

May/June, 2020

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Meet Celia Breslin.
Queen of 'Otherworldly' Romance

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

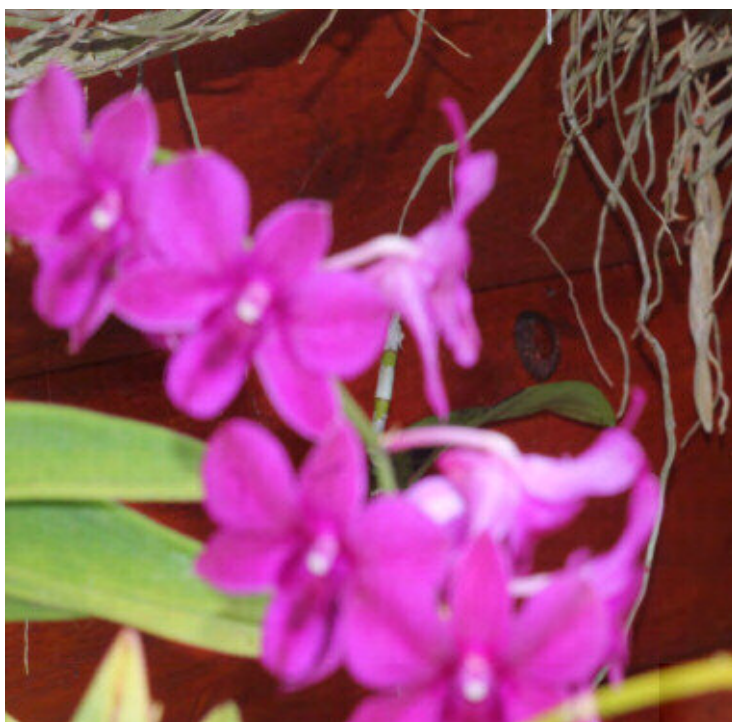
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Subscription rates for the U.S.A. are \$36 for 12 issues First Class. Third class subscriptions are \$24.00 for 12 months. Canadian subscriptions are \$65.00 for one year. Other foreign countries rates are dependent upon the cost of mailing. A single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

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To Be, or Not to Be *~the Oxford Comma*

,

The Oxford Comma is also known as the serial comma and the Harvard comma. The rules and usage of it can put you in a dilemma. Proper use of it is enigmatic and confusing.

No, it's not. Too many people make it more difficult than what the rules state and end up over-doing it. A comma doesn't need to go after every *and* that's in a sentence. Nor does it have to go after every *or* in a sentence.

It's used and only used after a list of items in a sentence when a colon is not required.

It also shouldn't be optional. (In my humble opinion.)

Here are some examples:

His law office partners, Anthony and Fred moved his belongings into storage.

So, his law office partners' names are Anthony and Fred?

Nope. Anthony and Fred are his brothers.

His law office partners, Anthony, and Fred moved his belongings into storage.

Here, you can see there are at least three people involved in moving the belongings: His law partners and his two brothers Anthony and Fred whereas, in the first sample it appeared there were just the law partners.

Let's try again when the reader doesn't know prior information.

She grabbed the notebook, pen and tablet. (No Oxford comma)

She grabbed the notebook, pen, and tablet.

or

I want to thank my parents, Danielle and God.
(If no Oxford comma is used, I guess your biological father is God, no need to care.)

I want to thank my parents, Danielle, and God.



There are times when using the Oxford comma is unnecessary. For example:

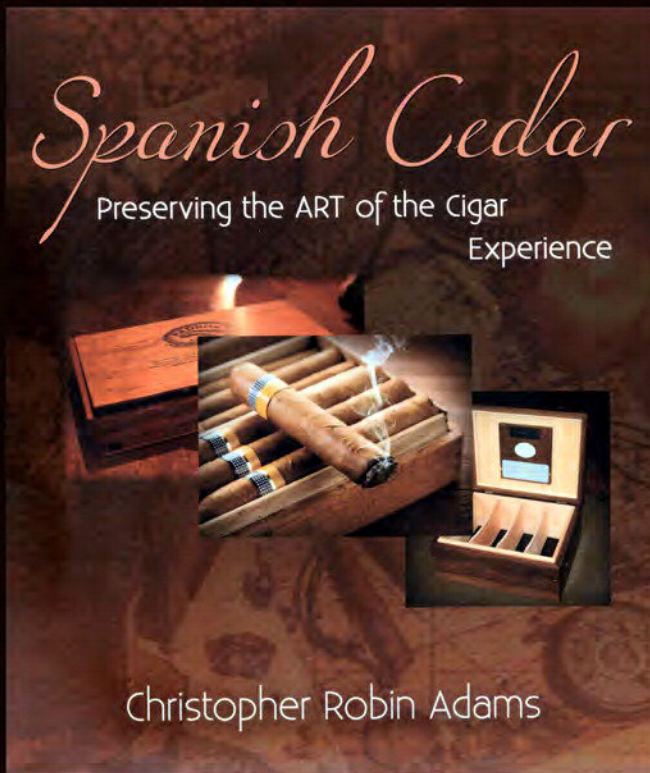
For lunch, did you want wheat toast, peanut butter and jelly?

Why? Because peanut butter and jelly are a combination type of wording. Similar to bread and butter.

The Oxford comma is used to separate different subjects referring to the main subject and to clarify a particular statement. Example:

I like fishing lobsters and children. (You fish for children?)

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specific cigars,
about the cigar
world, or written
while enjoying
a cigar.

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I like fishing, lobsters, and children.

(Ahhhh, so much better, don't you think?)

And using commas after and:

The portrait was dry and the artist hung it on the wall.
(Incorrect)

The portrait was dry, and the artist hung it on the wall.
(Correct)

The reason why the second option is correct is because the original subject is different from the second phrase/subject but you're still referring to the original phrase even though the action is different.

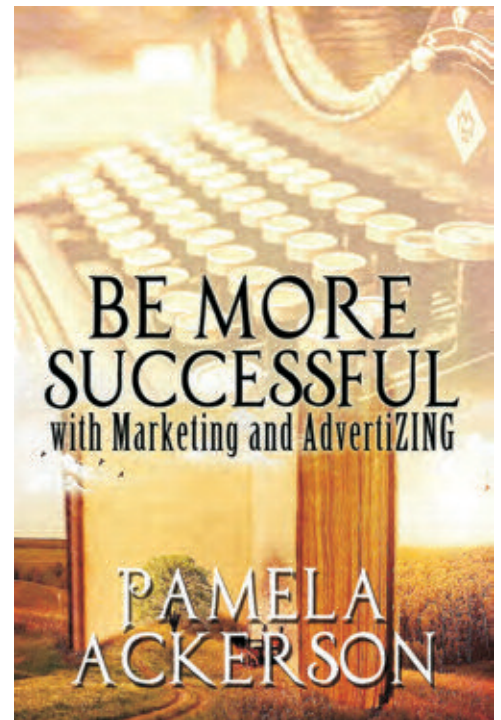
To be more specific, set off a complete phrase of a sentence with commas. It connects the sentence as a

whole, and not as a single element. And the best way to understand it is, if you can make it into two sentences.

**The portrait was dry.
The artist hung it on the wall.**

Using commas in place of the and, in any form of writing, helps keep down the choppy sentences. Over-use of commas is where wordiness and run-on sentences come in causing confusion.

All in all, use what you're comfortable with, but double check when it comes to those lists. Eating children, or fishing for them isn't an option.





WARLORD



Miriam Newman

Whatever he is, he is the new warlord
and she is now at his mercy.

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EDITORIAL

BY LOUISE B. SNEAD

“It’s Not Over ‘Till It’s Over”

Yogi Berra

And, folks, it’s not over. Covid-19 is what I’m talking about. With 19 states showing alarming increases in infections and deaths, it is far from over. I’m afraid for you and me. We are becoming complacent. Perhaps we believe that because we haven’t caught it, despite some reckless behavior, we probably won’t. That’s not how it works.

As many of you know, I am an R.N. So, I’m going to give you my perspective as a scientist, not as a political activist. I am not a conspiracy theorist. I don’t even understand why there is a conspiracy theory about a disease. The bottom line is this: It’s here, it’s highly contagious, it’s killing people, particularly those who are underrepresented in health care delivery. Instead of going down, the number of infected people are rising as are the deaths from Covid-19. So why in the world is there such an imperative to mix and mingle? Why are you at the beaches? Where are your masks? Why can’t Macy’s deliver your goods instead of you going to the store?

I’m guilty, too. Though I wore a mask and gloves, I went to the grocery store for the first time this Saturday. Why? My children are great, and they have been doing my shopping for me. But it’s hard; it took my youngest about three hours to get my stuff, and I felt bad about that. I know where everything is and can cut down on the time in the store. So I went. I tried to socially distance myself, but that wasn’t entirely possible. When I got home, I asked myself, “Which one of these items was worth dying for?”

It’s not that I don’t care. I understand the economic need for people to go back to work. But are they being pushed into work places that are not safe? What about public transportation? Public transportation around here is notorious for being dirty. Clorox is made here in Oakland, and I can’t get any at the store. So what are they cleaning with?

I also understand boredom. Lord, I’m bored. I’ve missed the graduations of some children I watched grow up. One of my kids (I claim her though she’s not really mine) got her Doctorate from Mills College, and I missed it. (Well, I followed it online, but it’s not the same). I’ve watched so many Netflix movies that my vision has diminished. I’ve taken on the mammoth job of cleaning my house, which is only going along so so because my heart isn’t in it. I planted a garden this spring. I cannot wait to see how it turns out. And, I’ve been real innovative in the kitchen. I learned how to make sourdough olive bread from scratch.

Most of all, I understand the protests. What happened to Mr. George Floyd exposed the racist practices (to some) we have as a country. As an African American woman from the South who has participated in protests all my life, no one wanted to go out there and protest more than I. But a lot of people weren’t wearing masks. There was little to no social distancing. So I’m going to have to join that march later. I have the feeling that all the ills brought about by Mr. Floyd’s death will not be cured quickly, and I will have plenty of time to show my social



consciousness.

So, this is what I’m asking you. Stay home, please. If you go out, mask up, wash your hands often, and keep your social distance. When the vaccine comes out get it, and, if they make an isolated vaccine just for Covid-19, get a flu shot, too. This disease is no joke, and I don’t want you to become a statistic. Meanwhile, keep reading!



