

September/October 2021

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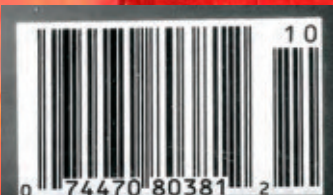
BEST SELLING AUTHOR

MIRANDA LYNN



Pam Binder

Author, Award Winner and President of her local Writer's Association



Reviews!
Reviews!
Reviews!

*He was the
town's hell-raiser
and she was his
salvation. Now
that he's back,
will he claim her
heart or break
it again?*



Available on Amazon
www.deborah-camp.com

September/October, 2021

Affaire de Coeur

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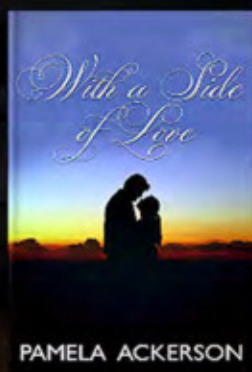
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Clere's Restaurant Short Story Collection Available in E-book and Print



Sunday at 7
Jason Donovan has a secret.

With a Side of Love
Who had no idea she'd be served a plateful of drama.

Winds from the Past
Larriane arrived in Florida with hope, a new job, and a new identity.

The Throuple with Love
Surprises are quite pleasant when least expected.

The Best Catch of His Life
If only she could forgive herself.

BLUE'S WOLF
was taking what it *wanted*.
It recognized him as its mate
even if her *human* side denied it.



HELL'S FURY MC:

Blue

GUARDED HEARTS BOOK 9

CLAIRE
MARTA



NIA
FARRELL

Amazon <http://mybook.to/BlueGH9>

Release Date 8 August 2021

Vella, My Love by Pamela Ackerson

Seriously, Amazon and their Imagination Crews are fantastic. I've seen authors, for years, do episodic stories on their websites. Moreover, a few big name authors were doing it on various platforms where the chapters were purchased individually.

When I first started writing, and being published, it was with short stories. I was sixteen when my first short story was submitted to a writing contest. To my ultimate surprise, I took first place, along with a nice little bundle which was set aside for college.

That put a writing ember under the seat of my pants and I began writing non-fiction articles, and fiction short reads. It was fantastic!

Back then (yes, I'm carbon dating myself), everything was written long hand and I didn't know how to type. My parents paid someone to type the stories, articles, and edit the pieces before submitting to various publications. (Silly me. At the time, I had no idea they had to pay someone to do

that.)

Along came the typing classes, and a whopping 20 words per minute. What a wonderful surprise when I received an electric typewriter as a gift! Terrific! I could now do 30 words per minute.

There was nothing to hold me back.

Fast-forward...To the here and now.

I've always found short stories, and quick reads to have a special place in my heart.

Yes, I have full-length books.

Several:

Native American Time Travel
Private Investigator Time Travel
WW2 Historical Fiction
WW2 Non-fiction
I co-wrote a memoir
And etc.

Short reads and short stories went out the window many years ago

when the publishing industry changed. Now it's coming back!

The idea of episodic stories isn't new, but Amazon seems to be revamping it to a new level. It can be a combination of stand-alone short stories, chapter, or short reads.

This is, FYI, a fantastic way for authors to get their name out there to reads.

A Win-Win all around.



The Spotlight is on *Miranda Lynn*

USA Today bestselling author, Miranda has always been a voracious reader and created worlds in her head ever since she can remember. The inspiration of two of her English teachers and a creative writing teacher put the writing bug into her head and it slowly grew until the advice of a fellow writer hit home. She uses that same advice when talking to other aspiring writers...“Write the story you want to read.”

Miranda is the wife of an army veteran, a proud mother to two amazing sons, a fur baby lover and is excited as each new chapter in her life unfolds even with the bumps and bruises that may come with it. She enjoys connecting with fellow authors, readers, and fans. If you ever get the chance to meet her, you'll remember her always.



Miranda Lynn

AdC: *How many different genres do you write?*

M.L.: Currently I write in three different genres. Paranormal Romance, Contemporary Romance, and Time Travel Romance.

