or keep it a solid color and use a font that's legible to the reader and makes your book covers stand out.

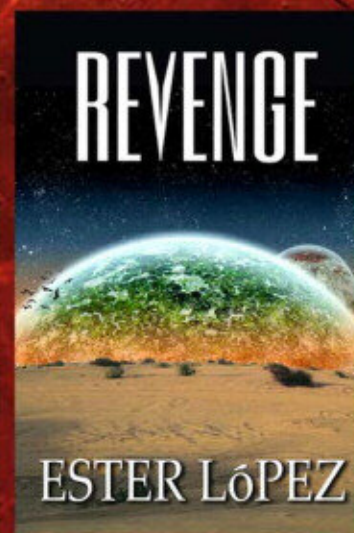
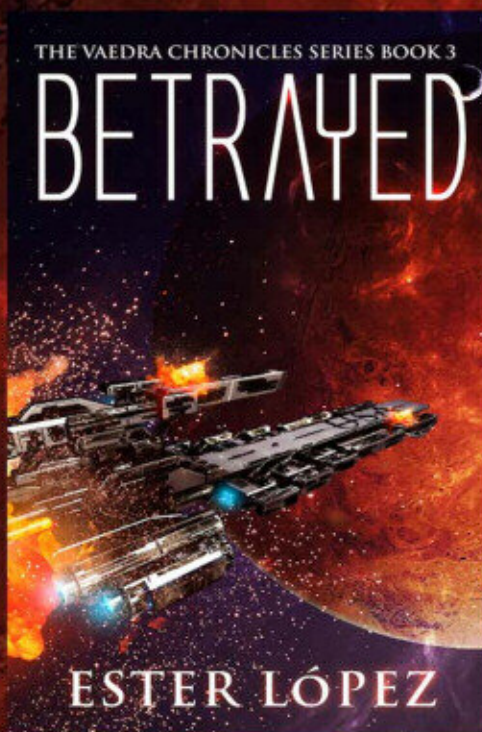
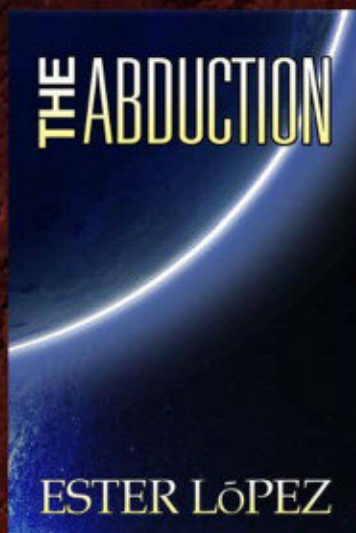
- * If you use an opaque image, use darker, bolder fonts. You can go with reds, black, or dark greens/blues. If you prefer using a dark background image, use lighter fonts. Use gold, yellow, or reds with thin white strokes.

- * Another major requirement for an awesome web page is to take advantage of excerpts or freebies. It doesn't have to be a full chapter. You want to entice the reader to wanting more. Let them see your writing style. Give away a short story that can be uploaded or sent to their email address. If they're interested in reading more, you've enticed them to click on the buy button and either purchase, or read more on the "look inside" page. Enticements can work well for you if you do it correctly. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. Offer the e-book for free. They may or may not put the review up. It's a chance you have to take.

I've mentioned this before with your social media sites, but you need to do this with your website as well. You need interaction with your readers. You want to build long-term relationships with them. If you're inclined to have a newsletter, collect email addresses from readers who contact you. Ask them if you can mail them once in a while.

If you touch up your page once in a while, you'll be giving your readers fresh and updated information. Even if

Writing on the Edge of Reality



EsterLopez.com

@EsterLopez1

you haven't written a book in six months, go in and move things around.

You've seen department stores and grocery stores do it. How many times have you walked into the grocery store and noticed that they've changed things around? They're trying to make it look fresh. Big businesses do it and you need to do it, too. Make sure your readers can find what they want. You don't want them searching around for something, getting frustrated, and wandering off.

Keep it simple and fresh.

Promoting your website, blog, and/or articles is very important. Use your networking sites to encourage readers to

your website.

When doing promotional blurbs or bullets, use hashtags. There's a special way to make them work to your advantage. In a tweet, never use more than three. One or two is best, but you can do three. Make your tweets short and sweet, add a picture,

and don't forget to put in the website address. I've seen so many authors forget to do this and they wonder why they're not getting a good re-

“Promoting your website, blog, and/or articles is very important.”

cont. on page 13

The World Mourns the Death of an Icon, Toni Morrison



So many nouns come to mind when remembering Toni Morrison (Chloe Anthony Wofford): Nobel Laureate, Pulitzer Prize winner, African-American, Icon, Treasure, Story-teller, Princeton Professor, and many more. Through eleven novels she wrote of the Black experience, from the 19th to the 20th century and the struggles of the oppressed while exposing the effects of slavery and racism on its victims.

The Bluest Eye, published in 1970, was her first novel and focused on a young Black adolescent who was obsessed with white features and craved the bluest eyes. *Beloved*, which was based on a true story, won her the Pulitzer Prize. In it, Sethe, a runaway slave confronted with recapture, killed her daughter rather than submit her to slavery. Within the story are ghosts who haunt Sethe and the reader. Her last book of fiction, *God Help the Child*, chronicles child abuse with the story of Bride, a dark-skinned child born to light-skinned parents.

Morrison's voice changed the way the rest of the world looked at Black American's life. Toni Morrison passed away this week. We are forever grateful for her talent and contributions.



Enough is Enough!



I make an effort not to mix *Affaire* with politics. After all, *Affaire* is about books and all things that go into books, specifically focusing on women's fiction with a high percentage of romance-love. These books provide escape from the real world and a chance to dream. Politics, on the other hand, or the discussion thereof, is the source of malcontent. Everyone's experiences are different and the manner in which we approach the solutions to the world's problems is centered on our orientations, experiences, histories, social status, wealth (or poverty) and, yes, unfortunately, the color of our skin and all the history that brings with it. The end result of delving into politics is that we disagree. The way we disagreed used to be civil. Now....

It is because of the propensity to argue and dig into our positions that I never addressed anything outside of things related to women's fiction. That does not mean that I am blind to what's going on around me. My head is not in the clouds or buried in a book. Quite the opposite. It also doesn't mean that I don't have opinions. I may be one of the most opinionated people you know,

but I am open to evaluation of my opinions, and have often changed them. I think that's called growth. It also doesn't mean I cannot work or socialize with people who don't share my points of view. Pam Ackerson and I are political opposites, but I trust Pam and consider her a friend.

So why am I talking about politics today? I'm sad and I'm hurt that I live in a country where there are endless senseless killings. Because of the color of our skin, my family and I have targets on our backs. War has been declared against people of color, but now it's open warfare. I go to the Garlic Festival in Gilroy whenever I can. I planned to go last Sunday, the last day, but we were having record-breaking temperatures in Oakland - nearly 100 degrees, and I knew Gilroy was much, much hotter. Three people were killed there, two Latinos and one African-American. The two Latinos were children. I went to El Paso when my son played football in the Sun Bowl. Twenty-two people were killed there, Latinos were targeted. I've been to Dayton many times. My sister-in-law was from there. Nine people were killed there. I will never feel safe going to any of these aforementioned places again, and I certainly don't want my children to go there. In truth, I don't know any place that's safe, and it hurts to live in fear that someone is going to make a judgment about you because of the color of your skin and act on it.

I am not naive enough to think that the racism I experienced growing up in West Virginia is gone. I could tell you stories about racists' behavior towards me, as recently as last month. But now, it is as if a flag was dropped, like they do at Daytona, and all the bigots, racists and misogynists came out of the pits, encouraged by the lack of repudiation of one political party. In this case, silence is not golden. When one doesn't say anything to counter the negative remarks, it can only mean they agree with them.

And then, there are the Second Amendment fanatics. I will be the first to agree that you do have the right to bear arms. My father had guns and I learned to shoot when I was school aged. But your Second Amendment right doesn't mean you need assault weapons designed to kill a large number of people in a war. It doesn't mean you have the right to terrorize and kill people because they are not the same color as you or because their sexual orientation is not the same as yours.

I have lost a son and a grandson to gun violence. There is no greater pain than burying your child. So I beg you on their behalf and on the behalf of the children in Sandy Hook, the people in Las Vegas, the kids in Florida, and the rest of the 1,112 people killed in gun violence in the past five years.... VOTE!!!! Vote out those politicians who support racism, sexism, hatred and misogyny. Vote out those who are owned by the NRA and don't have the guts to vote for background checks, limited magazines, and a ban on assault weapons.

Romance readers like me know that every novel has a happy ending for the couple involved. It's time we had some happy endings.

Capital City

May 18-19, 2019

The Capital City Author Event in Montgomery, Alabama, was a conglomerate of a multitude of book lovers from all over the southeastern states. Hosted by Tammie Smith, Randy Sewell, and Michelle Sewell, the event began on Friday evening with a Riverboat Dinner Cruise on the Harriet II.



Hostess, Tammie Smith



Miranda Lynn



Host, Randy Sewell



Author Event



Hostess, Michelle Sewell

On Saturday, May 18, the book signing event began at the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and Spa in downtown Montgomery.

Raffle baskets and giveaways topped off the event. All raffle proceeds were donated to Camp ASCCA, an Easter Seals camp located in Alabama for disabled children and adults.

For those interested, there was also a cash bar available during the signing.

[Facebook.com/Groups/CCAEReadersGroup](https://www.facebook.com/Groups/CCAEReadersGroup)

Campascca.org



Model, Wander Aguiar and Debra Parmley



Sandy Sullivan



River Boat Dinner Cruise

The Spotlight Interview

The Spotlight is on...Teri Riggs

USA Today bestselling author, Teri Riggs, writes romantic suspense. She lives in Marietta, Georgia, with her husband and two of the world's most spoiled puppies. Teri and her husband began dating when they were fifteen. They've been married over forty years--a true qualification for expert status in happily-ever-afters!



her hero.

AdC: *Tell us about your new book or series.*

T.R.: I'm working on a historical western romance trilogy about three women who have received help from the Blue Stockings Society. Each book is about one of the three women and their love story.

AdC: *What motivates you for a perfect writing day?*

T.R.: I always come home from a conference or book signing eager to write. I also love when the words seem to flow.

AdC: *How/where do you get your plot ideas?*

T.R.: Everywhere. Watching TV, movies, songs.

AdC: *When you write, do you outline first, or are you a pantser?*

T.R.: I'm a pantser. I've tried using outlines, but it seems I'm never able to stick to them.