Spotlight Interview

Celia Breslin

Celia lives in the Northern California with her husband, daughter, and two feisty cats. She writes urban fantasy and paranormal romance, and has a particular fondness for werewolves, vampires, and the Fae. When not writing, you'll find Celia editing for other authors, exercising, reading a good book, hanging with her family, or indulging her addiction to Joss Whedon's TV shows and movies, as well as everything in the Marvel Universe franchise.



nesses, hopes, and dreams. Of course, my characters would say they create themselves. :-)

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

C.B.: In September, 2019, *Origins* was released by Champagne Books. It's the third book in my urban fantasy vampire series, the "Tranquilli Bloodline", and it completes our heroine Carina's story arc. While each book in the trilogy, *Haven*, *Destiny*, and *Origins*, can stand alone, I recommend reading them in order to get the most bang for your reading pleasure.

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

C.B.: I had a lot of fun writing *Origins*. It is most definitely action-packed and it's hard to pick only one scene. There are also a lot of emotional moments where Carina is reunited with loved ones after a lengthy forced separation. I particularly got all misty-eyed when she reunites with her father because she hasn't seen him in many years. That's all I'll say for now. No spoilers! ;-)

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

C.B.: I'm motivated to write because I love it. There's great joy to be had in following your passion. A perfect writ-

ing work day usually involves sunlight streaming through my office window (although I enjoy a good rainstorm, too) and cats napping nearby.

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

C.B.: My stories tend to be character-driven, so my characters come first. As I get to know them, the plot develops itself. It boils down to asking A LOT of questions, including "what if" questions. For example: what if you discovered your family had lied to you for twenty-five years? What if you found out you had powers? What if your new boyfriend was undead? What would you do if your bestie was kidnapped by a vampire?

AdC: *Did you need to do research for the story? And what kind of research did you need to do?*

C.B.: I do research for every story. We're lucky to have the world literally at our fingertips thanks to the Internet. Research ranges from big picture items such as the setting to small items like clothing styles. Speaking of settings, the first two books of the "Tranquilli Bloodline" (*Haven* and *Destiny*) are set in San Francisco where I live, so I was able to use locations I'm very familiar with such as Golden Gate Park and Dolores Park. *Origins* is set in Italy. I have spent some time in Italy, but I did additional research on the terrain, weather, and

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

C.B.: I'm a blend of both pantser and plotter. I outline first, but my characters have been known to veer off-script from time to time and add new and exciting developments I hadn't originally planned. While the structure and key points of the story remain intact, how the characters move from that beginning point to the end (for their HEA) may then vary, given the fun surprises popping up along the way.

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

C.B.: I like to create vivid characters with flaws, quirks, strengths and weak-

The Tranquilli **Bloodline** Series

Presented by:
Celia Breslin

Vampires.
Murder.
Mayhem.

Just another day for
Carina

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architecture.

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

C.B.: The journey. Each step of the writing process itself is fascinating and rewarding in its own way. It's fun to bring characters to life on the page and share their stories with interested readers.

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

C.B.: I write urban fantasy (with and without romance) and paranormal romance. I have a few science fiction ideas that may get my attention one of these days.

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

C.B. The "Tranquilli Bloodline" series

(urban fantasy with romance) has three novels and one free short story on the market. In the multi-author, "Black Hills Wolves" series (paranormal romance), I have three novellas on the market (*Diamond Moon*, *Under A Matting Moon*, *Jasmine Moon*). Coming up in 2020: some novellas in the multi-author "Cupid Dating Agency" series (paranormal romance).

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

C.B. Given the current state of the world with the global pandemic, I have no travel plans. We are Shelter-In-Place over here in San Francisco. I hope you all stay safe and healthy during these uncertain times!

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

C.B. Write, write, write. It's easy to

procrastinate with all the distractions available to us. Set writing goals, gather some accountability author buddies, make the time for your writing, and then go for it!

Please give us the following contact information:

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Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/celiabreslin/>

Newsletter: <http://eepurl.com/bxqwR>



Sneak Peek

Celia Breslins'

ORIGINS

Tranquilli Bloodline Book 3

Chosen One is home. Bad little vampires beware...

In *Haven & Destiny*, San Francisco nightclub owner Carina Tranquilli finds love and fights her vampire family's enemies. Now, in *Origins*...

En route to reunite with her estranged father in Italy, Carina is kidnapped by a human organization intent on vampire genocide. Beaten, starved, and forced to fight fellow captives, she finally manages to escape. Along the way, she encounters the group's leaders—their identities shock her to the core.

Once home, Carina warns her family of this new threat, but dear old dad is missing. In his absence, the Tribunal, the governing body for all vampirekind, lies in disarray, with an old enemy making a bid for her father's throne. What's worse? The usurper wants her for his queen...and slave.

With a human-vampire war looming on one side and a vampire-vampire battle brewing on the other, Carina will have to rally her troops, take back the throne, and fulfill her destiny as the Chosen One. If not, her whole world will fall, taking everyone she loves with it.

Excerpt

The car stopped. I couldn't convince myself to step out. What if this was a freaking, injection-induced hallucination? What if I was still back in the damn prison?

Besnik helped me out.

The mansion's mammoth double doors eased open. The man illuminated in the doorway chased away the numbness, pumped my heart so hard it might pound right out of my chest. He opened his arms wide, calling me. My lips curled upward in the first true smile I'd cracked since the last time he'd held me in his arms. That man, my man, loved me more than any other on this whole damn planet.

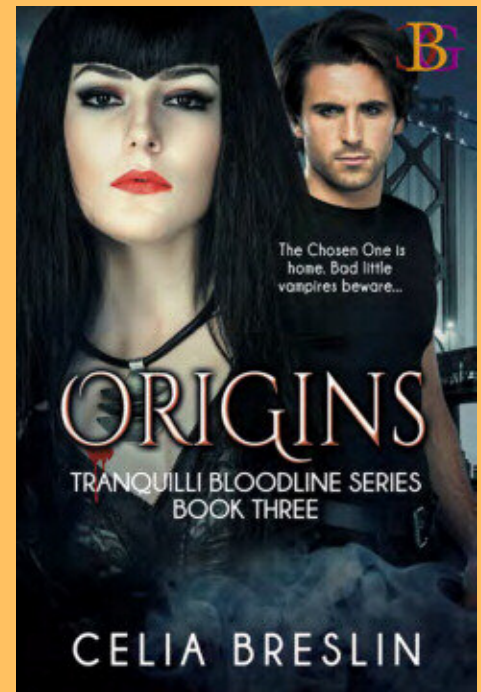
"Alexander."

I ran to him.

Alexander's arms closed around me, his hold so tight I could barely catch a breath. Tremors ran through his hard body, again and again.

"Carina," he croaked, voice sandpaper rough. "Carina."

Nuzzling his neck, I planted fevered kisses along his tan, heated skin. He'd fed recently to be this warm under my lips. Temptation had me licking his pound-



ing pulse, nipping at the vein. Couldn't resist it. My fangs slid home.

Energy exploded between us, our mate bond bursting to life and tearing away whatever magical wall had separated us for far too long. My bite, the catalyst, his blood, the cure. Awash in the force of our reunion, Alexander staggered then clutched me closer while I pulled out of his neck and laved the rapidly healing holes.

As our power continued to bubble and stitch us back together, he whisked us into the grand entryway, planted my ass on an ornate, antique cabinet, and devoured my mouth like a starving man. His hands roamed everywhere, searching, cataloguing, as if to reassure himself this wasn't a hallucination, that I was really here, in his arms, relatively unharmed.

The more he kissed me, the more those wonderful, golden threads of our connection resurrected inside me, around me, between us, and I felt like freaking Sleeping Beauty awakened from her magical slumber by a kiss from her fated handsome prince. The silly thought made me giggle against Alexander's seeking mouth, and then I was crying while my love cupped my face between his hands, wiped away my tears with his thumbs, and pressed ten-



Spells, Charms, and The Book of Cures

A grimoire Hitler
wants to get his
hands on...

JoAnnSmithAinsworth.com

der kisses to my forehead, my cheeks,
the tip of my nose...

"Alexander." I fisted his shirt
tight. Please, God, let him be real. "I...
I don't want to wake up." Please, don't
let this end.

His smoky blue eyes bored into
mine, his brown hair spiked in every
direction, a bit longer than in my mem-
ory. It's not a dream, baby. You're here.
You're home.

Oh my God, I can hear you. I
swiped some willful bits of hair away
from his forehead, touched his full lips,
ran my fingers along his strong jaw,
taking in the whole handsome, bad-boy
package. You're back in my head. I'd
never been happier to have someone
inside my mind. Silence was seriously
overrated.

And back in your arms.



Romantic Traveling Aruba



Aruba is a desert island in the Caribbean. According to reports, it is never within the path of a hurricane, making it the perfect place to go at any time of the year. Only 19.5 miles by 6.5 miles, Aruba is a real treat. Because it is a desert, it is very hot and dry all year round. The first thing you

see are the endless numbers of cacti all over the land.

The first Europeans to find Aruba were the Spanish, specifically Amerigo Vespucci (name sound familiar?). In typical European colonization fashion, they claimed it in the name of Spain, took the natural resources, which consisted of brazilwood, cotton, and cacti, and began enslaving the habitants, the Arawak Indians, originally from South America. Unlike the other Caribbean islands, Aruba's climate was such that it was too hot and thus not profitable to set up the plantation systems we saw in the U.S. Consequently, slavery on a grand scale never existed.

Apparently, it did not take much to scare the Spaniards away, according to our guide. After the Thirty Years' War, Aruba was colonized by the Dutch which had a lasting influence on how it looks. In the early 19th century, gold was discovered and Aruba experienced a 'gold rush' which did not last long, as the mine was depleted. The surviving Arawaks established a 'ranch' economy and also grew crops such as mangoes, coconuts, millet and aloe (which, except for aloe, they no longer do.)

Under the Netherlands government, Aruba was occupied by the British during the Napoleonic Wars and by the Nazis during World War II. But Aruba bears the flavor of Amsterdam's colorful windmills, clods and all. It must have been a beautiful sight when the Spanish and Dutch arrived. Except for an overabundance of construction work, golf





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courses and resorts, it still is. All of that history goes out of your mind once you see the Aruban beaches.