AdC: *Tell us about the type of characters you love to write about.*

M.L.: I love writing about strong females and males who are both protective and supportive, and of course, sexy as hell. I have recently begun writing a bit darker for my heroes, broken and twisted former lives that haunt them. Along with shitty villains you want to hate and clap when they get their comeuppance.

AdC: *Do you have a new book or series?*

M.L.: I do have a new series that began this year. “The Night Shift” series is a spin-off of my “Black Mountain Pack” and will become interwoven as it progresses. This series is the darker side of my paranormal world.

AdC: *Favorite quote?*

M.L.: “You must stay drunk on writing so reality cannot destroy you.”--Ray Bradbury

AdC: *What do you do when you just don't feel like writing?*

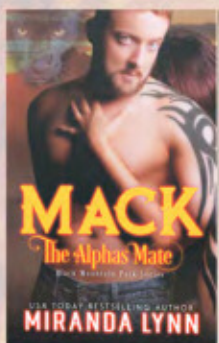
M.L.: I read, in my genre, out of my genre, or I play WOW. I have a wonderful guild that includes my author bestie and her hubby so it's a way for both of us to get away from writing and just enjoy some relaxing gaming time.

AdC: *There's a lot of controversy going around about how authors shouldn't write about things they've never experienced, i.e. if you're not trans, gay, an addict, etc. don't write a character like that...what's your take on that?*

M.L.: I don't agree, but I do highly recommend doing your research, asking those who are a part of whatever community or character you are writing about.

AdC: *Many indie authors don't get their books edited by professionals. What advice would you give them?*

Black Mountain Pack Series



Escaping reality
one book at a time.

We want you to
Join the Pack

Hot shifter stories
that go beyond what
we think we know...



MirandaLynn.com
@MirandaLynnBks

M.L.: For me, an editor is an absolute must. I cannot see mistakes in my own writing and by round three of revisions, my eyes are skimming over chunks because I already know what it says or should say. Alpha and beta readers are great helps with catching things, but my editor polishes the rough corners, fixes my addiction to commas, and points out lines that make great teasers, or that make her lol, pull at her emotions, or just make her smile at the sass or stupidity of the character at that moment.

AdC: *What do you do to go beyond your comfort zone when it comes to writing and life?*

M.L.: This new series is out of my comfort zone with the darker and possible trigger worthy scenes. I enjoyed writing them and then guiding the story as it develops into the HEA that all my books have. In life at this moment, I don't do much out of my comfort zone. I have become quite a bit of a homebody other than work and necessary store runs, though I enjoy traveling to new places and trying out new places to eat and drink.

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

M.L.: Yes, I just attended Writers on the River in Peoria, IL. I have Naughty in Nashville on October 9th, and Indie Romance Convention November 10-13 in Lebanon, TN. I have quite a few scheduled for next year as well, all info is available on my website. www.mirandalynn.com.

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

M.L.: Keep writing, get all the words out because those can be edited, fixed, and revised. If you write nothing, then nothing is what you will have. Ask questions, don't get caught up in the drama side of the indie world, and always keep learning!



Sneak Peek

◇ Excerpt

His One True Mate

by Miranda Lynn

Billionaire tech genius, Leo Lancaster is accustomed to hiding his truth behind mankind's materialistic comforts. But no more. The lion within him is on the prowl for a mate, and his primal instincts refuse to be ignored. Driven by his shifter side, he embarks on a journey across the globe to claim that fated bond.

Thankfully, he doesn't have to venture far. Sauntering by in heels and a curve-hugging pencil skirt, everything about Katrina calls to him. To Leo's great regret, she needs a bit of convincing.

Katrina Denmark is on the run from a past determined to destroy her. By focusing her life on helping others, she battles to overcome the fears that haunt her. Finally, she's starting to feel safe. In control. Until the lioness side of her begins aching to submit to Leo. Terrified of her own growing desires, Katrina is deliberating over whether to take a chance on Leo when the deranged monster she's spent years trying to escape catches up to her.