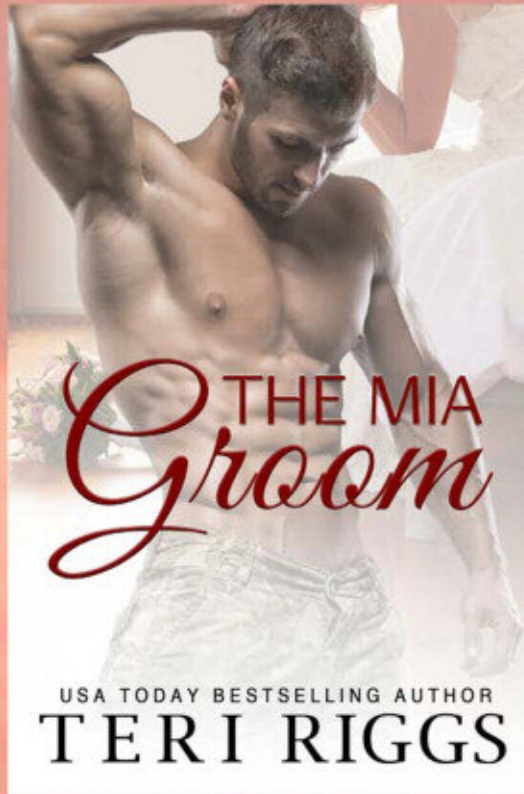
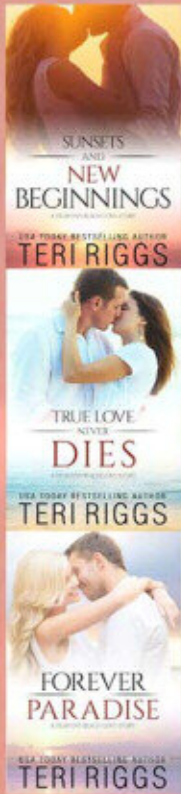
AdC: *What type of characters do you like to create?*

T.R.: I love a strong female who can go toe to toe with

AdC: *What is the most difficult thing about creating and developing characters?*

T.R.: Trying to come up with a good conflict for the hero and heroine.

Action-Packed Romantic Suspense



Teri-Riggs.com

@TeriLRiggs

AdC: *What is your favorite thing about being an author?*

T.R.: I love the feeling of accomplishment I get when I type, "THE END."

AdC: *How many books do you currently have out on the market and what genres do they fall into?*

T.R.: Currently, I have thirteen books out. I write contemporary and historical romantic suspense. I have one romantic comedy.

AdC: *Will you be attending any book signings or conventions?*

T.R.: I will be at RWA in New York from July 22nd to July 29th. I'll attend Penned Con in St. Louis in September.

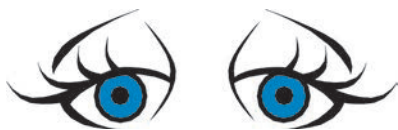
AdC: *Pass on some words of wisdom, please, to aspiring authors.*

T.R.: Never give up your dream of writing. Rejections are hard, but try to listen to the advice most editors give you. They are usually helpful.

Teri-Riggs.com

Twitter.com/TeriLRiggs

Facebook.com/Teri-Riggs-329379907142621



Sneak Peek

The MIA Groom

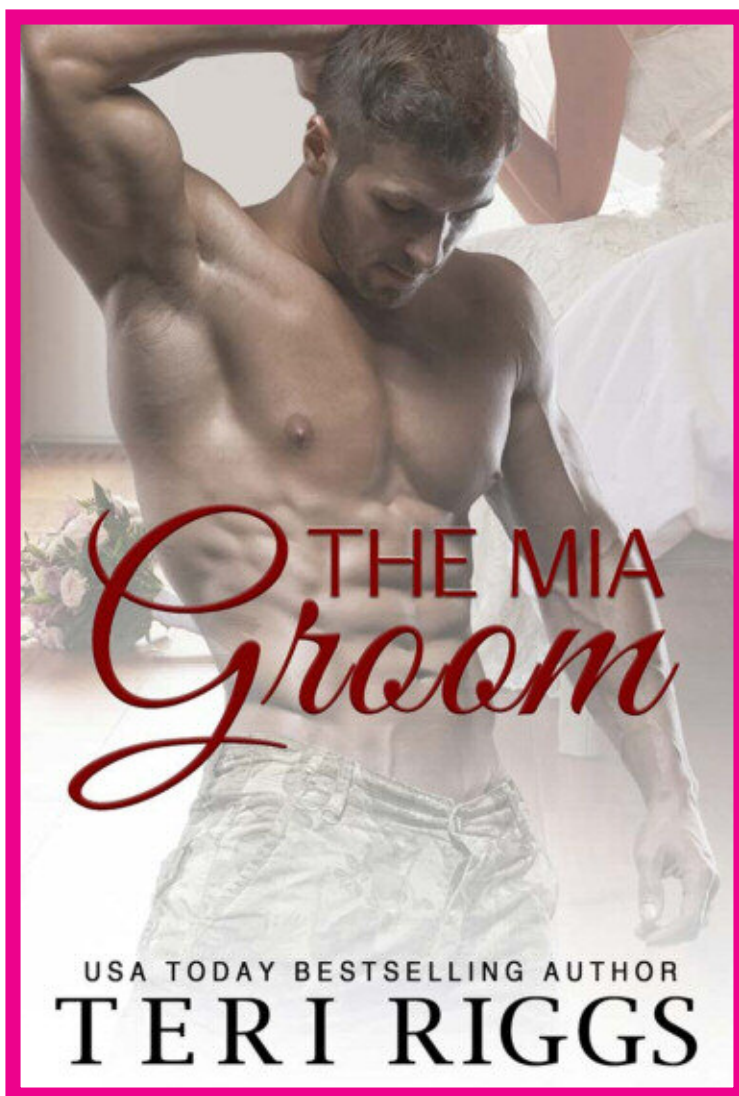
YEP. I BECAME one of *those* brides a month ago. I have become the woman everyone whispers about when I walk into the room. The puffy-faced, red-eyed girl people pity and pat on the back as I move past them, clutching my box of tissues with numb fingers. The bride with a broken heart.

Excluding movies and books, how many women are *actually* left standing at the altar on their wedding day and never know why? I, for one, have no idea why he bailed. Nor do I have a clue where my groom has run off to. Is he hiding from me, or more likely running from my father—who is all about strangling my missing betrothed?

Tuck seems to have vanished off the face of the earth without the courtesy of an ‘I have cold feet,’ ‘I met someone new last night and fell madly in love with her,’ or even a ‘your father offered me ten million dollars to disappear from your life and I always wanted to be a millionaire’ kind of explanation. No call. No text. No Dear Jane letter. Not even a mortifying public Facebook breakup. Nothing. Nada. Zipola.

If any of his friends or family in attendance knew anything, they were not sharing. And they say Navy SEALs are honorable. Hmph! Shouldn’t matter that Tuck joined the civilian ranks a little over a year ago. He still had the heart and work ethic of a SEAL. According to Tuck, he always will. I guess the expression ‘Leave no man behind’ doesn’t cover women.

My family refers to my wedding disaster as *the MIA groom incident*. The humiliation and hurt from my missing-in-action man have begun to fade a bit, only to be replaced with anger and a gut-wrenching fear. I’m having trouble reconciling with the way Tuck left me. It isn’t reflective of his character. No matter how badly he may have wanted out of the engagement, he would’ve told me in person. After Tuck opted out of the Navy, he took a job with the CPD Bureau of Organized Crime. Though he may be a tough guy on the out-



side, on the inside he has a gentle heart. He would never hurt anyone who didn’t deserve it—and when I say ‘deserve it,’ I’m talking about the worst types of criminals Chicago has to offer. Child molesters, serial killers, rapists, human traffickers... the list goes on and on. With the BOC, he’d seen it all.

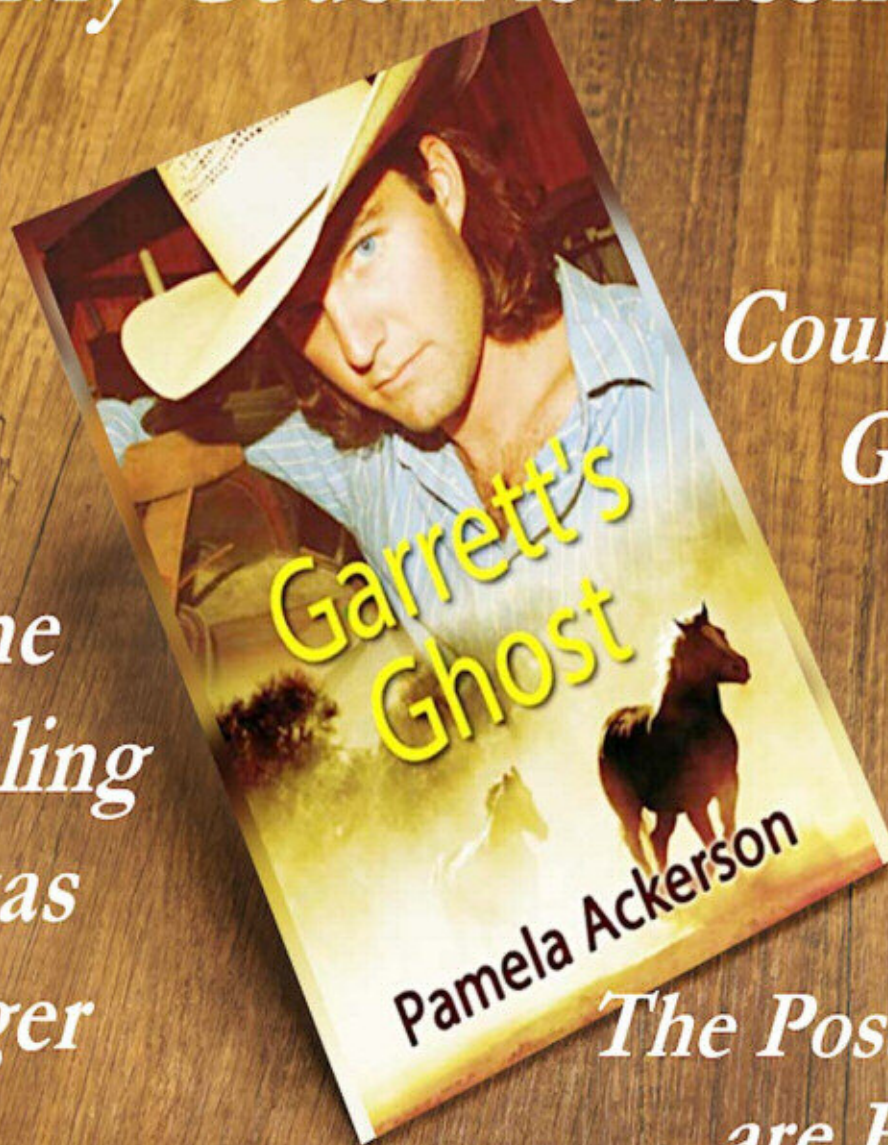
I want to look him in the eyes and give him a piece of my mind. At the same time, I’m worried about him. I have so many questions I won’t find answers for if I can’t reach Tuck. What if he’s fallen out of a tree, hit his head, and is a John Doe lying unconscious in a hospital? Or been thrown from a speeding train and is dead, toe-tagged, and residing on a slab in the morgue? What I’m getting at is, he may’ve been injured somehow and lost his memory. Or he could be dead. The thought of Tucker dead turns my belly into sludge.

Still, in my new role as an embarrassed almost-bride, I liked these possibilities considerably more than the ‘he’s a lying dickhead’ option. Blaming death or physical incapacity for my unfortunate abandonment in front of four-hundred-plus guests

My Cousin is Missing!

*A
Courageous
Ghost*

*A
Time
Traveling
Texas
Ranger*



*The Possibilities
are Endless...*

sounds much better than the jilted woman-he-probably-never-loved scenario. Yep, I can work with death. Besides, if I find out Tucker put me in this situation for any reason other than he has no memory or he's dead as a bag of rocks, I will kill him slowly and painfully. And when I finish, I will feed his body to the fish in Lake Michigan.

Space Coast Book Lovers 2019

The Space Coast Book Lovers SCBL is one of the most 'must attend' book conventions in Florida for readers and authors alike.

The convention launched on Thursday evening with the traditional meet and greet, and a lovely, delicious meal.