Though I have seen many beaches in the Caribbean--Jamaican,



Bahamian, Antiguan, and more, I was awed by the Aruban beaches. The water is in every shade of blue imaginable, including blue-green. We were told by our tour guide that when you see the deepest, darkest blue, it means the water is at least 100 feet deep. I don't swim, but imagine a scuba diver's or deep sea diver's delight upon

seeing the abundant and varied species in this water. While the water is beautiful to look at, it's no joke. The waves become so high and so fierce, they can literally knock you off your feet, as they did my sister. Of course, I dove in to save her and almost needed saving myself. She was more concerned about where her wig had gone in the water



than how she would get out of it. Thank goodness the friendly Dutch tennis team were there to save her, and we found her wig!



Dutch Tennis/Rescue Team with Sis and her wig!

Aruba's greatest asset, by far, are its people. Never in my world travels have I met a more helpful, kinder group of people who seem to want nothing in return. Since they were colonized most recently by the Dutch, their official language is Dutch, and they are granted Dutch citizenship at birth.

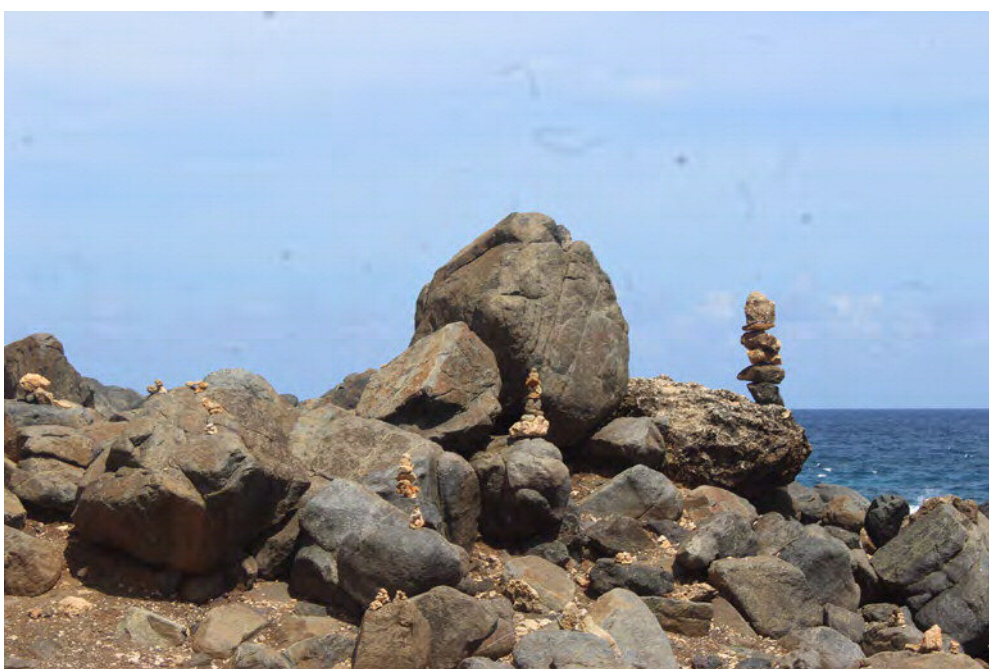


Erwin Williams, host extraordinaire

Curacao. Papiamento is a combination of nine languages and dates back some 300 years. Spanish is the next language spoken by all, and by the time they start grade school, English is a required subject. So you have children walking around speaking at least four languages while we U.S. citizens are not required to and don't have command of one.

Many natives refer to Aruba as "the rock" because there is a lot of rock formation predominating the landscape. The other, equally dominant island feature are the aloe vera plants. They look like cactus; I didn't know the difference. I also didn't know that aloe vera comes from this plant. Because Aruba is a desert island, aloe vera plants are superabundant and one of their main products. The next time you put lotion on your hands or take a bath with aloe vera, think: it probably came from Aruba.

Aruba does not grow anything else. Everything they use, except the



Rock formations abound in Aruba

Unlike most Americans, they speak at least four languages fluently. Their other official language is Papiamento, the local AfroPortuguese Creole language, which means they made it up, and is only spoken in Aruba, Bonaire, and

water, is imported. Consequently, the cost of food is nothing short of outrageous. I framed my \$450 receipt for my less than one full bag of groceries I bought there. For example, one scallop was \$4. And the smallest bottle of ol-



Rock formation shaped like a monkey

ive oil was \$27. I recommend if you take nothing else to Aruba, pack some food. That's what's going to cost the most.

The Arubans have a leg up on us technology wise. They take all of their water from the Caribbean Sea and desalinate it. All of their water, faucet and bottled, comes from the same water plant after going through the desalinating process. They warn tourists against buying bottled water (which is about \$8) because you get the same thing out of the faucet.

One could call the Arubans true pet lovers. We saw no strays--cat or dog-- the entire time we were there. Naturally, I managed to find a new feathered friend that was quite beautiful. and their daily newspaper advertised for people who were willing to travel (at Aruba's expense) and transport rescues

to their new island homes. Their generosity does not end there, however. There is a beautiful cemetery for pets by the sea that costs the owners nothing.

Oddly enough, there are no real



The only lighthouse in Aruba, it served the pirates and citizens well.



The pet cemetery



I always find my animal friends

cities in Aruba, not like the cities we know. They have segments of the island. They also don't have their own music. When you go to Jamaica, you know you're going to hear reggae. There is no identifiable music associated with Aruba. Likewise, there is no particular food that can be identified as Aruban. There is a lot of fish, but the menus read like a typical American menu--chicken wings, fries, pizza, etc.

We did two tours while there. One was a six-hour bus tour around the island and ending at the Baby Beach. This included lunch and snack and stopping visits to the lighthouse, first church established on the island, different beaches, the water production plant and St. Nicholas, site of the previously booming oil refineries. The Baby Beach got its name from the American women who used to bring their children to

learn how to swim. The water is shallow there, and you can go far out in the mild waters. From there, you can see Venezuela across the waters. I really wanted to go South America; it's only a 15-minute ride, but we were warned against doing so because of our relationship with the government of Venezuela. The cost of this bus tour was about \$65 per person and worth every penny of it.

The other tour we took was on an all-you-can-drink sunset sailboat tour. We were issued a warning before we started: If you get drunk and fall off the boat, you're on your own. This was, indeed, a possibility. This package included snacks on board (which were not very good) and a full dinner when we returned. (Which was good.) This cost about \$90 per person, and again,



All you can drink sail boat.



Is there any question why you're on your own on this boat?

was worth every penny.

It's fairly easy to get from place to place. Free shuttles and buses are available everywhere and around the clock to take you to the beach or elsewhere. Taxis can also take you around, but they can be expensive. Because it's a place where cruise ships dock, there is abundant shopping of items of reasonable prices, some of which were made by the native women.

Aruba is a place so many people fall in love with. On the plane, I rode with a lady who was going there for the 27th time. I don't think I met anyone who had not been there before. Aruba has a character of its own. It's charming, warm, personable, yet different from all the other Caribbean islands that I've been to. You can bet your bottom dollar, I'm going back! Take a look at my friend and family. You know they're going back, too.



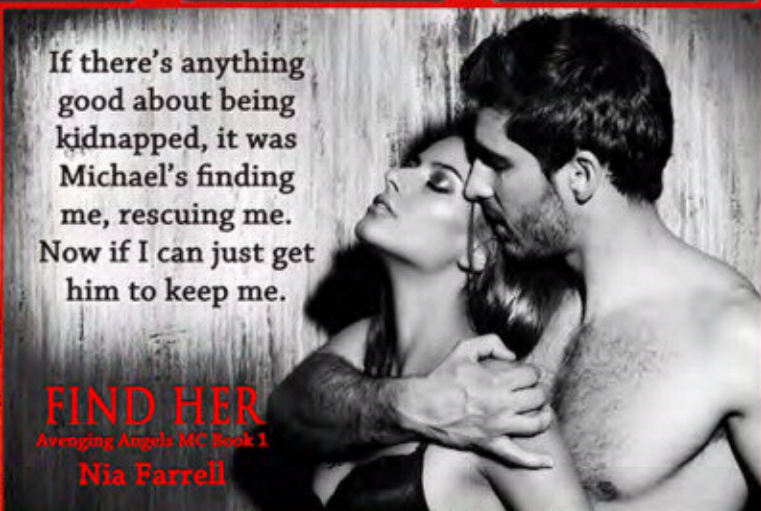
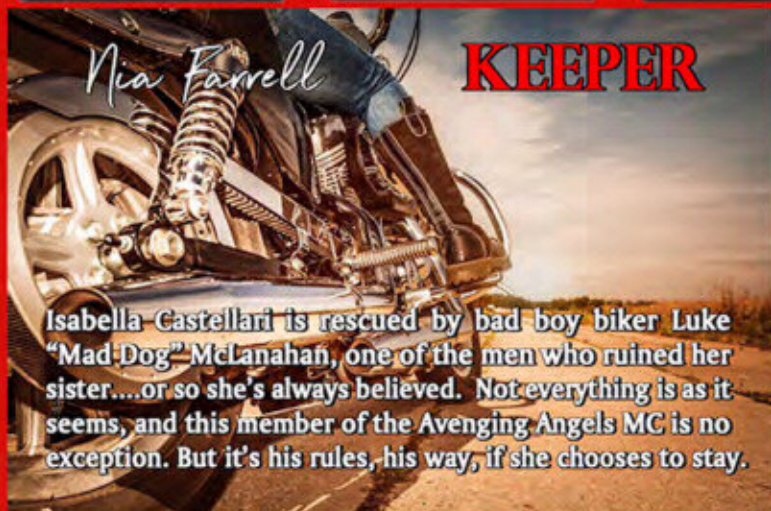
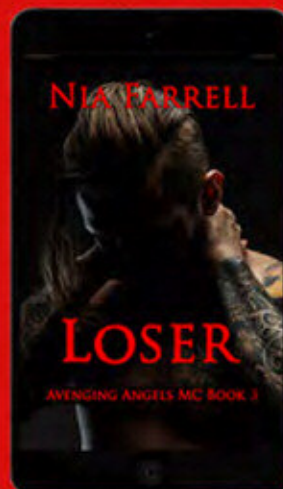
Th Divi Tree, the symbol of Aruba



My friend, author Judith Hill and the Cap'n

AVENGING ANGELS MC SERIES

by NIA FARRELL



niafarrell.wordpress.com

Spotlight Interview

C.A. Szarek

USA Today Bestselling, award winning author of romantic suspense, epic and historical fantasy romance, C.A. loves to dabble in different genres. If it's a good story, she'll write it, no matter where it seems to fit!

