

July/August, 2020

Affaire de Coeur

Bringing You 40 Years of Honest Reviews

Beautiful Sint Maarten

Reviews!
Reviews!
Reviews!



Meet Fabulous Dyanne Davis





Affaire de Coeur

The Staff

Editorial Director

Louise B. Snead

Editor in Chief

Lanelle Brent

President of Advertising and Marketing

Pamela Ackerson

Founder and ROM-CON Director

Barbara N. Keenan

Literary Reviewers

Mildred Burkett • Lauren Calder • Martin Chan • Sheila Griffin • Danielle Hill • Lacy Hill • Kathye Quick
Lani Roberts • Hannah Rowan • Veronica Giles Westfall

Affaire de Coeur is published bi-monthly at 3976 Oak Hill Road, Oakland, California 94605-4931 Telephone (510) 569-5675
Fax (510) 632-8868:

Email address: affairedecoeur@adcmagazine.com

Affaire de Coeur Inc #039-3881. Material in this publication may not be reproduced in any form without written permission. All books and material reviewed by this publication have been read by the reviewer, and the opinions expressed are those of the reviewer. Release dates and prices are subject to change by the publisher without notice.

Subscription rates for the U.S.A. are \$36 for 12 issues First Class. Third class subscriptions are \$24.00 for 12 months. Canadian subscriptions are \$65.00 for one year. Other foreign countries rates are dependent upon the cost of mailing. A single issue is \$5.95. A subscription may be purchased on line at www.adcmagazine.com/subscriptions.

Visit us at www.adcmagazine.com or www.affairedecoeur.com

CONTENTS

July/August 2020



* Departments and Columns

Puzzler	21
Contemporary Romance Reviews	22
Historical Romance Reviews	24
Paranormal Romance Reviews	26
Erotica Romance Reviews	28
Audio Reviews	29
Booty from the Other Genre	31
YA/Children	33
Late Reviews	34

Articles

How to Write a Great Book Description by Pamela Ackerson	4
Authors for Authors, a Small Gathering in Florida.	6
Editorial	9
The First Spotlight is on Dyanne Davis	10
Romantic Traveling--Go With Us to Beautiful St. Maarten	12
The Second Spotlight is on Ester Lopez	16
Sneak Preview	18

How to Write a Great Book Description

by Pamela Ackerson

It's a challenge. We know it is, but we want to make it easier for you. This is the marketing part of writing. This is not a two paragraph synopsis of your book. It's not a two sentence blurb. It's not a tag line, although sometimes using the first sentence of your book description can be used as a tag line.

As an Indie author, you need to do these things yourself. Your book description is an advertisement, and you have to look at it that way. It's the second thing a reader sees when searching on a website. You've grabbed them with an awesome book cover. Now you need to entice the reader to purchase your book. It determines the genre, sub-genre (marketing), and uses colorful descriptions, back-cover copy, to help make it click worthy.

First, use adjectives and adverbs. Think about how the movies promote their stories. Listen to the way the commercials are done on television, radio, and the internet. Ever wonder how the book descriptions on Amazon are bold or have colors?

As an example, I'm going to use Mary Burton's *Never Look Back*. I'm going to break it down for you.

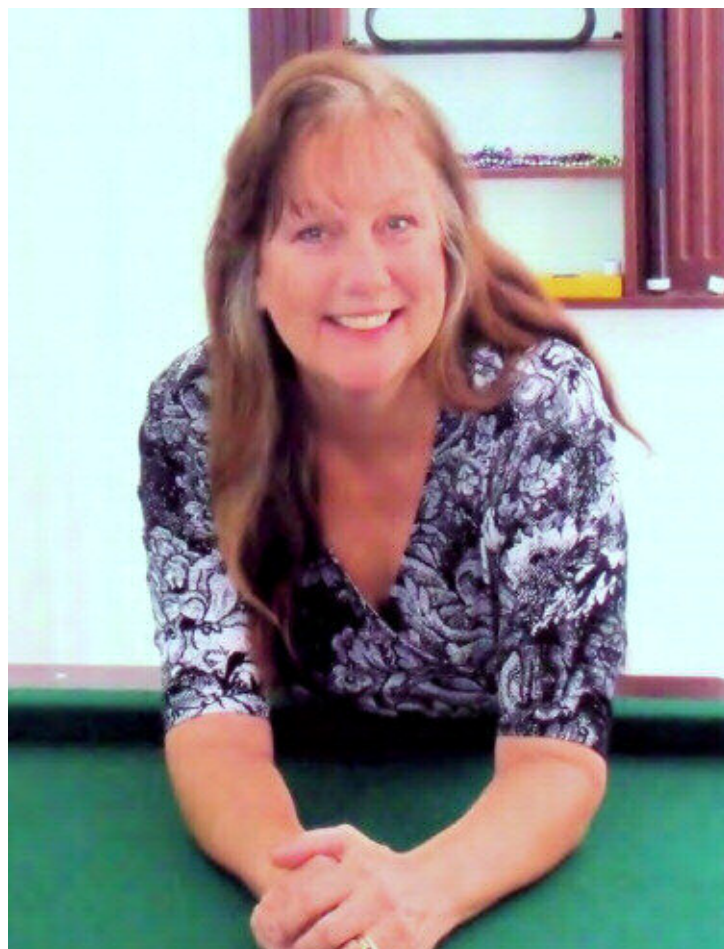
Expect the unexpected in this gritty, tense, and page-turning thriller from *New York Times* bestselling author Mary Burton.

After multiple women go missing, Agent Melina Shepard of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation makes the impulsive decision to go undercover as a prostitute. While working the street, she narrowly avoids becoming a serial killer's latest victim; as much as it pains her to admit, she needs backup.

Enter lone wolf FBI agent Jerrod Ramsey. Stonewalled by a lack of leads, he and Melina investigate a scene where a little girl has been found abandoned in a crashed vehicle. They open the trunk to reveal a horror show and quickly realize they're dealing with two serial killers with very different MOs. The whole situation brings back memories for Melina—why does this particular case feel so connected to her painful past?

Before time runs out, Melina must catch not one but two serial killers, both ready to claim another victim—and both with their sights set on her.

The following commands are used on most websites in the html building section, or on Amazon in the KDP section when entering your book description:



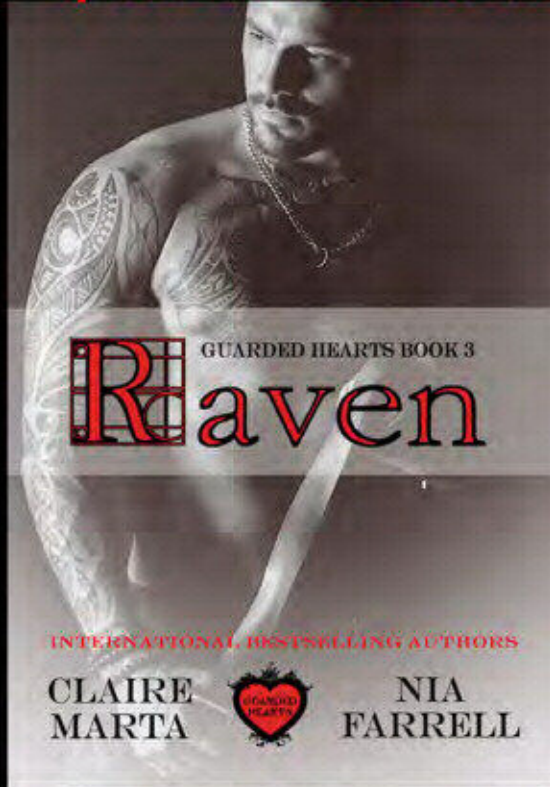
First paragraph: Tell the reader what to expect, and what they want to read. And, in bold print so it stands out. The strong command makes it bold. The
 command (html) gives you a space in between paragraphs.

** Expect the unexpected in this gritty, tense, and page-turning thriller from *New York Times* bestselling author Mary Burton.
**

The body of the description doesn't tell the story, it isn't a synopsis. It hints at the plot line and dangles intrigue for the reader. The question in the body of the description engages the reader: —why does this particular case feel so connected to her painful past?

After multiple women go missing, Agent Melina Shepard of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation makes the impulsive decision to go undercover as a prostitute. While working the street, she narrowly avoids becoming a serial killer's latest victim; as much as it pains her to admit,

REVIEWS FOR RAVEN (GUARDED HEARTS BOOK 3) by Claire Marta and Nia Farrell <http://mybook.to/GH3>



*Farrell and Marta have done it again!
Created a story to sweep you away...*

This is one storyline that is nothing like I expected it to be. It was so much better! From the beginning you will be hooked as the words from the characters bleed in your ears with the delectable accents that will have you swooning. I highly recommend this series.

This might be my favorite from this series to date! There was something magical about Raven and her connection with Cayden and Rillian. The back and forth? The instant desire? They ignite all those fever bits & hot!!

I couldn't stop turning the pages...

"A few twists, lots of drama & a big omg I wasn't expecting that at the end."

I love these two amazing authors when they collaborate... You will be hooked right from the start and unable to stop reading until you're finished.

**THIS IS ONE SERIES
THAT IS
UNFORGETTABLE**

*This is a fantasy/paranormal erotic romance series
So if down and dirty are not your thing? I would skip this
If power exchanges are a bit out of your comfort zone? I would skip this
If fated mates, second chances and bratty women and the men who love them are your thing?
Then this definitely the series for you.*



she needs backup.

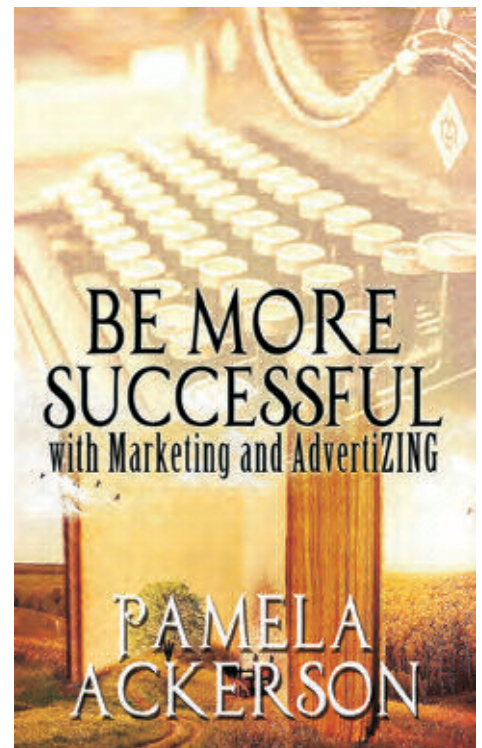
Enter lone wolf FBI agent Jerrod Ramsey. Stonewalled by a lack of leads, he and Melina investigate a scene where a little girl has been found abandoned in a crashed vehicle. They open the trunk to reveal a horror show and quickly realize they're dealing with two serial killers with very different MOs. The whole situation brings back memories for Melina—why does this particular case feel so connected to her painful past?

Before time runs out, Melina must catch not one but two serial killers, both ready to claim another victim—and both with their sights set on her.

If you want a space between paragraphs put the html command `
` at the end of the paragraph. The last paragraph leaves the reader wanting more...the cliff hanger catches the readers' interest. It's an excellent way to get the reader to want more. Regardless of whether the book has cliffhangers or not, you want to entice the reader to click on the buy button. The best way to do that is to instill curiosity.

And it never hurts to add a call-to-action.

Grab your copy today.



Authors for Authors

A Small Book Event Gathering

Valerie Allen and Marshall Frank hosted the annual event that's been held for twelve years.

Almost all book events around the world scheduled in 2020 have been cancelled. This particular event, held on June 20th in Florida, had been postponed with the hope of being able to gather. And gather we did. Masks, gloves, social distancing, air hugs, and sharing stories was our daily adventure.

A few book sales here and there, round-table discussions, and an abundance of author sessions for everyone to share their knowledge and ideas concerning the publishing industry.



Hostess, Valerie Allen



Ash McGrath (left) and Valerie Allen (Right)

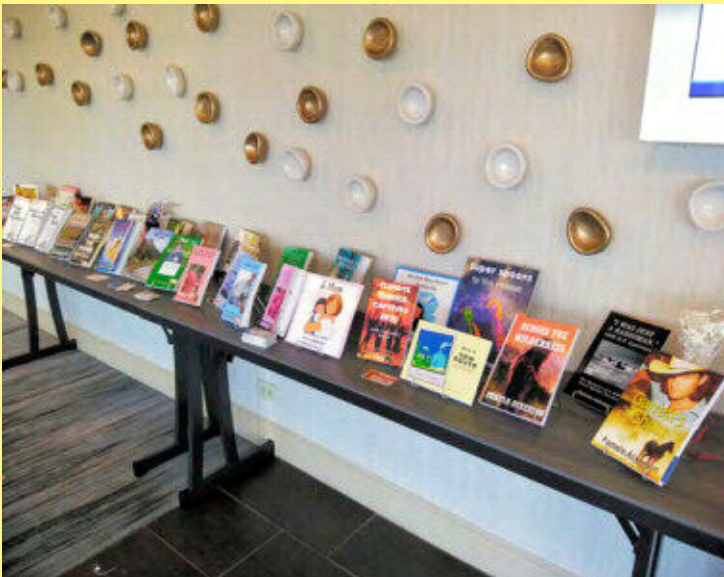


Table display at the Conference



Authors for Authors Attendees

In the land of Faerie only the bold will survive...