Friday brought readers and authors together for the Buzz Sessions. Mini workshops to help everyone interested in books. There was a Book Nook, reader's lounge, raffle baskets, photobooks, and the BOOKnique Adventures.

The author-reader luncheon brought everyone together for a wonderful time.

It was fun for everyone, the Author Speed Mingle. A great way for authors and readers to meet, introduce themselves, and talk about books!

Saturday offered all attendees even more fun. The Escape Room was open first thing in the morning. Fun, fun, fun! The book signing, in the afternoon, was a huge success. After everyone settled down and relaxed, everyone got together for the Hasta La Vista party.



Taira Wilds (left) with hostess, Teri Dees Edney (right)

Sunday morning ended the convention with a farewell breakfast and an input session on how to improve the next convention.

Details for Space Coast Book Lovers 2020

SpaceCoastBookLovers.com



Terri A. Wilson



Robbie Cox



SE Smith



Sheri Lyn



Hellfire and Handbaskets

When the past comes searching for you,
there's no escape.

KathrynHills.com @AuthorKathrynH



Violet Howe and husband John



Pam Ackerson and cover model John Antorino

The Spotlight Interview

The Spotlight Is on ... Eve Langlais

New York Times and USA Today Bestseller Eve Langlais is a Canadian author who loves to write. Her twisted imagination and sarcastic sense of humor tend to heavily influence her stories. While she might not always know what her mind is going to come up with next, it will probably have lots of romance because she believes in a happily ever after.

AdC: When you write, do you outline first, or are you a pantser? ‘

E.L.: Pantser! I kind of let the characters guide me so that I get the same wonder of surprise and excitement a reader does.

AdC: What type of characters do you like to create?

E.L.: All kinds, lol. Being a prolific author, I’ve crafted all types from the heroine who is timid to kickass, big and small, although, many of my heroes do tend to have alpha tendencies--and pretty hot physiques.

AdC: Tell us about your new book or series.

E.L.: I am so excited about the “Chimera Secrets” series that started releasing in June. Five books in total, following a different couple each time with a big story arc to keep you intrigued. Plenty of action, thrills and chills, plus, best of all, five happily ever afters. The idea in a nutshell is a secret lab experimenting on humans, making them into monsters. But what if those monsters revolt and, in the process, find love?

AdC: What motivates you for a perfect writing day?

E.L.: LOL, less motivation and more focus. I take the job of writing very seriously and have set hours Monday to Friday where I sit my butt down and get the story from my head to the computer.

AdC: How/where do you get your plot ideas?

E.L.: Anything can inspire me from a song to a news clip, and most of all my imagination combined with the “what if” factor.



reasoning and conveying it to the reader can be tricky.



EVEN MONSTERS FALL IN LOVE

EVE LANGLAIS

WWW.EVELANGLAIS.COM

©DREAMS2MEDIA

AdC: *What is your favorite thing about being an author?*

E.L.: The stories! I love that I finally have a use for my overactive imagination, lol.

AdC: *How many books do you currently have out on the market and what genres do they fall into?*

E.L.: A lot. Over a hundred, primarily romance, then sub categorized into paranormal, with a sprinkling of sci-fi and romantic suspense.

AdC: *Will you be attending any book signings or conventions?*

E.L.: Yes! I love face to face time with readers. I have Romancing the Capital in August, in Ottawa, Canada. RARE in September in London, UK. And most recently, Coastal Magic coming this February in Daytona Beach. The event page on my website has more info for those interested.

AdC: *Pass on some words of wisdom, please, to aspiring authors.*

E.L.: Finish it. It's not a book until you write the end.

Please give us the following contact information:

Personal web page <http://evelanglais.com>

Twitter: @evelanglais

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/eve.langlais.98/>



Sneak Peek

◇ *What happens when a nurse falls for the wolfman?*

The job offer is a dream come true. Three times her usual salary. Free meals and a suite. The only catch?

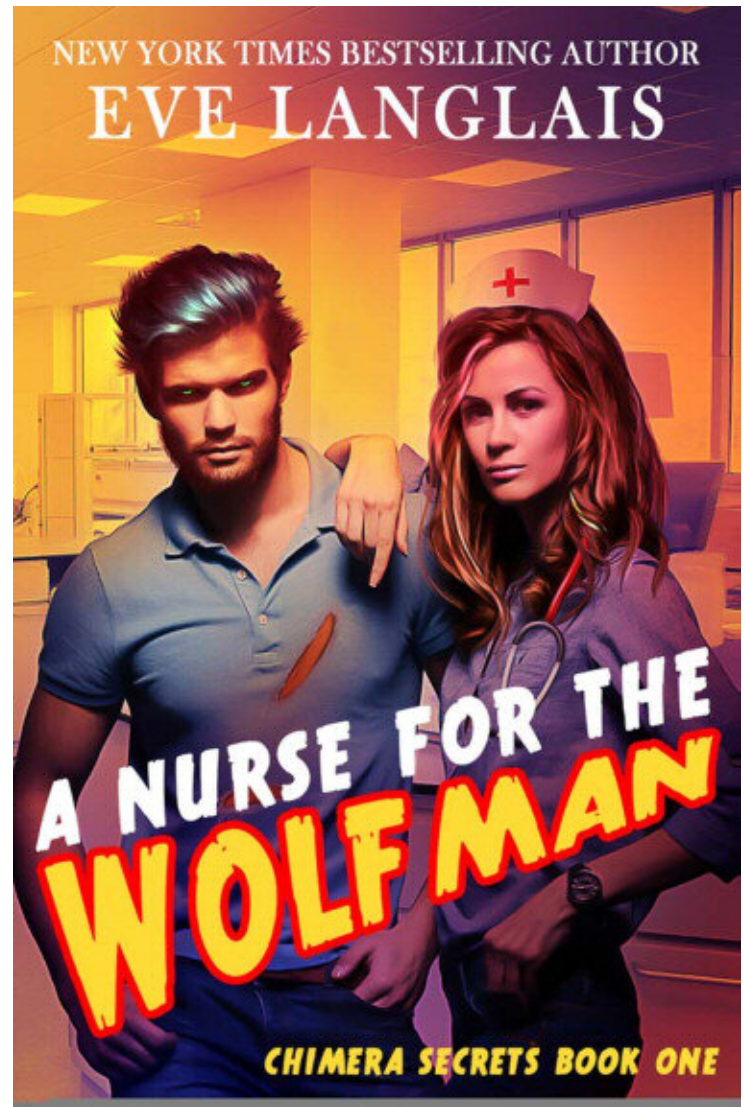
Margaret can't tell anyone about it.

Hidden in the Rockies, the clinic is well protected and...odd. It doesn't take her long to realize the doctors and scientists are up to no good. Especially once she meets Luke.

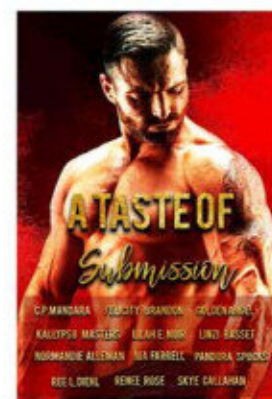
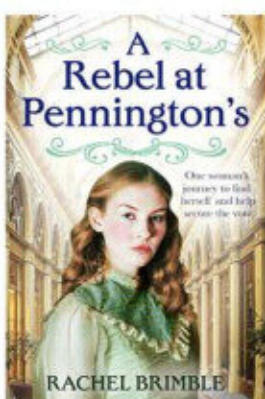
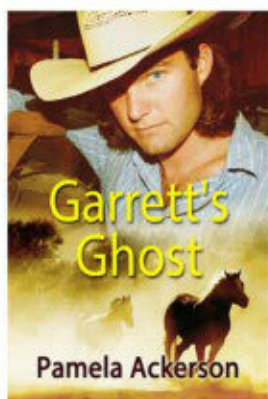
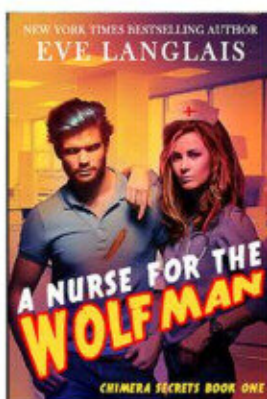
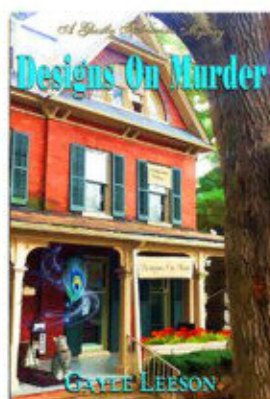
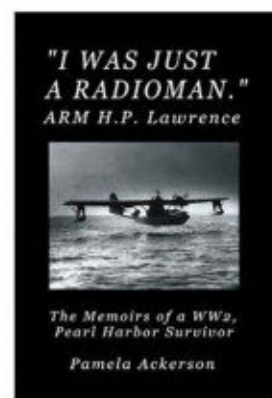
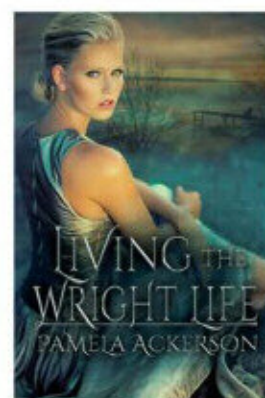
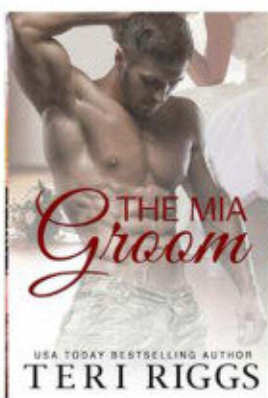
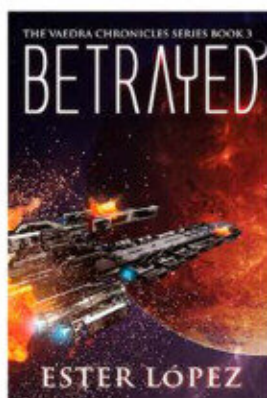
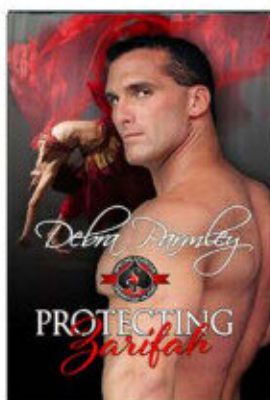
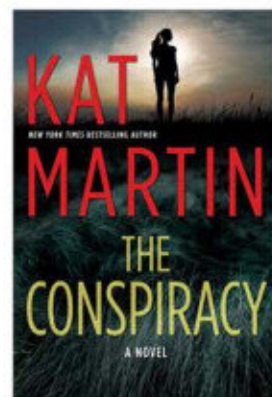
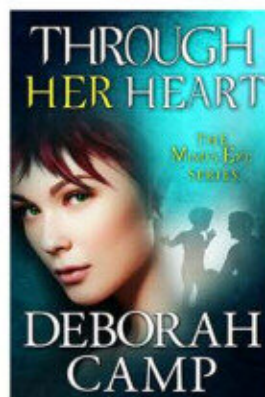
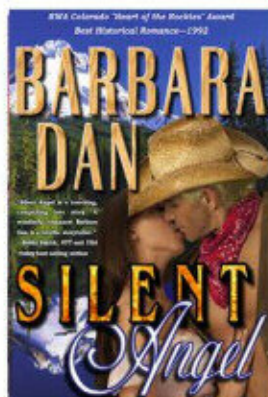
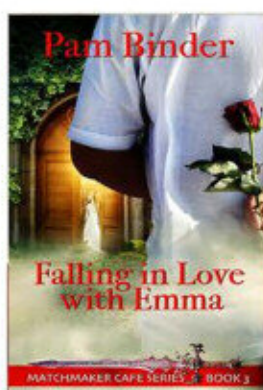
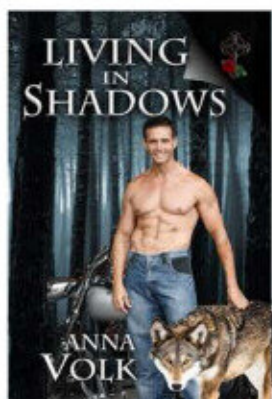
Her patient is an angry man who used to be a soldier. Now, he's something else. A savage beast with gentle eyes that glow green when he's agitated.