She's a hopeless romantic and always will be. Risking it all for Happily Ever After is what she lives by!

C.A. is happily married and has a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice.

She works with kids when she's not writing.

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

C.A.: I'm a total pantsier. The most "plotting" I've ever done was bullet points on a word doc. I guess that was an outline, after all, but it was a one-time thing. I don't like to plot, though. The times I've tried, I didn't want to write the story, it became "boring" when I knew it all. I guess it's exciting to me when it forms organically.

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

C.A.: Real "people" with flaws. I like when they're relatable and "feel" real, like they could come off the page. I also love to write strong women, since I am one. I love to write alpha heroes that have more cockiness in them than they need.

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

C.A.: *King of Hearts* is the first book of a four-book series set in Vegas, and each book will be about a Giovanni sibling. There are four siblings, and this book is about the oldest brother, Nico. He's a detective and everyone calls him Gio. The series is a steamy romantic suspense, and it's a lot of fun. I can't wait to share book two with y'all. I have a cover, and it's delicious! As always, I work on more than one thing at the same time (cuz I'm a little crazy, LOL) and I have more 'Highlanders' in the works, and a book that is very different than anything I've ever written before. I don't have a title yet, but it's weird, and perhaps urban fantasy. LOL.

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

C.A.: I love writing sexual tension and banter, so the scene that I've shared with y'all in the excerpt is probably my fav non-sexy (sorta, LOL) in this book. It's an argument filled with sensual tension and subtext, with a side of awkwardness. It was super fun to write, and I hope y'all love it!

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

C.A.: Probably my characters. If I don't continue their stories, they don't leave me alone. But I love to write. It lets me concentrate without concentrating, really, because when the words flow, I just let it happen and I'm more a navigator than a creator, believe it or not.

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



C.A.: I'm not really sure. My stories just come to me. Sometimes in dreams, and sometimes they just pop into my head. I get inspiration from all sources, I think. Like breathing. Sometimes it's latent, and sometimes it's more obvious.

AdC: *Did you need to do research for the story? And what kind of research did you need to do?*

C.A.: I feel like no matter what the subject matter and genre, authors need to do research, even if it's just a little. I live in Texas and even though I have a sort of law enforcement background, this new series takes place in Vegas, so I did have to research Nevada (and



specifically Las Vegas as well) police structure to make sure I had it right. This book also features a female US Marshal, and I am much more familiar with the FBI as far as Federal Agents are concerned, so I also had to do research to make sure Maddie was realistic. I discovered some cool things, and I love learning, so it's double fun.

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

C.A.: Sharing interesting and sexy stories with the world.

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

C.A.: I am sort of branching out with one of my WIP. It's urban fantasy with a side of paranormal so that's different for me, and it's been fun. I think when it's done it might be a weird one-off for me, more than a series, but we will see.

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

C.A.: Seventeen E-books, and two short stories. They are all contemporary, romantic suspense, epic and historical fantasy. I also have ten audiobooks out.

AdC: *Will you be attending any book signings or conven-*

tions?

C.A.: YES! I will be at Buns 'n Roses on June 13, 2020, in Allen, TX.

I will be at Writers On the River in East Peoria, IL, on July 17, 2020.

On August 15, 2020, I'll be at Delightfully Dirty in Dallas.

Later in the year, I will be attending Readers & 'ritas in Allen, TX, from Nov 13-15. These events will be a lot of fun, and I would LOVE to see you there!

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

C.A.: Never, ever give up. This is hard (really, it is) and if you want it, you'll have to work for it.

Please give us the following contact information:

Personal web page : www.caszarek.com

Twitter: @caszarek

Facebook: www.facebook.com/caszarek



Sneak Peek

King of Hearts

By C.A. Szarek

"I need to talk to you," Gio muttered in her ear.

"I don't have anything to say to you."

His large hand clamped on her wrist. Maddie tugged away, but he tightened the hold.

Her eyes darted around the corridor. There was no one around, but anyone could come at any moment. The ready-room door was ajar. It would likely empty momentarily.

The briefing had gone well, but she'd fled the room first, before any of the LVMPD detectives or Captain Olinsky. She'd thanked them for their time and attention, answered questions as fast as lightning, then told them she'd check in soon.

Maddie hadn't had a direction or destination. She was supposed to stay there, work with them, but she'd copped out. Stated her colleagues from the Marshals would meet up with them soon and they'd proceed.

She'd just needed to get out of there.

Get away from *him*.

Even if she'd never given him the barest acknowledgment during her talk of the case. Her reason for being in Vegas. With his father's casino at the center of things.

She hadn't spared him one glimpse.

Now, her eyes shot to his face, and she couldn't turn away. "N-n-not here." The stutter made her cringe, but Gio gave the barest nod and dragged her down the hallway.

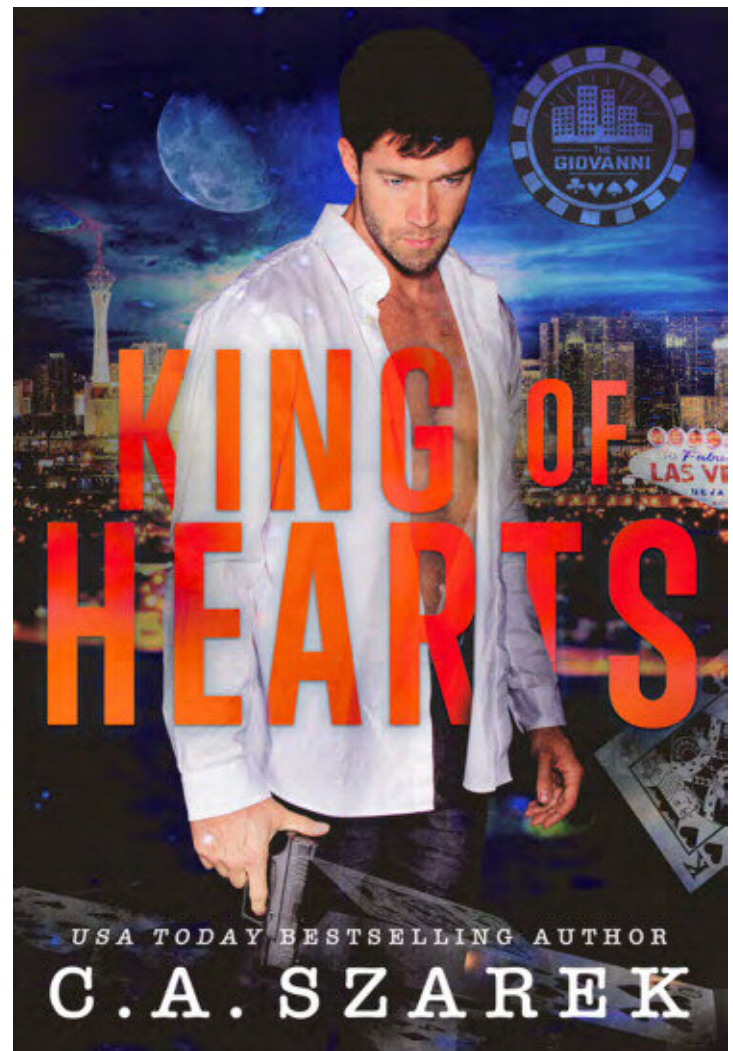
He pushed open the nearest door and shoved her inside, slapping the light on and yanking the thick panel shut, just short of a slam.

The *click* of the lock resounded in her temples.

The contents of the room told her it was an office supply hub, from the neatly organized stacks of copy paper cases against one wall, to the shelves lining all the rest.

Post-it notes were next to boxes of pens, bundles of notebooks, highlighters, and multiple toner refills. File folders, and banker boxes galore. The scent of paper and cellophane tickled her nose.

She'd always loved going to the office supply store. New supplies made her want to do her job. She'd never been afraid of the paperwork side, what most cops dreaded. Maddie thrived on the investigation, being sharper than coworkers, researching and catching the little things others missed.



She was detail-oriented, and good. She deserved this case, this command.

Her former lover whirled and stalked toward her, towering over her with his six-foot-four frame. She refused to shrink way, but Maddie retreated until her shoulders and upper back hit the edge of the far shelf. There was nowhere else to go. The contents shook and she waited for something to fall and smack her head, but it didn't happen.

Gio's sapphire eyes flashed with anger and he slammed his palm on the edge of the shelf right above her left ear.

She winced.

"Are you five?"

"Excuse me?" She met that gaze dead-on, not wanting to give in to her confusion. Whatever she'd contemplated he might open with, it wasn't that.

"Ignoring me. Pretending you don't *know* me. Leading the whole fucking briefing, avoiding even one glance in my direction? Real cute, Senior Inspector Granger, with the United States Marshals Service." He spat her title, last name and agency.

"I was trying to maintain professionalism." Her tone sounded defensive to her ears and she fought another wince.

He threw his head back and laughed. "Bullshit."

Maddie shuddered and wanted to rub her arm, but

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couldn't move when he looked at her like that.

Gio was right, of course, but she'd cut her tongue off before she admitted *that*.

"It doesn't matter how many years passed. You can't pretend *we* didn't exist."

"Why not?" she snapped. "None of it matters. We have a case, and you happen to be on my task force. We have to work together. So, let's just keep it professional. A work thing."

"Hell no."

His vehemence made her startle, and she reared back, knocking her head into the shelf.

"Shit." Maddie rubbed the throbbing spot.

Gio's expression lost some of its harshness. "You okay?"

He must not have been overly concerned, because her former lover still hovered too close for comfort. The heat coming off him warmed her, and her traitorous body only wanted him closer.

She needed a freaking distraction, stat. "Speaking of my case, how did you even get a spot on my task force? Olinsky doesn't know your family owns the casino?"

He jolted. Averted his eyes, and jammed his hand through his dark hair. His shoulders quaked, more than the barest denial of his headshake.

Surprise washed over Maddie.

Gio's hesitation shouted he hadn't wanted to admit

that truth, and perhaps he *shouldn't* have. With one word to his captain, she could have him removed from her task force. Probably should.

"It's not a conflict of interest," he said, as if he'd read her mind.

"How could he not know?" she demanded.

"I'm a private person," he said on an exhale, like he needed a second to gather himself.

"Gio—"

"My dad isn't laundering money!" His shout had her freezing. He rubbed the back of his neck, and again, avoided looking her way. "He has cancer. He's in the hospital."