With her life and freedom on the line, will Katrina allow Leo to stand beside with the ferocious love of a mate? Or will her own fears force her to face the looming darkness alone?

Miranda Lynn's Social Media Contact Information:

Personal web page www.mirandalynn.com

Twitter I don't use twitter

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

Instagram: @authormirandalynn



His One True Mate Book One (The Night Shift Series)

*Independently Published in
Paperback – May 7, 2021*

13⁹ : 979-8745452536

Available on Kindle.

AISN: B0926V7XTF

Hats Off to Olivia Drake!

for continuing to expose the inequities of women in love in the Regency Period



whip stitches, and the ladder stitch to make the finishing invisible.

As Tessa tackles the task of helping the Duke of Carlin reconnect with his motherless daughter, her passion for designing hats nearly gets her into trouble on several occasions. And as they begin to fall in love, she longs to confess the truth about her past. But how can she?

Here's a little sample

She knew that a career of any sort was forbidden to a duchess. The swells despised even a whiff of trade among its exalted members. Yet all she had ever wanted was to design hats, to own her own millinery, and as the wife of a duke, she would be barred from doing so.

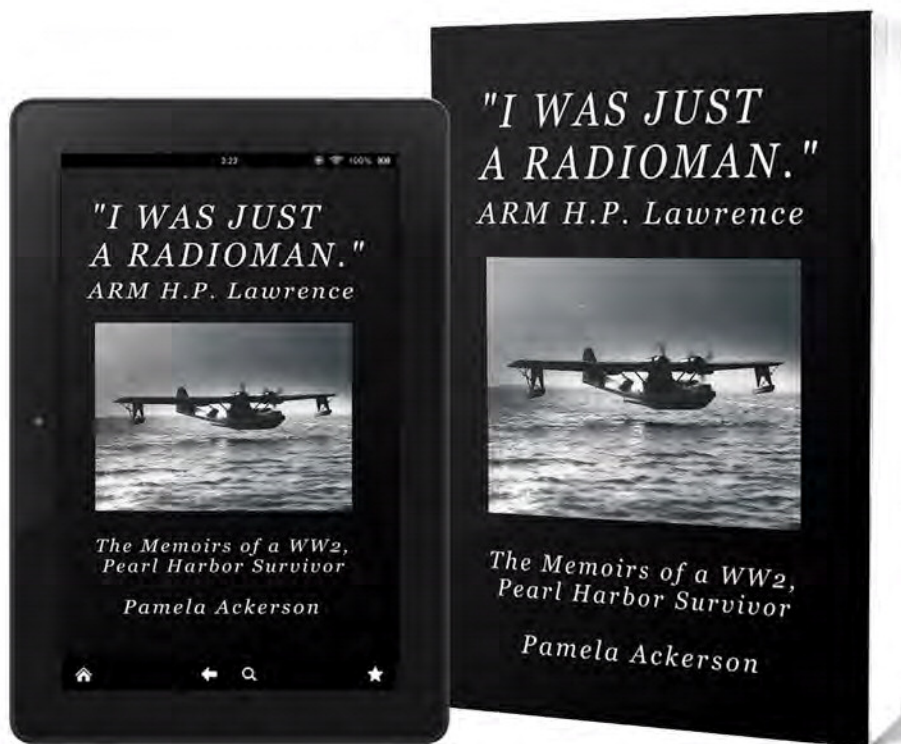
After years of working in the back room of a millinery shop, Tessa James dreams of opening her own hat-making business. All she needs is a loan from the lord who sired her. Since her only clue to his identity is a coat of arms on a pendant, Tessa decides to find him by entering the aristocratic world as a governess. The trouble is, she must hide her background - and her true purpose - from her new employer, the sexy, delectable Duke of Carlin.

One of my favorite parts of writing *WHEN A DUKE LOVES A GOVERNESS* was researching hat-making. In Regency England, no decent woman ventured outside in public without a bonnet; the proper hat was as important to a lady as a fashionable gown. In order to illustrate Tessa's talents for the reader, I needed to learn more about the millinery trade.