What has he become?

And will she be next?



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The Best Things About Summer

Across

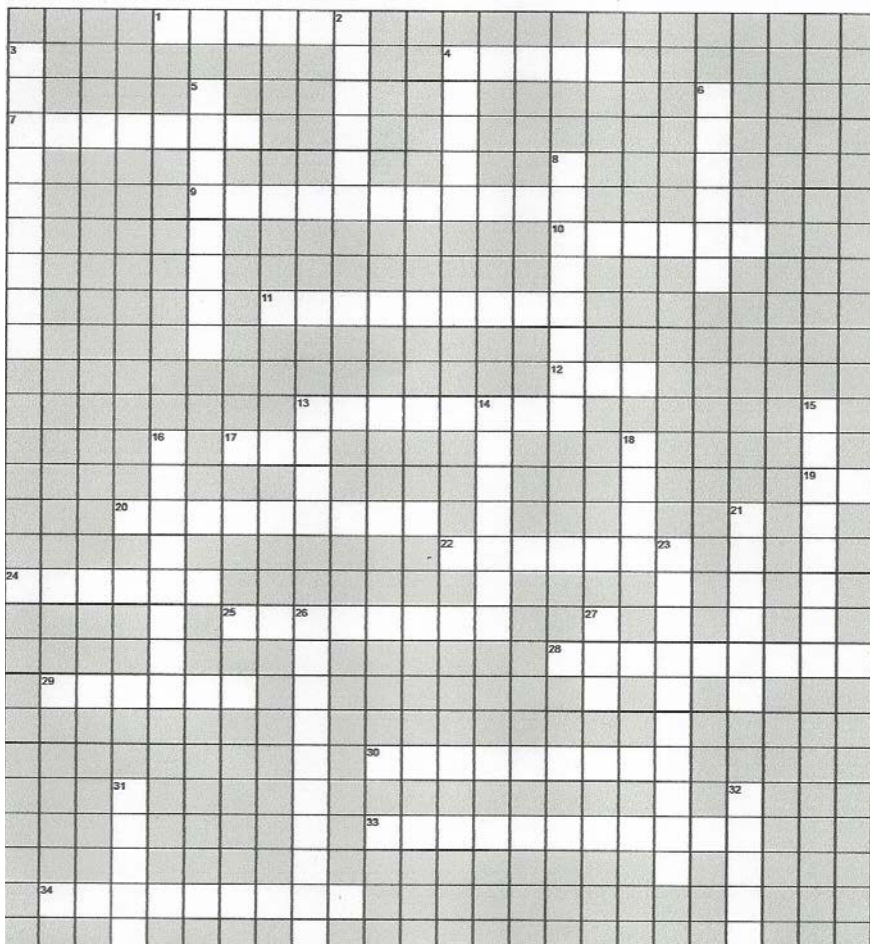
1. Outdoor dining.
4. Sail, speed, motor, catamarans
7. Family ____.
9. His plays are in the park.
10. Water, cantaloupes, honeydew, crenshaw are all ____.
11. Biggest tennis event of the year.
12. Hot August days (and sales).
13. Frozen Kool-Aid on a stick.
17. This beast is seen in the summer stars.
19. Where to ship the kids during the summer.
20. Going from one location to another for fun.
22. Getting the fruit from the tree i.e. cherry ____.
24. A summer zodiac sign.
25. Activity done in the water-different strokes, etc.
28. Planting seeds and taking care of their growth.
29. "Summer ____ makes you feel fine...."
30. Disney World, Magic Mountain, Six Flags are ____ parks.
33. Beautiful state park in Montana and Wyoming.
34. The big, puffy pink to blue flowers of the summer.
35. Changing cucumbers to dill ones.

Down

2. A vacation on a big boat.
3. Sparklers, cherry bombs and the like.
4. The church's Vacation ____ School.
5. Longest day—Summer ____.
6. Favorite type of swimsuit.

8. A favorite drink of the summer.
13. This 'cleaner' is needed more in the summer.
14. Preparing the fruit for use in the winter.
15. Time off.
16. Cooking on a grill.
18. Summer precipitation.
21. A trip up the mountain may require this.
23. The ultimate culmination of school.
26. Fourth of July is ____ Day.
27. Much desired darkening of the skin.
31. June is Gay ____ Month.
32. The sandy place bordering the water.

Answers on page 28



Dog Days!

Words related to dogs and breeds



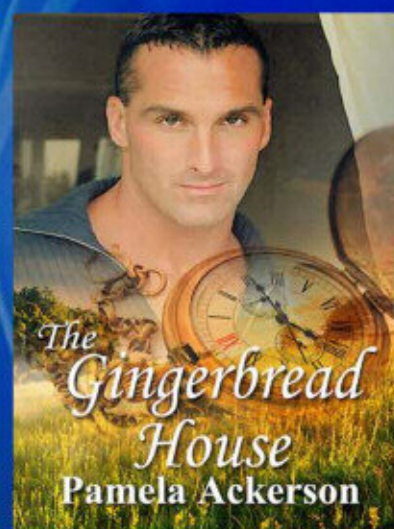
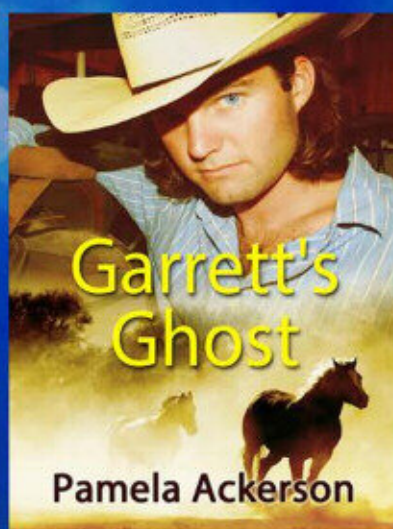
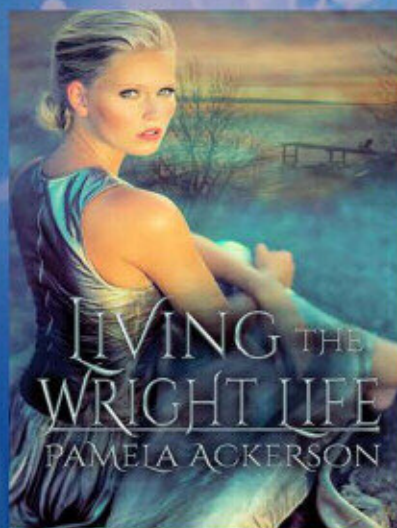
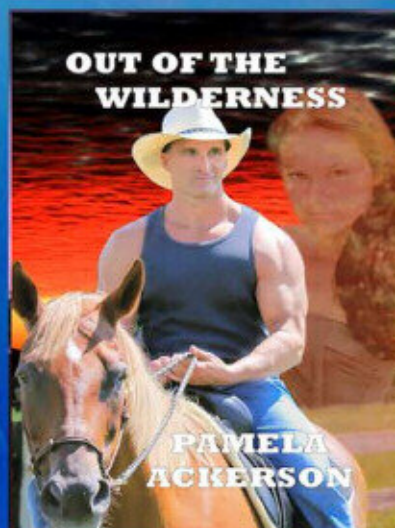
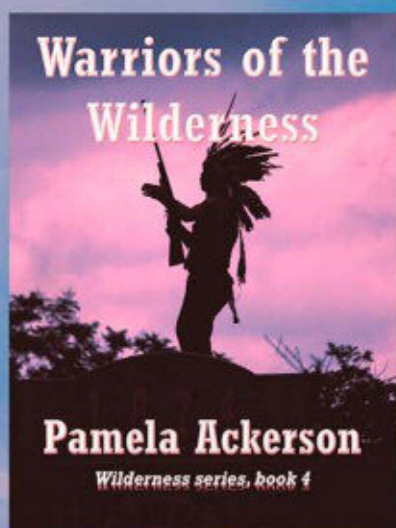
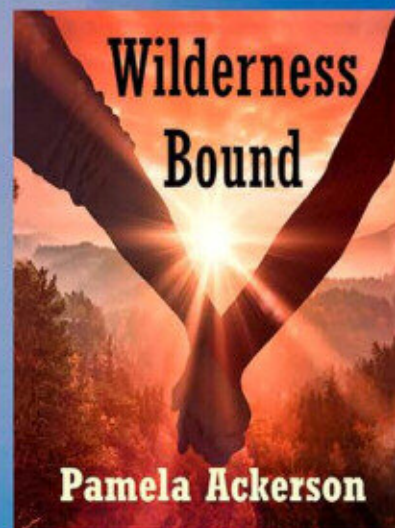
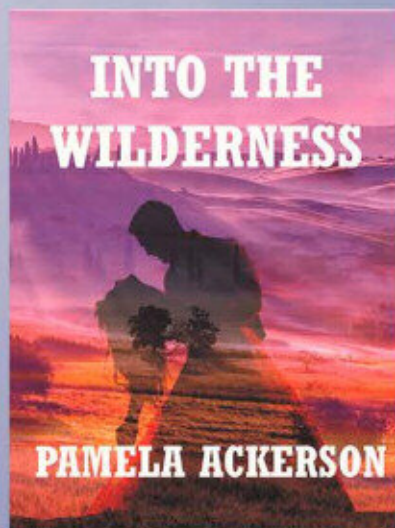
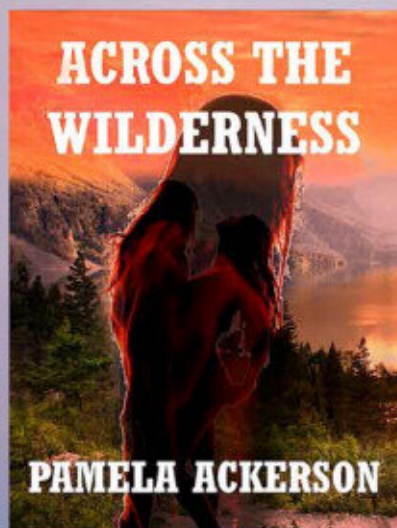
P K M N D R E H P E H S E N K
D M R Y A L D L W S I R I U S
X R G E A I R E L E I W T O R
H N C S G P N E Y H S P I T Z
B O S H O R I A S O J Y M Q Q
B I U O I N E D R B M R K J G
E A D N A H R B E E T A T V Z
R L S P D O U A N W M P S R G
E L S S F S G A B O R O Y P P
X Z N F E L P N H P E V P Z Q
O L A X E T M X Q U D L J N P
B T X N L W L Q Y G A P N J K
S L T J T R Y R R Q T Q L Q G