Special Days in June

Across

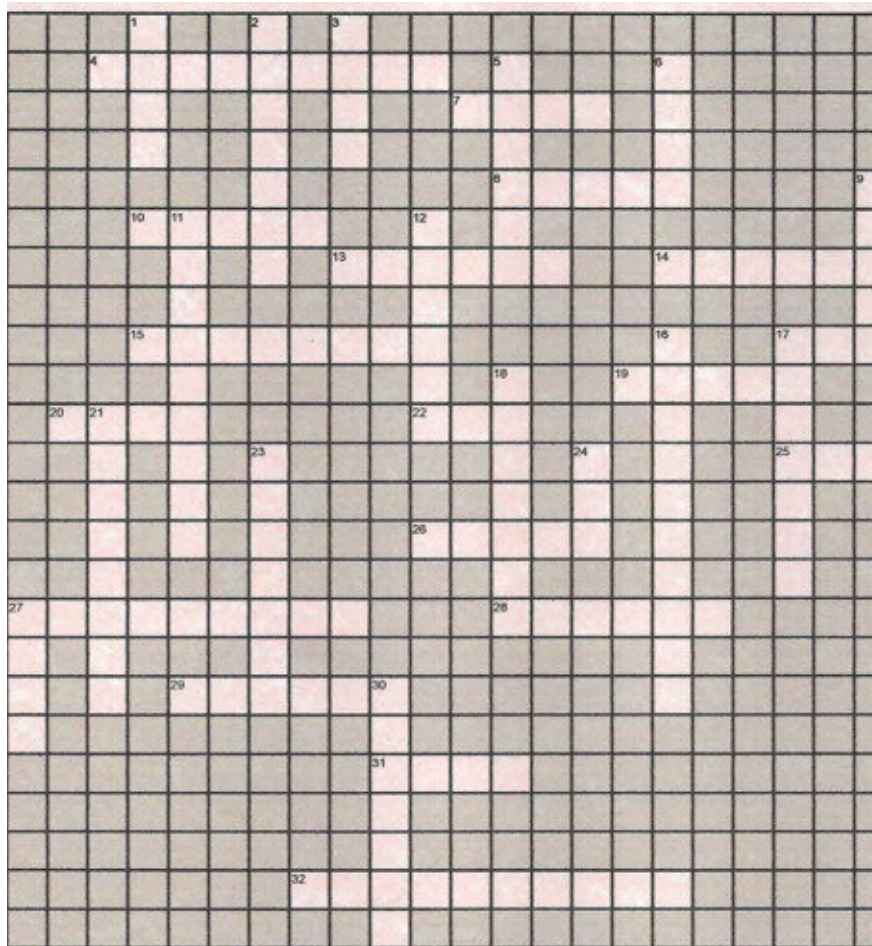
4. This week celebrates the growing of our plants.
7. These forests are found in the Amazon and Africa.
8. This pungent, edible bulb has its own day.
9. June is Adopt a ____ (feline) month.
10. Milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, sour cream are honored in June.
13. Gruyere, Gouda, Cheddar, Feta are celebrated on this day.
14. Bass, trout, halibut, tuna fear this week in June.
15. Longest day of the year.
17. Fight the Filthy ____ Day (nasty insect).
19. All of my hillbilly friends have a friend named this.
20. June is ____ eagle month.
22. Lipton and Celestial love Iced ____ day.
25. Day to highlight tarragon, basil, dill, and other flavorings.
26. Day to praise this dried meat.
27. Another name for thong shoes.
28. Singer and Brothers are two types of this machine that is celebrated in June.
29. This famous logger is celebrated in June.
31. By any other name this month is a ____.
32. This Disney quacker has his own day.
33. This stringed toy will come back to you.

Down

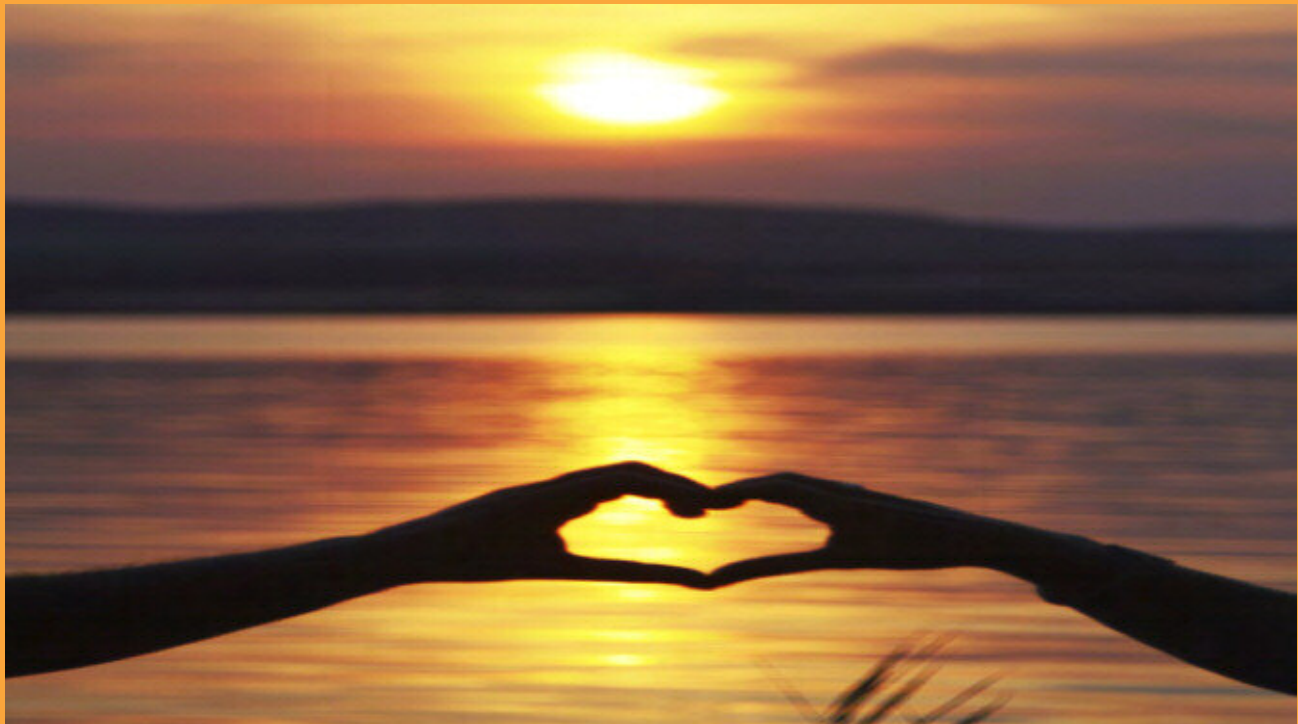
1. Truth or ____ Day is on June 1st.
2. Haley's comet and these other celestial bodies are celebrated in June.
3. Lighter color of red.
5. Native American boats.
6. Heads or tails on National Flipping a ____ day.
9. Suckers, chocolates, peppermints and others are celebrated the entire month.
11. June is the awareness month for this wind instrument with a keyboard.

12. What did you say? What did you say? on National ____ day?
16. Day when Texas slaves learned of their freedom.
17. These men are celebrated on the 3rd Sunday in June.
18. Kodak, Olympus, Canon and Nikon are these types of machines celebrated in June.
21. June celebrates the place where captured fish live.
23. "Would you like to fly in my beautiful (air) ____?"
24. ____ Pride Month.
27. Betsy Ross would love this day.
28. D Day is the day the allied troops landed in ____.

Answers on page 34



Affaire de Coeur



Contemporary Romance Reviews

American Princess Meets Homeboy

Jamy Rosser

Waldorf Publishing

Trade Paperback

978-1643165844

☆☆☆ 1/2

The story is written in first person present tense. This particular reader found it to be a very difficult read and it was a struggle to continue with the story. I'm glad I stuck with it.

Hope Johnson, daughter of the Johnson family who rules the fashion industry, meets David Taylor, and promotes him to manager. David's life changed forever.

It's a worked hard for my money love story. It's new money meets old money. It's a great story.

Kitty Lane

The New Husband

DJ Palmer

St. Martin's Press

Kindle Edition

B07SBQ9VZM

☆☆☆☆ 1/2

"I guess when you shine light into the dark, you see it for what it really is, and it loses all power over you."

Nina Garriety has it all. A loving husband, two beautiful children and a loyal dog. But in an instant, Nina's world comes crashing down around her. Her husband, presumed dead, has hidden a double life, and she now finds herself in dire need of a way to pick up the pieces and rebuild. Enter Simon Fitch...a local history teacher that is perfectly perfect in every way. Perhaps too easily he enters into the Garriety household, and as each day passes, more and more light is shown on Simon's true nature as well as the secrets behind Nina's missing husband...

Show of hands, how many remember the old 1987 slasher/horror movie *The Stepfather* starring Terry O'Quinn? If not, go use Google and get caught up. Fun fact, it's based loosely on a true story. Are you ready? Now, grab your popcorn, because DJ Palmer has woven a dark

Contemporaries

tale of second chances that makes for a very twisted, yet fun read! Highly recommend!

Sharing what I love,

Veronica

Perfection

Kitty Thomas

Burlesque Press

Kindle Edition

B086R4Y35X

★★★★★



"I wonder if he can see the fear in my eyes. I'm afraid of what I feel, afraid of what I want, afraid of this dark slithering thing he's awakened inside of me."

Cassia seems to have the perfect life married to the rich and powerful Conall Walsh. But what is perceived as perfection by those that live outside the walls of Cassia's home, is a living nightmare to her, a nightmare that ends in the death of her tormentor and awakens an entirely new darkness in the form of her blackmailer. But this blackmailer does not demand money. Rather he commands her complete obedience and submission.

Perfection is a darkly enticing romance that I devoured in one sitting! Loved and highly recommend!

Sharing what I love,

Veronica

The Wrong Mr. Darcy

Evelyn Lozada and Holly Lorincz

St. Martin's Griffin

Trade Paperback

9781250622143

★★★ 1/2

Smalltown reporter, Hara Isari dreams of being a sports writer. 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

A Good Duke Is Hard to Find (Isle of Synne #1)

Christina Britton

Forever

Kindle Edition

B081YZYH1T

☆☆☆ 1/2

Once again Lenora finds herself left at the altar, a jilted bride for the third time. Her controlling father has threatened to disown her if she is not properly wed, and, once again, the hunt for a suitable husband begins. Needing a break from the gossips of the *ton*, Lenora and her best friend head to Lady Tesh's manor on the Isle of Synne. But the ghosts of Lenora's past still reside on the Isle, and when she meets the heir of the Duke of Dane, Lenora is torn between letting go or moving on.