GRACE LOGAN
AND THE
GOBLIN BONES



In the world of Faerie, only the bold will survive.

PAM BINDER

Grace enters the underworld of the Goblins with outcasts: a changling abandoned by her Faerie mother at birth, and a mysterious young man who harbors a dark secret.

PamBinder.com
@PamBinder183



AdC's own Pamela Ackerson was in attendance

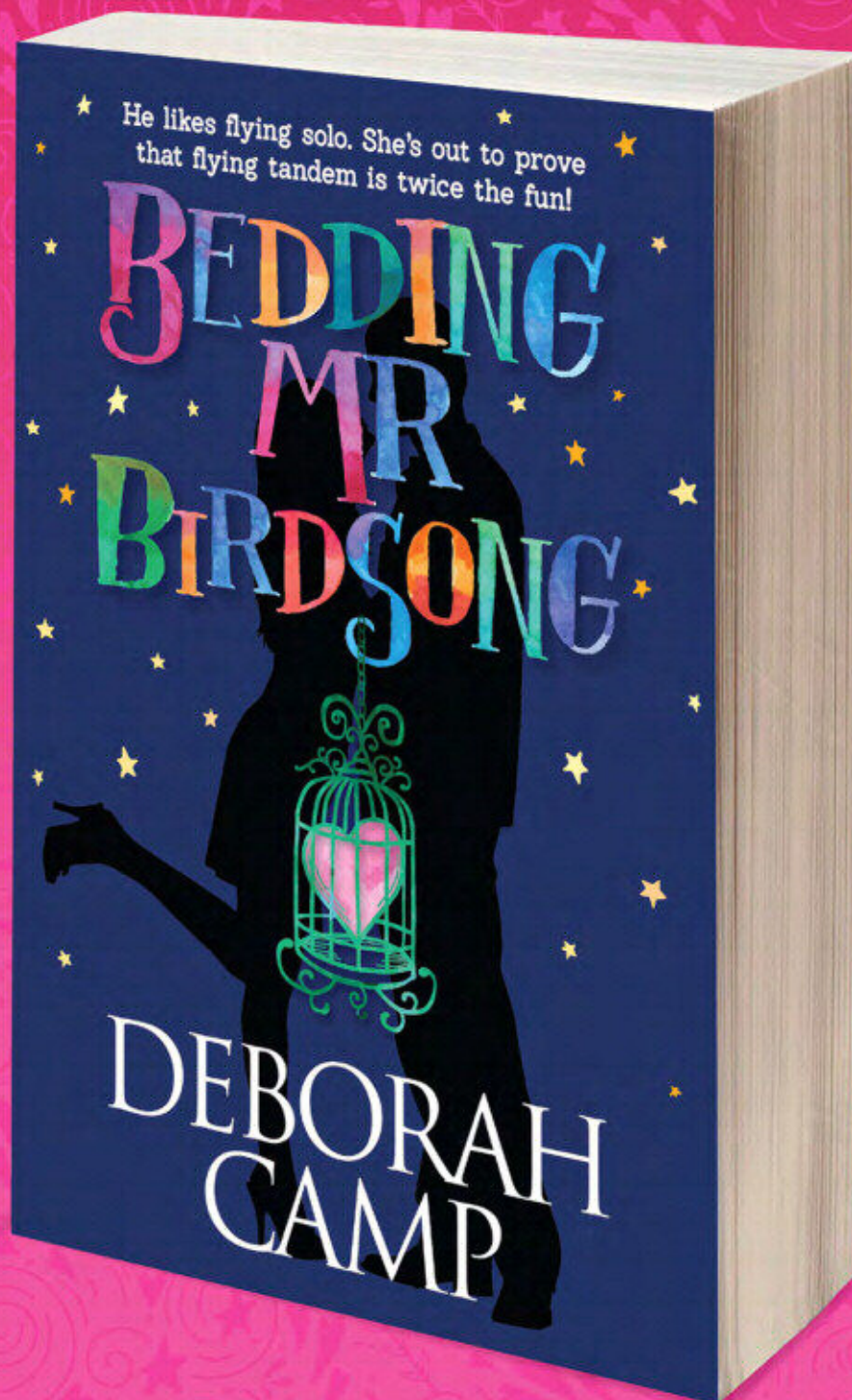


Keynote Speaker, Bob Gabordi

Author, Sabrina Clayton



Affaire de Coeur



*"A frolicking, sexy romance
that will tickle your heart
(and other places)!"*

Available on Amazon
www.deborah-camp.com

Affaire de Coeur

Editorial

by Louise B. Snead

The impact of Covid-19 goes beyond the physical effects of the disease itself. This pandemic has wiped out more Americans than any in history. The numbers are appalling, and we are on track to get much worse by November. We have all heard the stories about those who have been lost--first responders who are dedicated to helping others, as well as workers pressed into service because they need to feed their families, to people who were exposed because of premature re-opening or they didn't believe the hype.

The economic effects the disease has had on all of us has sent everyone who's not Wall Street, Netflix, or Amazon into an economic spiral. Some businesses, both large and small, have closed, and that temporary closure has turned into permanent for some, i.e. Steinmart. The uncertainty in people's lives--where the next meal is coming from, whether the landlord or finance company will evict or foreclose--is devastating, not only to those who are affected directly but those who are not impacted in obvious ways.

We made an effort to deal with some of the issues brought about by Covid-19, even if the methods we use are not the best. I say that only because there are countries who are doing so much better than we are. (I will leave the why's to you, as this is not a political editorial.) We now know more about the virus than we did. Consequently, we have developed several tools in our toolboxes we can use to fight it:

1. We are capable of doing testing. Get tested if you can. (Not to say it's not problematic in some areas, but if it's available, take advantage of it.)
2. Hand washing diminishes

the spread

3. Wearing masks is essential in mitigating the spread of the disease. Social distancing makes it difficult for the virus to go from one person to another.

Whether or not we comply with these guidelines is another story and may explain why Covid-19 thrives so well here in the U.S. That, and the fact that it's gone political. Even if we did adhere to these principles, and even if we don't get the virus, there are undeniable psychological affects that are immeasurable but true simply because our lives have changed. Let me begin with the things I miss and how that has affected me. See how many apply to you:

I miss seeing my adult children and grandchildren. Visiting friends and having them visit me.

Going to business meetings and conferences. My exercises at the Physical Therapist's office.

Walking my dogs on the trails.

Going out to:

the beach
the movie theater
live theater
sporting events
my favorite restaurants
the grocery store
and even the drive-up CVS window

Peach picking.

Playing cards.

Seeing my doctors.

Traveling--I love to travel. I was slated to spend Mother's Day on Orca Island, Washington, to watch the whales with my children and a family cruise to Alaska this month which would complete my visiting all 50 states.



Going to special, once in a lifetime, experiences. One of my neighborhood kids got her doctorate in June, and there was no celebration. My sister celebrated her 90th birthday in July, and I missed it. My sister-in-law passed away on Friday, and I cannot go to her funeral.

Like me, many of you may fill your lives with quirky events, things that are important to only you and a few friends or relatives. But they are important. As a result of this disruption in your lives and the accompanying isolation, you may suffer a range of feelings, some of which you may not have recognized. Some of them include:

Trust issues--who is telling the truth about this virus or doing what temporarily favors a better economic outcome?

Not feeling safe--if you live in urban areas, you have seen the crime rate rise precipitously.

Helplessness--you see the food banks running empty, you know people who are not doing well, you hear the pleas for donations/help/volunteers, but you are not in a position to help.

Boredom--no need to explain this one. Being locked up in your own home with the same people can do you in.

Loneliness--there was a song by the Temptations that said, "Even in a

*

Continued on page 19

Spotlight Interview

Dyanne Davis is an award-winning author of 27 novels, several novellas, and anthologies. She lives in a Chicago suburb with her husband of 49 1/2 years, Bill Sr. She has been a presenter of numerous workshops, hosted a cable show for 10 years on Bolingbrook Community Channel, "The Art of Writing," to give writing tips to aspiring writers. Interviewing many of her favorite authors was the highlight of doing the show. You can catch clips on YouTube. Dyanne also writes a vampire series as F. D. Davis.

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

D.D.: I'm a pantser

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

D.D.: I like creating characters who question things, characters you may not like but who does remind you of someone you know in real life.

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

D.D.: The new book I'm working on is the 4th installment of my vampire series. Mr. Adam Omega will soon return.

AdC: *What are your favorite passages/scenes in your current release or WIP?*

D.D. I'm not ready to share my WIP, but here is a sample from my fake memoir. Different right? LOL. Hebrews 11:1 (King James Version) *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

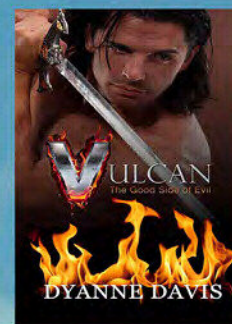
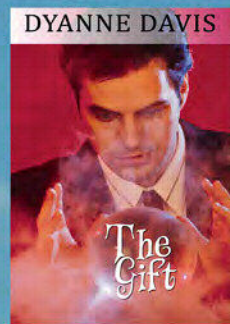
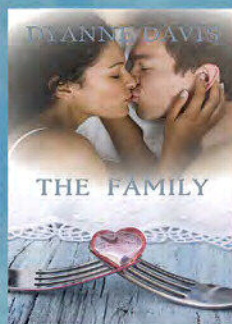
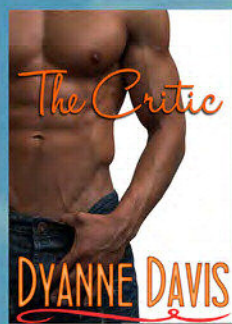
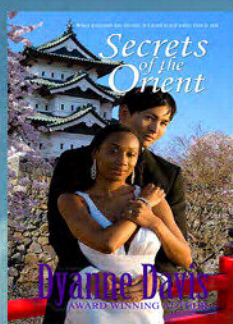
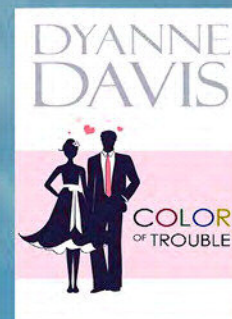
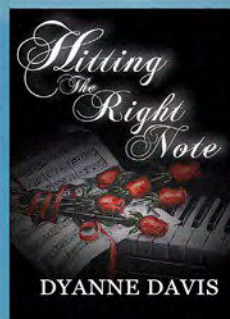
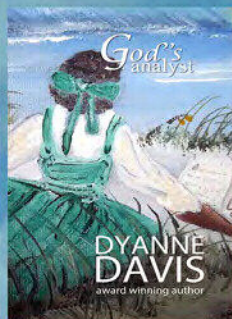
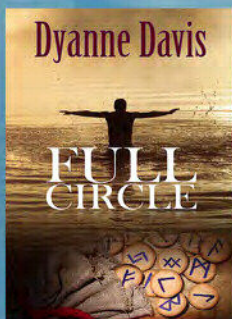
"Was I aware that I couldn't make the mountain move if I didn't have that unshakeable faith? Of course I was. That knowledge didn't prevent me from wanting the mountain to move. Nor did it prevent me from wanting answers to questions I found contradictory in the Bible and in life. It wasn't that I



didn't have faith. My faith, on looking back was selective. During my private conversations with God, I believed. The singing of hymns and reading the Bible served to strengthen that faith at times. I will be blunt and honest for a moment. I didn't believe every word in the Bible to be true. I didn't believe ALL the messages given by the ministers. But I did believe that someone greater than humans created the universe and the

humans that dwell on earth. I believed in God. I believed in Jesus. I believed in The Trinity. It was a bit confusing, but I decided to just accept that one as one of the things we were not meant to understand. At least that was what the ministers said, SOME THINGS WERE PAST MAN'S UNDERSTANDING. That didn't mean I didn't have questions about things. I always wanted to know why things were done one way instead

Dyanne Davis



DyanneDavis.com

of another. I wanted God to talk to me face to face, not in my head. Heck, there was a lot of craziness that resided there, including all the characters I write about. I needed to know I wasn't making up what I heard. I needed God."

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

D.D.: There is no such thing for me. My husband has been retired for 18 years, so it's just sit down and write a line at a time.

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

D.D.: Everyday circumstances that make me think about something more than once. For instance, at the moment I'm trying to decide if I want to write a serious book about the state of the world, the pandemic, the racism, the going batty from social distancing. Thank God I not only love my husband of almost 50 years, but like him and

enjoy being with him. Still the thought to write about something other than romance remains.