Sirius
Lassie
Hounds
Beagle
Poodle
Basset
Chihuahua
Leonberger

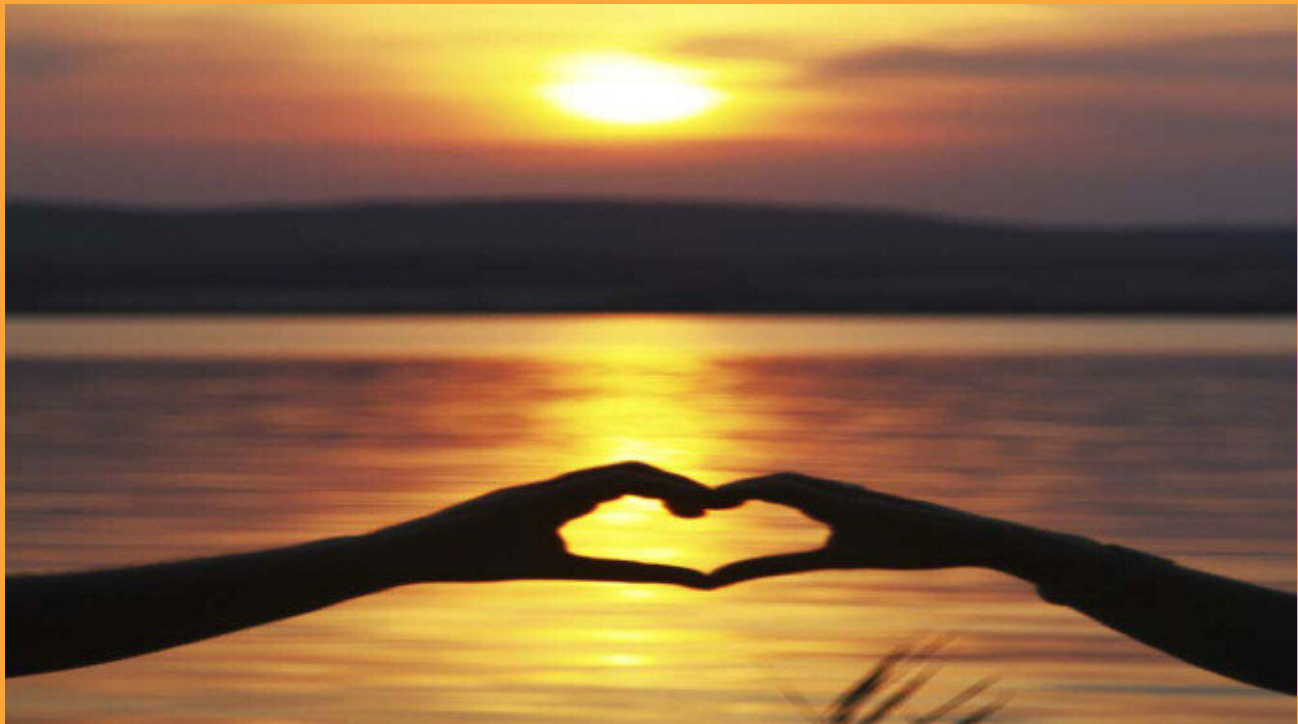
Spitz
Samoyed
Staffordshire
Pomeranian
Shepherd
Spaniel
Rotwieler
Pug
Boxer

Answers on page 33

*Stories that stir within us the unquenchable
hope for a better tomorrow.*



PamelaAckerson.com @PamAckerson



Contemporary Romance Reviews

The Billionaire & the Beast

Brynn Paulin

Supernova Indie Publishing
Services LLC

Kindle Edition

B07SHN9LVZ

★★★★★



"I would never hurt you. Ever."

"Good...I've had enough of that in my life."

Cricket considers herself the ugly stepsister in her non-fairytale life. For as long as she can remember, her family has constantly diminished her confidence. Her goal is to take the college scholarship she's fought so hard to obtain and get as far away from them as she can. Before she can leave, her father forces her to attend a function to network and obtain a job. Once again, Cricket finds herself being the wallflower to her stepsister Ella. But for all of Ella's beauty, it was Cricket who stood out amongst the crowd and snagged the attention of Brix.

Brix has more money than he could ever spend, as well as his own family issues. Sent to an event by his grandfather to search out a bride, he is mesmerized by the beauty in the corner. There is something that draws him immediately to her. When he gazes into her eyes, his heart screams, "She's the one!"

Brix and Cricket instantly "clicked, like two puzzle pieces meant to connect." But their love story isn't all sunshine and rainbows. This fairytale has a villain set out to destroy any happiness Cricket obtains, and Brix will have to slay the proverbial dragon to protect what is his.

Okay, I'm totally obsessed with any and all stories with a Beauty & the Beast theme, and Brynn Paulin weaves a romance that has that and so much more! I could not put this book down, and immediately read it again! I loved it that much! Brix and Cricket have the most amazing happily-ever-after! Highly recommend! 5 Plus Stars!

*Sharing what I love,
Veronica*

Cold Heart, Warm Cowboy

Caitlin Crews

St. Martin's Press

Mass Market

978-1250295255

★★★★ ½

Ty Everett ran off to join the rodeo at the age of 18 and never looked back. He was one of the best bull riders out there and a star, in his own right. Then came that fateful day when the most ornery bull around turned on him after he had jumped off and stomped on his skull, among other body parts. He was in the hospital for weeks, getting

Contemporaries

everything put back together and healing...except for his memory. He refused to tell anyone, including his family, that he remembered absolutely nothing of the last two years. Recuperating at home on his family ranch in Colorado, he was surprised to see a young woman, a rodeo queen from the way she was dressed and acted, show up at his front door and quietly demand to be heard. She informed him her name was Hannah...and she was his wife.

Hannah Monroe was torn. She had given up her "Rodeo Queen Forever" crown and her virginity to Ty Everett. She had been a good rodeo queen and had resisted temptation for almost six months before Ty asked her to marry him. They were wed secretly because reigning rodeo queens had to remain "pure" and were not allowed to associate with the cowboys except in an official capacity. Then Hannah got pregnant and gave up her crown. When she told Ty about the pregnancy, he lost it and told her she had "messed everything up," and he never wanted to see her again. Then Ty got on that bull and lost his memory. Now she wasn't sure what to do. He had hurt her badly at a time when she needed him. Does she tell him he has a son who is the love of her life, then go ahead with the divorce, or does she give him a chance to redeem himself? Then she discovers he doesn't remember her or their wedding, much less that he has a child! Now what?

Cold Heart, Warm Cowboy is definitely a feel-good cowboy romance, but you do have to get through the insufferable ego of rodeo cowboys. Ty is a good guy with a lot of issues, mostly his family. And Hannah is his equal when it comes to family issues. But the chemistry between them is red hot and can't be denied, and the manner in which Ms. Crews has them work through their issues, memory loss and all, will warm your heart through and through. An excellent read that I would heartily recommend!

Lani Roberts

My Crazy (Sick) Love

Drica Pinotti

Self-published

Trade Paperback

978-0578460734

☆☆☆1/2

New York city attorney Amanda is single but not living it up like "*Sex in the City*." She's searching for her soulmate, but for now she will settle for decent sex. Unfortunately, she doesn't have the best luck with men or dating. In fact, it's terrible--every date she goes on turns into a spectacular failure. Worst of all, she suffers from such severe hypochondria that her friends call her phone book

"dial a disease," and she begins each day trying to discover which terrible disease is going to kill her before her 30th birthday.

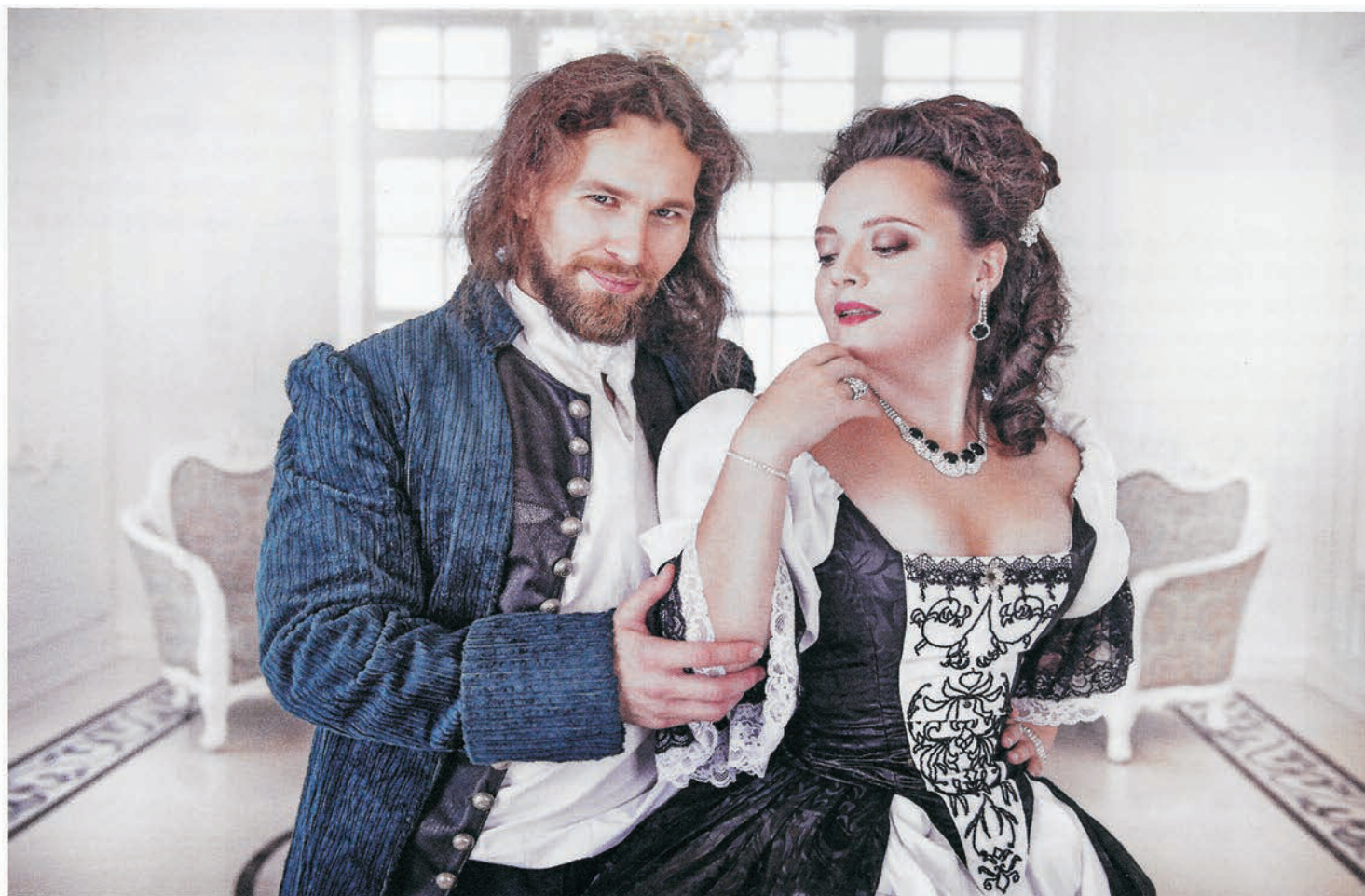
Amanda and Brian, who are neighbors, meet for the first time when his dog attacks and bites her. Brian apologizes and from that moment on, they keep running into each other, and Brian keeps inviting Amanda to his restaurant.

Amanda is smart, a bit OCD, a drama queen, and good friend with a good heart. Ultimately, she knows she needs to break the vicious cycle free from the patterns dominating her life, but she's not ready to take the steps to do so until she realizes what her life could be like without the hypochondria. Brian is a charming, gorgeous, supportive, kind, restaurateur, who is determined to get Amanda to go out with him, and he has no problem with getting rejected repeatedly. Best of all, he accepts Amanda as is and seems to adore her, weird quirks and all.