Luckily, those who enjoy crafts and reenactments are happy to share their techniques. On the internet, I found several step-by-step guides that took me through the process of making a bonnet. A hat has many layers of construction: a buckram base, wire, crinoline tape, lining, and trimmings. It also requires a variety of hand stitches: running stitches,



Author, Olivia Drake



December 7, 1941

The day which
will live in
infamy...
was just
the beginning.

Their hearts were strong, and their courage endless.

Pearl Harbor survivor, Black Cat radioman, and decorated WW 2 veteran. ARM H. P. Lawrence, tells the true story of the fight against the Japanese in this compilation of his memoirs.

One of only a handful of non-Native American code-talkers, H. P. Lawrence became a member of an elite fighting force, the Black Cats. Flying in their nocturnal missions, the Cats claws were sharp and their aim deadly.

From devastation to victory, the story of these brave men—the deadly, mysterious, and illusive Black Cats is a journey into the past where nightmares came true and hatred reigned. A time in history we should never, ever forget.

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Hardcover: 979-8743295715

Paperback: 978-1540447395

Ebook: B01MRL3T88

Audio: B06ZZDZ6TR

PamelaAckerson.com



October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Every October the majority of people see an influx of commercials, promotions, all helping to keep people aware of the death sentence referred by many as the big C. For me, it's an awareness for all cancers.

My mother passed away after fighting Stage 4 Ovarian Cancer for two years. My sister passed away after fighting Ovarian Cancer Stage 3 for four months. I was lucky, Stage 1 Ovarian Cancer. I never had to go through chemo, but I did have to go through major surgery. I feel guilty. So many others have gone through hell to survive.

Your chances increase if a family member has had Ovarian.

The Big C: October and Breast Cancer Awareness.

There are different symptoms, depending on the person and their body. Unusual changes are a blinking yellow light. Go to the doctor. It may be something simple, or it may be your ticket to survival.

Symptoms:

Swelling in the breast/chest area.

Pain in the breast and/or nipple.

Nipples being pulled inward.

Sensitive skin, redness, thickening or puckering of the upper chest/breast area.

Discharge not associated with breast-feeding.

A lump or lumps in breast area and/or under the armpit.

There are different forms of breast cancer from non-invasive to metastatic and from common to rare.

Unfortunately, we all know someone or know of someone who has had cancer.

A group of talented, generous authors has recently published a Box Set, and will use all the proceeds as a donation to help one of our own.

Late to Love, a Second Chance Romance Anthology
#TeamPink4Teri

Purchase: ASIN [B09BW6KCFJ](#)

Website: books2read.com/b/bMwPP7

For more information about Breast Cancer, please visit:
BreastCancer.org

The heart knows
it's never
too late to
fall in love again.

All proceeds donated to:
#TeamPink4Teri



ASIN [B09BW6KCFJ](#)

This month's spotlight is on...

Pam Binder

Pam Binder is an award-winning New York Times, USA Today and Amazon bestselling author based in suburban Seattle. She has eleven novels and seven novellas to her credit. Drawn to Celtic legends and anything Irish or Scottish, the prolific author blends historical events, characters, and myths into her young adult, romance, historical, time travel, contemporary and fantasy fiction.

Pam is president of the Pacific Northwest Writers Association and annually chairs the group's Pacific Northwest Writers Conference. Devoted to helping aspiring authors succeed, she teaches two year-long courses, "Write Your Story" and "After the First Draft." She also presents frequently at reader, writer, and library conventions. Among her many honors is RT Book Reviews' Lifetime Achievement Award.

AdC: *How many different genres do you write?*

P.B.: Four genres: Romance, Time Travel, Young Adult, and Fantasy.

AdC: *Tell us about the type of characters you love to write about.*

P.B.: I love to write about second chances and redemption.

AdC: *Do you have a new book or series?*

P.B.: Yes. I'm writing for "The Wild Rose Christmas Book" series. My title is *Gingerbread Knight*, which will be released in November 2021.

AdC: *Favorite quote?*

P.B.: "Fortune Favors the Bold."