AdC: *Did you need to do research for your stories? And what kind of research do you need to do?*

D.D.: Several of my books where the characters were living in foreign countries took a *ton* of research. I watched films, did internet searches, and talked to people who lived in the countries I was writing about. *Forever And A Day*, the romance about Hurricane Katrina also took a lot of research. I talked to residents, had a friend that was running from the hurricane and running into even more problems. I got a newspaper subscription to keep the info current.

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

D.D.: Wow, that one is hard. Hmm. Okay, since reading has been my favorite thing to do since I was four, and

going to the libraries my favorite place to visit, I would have to say having my books in the libraries is the coolest thing ever.

AdC: *Is there a genre that you've been wanting to try writing?*

D.D.: I've flitted around in my writing: romance, paranormal, women's fiction, a vampire's journal, and finally a fake memoir. LOL. I think I'm good with the genre hopping.

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

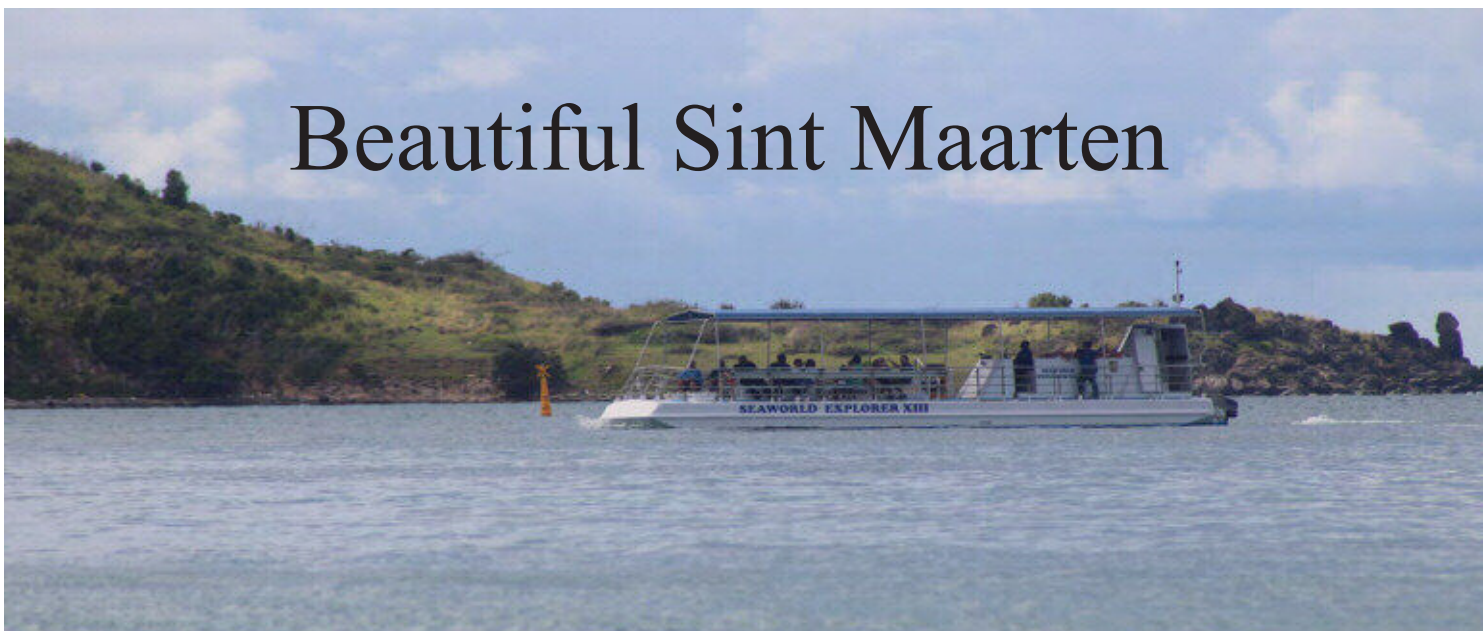
D.D.: To date I have 27 books on the market and several novellas.

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

D.D.: It will be a long time before I feel comfortable enough to attend large

continued on page 14

Beautiful Sint Maarten



I haven't been anywhere since Lake Tahoe in January because of Covid-19; so, I'm reaching into the archives for "Romantic Traveling" this month. Approximately three years ago, *Affaire de Coeur*'s Editor-in-Chief, Lanelle Brent and I went to St. Maarten's in the Caribbean to celebrate our birthdays (November 1st and 2nd). Neither of us had ever been there, and it sounded intriguing. A disclaimer: we went before St. Maarten's was nearly destroyed by a hurricane so things may be different now.

St. Maarten is a small island. To get there felt like a near-death experience to me. You know, one of those bumpy, wild, white-knuckled plane rides that Lanelle slept through. And the airport is number one on the "most dangerous airports in the world" list!

St. Maarten is part French and part Dutch. We were told by a local that the division of property between the two countries was simple: A Frenchman and a Dutchman started off at the same point and walked in opposite directions until they met each other again. All the land that they covered

until they met would go to their country. The problem was, I'm told, the Dutchman got drunk and fell asleep while the Frenchman kept walking. Consequently, the French portion of St. Maarten's is bigger than the Dutch portion, 60/40 split. But the Dutch know how to party!!!

Accommodations are not that expensive on St. Maarten. Our two-bedroom condo with living room and kitchen costs about the same as a hotel room. We learned early it was better to hire a guide over the period of time you're going to be there rather than try to find transportation each day. Our guide was a totally delightful young man named Giovanni who was about the age of my youngest son, 25, with the patience of Job and took us everywhere we wanted to go. He was a fount of information, advising us on where we should go and what we should avoid.

It is a Caribbean island and, thus, has the flavor of one with the reggae music and the different foods like jerk chicken and seafood. As with other countries in this area, the natives are mainly descendants of African slaves in addition to people from both France and Amsterdam. The Dutch influence was not prevalent in the buildings that one sees in a place like Aruba. There were a number of condos and build-



Our guide, our friend Giovanni



Newly-constructed Condos

ings under construction that resembled those in the U.S. In fact, we met a couple from Georgia who was taking the plunge and buying a condo. I often wonder whether they lost everything in the hurricane and pray that they didn't. It was surprising to me to see black folks speaking Dutch though it should not have been. Despite the number of Caribbean islands I've visited, everyone spoke their version of English and this threw me off.

We signed up for several tours. A couple of them took place on boats. One was a tour of the sites of the island, and one was a sunset cruise replete with all the drinks, especially all the rum (rum) you wanted. The staff of the boats were cordial and



Lanelle says, "First, you have a nice, cool drink"



Then you can dance with monsters on Halloween



The good-lookin' crew of The Edge and moi

sometimes downright fun, doing the Electric Slide with some of the patrons while singing R&B. Giovanni took us to St. Marteen's capital city, Phillipsburg, where we shopped all day, especially the duty-free stores. One can get

inexpensive souvenirs or Rolex watches if desired, but this is a place where I would advise the buyer to beware.

On November 1st, we decided to take a tour of the tiny island of St. Bart's. Why? Because it was visiting another country, the passport got stamped, and it was only about an hour's ride on a boat from St. Maartens. St. Bart's is for people with money. All the famous international shopping venues are there. Nothing is inexpensive. My excuse for not shopping was that November 1st is some kind of a holiday there, and most of the places were closed. Even then it seemed a little



With drinks like these, who cares?



congested.

Iguanas abound on St. Maarten and St. Bart. They greeted us each morning on our landau. I am personally a little squeamish when it comes to amphibians of any kind, so I wasn't too happy to see them. However, Giovanni put Lanelle and I in his car and wouldn't tell us where he was going. When he got to this swampy



Iguanas eating bread we brought. I never said they were cute

area, he told us to stand and watch. He had a loaf of bread that he opened and broke up, then tossed on the ground, and in less than a minute, the entire area was covered with iguanas. The green ones are teenagers and the gray ones are adults. They don't bother people unless you're wearing bright nail polish on your toes. Then they might come to investigate you, but they don't bite.

I must share these two phenomena with you. We saw a large crowd of people at the airport lined up on the field behind a fence. "Why?" we asked. We were advised that the people on the field were waiting for the planes to take off so they could inhale the fumes and maybe get a little high. I don't get this, but whatever floats your boat. Secondly, Giovanni advised us that the Dutch have more fun. On the Dutch side there was a bar whereby if you agreed to remove your shirt/blouse and

become topless, your drinks were free. We made him laugh when we told him they would probably give us free drinks if we kept our shirts/blouses on.

After the hurricane hit St. Maartens, I called Giovanni to see how he and his family fared and if there was anything we could do. He told me that 95% of the buildings were destroyed and the roof was gone from his Grandmother's home, but everyone was okay. I was glad to hear that, of course, but it always saddens me that people in areas like this are so poor and exploited and so dependent upon tourism that something like a hurricane would devastate them. Little did I anticipate a similar situation as a result of Covid. Research has told me that massive rebuilding has taken place and St. Maarten's is open for business. Even without the tourist traps, it's a wonderful place where you can go and relax and enjoy the beautiful waters and weather and people.

Dyanne Davis continued

gatherings. Our new social distancing has become the norm.

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

D.D.: To all aspiring authors out there, please write, your stories are needed more than ever now. Reading is the one thing that we can do safely. But seriously, write what you love to read, don't worry about bad reviews, all authors get them, and that includes the Bible.

AdC: *Please give us the following contact information: Personal web page, Twitter, Facebook.*

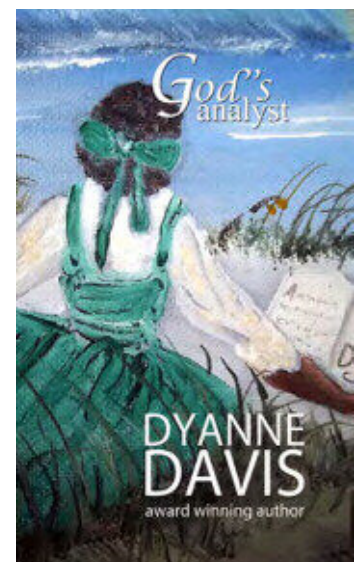
D.D.: My email address is davisdyanne@aol.com.

My website: www.dyannedavis.com Twitter: <https://twitter.com/dyanne-davis>

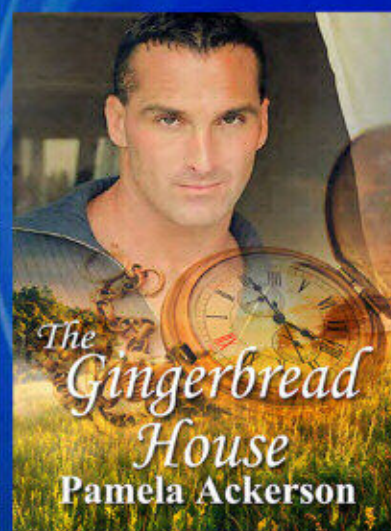
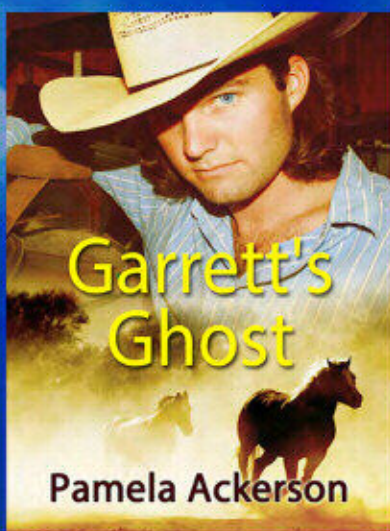
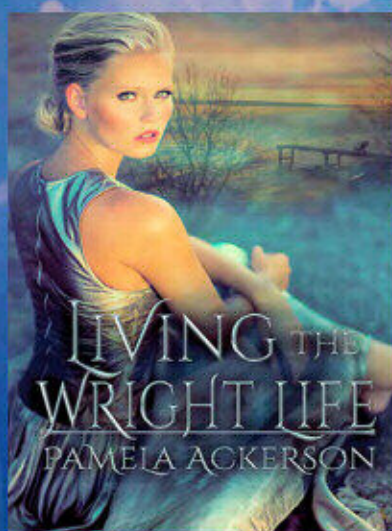
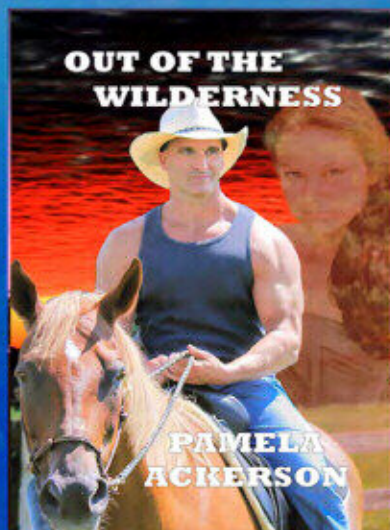
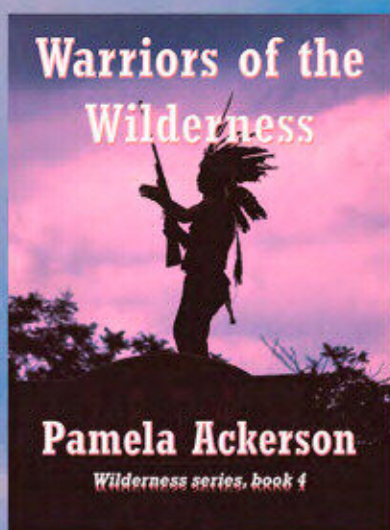
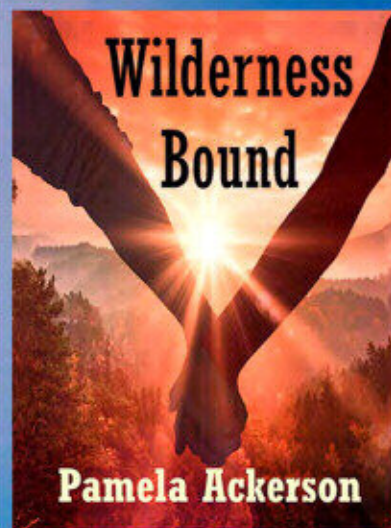
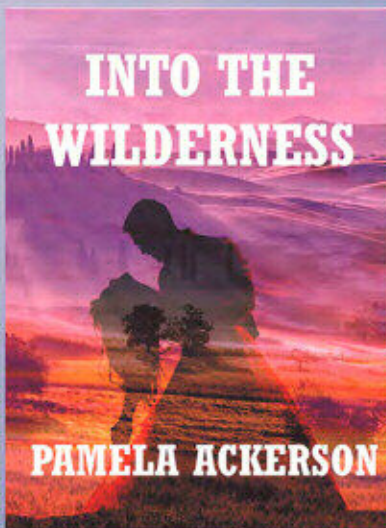
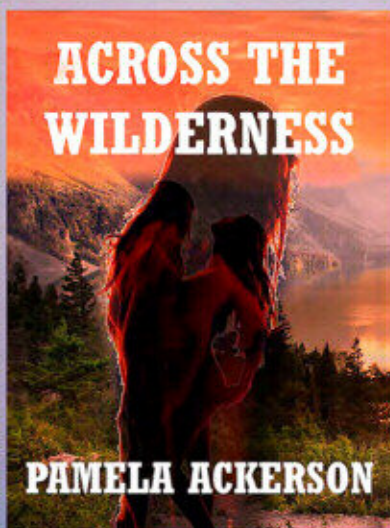
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/davisdyanne>.