Peter Ashford is now the heir to the Duke of Dane. At the young age of 13, Peter swore vengeance against the Duke of Dane for his callous actions against him and his mother, causing, in his young mind, her ultimate demise. Heading to

the Isle of Synne to confront the Duke and to make good on his promise to his deceased mother with Lady Tesh, Peter is overcome with conflicting feelings after meeting Miss Lenora Hartley. Her kindness to him clashes with his plans to destroy the Duke of Dane's holdings and lay waste and ruin to his estate.

Perhaps Lenora will be able to pull the thorn from this grumpy lion's paw, and with that, allow them to seek their happily ever after.

It has taken me a few days to prepare a review and rating for this romance. While the beginning of the book grabbed my attention, as I continued, it began to drag a bit and become rather repetitive in the middle, causing me to skim along to the end. Peter's thirst for revenge and gruffness wore a bit on me, but then he'd have turns of being the perfect hero coming to Lenora's rescue. Overall, *A Good Duke is Hard to Find* made for an enjoyable read, and if you are a fan of Regency romance, I'd recommend.

Sharing what I love,

Veronica

Highland Conquest (Sons of Sinclair #1)

Heather McCollum

Entangled

Kindle Edition

B08472ZRKP

★★★★



"Will you catch me?"

"Always and forever."

Having watched his father fall in battle to the Sutherland Clan, Cain Sinclair has an idea on how to bring peace between the feuding clans--marry the chief, Ella Sutherland. Ella isn't one to be conquered easily and demands her freedom or her death over being married to a Sinclair. But as time passes, Ella finds that the Sinclair brothers are not totally the harbingers of death and destruction as everyone has long believed, especially their leader Cain. Cain and Ella discover that enemies may make for the best lovers, but will their impending union be forever shattered when Cain discovers the truth behind the secret Ella has pledged to keep with her life?

Heather McCollum has become my one click must read for highland romance and adventure! With her start of the "Sons of Sinclair" series, we are introduced to the brothers Sinclair, whose father raised them as being none other than The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse. Cain Sinclair is a fierce warrior and compassionate lover, and I've totally added him to my book boyfriend list! Loved and highly recommend.

*Sharing what I love,
Veronica*

When You Wish Upon a Rogue

Anna Bennett

St. Martin's Press

Mass Market

978-1250199508

★★★★

Sophie Kendall is the last of the Debutantes Revenge Column's founding trio who has yet to fall in love and marry. She loves hosting and arranging the Debutante Underground's secret weekly meetings where women discuss the Debutantes Revenge Column, which offers romantic advice. A romantic who longs to fall in love before marrying, she's in a tough spot because her parents are arranging an advantageous marriage to save them from financial and social ruin caused by her father's drinking and waste of his fortune. After suffering scarlet fever as a child, her eldest sister became housebound and unable to fulfill this duty. So, it falls

Historicals

to Sophie.

Henry Reese, Earl of Warshire, also second born, purchased a commission in the army to become a soldier. He has lived in the shadow of his elder brother and believes he will always be second best. Brought home by his brother's sudden death, he reluctantly assumes the Earlship – a title which he never expected or believed himself worthy of – determined to resolve the financial issues the estate is burdened with and pass it and the title on to a cousin. Burdened with nightmares, insomnia, and survivor's guilt, he's in a dark and unhealthy state emotionally, mentally, and physically until Sophie comes into his life.

While looking for a new place to hold the Debutante Underground meetings, Sophie finds a tailor shop that Reese owns. He agrees to let her use the shop once a week if she stays with him one night a week to help him sleep. Meeting weekly, they become friends and slowly fall in love. She helps him to heal and come back to life, and he shows her the life full of passion, love, and partnership she could have if she finds the courage to live for herself and not for her family. The path to love is difficult for them – barred by family secrets, tragedy, duty, familial responsibility, self-esteem issues, lies, and betrayal.

Bennet's flair for description brings the characters and the world they inhabit to life, enhancing the novel's themes and the characters' development, deftly drawing readers into the story. Her tone is melancholy most of the novel, becoming whimsical during Reese and Sophie's time together as the relationship progresses. *When You Wish Upon a Rogue* is a passionate, angsty, sweet love story that will capture reader hearts, taking them on an exciting journey filled with ups and downs, twists and turns, building to a satisfying conclusion with unexpected surprises along the way.

Lacy Hill

Erotica Romance Reviews



HeartJacked (Messy Hearts #1)

Charity Parkerson

Punk & Sissy Publications

Kindle Edition

B082FQYHLG

★★★★ 1/2

Nash and River are as opposite in looks as they are personality, but that's exactly what makes them complete. Loved Charity Parkerson's intro to her newest series, and look forward to reading the next "Messy Hearts" romance! *Sharing what I love,*

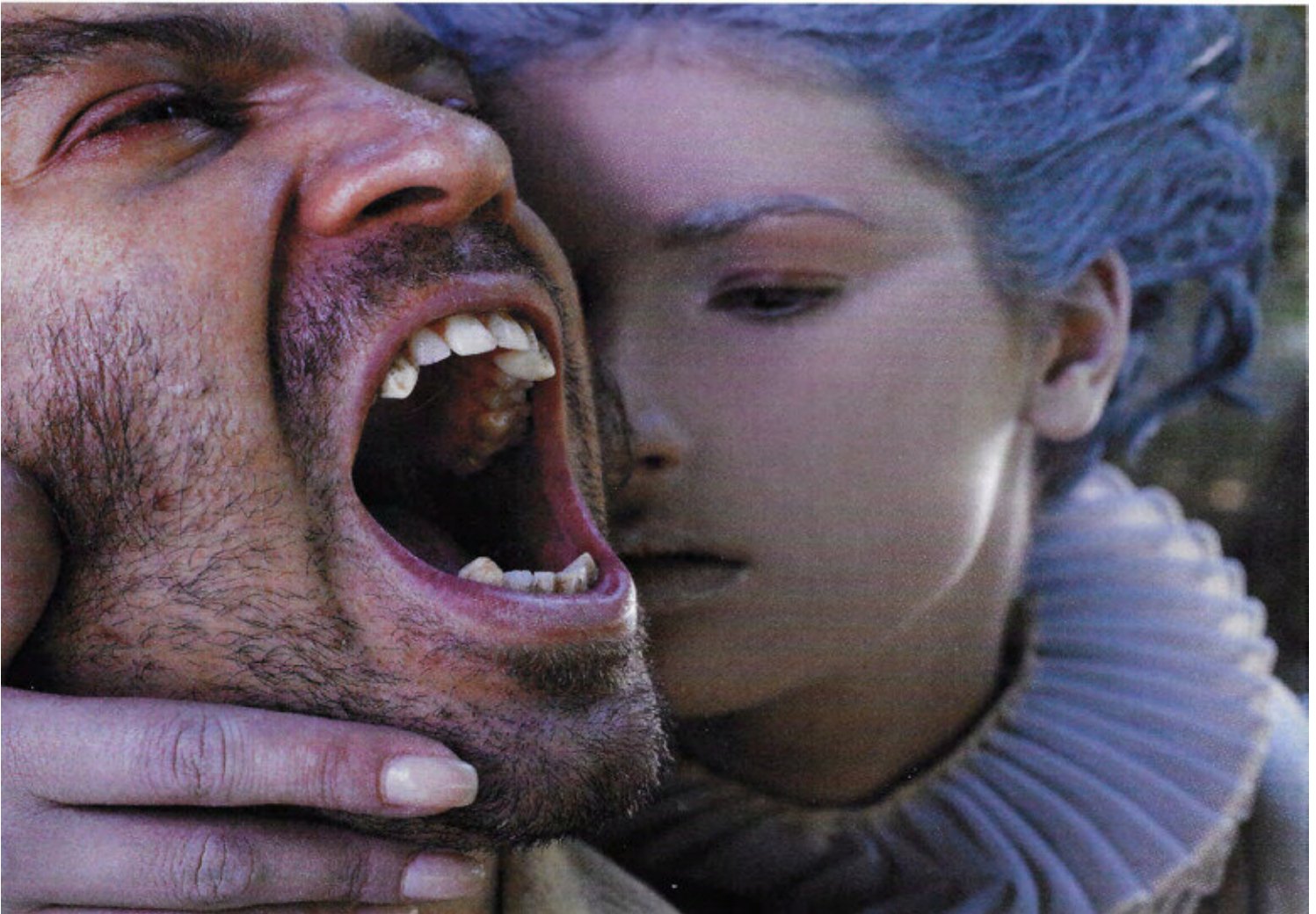
Veronica

"Sometimes loving someone isn't enough to save them."

Abused since childhood, Nash has grown up in a family of thieves and drunkards. Determined to turn his life around, Nash tries to leave his past behind him. He works at a local dealership as a mechanic and is the last place Nash thought he'd find his soul mate, but that's exactly what happened when he gazes into the eyes of River. Now if only his past would stay buried before it ruins his last chance at happiness.

River can't believe his luck. Just when he thought his life couldn't get worse, he's told his car needed a repair that will cost money he doesn't have. But when he looks up into the eyes of the large bear of a man covered in tats, he's overcome with a feeling he long thought lost--hope. Hope that maybe he finally found someone to love and be loved.

Paranormal Romance Reviews



The Blood Covenant: Book One of The Medici Warrior Series

Emily Bex

Foundations, LLC

Kindle Edition

B07NDS1VW6

★★★★

"You love me for me. Without you I would still be lost, for I have found what I was seeking my whole life, my eternal mate."

"Allow me to introduce myself--my name is Shade Medici."

The Medici Warriors have been long revered and feared. Shade is their Warrior King and has been existing to fight and destroy rogue vampires for 500 years. With the reputation of ruthlessness as a warrior and a lover, Shade has been called to the DC area to help a fellow Master vampire with an influx of rogue vampires. But when Shade finds

himself drawn to a beautiful and feisty redhead, his Beast roars that she will be theirs--at any cost--even if she is a mortal.

Kate Reese has been hurt for the last time by a man. Finding out her fiancé cheated on her is the last straw, and she has sworn never to lose her heart again. When a chance meeting has her bumping into the most striking, yet deliciously dangerous man, Kate's heart has other ideas.

Shade and Kate are two souls meant to be mated, but will those around Shade accept his mortal bride, or will their very existence be threatened?