AdC: *What do you do when you just don't feel like writing?*

P.B.: I love to travel and explore.

AdC: *There's a lot of controversy going around about how authors shouldn't write about things they've never experienced, i.e. if you're not trans, gay, an addict, etc. don't write a character like that...what's your take on that?*

P.B.: If you are interested in writing about things you've never experienced, research, research, research. Then when you've done your research, seek out people



who are experts in the field and make sure you have been accurate. If you still feel uncomfortable, or are concerned in any way, don't do it. Listen to your inner editor at all times.



A heart-warming holiday story of hope, forgotten dreams, and the magic of Christmas.

PamBinder.com
@PamBinder183

Lovers Convention in December that I'm planning to attend.

AdC: *Many indie authors don't get their books edited by professionals. What advice would you give them?*

P.B.: Not getting a book edited is like taking bread out before it is cooked. The end result is a gooey mess.

AdC: *What do you do to go beyond your comfort zone when it comes to writing and life?*

P.B.: I always try new things in my writing. For example, I've never written a western, and when a series from my publisher was advertised, I decided to dive in. I think trying new things in your writing, and in life, keeps the fresh ideas flowing. In life, I like to explore places I've never seen.

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

P.B.: Most conventions are still virtual, but there is a Book

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

P.B.: Keep writing. That advice was given to me when I first started, and it holds true today. I really believe that the only difference between a published author and an unpublished author is that the unpublished author stopped writing.

Please give us the following contact information:

PamBinder.com

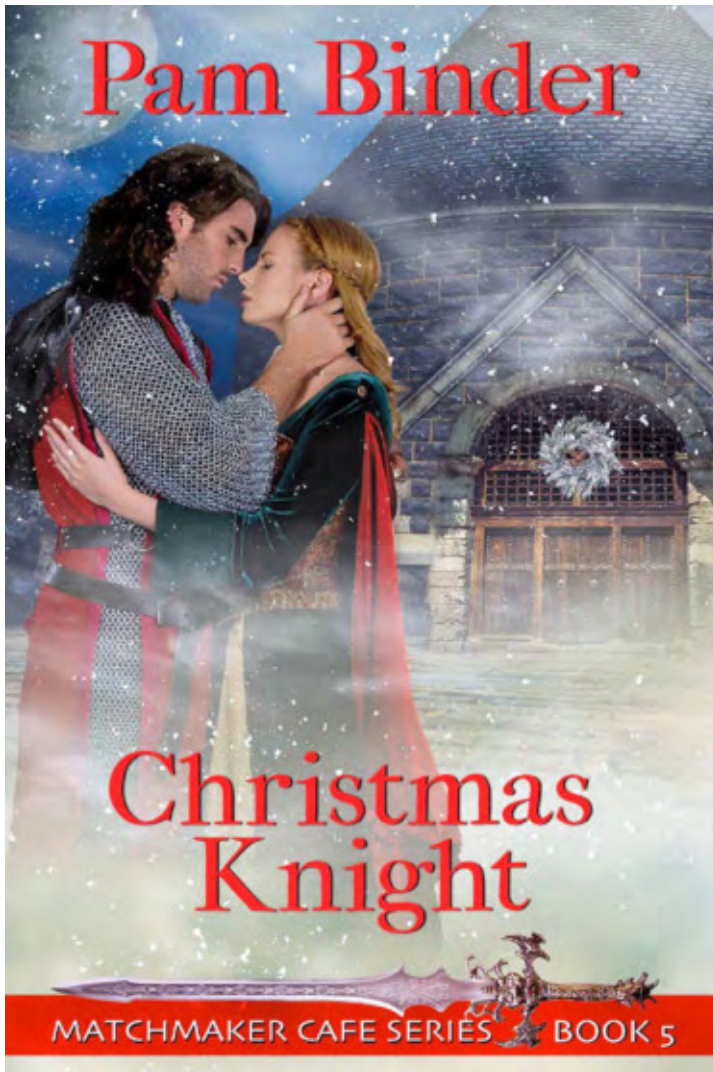
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An Affaire de Coeur



Sneak Peek



Christmas Deadline

by Pam Binder

Holly Lane and English mystery author Noel Atteberry agreed to co-author a book, to help expand the readership for both writers. But late in the book they've reached an impasse. Holly insists on her trademark happy ending, but Noel wants the couple to die in a fiery explosion. At their publisher's suggestion, Holly flies to England to work with Noel in person, in hopes of breaking the deadlock

in time to meet their deadline.