Pinotti's description and character development effectively delineate Amanda, explore how her hypochondriasis confines her existence, wonderfully bringing her to life. Use of first person for Amanda's chaotic internal dialogue fits a character with hypochondria and psychological/emotional issues. Amanda seems to be an unreliable narrator. Pinotti's development of the other characters, particularly Brian, was not quite as effective. Possibly because Brian and Amanda really spent very little time in each other's company or getting to know each other until late in the book. The tone is uneven, wavering between morose, manic, lighthearted, deadpan, sarcastic, and wacky high jinx. Because most of the novel, especially the beginning, takes place inside Amanda's chaotic musings, it takes a while to find its feet. Pacing issues may have been impacted by so much of the novel being spent exploring the character's internal monologue, emotional, and hypochondriac musings. Abrupt jumps from one scene to the next and awkward transitions between scenes make the story confusing and difficult to follow and also affected the pacing, making the novel flow awkwardly at times. In some ways the novel lacked realism concerning her career as an attorney. Amanda frequently got sick or had episodes where she used illness as an excuse to avoid events and activities she found stressful or didn't want to attend. It seems unbelievable that she didn't have more problems with her job because of her attendance and dependability.

For a novel that purports to be a romantic comedy, it has more of a chick-lit feel because it lacks romance for much of the novel aside from a few brief sweet, romantic, and fanciful moments. The tone is neither fanciful, nor romantic. Nevertheless, most readers should enjoy Amanda's journey and find the ending satisfying. *My Crazy (Sick) Love* is a quirky, insightful, poignant, moving, humorous, and, at times, sad exploration of the mind-body connection and how we find ways of dealing with childhood traumas and the stresses of life.

Lacy Hill



Historical Romance Reviews

The Duke is But A Dream

Anna Bennett

St. Martin's Press

Mass Market

978-1250199485

☆☆☆☆☆



Miss Lily Hartley, never having even been kissed, had decided that the debutantes of the *ton* needed to know all the secrets of romance that their mamas and governesses had never dared to tell them. So, she and her very married sister, Fiona, wrote an advice column called "The Debutante's Revenge," complete with illustrations by Fiona, that had garnered a very large and loyal following. To protect her identity, Lily would dress up like a young man and deliver her column every Friday to the *London Hearsay*. As she was leaving to deliver her column, her sister informed her that

her husband had returned unexpectedly from his business trip and wanted to take his wife on a short vacation. The only problem was that Lily and Fiona's parents had gone to the country for a few weeks and Lily had convinced them to let her stay with her sister while they were gone. Now with Fiona leaving, Lily was in London unchaperoned, which was alright with her.

Nash, the Duke of Stonebridge, was in a foul mood and needed a drink, but not from his London townhouse. He wanted a drink in a pub where he could placate his foul mood, if necessary. But his drink was interrupted when a young lad was accosted by some ruffians who wanted to see what was in his pouch. When Nash got up to intervene, the fight he was looking for erupted. But, unfortunately, in the middle of the melee, the young lad got hurt badly. Filled with guilt, Nash picked up the unconscious young man and took him home to recover, only to discover that the young man was a young lady! And, when she finally woke up, had no

recollection of who she was, why she was dressed like a boy, or where she had been or was going. Thinking her family would be looking for her shortly, Nash made the decision to keep her with him until she recovered.

The Duke is But A Dream is not your typical Regency romance. Anna Bennett has infused a happily-ever-after story with an identity crisis twist. Nash breaks almost every rule of the *ton* by keeping a young woman of unknown status within his home with the only chaperone his own 18-year old sister. With no knowledge of who she is and all her family out-of-town, Lily is at the mercy of Nash and his foul moods. But she finds him fascinating and he finds her fascinating. But, once she discovers who she is, will the HEA be possible? A wonderful read, one that is hard to put down. Well done, Ms. Bennett!

Lani Roberts

The Highland Earl (Lords of the Highlands #6)

Amy Jarecki

Forever

Kindle Edition

B07J556QS1

★★★★ 1/2

"In this moment, there's no place I'd rather be than in your arms."

Newly widowed and debt ridden, John Erskine, the Earl of Mar, is in search of a bride and stepmom to his two young sons. After meeting Lady Evelyn Pierrepont, the Earl feels as if she is a good fit for his family. But Lady Evelyn has secrets that could cost him more than just the loss of his position in the Queen's court.

Lady Evelyn Pierrepont is an activist for the common people. Tired of seeing how her father uses his power and influence over the servants and those less fortunate he deems beneath him, Evelyn does everything she can to offer aid. On a chance meeting, Lady Evelyn becomes the confidant of a Frenchman who professes to share her disregard for the Queen's policy and the other gentry within parliament and offers her a way of furthering their cause – become a spy for the Jacobites.

What starts as a marriage of convenience, quickly becomes one filled with passion, but only within the confines of Eve's and John's bedchamber. Each of them suspects the other of keeping secrets, while misunderstandings and lack of communication could cost these lovers the ultimate price... treason's death at the hands of the hangman or worse.

Amy Jarecki has written a fast-paced Highland adventure filled with intrigue and romance.

While this is the sixth installment to the "Lords of the Highlands" series, it may be read as a standalone. I found

Historicals

The Highland Earl impossible to put down. Loved it and highly recommend it!

Sharing what I love,
Veronica

How to Love a Duke in Ten Days (Devil You Know #1)

Kerrigan Byrne

St. Martin's Press

E-book

978-1250318858

★★★★★



"If there is a battle to fight, a villain to face, I beg you to allow me the honor. Because the cruelest thing you could do, is sentence me to a world without you in it."

Haunted by an unspeakable crime and bonded with secrets they vow to take to their graves, Lady Alexandra Lane and her two dearest friends make a pact to never allow a man power over them. Years pass, and Alexandra is shocked to receive a notice that she has been invited to a wedding – as well as a cry for help.

Piers Gedrick Atherton, Duke of Redmayne and known as the Terror of Torcliff, has been tasked with procuring a bride. No one is more shocked than he when Lady Alexandra offers herself to him.

What starts off as a wedding for vengeance turns into an epic adventure filled with secrets from the past, blackmail, murder, and perhaps, dare we say, love? Can Alexandra find it in herself to trust a man again? Will Piers forget the wrongs of his own past to allow his tortured soul to love and be loved? Ten days can feel like an eternity – depending on one's perspective.

I am beyond in love with this book!!!! Kerrigan Byrne has written an amazing story of how two broken people find a way to heal each other...even when some scars can't be seen. *How to Love a Duke in Ten Days* is a beautifully written historical romance that was impossible to put down and left this reader with a book hangover for days!

Did not want it to end! 5+ Stars!! Highly recommend!

Sharing what I love,
Veronica

Rebel

Beverly Jenkins

Avon

Mass Market

978-0062861689

★★★★★



The time is 1867, and 28-year-old Valinda Lacy had come to New Orleans from her native New York to teach the recently freed slaves and their children. It had been her lifelong ambition, and now, with her intended out of the country with his business partner looking for support to start their own newspaper, Val thought this was the perfect time to, at least, start on her dream before her father forced her home to marry. Her grandmother had been a slave who escaped to the North and started her own business, and Val wanted to be just like her. The only thing she hadn't counted on was how aggressively some people in the South didn't appreciate the freedmen "trying to be above their station."

Captain Drake LeVeq was from a very old and distinguished Creole family of strong women. Recently released from the Louisiana State Guard, Drake was using his free time to volunteer at the Freedman's Bureau, trying to help the freedmen and women work their way through the system. It was a frustrating job because he couldn't help everyone. At night, he would go to the house he was building on a corner of the LeVeq property, check in with his laborers and lend a hand, then go to his mother's house for dinner with the family. Except this particular day, as he was on his way home, he heard the terrified screams of a young woman trapped in an alley by two men. Val was fighting for her life and virtue from two of the very men who didn't appreciate that she was teaching freed men, women and children. Drake came to her rescue and their lives were never the same.

This reviewer was thrilled to have a Beverly Jenkins book to review. And she didn't disappoint. Ms. Jenkin's characters are fully fleshed out, and she makes the situations so real (and historically correct) that you feel like you were almost there. Drake is drool worthy, intelligent and a gentleman with a French accent. Val is an intelligent feminist who wants nothing more than to make life better for her fellow man. Both characters are equally strong and work well together. This is a book definitely worth reading – and learning some important aspects of Black history while you're at it. Can't wait for the next installment of the LeVeq family's saga!

Lani Roberts

The Wicked Viscount

Heather McCollum

Entangled Publishing

E-book

978-1640637979

★★★ 1/2

"As long as blood courses through my body, my heart will never leave you."

Cat Campbell has made the wilds of the Highlands her home. Cat has been caring for her younger sister since the death of their parents. When two English ladies open the doors of Finlarig Castle to the women in the area, Cat is, at first, skeptical. But she sees the ladies are not only providing food, shelter, and teaching the girls more than just reading and writing, but they are also teaching the art of self-defense. Cat and her sister join the Highland Roses.

Blessed with the art of healing, Cat quickly learns more of her craft as she becomes one of the most respected students of the Roses. When the Queen summons for one of the Highland Roses to assist her at Court, it is no surprise that Cat is the one chosen to answer her request.

Nathaniel Worthington, the Fifth Viscount of Lincolnshire, has been funding his sister's Highland Rose school and secretly yearning for a particular Rose. When Cat is summoned to Court, Nathaniel offers to assist her in her travels as well as maneuvering the many intrigues within the hierarchy of the prominent families at Court.

As the mystery of who plotted and succeeded in poisoning the King unfolds, so, too, does the budding attraction between one very wicked Viscount and his Highland Rose.

The Wicked Viscount is the third in the "Campbell" series. While it states can be read alone, I would not suggest doing so. I absolutely loved the first two books in this series. And while this was well written and an entertaining read, I missed the Highland backdrop, as well as all the Highland Roses, the sisters and their husbands. Cat and Nathaniel's romance is slow to kindle but quick to burn – and burn verra hawt! Overall, *The Wicked Viscount* would be enjoyed by fans of historical romance.

Sharing what I love,
Veronica

Historicals

When a Lady Kisses a Scot

Tara Kingston

Entangled Publishing, LLC

Trade Paperback

978-1640638419

☆☆☆ 1/2

"We all have our secrets!"

Rose Fleming has been in hiding for the better part of her life. After the death of her brother and the threat on her own life, Rose flees her home in Scotland and builds a new life for herself in New York. Finally feeling safe with an ocean between her and the villain who has haunted her dreams, Rose is stricken with fear when she receives an ominous note from her aunt beseeching her help. Without thought to her own safety, Rose rushes to her aunt's side only to discover she is too late, as she had been lured back to London for reasons far too sinister to imagine.