Emily Bex has developed a paranormal world that has combined the tropes of the billionaire alpha male with a smexxy vampire. This romantic saga is filled with intrigue, action and romance told from various points of view. Would recommend to fans of vampire romance!

Sharing what I love,

Veronica

Affaire de Coeur

Paranormals

Date with Dracula

Dakota Rebel

Supernova Indie Publishing Services,

Kindle Edition

B084Z3GPPY

☆☆☆☆☆

"You are my mate. My destiny. I was created to love you, Tessa. And you were made for me. I will wait for you until the end of time, if you need me to. But we will be together for eternity."

Noel is the oldest unmated vampire, and as such, has been given the title "Dracula." The lore of this vampire isn't the evil, soulless, blood drinking monster everyone knows. For Joel, it's walking through Walmart feeding off emotions without being overwhelmed. And who would have believed he'd find himself in the ice cream aisle staring at his soulmate while she is climbing inside the freezer case.

Tessa has found herself becoming one of the typical people of Walmart. Having a craving for ice cream in the wee hours of the night, Tessa foregoes regular clothes and leaves on her PJ's. With her fav flavor on the top shelf and no employee in sight, Tessa climbs in the freezer case to score her addiction. But when she turns around, she finds herself face to face with the most amazing man--and her soul cries out "MINE!" Who would have thunk it? Tessa just met the man of her dreams at the freakin' Walmart of all places!

Joel knows convincing Tessa he's a vampire and she is his one true mate may take time, but time is a commodity he has in spades, and Tessa is well worth the wait.

Joel's and Tessa's instalove romance is just a flat-out fun read. Yes, it lacks in-depth character development, and it's not your typical vampire read. But for a smexxy love at first bite quickie, I absolutely LOVED it! Hoping Dakota Rebel takes this entertaining little tale and turns it into more!

Sharing what I love,

Veronica





The Night Swim

Megan Goldin

St. Martin's Press

Kindle Edition

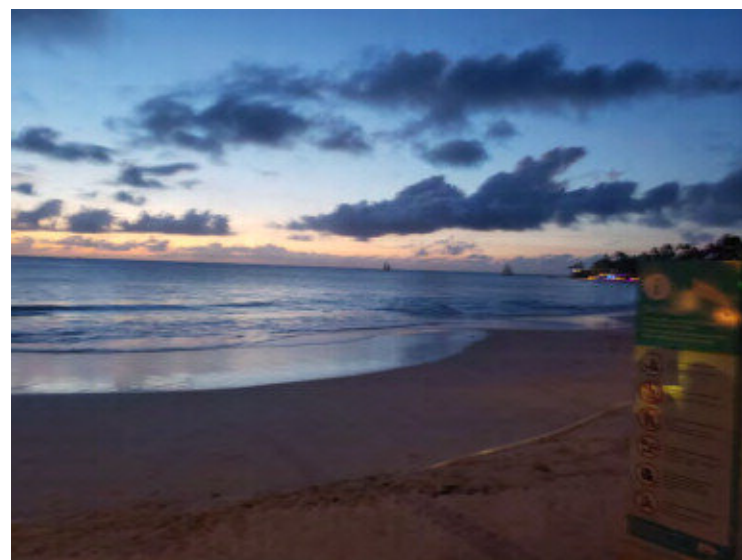
B0818N4HC8

★★★★ 1/2

Megan Goldin has written a dark and emotional thriller that will keep you turning the pages desperate to find out what really happened to Jenny Still.

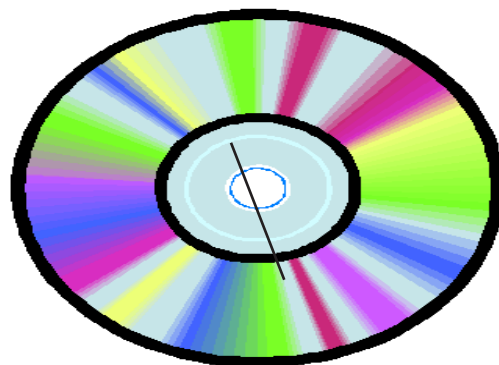
Sharing what I love,

Veronica



Rachel Krall has drawn fame from her podcast *Guilty or Not Guilty* that allows her listeners to be in a virtual jury box to draw their own verdict. Season Three will be focused on a controversial rape trial in the small town of Neapolis. Neapolis is a community where everyone knows everyone, and when the town's "golden boy" is accused of raping a high school girl, a line is split down the town. Rachel knows doing a rape trial may cause stressful and emotional triggers to her listeners, but she feels that it's important for them to hear both sides.

What Rachel didn't count on was receiving a letter from Hannah...a letter with a plea for help in finding justice for her sister Jenny Stills, who had a "drowning" accident 25 years earlier in the same small town. Between the trial and the notes left by Hannah, Rachel starts drawing her own conclusions...and as she follows the bread crumbs Hannah leaves, she soon discovers that not everything is what it seem.



AUDIO BOOK REVIEWS

The Hellion

Written by Christi Caldwell

Performed by Tim Campbell

Brilliance Audio

Audiobook, 8 CDs

B07539FLHF

☆☆☆

Cleopatra Killoran needs a husband, a titled husband, to give her respectability and money. She's from a very large family, all of whom have needs, including a sister who was beaten into blindness. To ensure a future for them, she needs to marry up, but she hates their kind, the members of the *ton*. Her brother has entered her into the matrimonial fray via an arrangement with Adair Thorne who is from a family Cleopatra has been taught from birth to hate. Cleopatra was raised by one of the worst thugs London has to offer. Extremely street wise, she is fully capable of taking care of herself.

Adair Thorne and his brothers owned a gaming place that they watched helplessly as it burned to the ground. He is positive that the Killoran brothers did it. He doesn't trust any of them including the woman Cleopatra whom he is supposed to help find a husband. She denies her family's involvement in his tragedy, but he doesn't believe a word she says. In fact, believing the worst of her, he draws a gun on her when he finds her in his nephew's nursery. Yet, there is something about her that snags his attention and holds onto it. He realizes he doesn't want to find a husband for her. He wants her himself.

Set in Regency England, *The Hellion* is an entertaining audiobook that is made better by the performance of Tim Campbell. His ability to swing back and forth between characters of different dialects is ingenious. The story lags in places and is nothing new, but it will satisfy listeners of historical romance.

Mildred Burkett

Making it Right

Catherine Bybee

Performed by Cristina Panfilio

Brilliance Audio

Audiobook 9 CD's

978-1536623109

☆☆☆ ½

Jo Ward grew up as a wild child, the daughter of the sheriff of River Bend, Oregon. When her dad dies, Jo runs for election and now she's the new sheriff. She has an ulterior motive for becoming sheriff—she believes her dad was murdered rather than having killed himself by accident. She would love to get out of this dead town, but she intends to solve this mystery. First, she needs to do some special training at Quantico with the FBI. Upon her arrival in Washington, she meets a sexy man at the bar and hops into bed with him. They spend the night together and go their separate ways...so she thinks.

Gill Clausen is a federal agent for the FBI. He and Jo are both surprised when she shows up in his class the next day. He's impressed with her skills as well as her body, and suddenly, he finds some open FBI cases in Oregon that

Audio Book Reviews

require his attention. When he arrives, he sees there's much more to the woman than he initially thought. She's a coach at the high school and has a posse of friends who will defend her to the end. Suddenly, it would appear that someone is trying to kill Jo. She and Gill band together to find out who and why.

This reviewer is a little old fashioned when it comes to the hero and heroine hopping in bed on sight. Once past that, the book was entertaining, though one villain was obvious and the other came out of left field. Cristina Panfilio does an adequate job of performing the various voices.

Mildred Burkett

Suddenly Single

Written by Julia London

Performed by Cristina Panfilio

Brilliance Audio

Audiobook, 5 CDs

978-1721367610

☆☆☆

Jenny Turner, smarting from a breakup from a cheating boyfriend, leaves California and goes to Lake Haven to stay at an inn. When she gets there, the inn is closed, but that doesn't stop her from trying to manipulate the handsome man in the kilt. If nothing else, she will talk the quiet man to death. She convinces him to allow her to stay a couple of days which shocks everyone. She finds the inn to her liking and the owner even more so.

Edan Mackenzie (whom she refers to as "Outlander") owns the inn, but he's ready to give it up and return to Scotland. His girlfriend has left him and he can get her back if he tries hard enough. Then this chatterbox comes into his closed inn and asks for a room and a sandwich. She's a knock-out, and she has some suggestions for the inn and the village which he seems to ignore. She has come to like the place and offers to buy it. They kiss and follow it with earth-shattering sex, after which he seemingly ignores her except for telling her he no longer wants to sell the place.

The heroine is flighty to say the least. Her plot with Lorenzo, one of the three Bortalotti brothers, to make Edan jealous, was juvenile, worthy of high school. If you don't mind fluffy, light on plot, this may be the one for you.

Mildred Burkett



Booty from the Other Genre



How's Your Family Going?

Sayonara Machado

Self-published

E-book

B086J3J3GW

☆☆☆1/2

How's Your Family Going book starts out with an inspirational feel about the dynamics of family and its structures. It's concerned with the immediate family, parent and children relations, and not the interactions of parental siblings, grandparents or grandchildren; although there are brief mentions. It delves into cultural concepts and historical appraisals that lead to relationships and interaction between parents and children of today.

All phases of marriage, living together and divorce are covered and what it means to those involved in different situations as it discusses the repercussions. There are many references to academia for various situations to bolster the Machado's points. The author puts forth her own life experiences to give the reader a reference in which to identify and find a commonality.

I would recommend this book to aspiring counselors. I would not view this as a self-help book about immediate family issues, as you would be pressed to find answers only by exhaustive study. Remedies are not simple to find and follow for answers due to the intricacies and variability of family.

Lauren Calder

The Nemesis Manifesto

Eric Von Lustbader

Forge

Hard Cover

978-1250751171

☆☆☆☆

The Nemesis Manifesto draws on current political situations as the background for this thriller, where Department of Defense black-ops agent Evan Ryder takes on the bad guys like a female James Bond. Intrigue piles upon intrigue as Evan races to prevent the murder of any more of her fellow agents after four have already been hideously killed by a mysterious group known as Nemesis.

With a target on her own back, Evan can never be absolutely sure who to trust as agents and double-agents, and even her superiors attempt to manipulate her to further their own interests. Ultimately, the very future of the American way of life lies in her hands.