Take a deep breath. It's a takeoff!



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



PamelaAckerson.com @PamAckerson

Spotlight Interview

Ester Lopez is a writer and publisher. She lives in the Smoky Mountains, where she has been writing sci-fi and paranormal/inspirational adventure romances for almost thirty years. Her first children's book, The Adventures of Charlie and Ellie was released this year.



lots of 'character.' Sometimes the name comes to me first and I try to go from there. But I use *Heroes & Heroines* by Cowden, LaFever, & Viders to create them, then *GMC: Goal, Motivation, & Conflict* by Dixon to figure out what they want.

AdC: *Tell us about your newest release.*

E.L.: My newest book in my sci-fi series is *Betrayed*, which was released last year. It involves a promotion-seeking lieutenant and a feisty Secret Service agent who must find a missing landing party before a war hungry Admiral and a conniving General unleash an intergalactic war of the worlds.

AdC: *What are you working on now?*

E.L.: My current WIP is the continuation of that story and what happens to the two characters from Book Three and introducing two new characters in Book Four. One of my favorite scenes so far is when the astronaut, Torin Conolly speaks to

his flight instructor, Captain Gadarani Hovsep, he is inches from her lips, teasing her to live life more fully. He leaves and forgets his shoes (in the laundry area of the space ship they're on). She comes knocking on his door and says, "You forgot something," drops his shoes in his room and pulls him into a steamy kiss.

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

E.L.: My motivation for a perfect writing day is when the story just comes to me and I try to type as fast as I can to get it into the computer. But I really like writing things down in long hand and when I type them up, I edit as I go.

AdC: *How do you come up with the plots that you do?*

E.L.: I get my plot ideas from everywhere and I try to put twists into some of them. Current events are triggering more of this story as well as characters from my other stories when they start telling me their backstory and I go with it.

AdC: *How do you get started? Do you outline or go by the seat of your pants?*

E.L.: When I write, I first figure out who my characters are, so I don't outline.

AdC: *Tell us about your characterization process. How do you go about creating them?*

E.L.: I like to create characters with

Writing on the Edge of Reality



The Angel Chronicles Series

Ester López

*EsterLopez.com
@EsterLopez1*

AdC: *In the sci-fi genre, do you have to do research, or can you just make up everything?*

E.L.: Yes, I do research for my sci-fi stories. I use a lot of conspiracy theories for this book and the last one. Most of it is online searches, some have been books I've read, or when I watch *Ancient Aliens* or similar documentaries on TV.

AdC: *What is the very best thing about being an author?*

E.L.: My favorite thing about being an author is I can be anyone and do anything I want in my stories.

AdC: *What genres do you prefer writing?*

E.L.: I like my sci-fi genre and the

paranormal genre, but didn't realize the paranormal is also inspirational. (At least, the way I write it since it's about angels.) I want to continue those two genres, but I've added children's books to my list.

AdC: *How many books have you written?*

E.L.: Currently, I have three sci-fi books out and hopefully number four will be out later this summer. I also have two paranormal/inspirational books out and one children's book. I hope to finish another paranormal and children's book by the end of the year.

AdC: *I'm certain you've been affected by Covid-19 as many authors have. What has changed for you?*

E.L.: All my book signings for this year were cancelled and rescheduled for next year, so that's when I'll be attending book signings. I'm hoping to get responses from people interested in coming to a book signing in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, that I will be putting on next year. I'll see what happens with that one.

AdC: *What would you advise an aspiring author or newbie?*

E.L.: My words of wisdom for aspiring writers: Never give up! Keep writing if you feel that is your calling. Once you finish your first book, start on book number two, then three, four, and onto book five. Then go back, re-read, edit, and tweak

continued on the next page



Sneak Peek

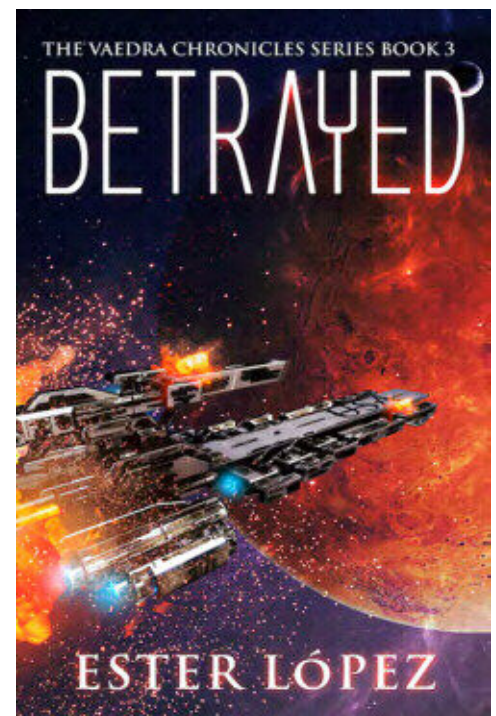
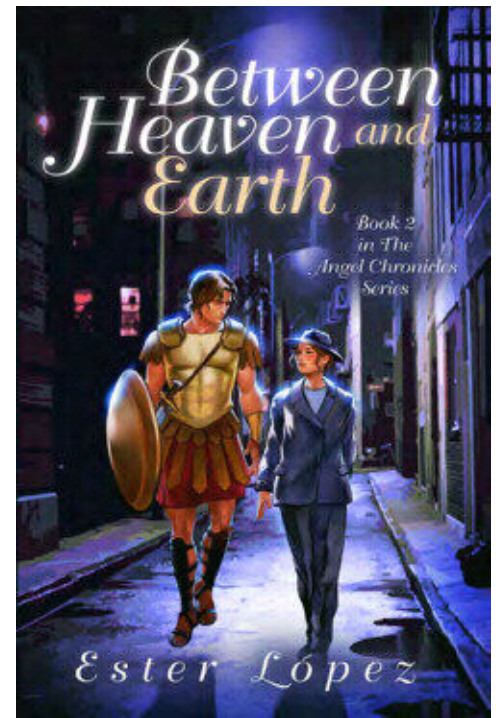
Between Heaven and Earth

by Ester Lopez

A Guardian Angel and a nursing school dropout must learn who is behind the murders of two homeless men before she becomes victim number three. Mike has been Maria Rojas' Guardian Angel for twenty-two years. The day he rescues her from two criminals, he discovers his human past.

Fighting evil spirits and keeping Maria safe are no longer his only priorities. Now he must find out who is trying to kill her and how he died while fighting temptations of the flesh, forcing him to choose *Between Heaven and Earth*.

Maria Rojas, a nursing student, drops out of college the day she buries her mother. Being locked out of her apartment forces her to live on the streets of Pensacola. But the streets become dangerous after she witnesses a murder and realizes someone is trying to kill her as well. Her only hope is her Guardian Angel.



Lopez interview continued:

each one before having your books edited professionally, then publish. They say five is the magic number.

You can follow Ester:

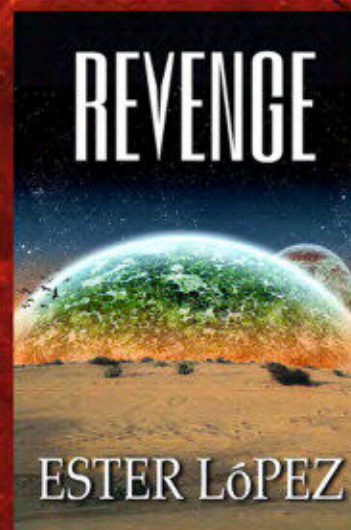
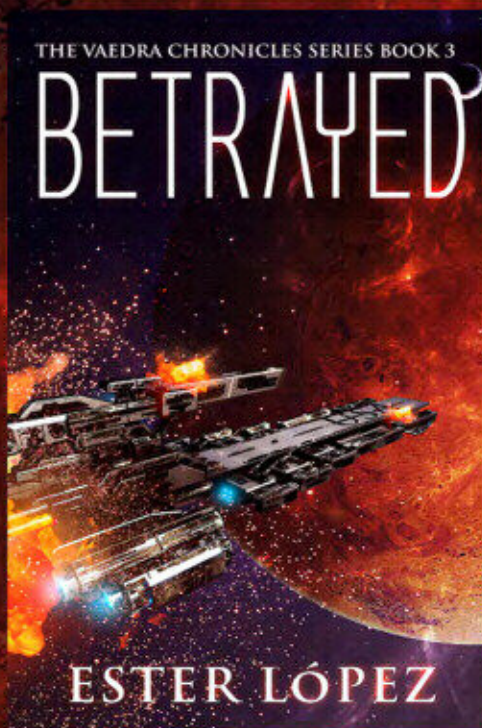
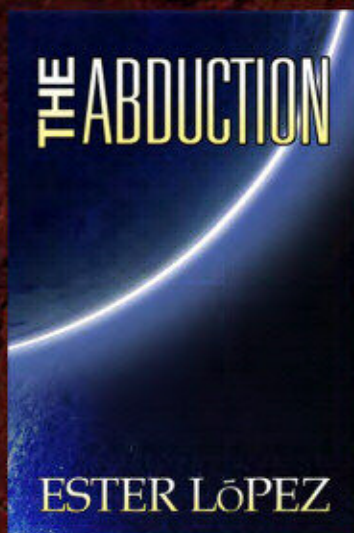
Facebook.com/EsterLopezAuthor

EsterLopez.com

Twitter.com/EsterLopez1



Writing on the Edge of Reality



EsterLopez.com

@EsterLopez1

* *Editorial Cont.*

crowd, laughing out loud, I'm lonely." You're not unique in feeling this way. Sadness to depression.

First and most important: **You are not alone.** Secondly, there is help out there. And some of it is free. Sometimes all you need is a friend. They are probably going through the same things you are. Give them a call, touch base with them. Just sharing some of your thoughts may bring a relief you didn't think possible. If you feel your state is more serious, you can call or text one or more of the following agencies. I will acknowledge I have not personally contacted all of these organizations, but it's worth an effort if you are down in the dumps.

1. If your state of being is because of misinformation or lack of information, the AARP site at aarp.org is a good place to go. They discuss everything from masks to stimulus checks to travel advice, and they have a link that is in Spanish. (You need to be an AARP member, I believe.)

2. To reach the Crisistextline.org, text 741741. They are free and offer 24/7 support. I tried this one and it is important to know they are a crisis center. They begin by asking, "What is your crisis?"

3. There are international agencies i.e. the National Helpline SAMHSA, available 24/7 in English and Spanish. The CDC offers Mental Health and Coping with Covid-19 at www.kff.org, then go to Corona Virus. There are also agencies

located in your area. For example, the state of California, where I am, offers Crisis Counseling and Support.

4. Depending on what you need, whether it is more information about symptoms or reassurance that you're doing the right thing for you, you can find help.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. There is no shame in it. We all need it. Take care of yourself.

Louise



Pages for you to fill in the blanks!