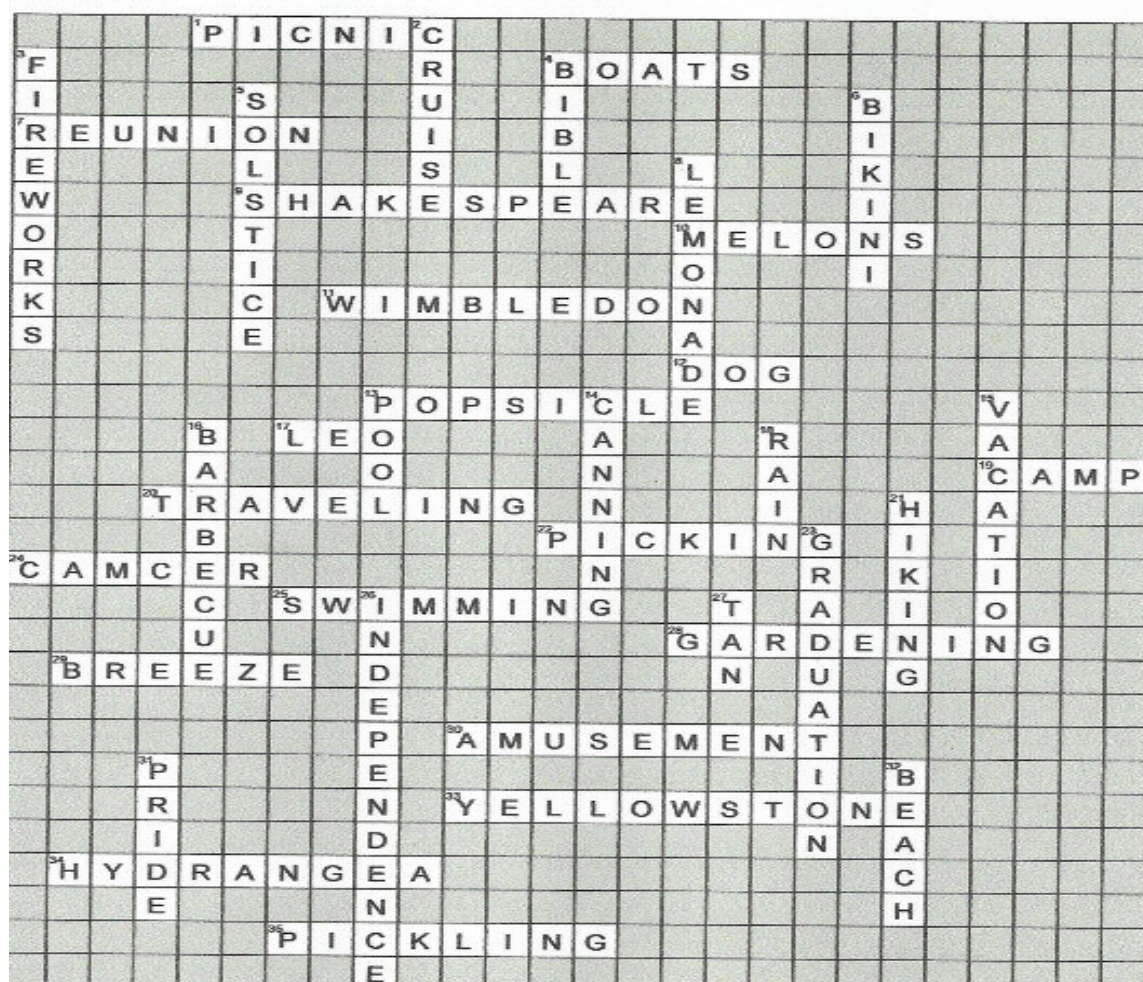
MacAllister Campbell is shocked to discover that the woman who ran into his arms as if the very Devil was chasing her is none other than his lost love, Rose Fleming. Long thought dead these past 10 years, she clings to him and begs for his kiss. He is, of course, obliged to come to her rescue. But as the plot of her reasons for fleeing the country and faking her death unravels, MacAllister vows to protect Rose at any cost – even if it's his own life.

When A Lady Kisses a Scot is my first read by Tara Kingston. What lies within these pages is not what the shiny cover portrays. Rose and MacAllister's journey to a happily-ever-after is filled with a macabre mystery. Once I set the thought of this being a romance to the side and read it as a mystery, I found myself enjoying the story more. This is part of Tara Kingston's "Her Majesty's Most Secret Service" series but may be read standalone. There are no cliffhangers. Would recommend to fans of historical reads.

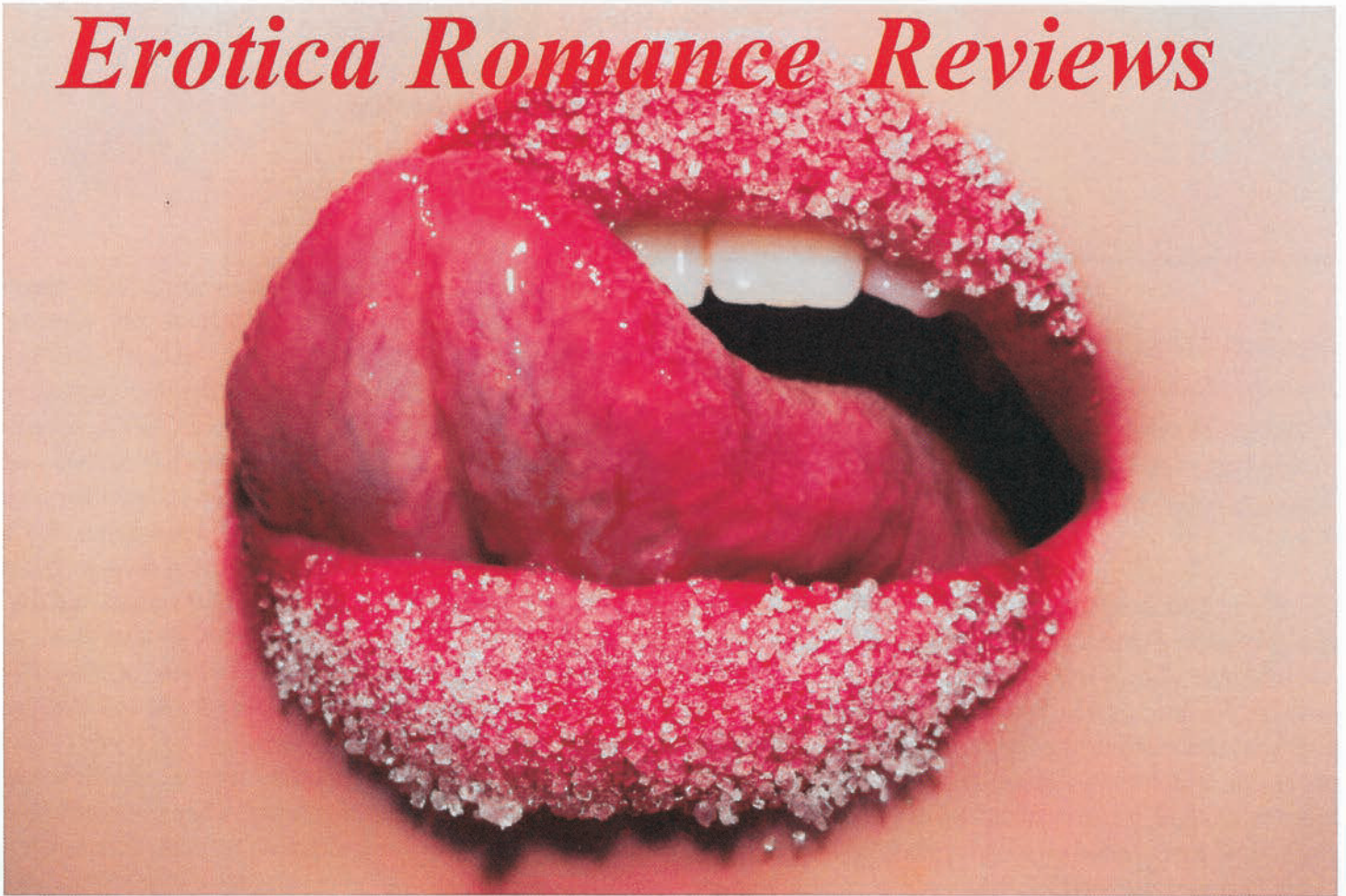
Sharing what I love,
Veronica

The Best Thing About Summer

Louise B. Sneed



Erotica Romance Reviews



With All of Me Book 1 and 2

Joanne Fisher

Self-published

Paperback

978-1546205203

★★★★

Giuliana marries Rocco, a rich farmer. Life is good, and they have three children together. Her husband isn't everything she needs in her life. In fact, she feels she's missing companionship. Giuliana turns to the Internet and finds companionship online with Aaron. He fills a void as they converse. They go back and forth for a long time, fanning the flames of longing that both desire. Aaron is married, as well, with children. Things begin to get complicated after they meet and wish together they could be a couple.

Family always comes first; it's their great hurdle that always shows itself when the desire to take the next step presents itself only to falter. It's a pretty high hurdle. Aaron's wife finds out, and Giuliana breaks it off and quickly moves on to Bobby, another online acquaintance who lives quite a distance away. They manage a long-distance affair for some time until ultimately Aaron comes back to her heart. Torn

between the two, she leaves Bobby with a pining in his heart and she goes back to Aaron.

This drama about Giuliana continues with many twists that only the multiple affairs of a heart can experience – exhilaration versus anxiety and online companionship leading into romantic trysts that is rarely a smooth journey. It's the journey that makes this story. I found the beginning chapter to be a little tedious to read, but it smooths out soon enough to carry the story well.

Lauren Calder



Killer in the Carriage House

Sheila Connolly

Minotaur Books

Hardcover

9781250135889

☆☆☆

The second book in the “Victorian Village Mystery” series features amateur sleuth and exhotel manager Kate Hamilton as she embarks on an endeavor to revitalize her hometown of Asheboro, Maryland, with a plan to draw in tourists by recreating it as a Victorian historical town. Everything is hinging on discovering the secrets of the reclusive Henry Barton, the long-deceased owner of the mansion in which Kate is staying. Unfortunately, the murder of a visiting college student at the closed library throws a spanner in the works. It’s up to Kate to figure out whose motive was murder and why in a notso peaceful small town.

Killer in the Carriage House never quite takes off as a cozy mystery. Despite the murder, nothing exciting seems to happen – just plenty of talking and little suspense. The characters, other than Kate, don’t have much vibrancy or depth within the story. While the motive of the crime becomes somewhat apparent, the murderer’s reasons for doing so did not feel believable. However, readers who enjoy

stories about small towns and their quirkiest denizens will appreciate the little tidbits about Henry Barton’s inventive mind that Connolly throws their way. Perhaps the next book in the series will have a little more spark.

Danielle Hill



Booty from the Other Genre



Animal Killer

B. Lee Baker

Self-Published

E-book

B07MY6KGRR

★

Animal Killer is a story about a hunter. It begins with a trip to Animal Hunter's childhood in the city as he strives to excel in baseball, maybe even make it to the big leagues. His hopes dissipate proportionately with discouragement piled on by his father. So, he enters a new path; his father taught him everything about hunting and he also goes on to become a successful attorney. With his means he is able to hunt worldwide for anything he felt was a challenge.

The Animal Killer is not a trophy hunter type of hunter.

On this one occasion in the winter he is with a group that includes his son. The Animal Killer bags a sizable deer and is, in turn, accidentally killed by his son in an unfortunate hunting accident. From there, he sees his own body. The very beginning of the book sets up

the story nicely until the Animal Killer's death.

After a quick, but uneasy, journey in the spirit world, Animal Killer finally has a brief meeting with 12 characters who, in essence, pass judgment. He is led to a hellish version of Purgatory to be judged and admit his wrongs towards animals. There are no other factors about the Animal Killer's life that come into play when he is judged, as if the character did absolutely nothing else in his life that needed being looked at. From there, more than half of the book is dedicated to the sadistic tortures of the Animal Killer's mind and body and his degradation using a fiction of purgatory as the tool to accomplish the author's aims.