The Nemesis Manifesto will keep the reader turning pages, following a breath-taking international adventure and wondering if Evan can triumph with so many obstacles in her way.

Hannah Rowan

Booty

Rise of the Survivors

Yunus Salehi

Self-published

E-book

B086L2NBR4

★★★★★



Rise of the Survivors is a saga that begins in the 1860's. Nawrooz is an orphan saved from the watery fate of his now gone parents. The wise man who saved him, the Lala? Nawrooz's wisdom of the world increases dramatically from the Lala's teachings. Violence is not the way, though such thoughts are very ahead of their time and even frowned upon. He leaves his teacher and caregiver to continue his fulfillment, eventually into a quest to help his people, the

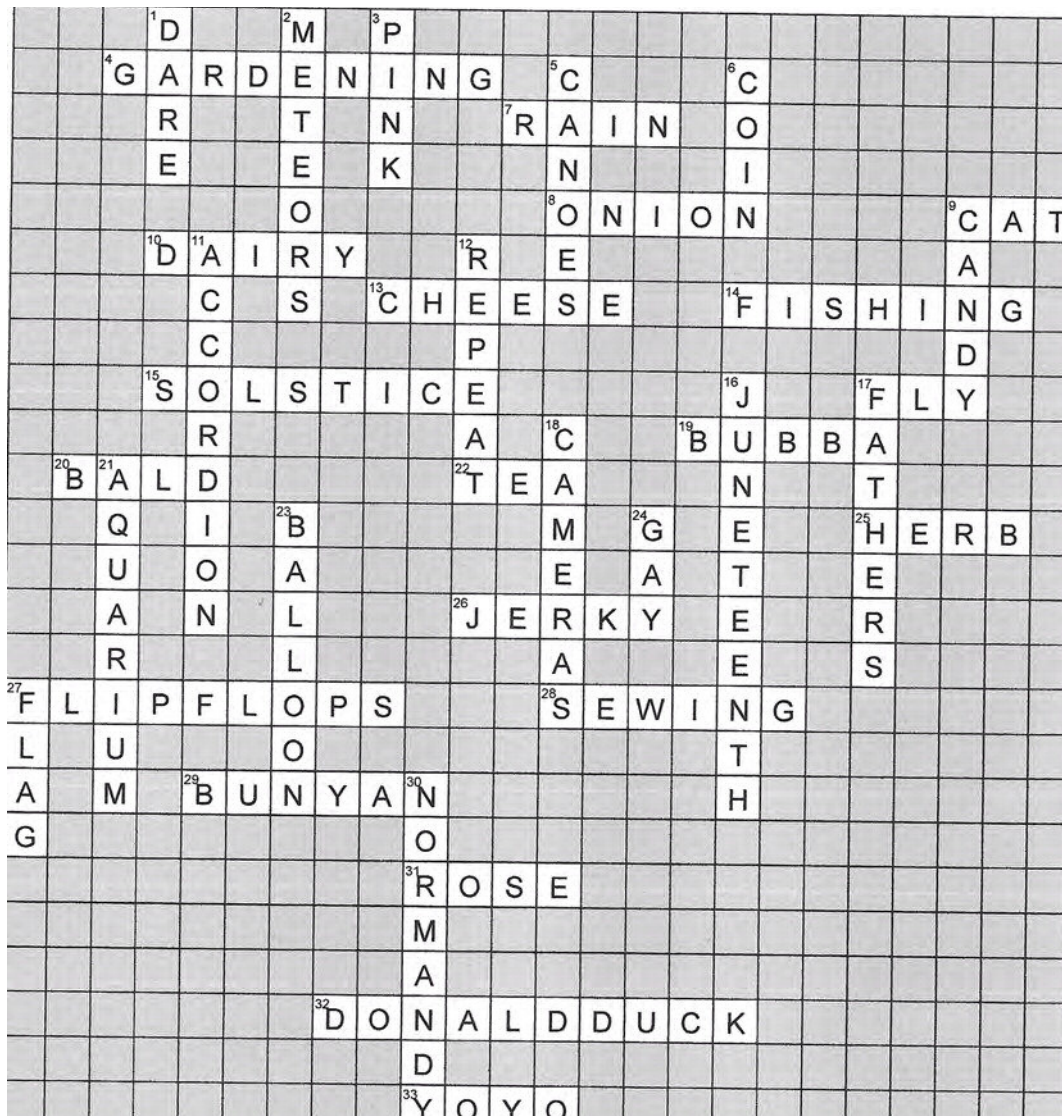
Hazara, from certain annihilation.

Nawroos finds unbidden love with a royal that seems to lead to tragedy. Not knowing his love's fate was not death as he was led to believe, he moves on to India and a formal education, changing names several times for the sake of safety. Nawroos is now Ali Marden. His studies in India round out his education, but he is pressed to move back to Afghanistan before finishing at the university. He meets the young Shereen, an adopted ruler's daughter, to help save the Hazara. Shereen is more special than he can even imagine.

This story has it all--adventure, international intrigue, espionage, war, a love not lost--and the author weaves a fine story within the history that is the Afghanistan of then and now. Those not familiar with the names and titles associated with this country are provided with a glossary to aid in the understanding. It will begin simple enough, but the characters will add up. It is regional and will all fit together. One will get used to the hierarchies of various royalties and it plays a crucial part in the saga.

The story is easy to read with good continuity and is consistent throughout. This is good entertainment.

Lauren Calder





Late Reviews

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

Fight Girl

Tony Clark

Word Association Publications

Trade Paperback

978-1633852989

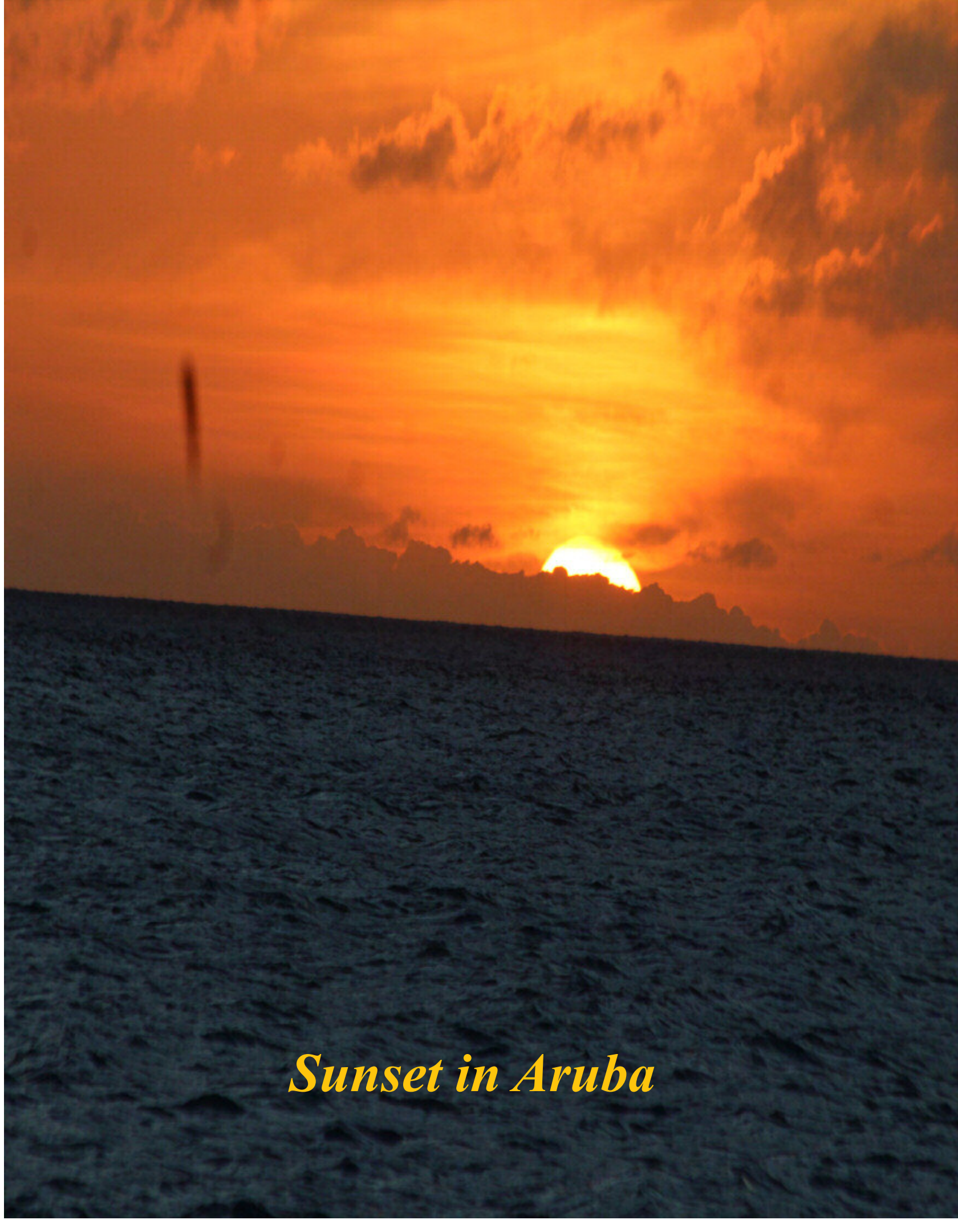
☆☆☆ 1/2

quick sketches veering towards stereotypes, but this is a fun, cinematic, genre-straddling read.

Danielle Hill

Twentysomething lawyer Peggy Devlin's everyday norm is blown away when she gets a new client, a mysterious and tough young woman named Jessie. She wants Peggy to help her win the mayoral election against highly corrupt incumbent Richard Hawkins, whose mob connections keep him in power and the town under his thumb. Jessie hands Peggy a check for a large sum to cash because she isn't going to take no for an answer. Jessie has an underlying agenda she won't reveal. She's determined to change things in Sharpburgs, Ohio, and Peggy is along for the wild ride.

Fight Girl is a distinctive story with an unforgettable lead. It reads like an indie action crime drama. Jessie is incredibly magnetic and extraordinary. She's a great action heroine, charismatic, clever, and caring in a way that's incongruous with her penchant for brutality when necessary. She leaves others guessing what she has up her sleeve next. Peggy's first person narration has an authenticity, due to a combination of naivety and hope tempered by habituated cynicism. At times, the writing is heavy-handed and clunky, and the supporting characters need development beyond



Sunset in Aruba