Journal writing improves mental health and happiness, provides a creative outlet, and gives a perfect place to record your thoughts and precious events.

Pambling Roads Journals
Great for all ages.

Available at your favorite bookstore.

U.S. State Journals with tidbits and trivia!
Several states to choose from...

Rhode Island
Idaho
Alabama
Kentucky
Tennessee
Maryland
Arizona
Mississippi
California
Oklahoma
Washington, D.C.
Georgia
South Carolina
Ohio
Texas
Arkansas
Virginia
Florida
Louisiana
Colorado

More to states are on the way...

PamelaAckerson.com

PUZZLER

Things Associated with American History

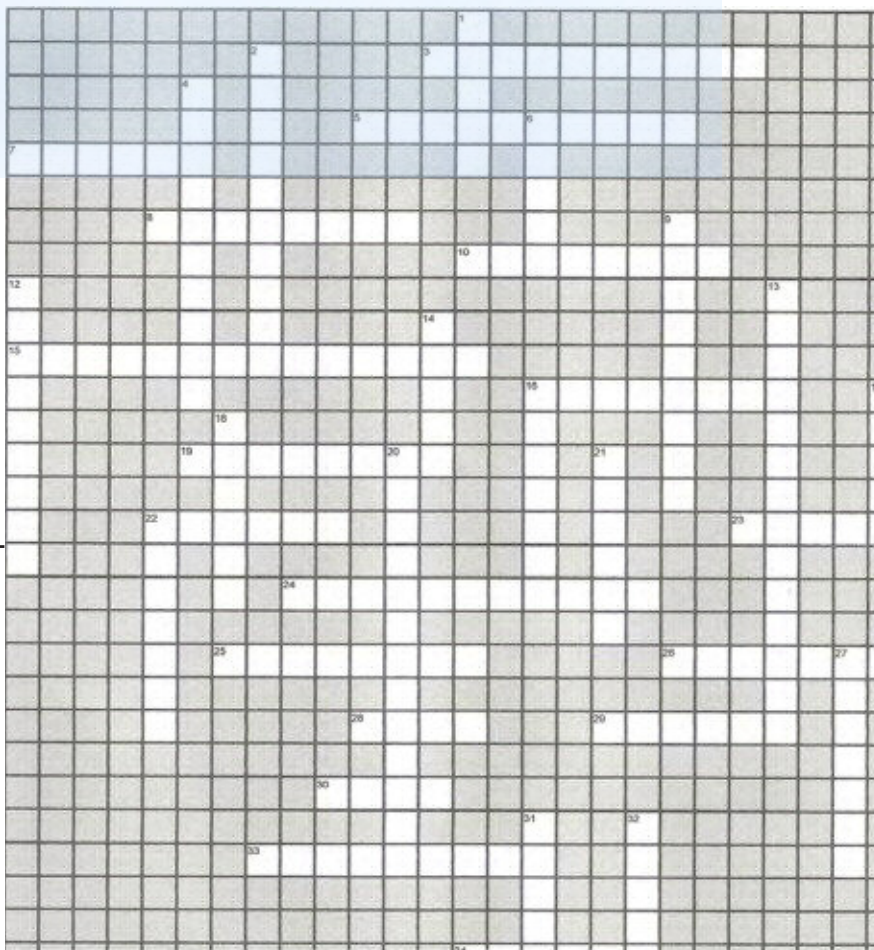
Across

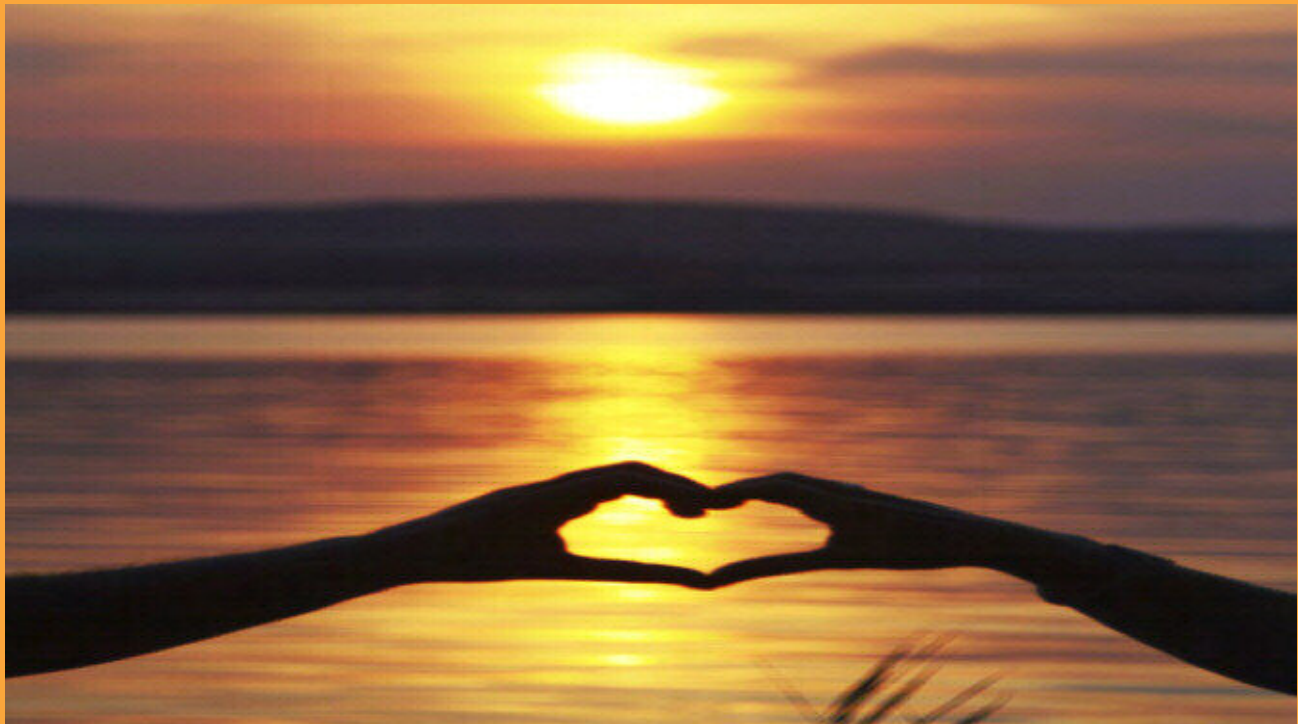
3. Wrote the poem, "Listen my children and you shall hear..."
5. British General who surrendered in Yorktown.
7. Traitor.
8. The Founding father who flew kites to study electricity.
10. There were 13 of them depicted on the flag.
15. No taxation without it.
16. Framers of the Constitution, the Continental _____.
19. Icy river that Washington crossed.
22. The General's wife.
23. Known as the Father of the Constitution.
24. "We hold these truths to be self-evident..."
_____ of Independence.
25. Has a blockbuster musical celebrating his role as a Founding Father.
26. Largest signature on the document listed in clue #24 Across.
28. Seamstress who made the flag.
29. Bill of _____.
30. Old Glory.
33. French Marquis instrumental in the war.
34. Succession of people who march down the street behind the Grand Marshal.

14. Valley where Washington spent a bitter winter.
16. Another word for bar-b-que.
17. John or John Q.
18. He was king during the War of Independence.
20. Another name for the War for Independence
21. They had a tea party here.
22. Firearms of the day.
27. City along with Clue #11 Down where war started.
31. Silversmith who rode his horse to announce (not really), "The British are coming!"
32. British Major who helped Clue #7 Across and was hung for it.

Down

1. West ----. Benedict gave the diagram of this place to the Brits.
2. Father of the country.
4. Essays written which suggested three branches of government.
6. Month that famous ride took place.
9. Founding Father who owned Monticello and slaves.
11. Location with clue #6 Down of the first battle of the war—"shot heard 'round the world."
12. Cherry bombs, crackers, sparklers, etc.
13. African-American who was first killed in the War of Independence. (entire name).





Contemporary Romance Reviews

Bottle It Up (Between the Pines #3)

Lisa Shelby

Lisa Shelby Books, LLC

Kindle Edition

B084M8VFBZ

★★★★★



"You want to be mine?"

"I already am"

Emmett and Josh are lifelong best friends who made a pact: if neither of them were married when they turned 30, they would marry each other. Now that time has come, and Josh West is one of the most eligible Hollywood bachelors on the market, but his fame and fortune are coming with a price. Emmett, reminding him of their pinky promise, comes to his rescue. Being his fake fiancée for a couple years doesn't seem like the worst idea she ever had, but then again, she never counted on meeting verra large and in charge smexxy bodyguard Max Hopper.

With nothing but Emmett's safety in mind, Max Hopper becomes her shadow and a constant reminder of all she wants in a lover. As the threats to Josh's career as well as Emmett's life start hitting closer to home, Emmett must make tough decisions: Be true to her heart or to support her lifelong

friend.

Oh, dear Reader, this book is tough to review without spoiling the slow burn romance between smexxy bodyguard Max and Emmett! It is beautifully written with all the feels. Readers will want to bottle up all their swoons for your next book boyfriend! While the third installment in the "Between the Pines" series, this may be read stand alone. Highly recommend!

Sharing what I love,

Veronica

The Cowboy and the Cheerleader

Mary Allen Redd

Cascade Books

Trade Paperback

978-0963654878

★★ 1/2

Elaine Bybee was in high school the first time she saw Andy Bond. With his blue eyes and cowboy hat, he stood out from the crowd. Elaine likes Andy, but she is determined she's not going to tie herself down to just one boy. But no matter who Elaine dates she finds herself thinking of Andy. Then he goes and spoils everything by asking her to marry him. Elaine would do anything to keep from breaking Andy's

Affaire de Coeur

Contemporaries

heart. Anything except give up her dream of moving to Manhattan.

After college, Elaine moves to New York and lands her dream job. She dates several interesting men. Years pass. One day the phone rings. It's Andy. Over the thundering of her heart, Elaine agrees to meet him. Despite what she's told herself, she is still in love with him. Is it possible that he feels the same way?

This is an unusual romance. The reader follows the heroine's life in the years she is away from the hero. There is no contact between the two and little, if any, thought of the boy she was in love with. The plot is unbelievable, and the writing is choppy. But the author does do a wonderful job of showing the transformation of a young girl in the 1950's to a mature woman in the 1990's.

Sheila Griffin

The Love Scam (Danger #2)

MaryJanice Davidson

St. Martin's Griffin

Trade Paperback

978-1250053161

☆☆☆☆

Rake Tarbell is wealthy, a bachelor, man-child, womanizing, complete hot mess! The troubles he gets into are a comedy of errors. But he's a sweetheart who genuinely cares about people and is hiding a lot behind that carefree façade. Unfortunately, most people don't look close enough to find that out.

The Love Scam starts out with him waking up in Venice, no idea how he got there, with a massive hangover and missing his wallet. Then he discovers that all his money has been stolen from his bank account. At the worst possible time, he is alone in Venice with no money or ID. When Claire, a mysterious Midwestern free spirit, and Lilith, an irresistible little girl too mature for her young years are thrown into the mix, Rake's life takes on a whole new meaning. But he's finding it suits him.

Claire Delaney comes across as a friendly, mischievous, girl next door, albeit an exotic and mysterious one. But she has secrets and childhood trauma galore, not to mention a hidden agenda for being so helpful and why she drops into life with a secret child. At first glance, Rake is just the kind of man that she is suspicious and not too fond of, but as she takes Rake under her wing to help him, she learns he's much more complex than she could have imagined. Things get complicated when they discover they are being followed. As they spend days and nights exploring Venice, evading their pursuers, and trying to find out what happened to Rake's money and why he's in Venice, he gets to know Lilith and develops a relationship with her. He and Claire also become

friends and allies on the verge of something deeper. But they both try to avoid becoming romantically involved, each for their own reasons.

The Love Scam picks up en medias res, alternating between the present and past via flashbacks. Deftly balancing zany hilarity with moments of deep emotion and serious topics, it's an original and entertaining romance with an intriguing blend of humor, suspense, romance, and drama. Davidson's prose features vivid description and a crazy mix of internal thoughts in the form of his twin brother's critical voice, sarcastic and witty repartee, and pop culture references. The characters and their interactions are delightful and well developed. The structure of this novel, narrative flow, and how the character's internal monologues and conversations, as well as interactions, make this a novel that requires complete focus, which may not work for all readers, but if readers can get past this it's definitely well worth their time.

Lacy Hill

The Wrong Mr. Darcy

Evelyn Lozada and Holly Lorincz

St. Martin's Griffin

Trade Paperback

978-1250622143

☆☆☆ 1/2

Smalltown reporter, Hara Isari dreams of being a sportswriter. She's won a writing contest sponsored by a Boston basketball team. The prize is a private interview with their star player. This is Hara's chance to prove she's ready for the big time.

Rookie Derek Darcy wrecked his knee at the beginning of last season. He was almost cut from the team. Intervention by Charles Butler, the team's star player and Derek's childhood friend is the only thing that saved him. The team needs a winning season. Derek's got to show the owner that he's not just Charles's friend but also an asset to the team.