Classified as a suspense genre, *Animal Killer* is a book that should come with a caution. The author has done his best to impart his extreme message, i.e., having apes depicted as thugs, graphically nailing the character to a cross three separate times, etc. This may not be your cup of tea.

Lauren Calder

Booty

Blood

Maggie Gee

Fentum Press

Trade Paperback

978-1909572126

☆☆☆☆

Monica Ludd is a school administrator in post-Brexit vote England with a lot of family baggage. Outspoken as she is tall and Junoesque, she's not the sort of person that's easy to ignore. Monica finds herself under the spotlight when her father is violently attacked, and she is the most likely suspect. After all, she did threaten to kill him.

Featuring a distinctive lead female character, *Blood* is a darkly comic and often bewildering thriller with a healthy dose of introspection. Monica is loud, brash and seemingly lacking in empathy. But as the layers peel away, it becomes clear that she's just the opposite. She feels too much and has armored herself for her own survival in a family ruled by a violent patriarch whose abuse had inflicted lifelong scars on his adult children.

The reader is along for the ride with Monica as she sorts through a confused jumble of emotions, including an unwelcome attraction to the police detective who is investigating her father's assault. With strong character development, descriptive and evocative imagery, Gee paints a modern world that is bewildering in its duality, ugliness paired with beauty, and full of violence, but where love exists unexpectedly despite the austerity and cruelty humans inflict on each other.

Danielle Hill

Dream of the Water Children Memory and Mourning in the Black Pacific

Fredrick D. Kakinami Cloyd

2 Leaf Press

Large Paperback

978-1940939285

☆☆☆ 1/2

The casualties of war. Many images come to mind when one speaks of what is left after a conqueror has come through and decimated the conquered. All over the world and throughout history the evidence has been apparent—from the Biblical walls of Jerico to war-torn Afganistan. Occupation

of the conquered land often follows, leading to one of the biggest, yet unacknowledged casualties of war—the children who are born as a result. That is the focus of Fredrick Cloyd's book, *Dream of the Water Children*.

Mr. Cloyd is child of an African-American soldier and a Japanese mother. He was born after the bombings of Nagasaki and Heroshima. Following their surrender, Japan was occupied as were many of the countries in the Pacific (Korea, Cambodia, Viet Nam, the Phillippines, etc), first by Europeans then Americans, all of whom impregnated the native women. In Cloyd's case, his father married his mother and brought her back to the States, but in many cases, the men left once their tour was over, leaving the women to deal with their babies alone. (The exception was with mixed French children. France mandated that all children with French parentage would be taken back to France, whether their mother agreed with it or not.)

Most of the time the children left behind bore the brunt of the anger, racism, and hatred. As one of the children, Cloyd emphasized their treatment which can be generously described as awful, as in many cases they were accepted by no one. Ophanages were formed for mixed children, not because the were orphans, but doing so put them all in one place and away from the other citizens. Name calling is an everyday occurrence. Cloyd describes an incident whereby he went into a store in San Francisco, and the proprietor took one look at him and refused him service. It's one thing when people cannot tell your ancestry when they look at you; it's quite another when they can. Cloyd's story becomes one in which he acclimates then excels in his life, despite or because of the constant challenges he faced as a child. (And he, unlike other Pacific mixed children, had it better than most because his parents married.)

Dream of the Water Children is a relevant book in so many ways. Cloyd paints a vivid picture of racism at its worst—when it's pointed at innocent children. But he also gives us an expose on the Japanese culture, food, and myths including ghosts associated with his deceased twin sister. Some of the vignettes are poignant—learning his mother's name was really the name of her deceased sister. This reviewer learned so much about these mixed children from Japan while reading this book, and, ironically I came to realize that their experiences are not unlike those I had as an African-American growing up in the South.

However, it is my opinion the distractions almost destroyed the book. Cloyd uses several literary devices like italics, documentation and spacing. I have no problem with that. He speaks and writes in several languages, and he often, too often, makes a statement in English, Japanese written in English, and Japanese written in Japanese. This was so distracting from the storyline that I could not give it five stars. I found myself searching among these repetitions for what he was saying. The physical setup of the book was another source of frustration. On most pages the narrative took up half the page width. On a few of those pictures were

Booty

featured, but there were far too many where the other half was blank, leaving me yearning for a larger font. This was a really good book that will enlightened many readers.

Mildred Burkett

I Am a Runner: The Memoirs of a Sepsis Survivor

Maria Papalia-Meier and Pamela Ackerson

Self-published

E-book

978-1075802553

★★★★★

An incredible, inspirational story, *I Am a Runner; The Memoirs of a Sepsis Survivor*, is a recollection of the life-changing events of Maria Papalia-Meier. The memoir gives the reader a quick rundown of her life before her affliction.

Maria thought it was the flu, as she kept on through

the daily duties; she was going to work through it. Normally a bit of a complainer, when she wasn't feeling well, the malady didn't abate, and she ended up in the local hospital. The problem escalated quickly, and the diagnosis – sepsis.

Attached to IV's, prospects didn't look good. They transferred Maria to Brigham Hospital where she received advanced care. Between organs shutting down and the brutal hospital equipment needed to keep her alive, it was a battle. Several weeks of touch-and-go in the ICU trying to maintain a balance of medicines that would keep her blood pressure up and yet not damage other critical organs was of tremendous concern.

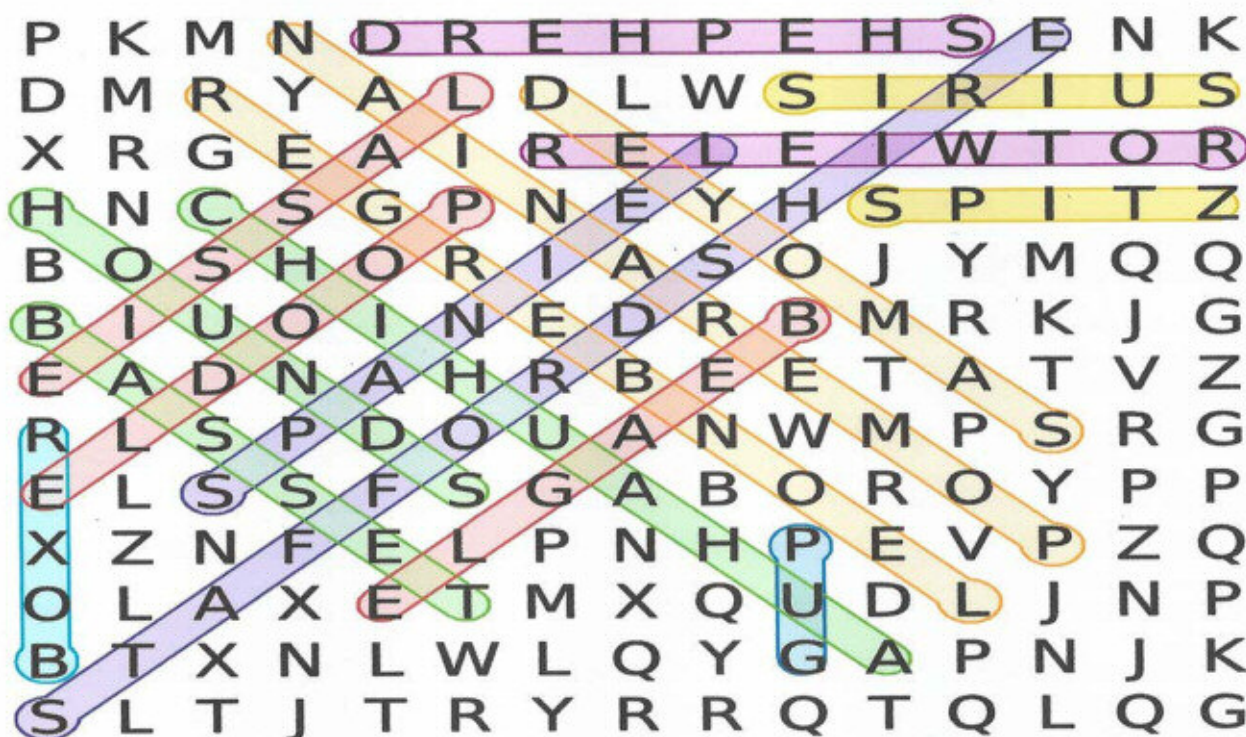
Maria was told that she would never be able to run again. She refused to accept the negative diagnosis and persevered through many months of rehabilitation. She would run again.

The story moves along well, and Maria thoughtfully includes an index in the beginning to explain the abbreviations used in medical speak, creating a smoother read. Letters are included in the end of the book to emphasize the support she received from family and friends. Maria's ultimate finish line – she would surely one day be able to race again.

Lauren Calder

Dog Days!

Words related to dogs and breeds





Late Reviews

(Those that didn't make the last issue.)

The Portal House

Kelsey Rudd

Amazon Digital

EBook

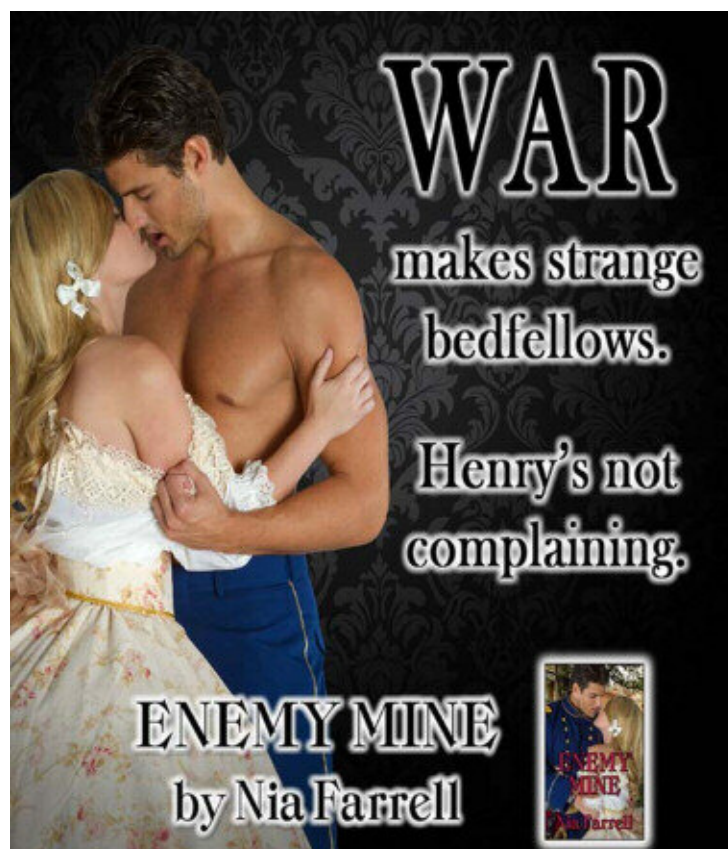
B07RJZRYDR

★★★★

Seventh grader Lizzie resents being dragged off to Portland by her parents, once there, she quickly teams up with Johnny to investigate the 'haunted' house next door in this fast moving page turner. Opening a window on a charming magical world of witches and warlocks, the plot moves through twists and turns to an unexpected ending.

As this novella (less than 40,000 words) is designed for children, Kelsey Rudd's use of seemingly heteronormative characters and classifications may be an important selling point for many parents and guardians. The plot device of good versus evil is also relatively inoffensive; though falling out of favour in the twenty-first century, the language used is clean, easily understood and nicely set out for younger readers. The beginnings of a potentially exciting series of imaginative books that readers may dwell within.

W. F. Richardson



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