When Derek realizes that Hara is press, he warns Charles to be careful around her. But Charles likes Hara and invites her to hang out with the team. As she gets to know the guys, Hara discovers that Derek isn't a jerk after all. In fact, in addition to being good looking, he's a great guy.

Danger forces Hara and Derek to get to know each other very quickly. They soon wind up in bed. This feels like it could be the beginning of something real. But Derek doesn't trust reporters, and Hara won't be with a man who doesn't trust her.

This is a typical boy-meets-girl story with the addition of sports drama. It's a good book.

Sheila Griffin



Historical Romance Reviews

Beauty Tempts the Beast (Sins for all Seasons #6)

Lorraine Heath

Avon

Kindle Edition

B0839MB57K

★★★★ 1/2

"Sometimes when life puts us on a path we don't necessarily want to travel, we discover it was a journey we needed to take in order to secure happiness."

Benedict "Beast" Trewlove has a powerful reputation in Whitechapel, and not just as being born a bastard. Vowing to protect those unable to do so themselves, Beast has found himself on the receiving end of a proposition he never dreamed possible—being asked to teach seduction by the former Lady Althea Stanwick. But Beast is not sure if he will be able to hold true to his principles of not sleeping with those he has sworn to protect. Sometimes the heart has other ideas.

Lady Althea Stanwick and her brothers find them-

selves outcasts and directly cut from the *ton* after their father had been tried and hung for treason. Althea has been given the opportunity to tutor less fortunate women on how to behave more "lady like," but in return, Althea proposes to receive training on how to be the ultimate seductress so she may make her own choice of how to live her life. She has decided to become the most sought-after mistress in London. But when Althea sees how kind her Beast is, her heart shows her the possibilities of how love can provide so much more than she ever dreamed.

Althea and Ben are lovers who are forced to make difficult decisions when it comes to matters of the heart. Even in their darkest moments they are reminded, "We always have a choice, even when it seems we don't."

Their happily-ever-after is fraught with hurdles of heartache, and it will take their combined strength to prevail and prove that true love does in fact conquer all.

Oh, dear Reader, I so loved this story! I'm a sucker for *Beauty and the Beast* romances and had no clue this was the sixth installment to a series. While it took me a bit to get all the Trewlove characters straight, *Beauty Tempts the Beast* may be read as a standalone. I highly recommend it.

Sharing what I love.

Veronica

Affaire de Coeur

Historicals

Highland Gladiator (Scots & Swords #1)

Kathryn LeVeque

Sourcebooks Casablanca

Kindle Edition

B083ZKQF6C

★★★★

*“In this life or in the next, I’ll always be true tae ye”
“I love ye—until the end of all things, I’ll love ye and only ye.”*

Lor Careston is a humble smithy living with his grandfather. Despite his size, fighting has never been his first choice. Always preferring to work out disagreements with his brain rather than his brawn, Lor is content with his life in the quiet Highland village where he and his grandfather live and work. When his village is raided and burned to the ground leaving death and destruction of both his grandfather and his home, Lor remembers a tale told to him about the Ludus Caledonia, an elite training compound where worthy men may sign on years of service to become highly trained warriors. With vengeance in his heart, Lor leaves all behind to be taught to fight for retribution, never dreaming that the path he has set to travel will lead him in an entirely different direction.

Isabail Keith, the daughter of the Chieftain of Clan Keith, has given up on finding love. What man would want a warrior for a wife? That is until her path crosses once again with Lor Careston. Lor accepts her for being both fierce and beautiful. He doesn’t judge her for her choice in being trained for battle, and willingly asks for her guidance. Over time, Lor and Isabail find a love that will last a lifetime and beyond.

Dear Reader, I did so enjoy the first installment to Kathryn Le Veque’s “Scots and Swords” series! If you are a fan of her Medieval romances, be prepared for the same epic adventure and swoon worthy hero! Looking forward to the next in the series and highly recommend!

*Sharing what I love,
Veronica*

A Royal Affair

Allison Montclair

Minotaur Press

Ebook

B0818Q75N1

★★★★

Iris Sparks and Gwen Bainbridge, co-proprietors of The Right Sort Marriage Bureau in Post-World War II England, obtain an atypical client. She is a Lady-in-Waiting to the Royal Heir, Princess Elizabeth, who’s being courted by a young Greek prince. There may be a shadow on his reputation that could spoil things, and they are hired to investigate the situation. A seemingly mundane inquiry that will add to their coffers and help expand their business becomes a lot more risky when a dead man turns up.

Sparks and Bainbridge make a captivating pair of amateur sleuths. Sparks is a gutsy, highly educated, and worldly former spy with nerves of steel who runs rings around men. Bainbridge is a determined, aristocratic widow working her way back from a mental health crisis who’s trying to get custody of her child from controlling, judgmental in-laws. Character interaction is the heart of this book, as these independent women navigate an evolving society, including the expanding of women’s roles. The scintillating, clever dialogue is another strength. Readers with an interest in history will appreciate the historical tidbits in this novel, such as the history of Greek’s early 20th century deposed kings and young Princess Elizabeth, soon to be the long-reining Queen of England.

Danielle Hill



Paranormal Romance Reviews



Arizona Lightning (Vyro Creek Book 1)

Natasza Waters

Self-Pub

Kindle Edition

B08D3BCMV9

☆☆☆☆



"I don't have a heart, but for some reason I still have a soul and you keep calling to it."

Ariana and her two best friends have had enough of city life. Taking a chance on building a fresh beginning from broken pasts, the friends purchase a fixer-upper ranch in Saguaro Gulch, Arizona. While getting their bearings in their new environment, they quickly discover the desert isn't the only thing heating up. Their new neighbors are smokin' hot—and brothers! Ariana is especially drawn towards one of them—tall, dark, and potentially deadly, Quinn Connolly. With each encounter, Ariana and Quinn try to fight the

chemistry sparking between them, but it's easier to bottle lightning than to stop a love that's fated.

Ariana's and Quinn's love affair is as wild and hot as the Arizona desert. Natasza Waters has written a paranormal romance with an all new take on the vampire lore, and I loved it! *Arizona Lightning* is a smexxy kick-ass vampire romance guaranteed to set you aflame! While it does end in a cliff-hanger (insert many a sentence enhancer), it only feeds your desire for more! If you are a fan of cowboy romances and not sure about paranormal, I recommend giving this a read. If you are a VILF lover, then hold on to your hat because dear Reader, you are in for a verra smexxy ride!

Sharing what I love,

Veronica

Affaire de Coeur

Paranormals

Omens (The Dark in You #6)

Suzanne Wright

Publisher

E-book

978-B07ZSXBNN

☆☆☆

Omens, Book 6 in Suzanne Wright's fantasy/paranormal romance series "The Dark in You" develops the love/hate relationship between Keenan and Khloé. While I didn't love it as much as I love her "Phoenix Pack" and "Alpha Pack" books, *Omens* is a humorous, creepy, very sexually charged, and entertaining paranormal romance featuring an interesting cast of characters, an intriguing story and thrilling action sequences. This is my first book in this series, so I felt like needed background information on a lot of the characters and their connections was missing for me. That's not to say Wright didn't do a good job of dropping enough basic information for readers to be able to piece things together. The development of the characters and their relationships, particularly Keenan's and Khloé's was nicely done, and information was provided effectively without slowing down the story too much. But you are left wanting to know how the characters got to here, which makes you think the books are better read in conjunction. *Omens* has Wright's bawdy and off-beat sense of humor to keep things interesting as she explores different territory with this series. This world is inhabited by demons of various kinds—angels, Nephilim, incubi, imps, etc.—but at the core it still focuses on familial bonds, mates, love, and the connections that draw beings together.

Keenan is an incubus who prides himself on maintaining control over all things in his life and his world, particularly himself. So, of course, Khloé, the one being who has the power to make him lose control and drive him up the wall, is the one that he can't stop thinking about, desiring, and wanting to make his. The attraction definitely isn't one-sided that's for sure. An imp, Khloé has a special talent for getting on people's nerves and making them crazy, even those who love her. Khloé knows being an incubus gives Keenan an inside advantage. Although her heart and mind agree that avoiding any sexual or romantic entanglements with him at all costs is best, her body refuses to get the message. She's immune to Keenan's incubus powers, but she is drawn to him so strongly, that she amps up her annoying personality and habits when she's around him to an almost silly and immature degree just to keep him away and protect herself. Keenan can't stop himself from looking out for her and taking care of her no matter how crazy or weird she acts. After another night of their back-and-forth exchanges, they

agree to a bet that will put them and the chemistry simmering between them to the test. The development of their relationship is complicated by a killer with a creepy love for death seeking revenge against Khloé and her family and Keenan's ex who doesn't know how to take a hint.

Wright's development of Keenan and Khloé is brilliantly done as they both soften and mellow each other, in a good way as they work to become partners and fit into each others' lives. While not quite a page turner, *Omens* is an enjoyable paranormal romance with a good balance of fantasy, action, horror, suspense, angst, and steamy romance that explores the incredible power of letting go of the past and taking a chance on love.

Lacy Hill

Erotica Romance Reviews



The Game Maker

Kitty Thomas

Burlesque Press

Kindle Edition

B08BYS4DTD

☆☆☆☆☆



"I've become twisted in the tangled vines of their darkness, and there's nowhere left to go but down."

At one time, Kate was walking on sunshine. Financially sound—a solid career and a future that had nowhere to go but up—until she decides to break off the affair with her boss and suddenly finds herself unemployed as well as blackballed in the industry. Now she's broke and soon to be homeless. Finding herself out of options, Kate decides to beg her former lover to take her back and pray for better days. Kate is rescued from her plight, but not in a way she has planned.

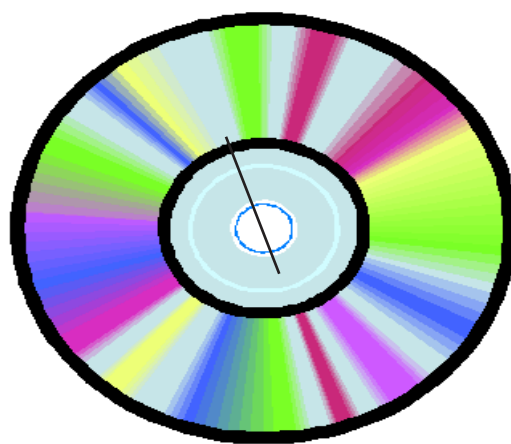
Abducted by an unknown captor, Kate awakens to find herself imprisoned with a beautiful man, Seven. As the days in their captivity become shaped into their captor's darkest desires, Kate and Seven form a bond. But the Game

Maker is holding all the cards, and Kate soon discovers that she is falling down the rabbit hole of a twisted game playing with her heart (and consuming her soul) for she is finding she is not only craving but loving a monster—her Master.

Buckle up, Buttercup! Kitty Thomas is about to draw you into a game of her own making like only she can write—and it is a dark and sexy ride! If you enjoyed *Comfort Food*, prepare to be devoured by *The Game Maker*. I loved it and highly recommend it to fans of dark erotica!

Sharing what I love,

Veronica



AUDIO BOOK REVIEWS

Bluestocking

Written by Christi Caldwell

Performed by Tim Campbell

Brilliance Audio

Audiobook, 9 cd's

978-1976602939

★★★★

The head of the Killoran family stole Stephen when he was three years old. Stephen was a Marquess, but once the Killoran family got him, they began to turn him into a criminal, as they were one of the most notorious London had to offer. Mack Dickery never told them who the child was, and the huge family accepted him as a brother. Now, Dickery is dead, the boy's real identity is determined, and the decision has been made to return him to his father. The one person who has been a protector and a buffer between Stephen and the harsh realities of the world for the past seven years is Gertrude. She is oldest of the Killoran women (all named after queens), and she is blind in one eye, consequently, a societal reject.

Lord Erwin is Stephen's (real name August) biological father. Called the Mad Marquess, Lord Erwin lost it when his beloved pregnant wife was killed and Stephen kidnapped. The *ton* hates him as do his in-laws who hold him responsible for the death of their daughter though it was Dickery who had given the order. Now, he is getting his son back, a hardened

street child he doesn't even know. The conditions the Lord set forth for the return of his son is that he comes alone. But Gertrude is not about to relinquish her little "brother" to the Mad Marquess. When she and Stephen arrive at the Marquess' place, she informs the Mad Marquess that he is incapable of handling her little brother and she is staying whether he likes it or not. Finally, the Mad Marquess has found someone who is madder than he. And so the real tale begins with two societal rejects coming together over a young boy.

Set in Regency England, *The Bluestocking* is a great story of two rejected souls. This reviewer especially appreciated that the heroine was imperfect and still capable of getting her HEA. As expected, Tim Campbell does a superb job of narrating, switching from proper to Cockney in the blink of an eye. The characterization is great, demanding the reader (listener) to feel empathetic about the tricks life has played of them. Lovers of Regency England, royalty, pitiful souls will love this audiobook as did I.

Mildred Burkett

Audio Book Reviews

Caged

Written by Lorelei James

Performed by Neva Navarre and Phil Gigante

Brilliance Audio

Audiobook 11 CD's

978-1491553015

☆☆

Molly Calloway is a young woman who has come into her own. Having grown up motherless and with vicious bully cousins who tortured her because of her weight, she has finally reconciled with who she is. Ironically enough, it was a kick-boxing class that helped her—that and the hunk who taught the class.

Deacon McConnell has also had it hard with family to the point where he “doesn’t do” family. He has overcome a great deal as well and has been floundering emotionally for some time. Then he went on a seminar that changed his life, but it was not as impactful as meeting Molly. They hook up, but though Molly pours her heart out to him, she learns the hard way that Deacon keeps secrets—relationship-bustin’ secrets.

This reviewer was not prepared for the content of this audiobook. Never having read (or heard) a Lorelei James book, I had no idea it was erotic romance. That said, *Caged* is an audiobook that is sorely lacking in plot but that gives the listener a roller coaster ride in endless sex between the couple. Get past some of the juvenile behavior and bossiness of the characters, you will find a couple who cares about each other. Some readers will like the crassness of the dialogue; others won’t. To each his own. The readers Neva Navarre and Phil Gigante are great. One cannot hold them responsible for the dialogue, and their delivery is flawless.

Mildred Burkett

One Night of Sin

Written by Elle Kennedy

Performed by Joe Arden

Brilliance Audio

MP3

978-1536696110

☆☆☆

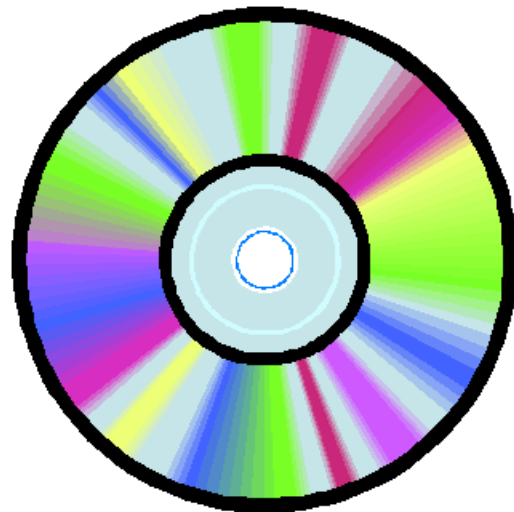
Skyler Thompson saw what she wanted. So, she waited for the opportune time to go into an exclusive night club called Sin Bar and gets what she wants. Mind you,

Skyler is a “good girl.” She lives with two other women while she’s working on her Masters so that she can do counseling, but she has issues. She’s never really gotten over the affair her now deceased mother had and how she thinks it resulted into her father having a heart attack and dying. She refuses to have anything to do with her step-father.

What Skyler saw that she wanted was sexy Gage Holt, Bostonian, former MMA fighter who is also part owner of the bar. She wants to and does rock his bones—so much so that they agree to have a relationship based on sex only. He’s not the relationship type, but he can’t say no to her either. He’s still engaged in fighting, not really on his own volition. He’s paying off a debt that’s not his own. On top of that, someone is selling drugs at Sin Bar. He and his partners have to find out who it is before it explodes in their faces. The last thing he needs or wants is a good girl who wants to bring out his feelings.

One Night of Sin is a novella of only four hours and 14 minutes of listening. Joe Arden had this reviewer convinced he was a sexy Bostonian and that he was a tortured soul. The theme is not new, but Kennedy made it an interesting tale. As the story winds down to their HEA, the only question left unresolved for this reviewer is who is selling drugs at the bar. It was made too big of an issue not to reveal the culprit.

Mildred Burkett



If you love to listen to audiobooks, contact me at adcreviews@att.net. We’d love to have you.

Happy Listening!

Booty from the Other Genre



1947: The Greys' Odyssey to Earth

Gus V

Archway Publishing

Hardcover

978-1480884168

☆☆☆

This story is a chronicle of the journey of the Greys. On another world, the Greys are a peaceful race. They have strong technology and are capable of deep space travel. They begin trade with another race, the Reptoids. It turns out that this trade was only a ruse to invade the Greys. They are invaded, destroying almost the entire civilization except for one spaceship of superior Greys' technology that has escaped the carnage. In deep space, the Greys are horrified to find through their radio from their home planet that the Reptoids are eating the remaining inhabitants.

The Greys find another planet only to find the Reptoids eventually catch up. They want the superior ship of the Greys'. They eventually escape from being hunted and find earth in 1947 at Roswell.

On their journey that eventually takes them to Earth, the story thoroughly uses Earth references to political upheavals, religion, Earth customs with a few references that indicate the Greys have a few human characteristics that are mildly different from the humans from Earth. There is enough reference to the Greys coming from another planet to maintain that they actually are space-traveling aliens. This is important because the story is very grounded in Earth references from the beginning. The author will take you through many history lessons as he spins the tale.

The story is easy to read, but one may find the history lessons a bit distracting from the story.

Lauren Calder

The First to Lie

Hank Phillippi Ryan

Tor/Forge

Hardcover and E-Book

978-1250258809 (H)

978-1250258793 (E)

☆☆☆☆☆



Is anyone the person they seem to be in *The First to Lie*?

Just when the reader thinks they've figured out what's happening, Hank Phillippi Ryan tosses in another unexpected plot twist and keeps them guessing until the surprising ending.

The cast of characters each takes on various assumed identities in order to expose the wrong doings of Pharminix Corporation's "miracle" fertility drug that has the unexpected sideeffect of rendering a certain number of users sterile. Events escalate to a dangerous level as the wealthy officers of the corporation struggle to cover up the truth. Corporate greed, family clashes, and romantic challenges abound in this book.

The First to Lie is filled with intrigue, strong emotions, and the challenge of forming romantic relationships when no one can figure out who's who and whose side they're really on.

Hannah Rowan

Griffins Perch

Ian Conner

Indie Published

E-book

B088SZKPCS

★★★★★



Denrael of Gesthamin is a high wizard of the Silver Order. There are six wizards in the Silver Order who have the responsibility of managing the elements and magical affairs of the realm. Denrael leads the order due to his calm nature and thoughtfulness. He and his griffin Glory have discovered an ancient evil may be released and a war is inevitable. It seems that one of his wizard orders is not satisfied with the way Denrael is managing the realm and feels that chaos is a better tool. He believes he will control the ancient evil and be the new ruler of the order and all else. Before Denrael discovers the treachery, he and Glory are already searching to find the Gold cluster and a scroll that are the keys to releasing the evil. Denrael finds the pixies have some stolen items from the elves that they feel they need to preserve themselves as their numbers have dwindled, the scroll is among them. Denrael must work out a solution that will satisfy everyone, but the elves are not so forgiving of theft.

This book is a standalone, the author builds a magical world as the reader moves through the story. Many mythical beings and mortal men occupy the realm and have their own paths to follow with interactions inevitably leading to the conclusion.

The story flows well and keeps continuity for a nice read. If fantasy is your genre then this will keep your interest throughout.

Lauren Calder

Nightingale House

Steve Frech

Harper Collins

Kindle Edition

B08SZN9MJL

★★★★★

"I can't sleep"

Daniel Price finally has it all—a loving family, a successful writing career, and moving into their dream house. In the blink of an eye, tragedy strikes, and Daniel finds himself a single father picking up the pieces and trying to move on for the sake of his daughter, Caitlyn. His dream home suddenly starts taking on a life of its own with whispers in the dark, shadows that resemble something more, and nightmares that plague Daniel to the point of exhaustion.

Booty

When Caitlyn begins to insist her imaginary friend is real, Daniel starts investigating the history of the house and discovering the dark secrets hidden within *Nightingale House*.

As a lover of anything haunted house/paranormal related, I'm thrilled to say that *Nightingale House* did not leave me wanting for a good scare! From the beginning pages, I was captivated till the very end! Steve Frech just got promoted to my must read author list! Highly recommend! *Sharing what I love,*

Veronica

Sage: The Reader

Clark Viehweg

Black Rose Writing

E-book

978-1684335176

★★★★★

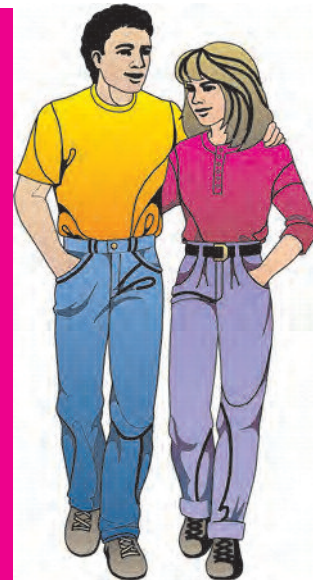
Sage's parents were killed in an avalanche. He was rescued by people who became his foster parents. For years Sage existed in a walking coma. He could walk, talk, and respond to commands, but Sage wasn't aware of his surroundings. Around Sage's eighteenth birthday, he receives an electrical shock. When Sage regains consciousness, he is cognizant for the first time in ten years. Shortly thereafter, Sage discovers that he has inherited a \$10,000,000 trust. His foster parents arrive home, but they completely ignore Sage. Apparently, they consider him their unpaid servant. Instead of sharing the news of his recovery, Sage decides to leave. The next day he takes \$50,000 from the safe, transfers the trust to an offshore bank, and moves out to begin his new life.

Sage discovers that he can read minds. This talent brings Sage to the attention of people who want him dead. Searching for the reason behind the kill order, Sage uncovers a plot to assassinate the president. He is three-thousand miles away from D.C., has no ID, and only has six hours to save the president's life.

The first part of this story requires a total suspension of disbelief. The events of the missing ten years are completely implausible. But once the hero leaves home, the plot becomes more credible. But by the middle of this book, it's become a page-turner.

Sheila Griffin

Young Adult



The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes (The Hunger Games #0)

Suzanne Collins

Scholastic Press

Hardcover

978-1338635174

★★★★

"Attitude is a choice. Happiness is a choice. Optimism is a choice. Kindness is a choice. Giving is a choice. Respect is a choice. Whatever choice you make makes you. Choose wisely." Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart

It is difficult to summarize or even review a story where you basically know the ultimate ending. In *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, future President Snow is an 18-year-old student with his entire future ahead of him. His outcome is based on a series of choices that sets him on his path of not only being the President of Panam, but also the most hated man in the Districts and the cause for the birth of an uprising the Hunger Games was put in place to squelch.

The prequel gives the reader an insight to the brutality of the early *Hunger Games*—no frills or fancy parties, or high class interviews with the tributes. The children selected at the reaping, starved and treated no better than animals in cages, are thrown in an arena gladiator style with no prize for the winner beyond their life. The choices these innocents are forced to make to stay alive are just as life altering as those of the Capital students forced to mentor them.

I found it difficult to sympathize with Snow, but I did push through till the very end! Did I enjoy the story? Yes. Just as I appreciated knowing how and why (excuse my

Star Wars reference) Darth Vader chose the Dark Side of the Force. It's always interesting to see or to guess the "What if's?" What if Snow had chosen a different path? One of love and a happily ever after? Would his lack of cruelty over the years have given the Districts a reason to rise up and follow the Mockingjay? Was he fated to be President as his family always stated? So many "What if's?" All based on a choice at each crossroads in his life.

It's understandable why several readers found passages of the book rather long-winded and boring. Truth be told, I found myself skimming over bits, too. But if you are a fan of the "Hunger Games" trilogy, I'd recommend *The Ballad of Birdsongs and Snakes*, but, again, that is your choice.

Sharing what I love,
Veronica





Late Reviews

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

Broken (Deep Ops #3)

Rebecca Zanetti

Zebra

Mass Market

978-1420145854

★★★★

Broken, book 3 in Rebecca Zanetti's "Deep Ops" series focuses on reporter Dana Mulberry and former Navy Seal and current Deep Ops operative Clarence Wolfe, who have been dancing around the attraction that simmers between them. Dana is more than ready to act on the attraction, but Wolfe has definitively put her in the friend zone and seems determined to keep her there whether either of them likes it. Searching for a missing fellow reporter and friend believed to be dead, she chases a lead that takes her straight to a sex club and once more into the possessive protection of Wolfe who is also there pursuing an investigation. Wolfe was severely injured and devastated – both physically and emotionally – by a land mine that took out every member of his team. But that explosion may have been intentional sabotage by someone on the inside, and Wolfe is determined to find him and avenge his team's death, even if it costs him his life.

Zanetti's exhilarating mix of action, angst, steamy and emotional romance is present from start to finish, making this another cover-to-cover read that you just cannot put down. Though this one does not feel quite as action-packed as the previous book, and more emotional and relationship focused, it is just as intense. Thematically, this works perfectly to tell Dana and Wolfe's story. No need to worry, Zanetti still

does not skimp on the action.

Wolfe and Dana pretend to be partners/lovers as they go undercover to follow both their investigations. However, things at the sex club take a dangerous turn, and Wolfe takes it upon himself to put Dana in protective custody—his—especially when it begins to look like someone is trying to kill her specifically. As much as they try to keep things professional, being in close quarters slowly leads to them becoming friends, then lovers. Neither can resist the fiery chemistry between them, though Wolfe tries to push Dana away at every turn until she takes a chance and pushes him on a night when he is vulnerable and in need of comfort.

Zanetti always finds just the right balance between the action, suspense, and romance. While the relationship between Dana and Wolfe takes center stage here with descriptive and well developed, sexually charged, emotional, physical and non-physical intimate interactions, the action sequences and suspense also are thrilling, and the pacing will keep readers glued to the pages. *Broken* is another entertaining page-turner that readers will not want to miss.

Lacy Hill



The Incredible Adventures of Absolutely Normal

Amanda Lotach

Line by Lion Publications

Hardcover

978-1948807333

☆☆☆ 1/2

Albert Jackson is not his perfect, handsome cousin. He's just plain average, trying his best in difficult circumstances after his father's death and mother's emotional withdrawal. He's spirited away by fairies to Gwyththenia as their savior. They believe that he's his cousin, but fate leads him to this strange land, to embark on an adventure he's uniquely qualified for, in his 'average' glory.

The Incredible Adventures of Absolutely Normal showcases the author's acquaintance with classic fantasy novels by JRR Tolkien and CS Lewis. There are many nods in the world building and storytelling. At times, the mélange of tropes and elements felt derivative, and in others, the story is uniquely strange. However, the emotional elements and Albert and Malarkey's characters creates strong, distinctive resonance. Lotach gives the unlikely comrades plenty of time to develop a relationship that helps to heal them both from past hurts as they meet plenty of interesting characters along the way. The Christian spiritual themes are very obvious, including Biblical quotes, which may not appeal to some readers. The conclusion is frustratingly abrupt, leaving important threads hanging and too many unanswered questions, undoubtedly for future installments. This book would appeal to readers looking for Christian-themed middle-grade/juvenile fantasy.

Danielle Hill

Only Mostly Devastated

Sophie Gonzales

Wednesday Books

Kindle Edition

B07SBQCWGC

☆☆☆☆

Only Mostly Devastated is an entertaining, emotional roller coaster ride exploring issues confronting youth today. Topics such as coming out, homophobia, and fat shaming, as well as the usual teenage foibles are subjects handled with skill, sensitivity, and creativity. Using first person narration and alternating between the present and flashbacks to the summer when Ollie and Will first meet, Ollie tells the story of the ups and downs of his first foray into love. The novel

Late

features diverse characters— both primary and secondary—including a plus size young woman, one gay character, two bisexual characters, two Latino leads, and the potential for an interracial relationship, all of which is in itself refreshing, but they are also well developed and not stereotypical.

Via flashback, we learn that Ollie met Will over a summer his family spent in North Carolina to be closer to his aunt who is ill. Ollie helped by babysitting his cousins. In the present, his parents drop the bombshell that they are going to temporarily be relocating to the area to be closer to his mom's sister for the indeterminate future. Ollie is not at all thrilled to be moving away from his friends and school, even to be closer to Will, especially since he suddenly stopped answering his phone calls with no explanation. To make matters worse, the Will he encounters at a party and his new high school is a completely different person – someone he cannot imagine giving his heart to at all. Luckily, Ollie does begin to make friends and settle into life at school.

Ollie is a mature, fairly self-confident, person who accepts himself and as such is "Out" at his old school and to his family. However, he's reluctant to be so open in his new environment. But suddenly, Will starts being everywhere Ollie is, trying to convince Ollie he wants to be in his life again. Over time, Ollie learns to see both sides of the situation from other viewpoints beside his own. Maybe the reasons why Will is in the closet and acts so hot and cold are more complicated than Ollie first believed.

Gonzales' writing style is wonderful with lively description that draws you right into the story. Her description of the diverse cast of characters is concise and flows from scene to scene. Alternating between the present and flashbacks is an interesting way of telling the story, but it would have given readers more insight into their relationship to see more of the moments with them together. Encompassing a range of emotions, *Only Mostly Devastated* is an emotional, charming, and enjoyable read.

Lacy Hill

A Taste of Sage

Yaffa S. Santos

Harper Paperbacks

Trade Paperback

978-0062974846

☆☆☆☆

A Taste of Sage is an emotional, character-driven romance with fantasy elements set in the competitive world of Manhattan restaurant ownership. What sets the novel

Late

apart are its diverse and well-developed lead and secondary characters, who are allowed to be authentic, flawed, and at times, downright unlikeable. They soar to life off the pages and into your imagination, heart, and mind—whether you like it or not. Santos’ sumptuous description of food combinations, preparations, and meals inspire visceral reactions in the reader. (This is most definitely not a novel to read when you are at all hungry.)

Lumi Santana loves food and cooking and becomes a chef. Unlike the rest of us, she has the gift of being able to experience the emotions the person who cooked the food was experiencing while preparing it. While most media focus on the positives and romantic aspects of this, *A Taste of Sage* also explores the darker side and effects of this gift. Lumi must take precautions about whose food she eats. Despite her mother doing everything she can to disabuse her of notions of fairy tales, happily ever after, love, romance, etc., Lumi follows her dreams and opens a fusion restaurant serving Dominican and world cuisine.

Julien Dax has a well-earned reputation for being a superb chef, but he is equally known for his arrogance, pickiness, rudeness, and mercurial nature. By planning everything and keeping things in their place, he doesn’t have to deal with risk or the unexpected. Being a sous-chef in his kitchen is not for the fainthearted. He expects his recipes to be followed exactly with no deviation. Unfortunately, because Lumi is so creative and eclectic with her cooking and menu choices, she is unable to expand beyond her dedicated regular customer base to financially sustain her dream and is forced to close her restaurant. Lumi gets a job as a sous-chef for the temperamental, prominent chef’s traditional French restaurant. It is far from her dream, as it’s very by the recipe, no frills cooking, but she doesn’t have much choice.

Lumi and Julien clash from the moment they first meet. Both are instantly attracted. However, Julien inadvertently insults her cooking within her hearing at his friend’s wedding reception for which she’s the caterer, thus setting their relationship off on the wrong foot. Lumi declares never to taste anything he ever cooks. The development of their relationship is bumpy, not only because of their own emotional baggage – both fear being hurt – but also from Julien’s obsessed secretary’s interference. Despite themselves and all the things that stand between them, Julien and Lumi both are unable to resist the attraction that continues to grow deeper between them.

Lumi eventually does taste Julien’s food, which is like nothing she has ever tasted and affects her profoundly, opening her eyes to the fact that there is more to him than the arrogance and rudeness he shows the world. As Lumi settles into his restaurant and he begins to see her creativity and skill, he longs to be closer to her and as important to her as she has been to him.

The tone of the book is somewhat melancholy, with moments of humor, angst, and suspense. However, midway through the tone shifts sharply, becoming intense and a little dark, ultimately returning to a lighter tone. Although the

novel is an entertaining and enjoyable read for the most part, it has some intensely emotional, disturbing themes/content that sticks with you long after you finish reading. At times I found Lumi and Julien unlikeable, but they both were very relatable in their human self-involvement, self-interest, and blindness to the other’s needs and feelings for much of the novel.

Lacy Hill

Tweet Cute

Emma Lord

Wednesday Books

Hardcover

978-1250237323

★★★★

Emma Lord’s debut *Tweet Cute* is an original, humorous, sweet, and entertaining YA romance filled with scrumptious descriptions of all varieties of desserts.

Jack lives in the shadow of his more popular identical twin brother. Although they are on the diving team together, he embraces the role of the loner, class clown who uses humor as a protective shield against the world. His classmates use him to get close to his brother. Jack teaches himself coding and, after discovering he’s not only good at it but loves it, he creates an anonymous social app that becomes an integral part of life at his high school.

Pepper’s life is stressful. Her mother moved with Pepper and her sister Page to New York so she could launch their business internationally while their Dad stayed behind. After the divorce, Page and her mother began fighting and Page moved to Philadelphia abandoning Pepper. She balances the stress of AP classes, the debate team, acting captain of the swim team, competing for perfect grades, and admission to an Ivy League with running the company’s twitter account and family avoiding each other.

Jack’s attention was captured by Pepper from the moment she came to his school. They spar, tease, and give each other a hard time, gradually becoming friends. While they are growing closer, they are also developing a burgeoning romance on Jack’s chatting app with each other, under anonymous assigned names.

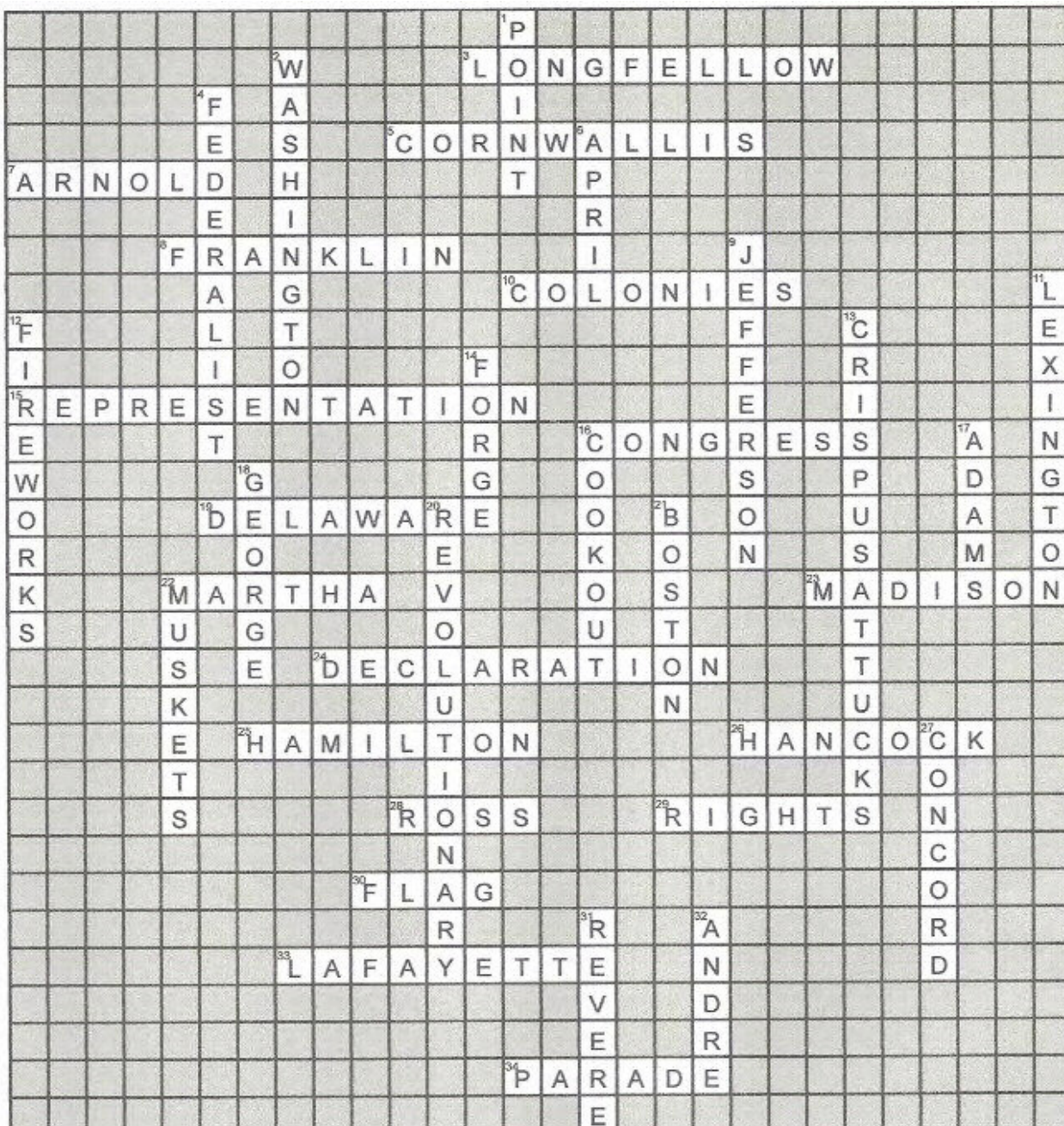
Having one another to share and confide in on the app becomes a life saver for them as does their growing friendship in real life. When Pepper starts posting about a grilled cheese sandwich for the new menu, it sparks a controversy between the families’ businesses because it’s the same exact recipe as Jack’s grandmother’s grilled cheese sandwich served in the deli. Jack and Pepper begin a Twitter war so intense and snarky over the grilled cheese sandwiches—unaware they are tweeting each other—that it takes over the Internet and social media. Pepper too discovers that things aren’t always the way they appear and finds a much-needed friend in an unexpected place.

Affaire de Coeur

Late

Lord's writing is descriptive, with well-developed characters you can't help but root for, humorous and snarky dialogue, and the novel has surprising twists that keep you on your toes. The first person, dual narration, perfectly tells this sweet, funny romance about discovering that life doesn't always take the paths that we start out on and how taking chances can be scary but ultimately is rewarding because it gets us closer to achieving our goals and making our dreams come true. If we're lucky we might just find the unexpected along the way—love and lasting friendship.

Lacy Hill



DOG DAYS