Working side-by-side in Noel's English manor, Holly and Noel feel the same heat of attraction as their fictional hero and heroine. But still there's no agreement on that story ending. If they don't finish their book in time, they'll lose the advance they both need to help their families. Will Holly and Noel manage to write a happily-ever-after for their fictional couple—and themselves—by their Christmas deadline?

He looked up and cocked an eyebrow. "I have a few questions."

She swallowed and took a sip of tea. "Awesome. I'm open to any suggestions. I wrote this very late last night."

He nodded, stacking together the papers she'd written. "I have an orchestration question."

"Orchestration? But the characters are making love."

He cocked his head. "An editor once told me that fight scenes and sex scenes are similar. All the body parts need to be moving in the right way. She suggested a writer act out a scene whenever possible."

She looked in the direction of the kitchen to make sure Jarvis and Clara weren't about to make a surprise entrance. She lowered her voice. "I wrote a sex scene."

"Yes, you did." And you're suggesting we act it out?"

"Consider it research."



SEPTEMBER IS

OVARIAN CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Orlando Reads Books August Event

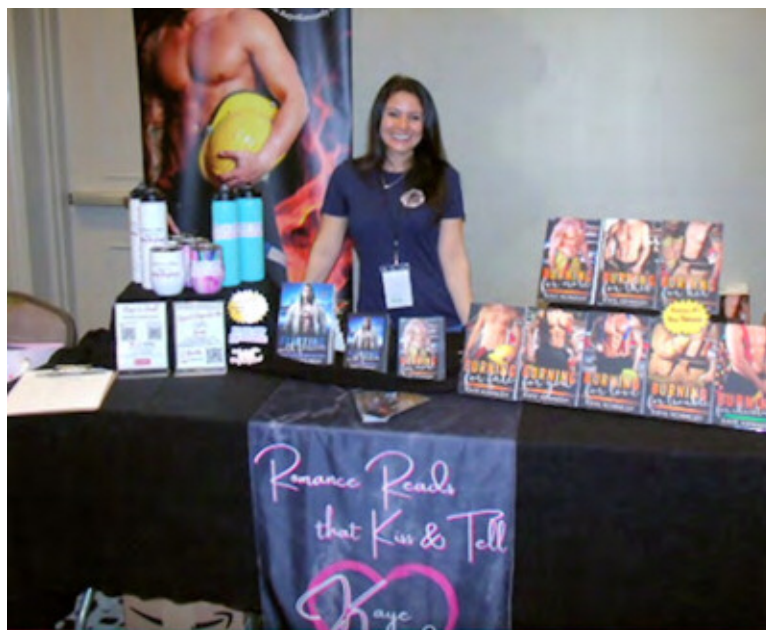
August 26th through the 29th was a fantastic event hosted by Mandie Stevens. The first two days were focused on multiple, and very informative, workshops for authors, along with some extra relaxation and fun events in the evenings.

Special events and parties were set aside for author and readers during the event.

Of course, we couldn't forget the wonderful book-signing event on Saturday!



Hostess, Mandie Stevens



Kaye Kennedy



Gina Ferguson



Candace Colt

His Majesty's Hidden Heir Princesses by Royal Decree Book 2



The prince is in
for a shocking
revelation...



ASIN:
B08XMM2YHY
ISBN:
978-1335568106

LucyMonroe.com
@LucyMonroe

TAKE A BREAK!

TRY TO FIND THESE

HIDDEN WORDS

TRICK OR TREAT

**CANDY
COSTIMES**

GOBINS

SKELETONS

GHOULS

MONSTERS

**PUMPKINS
WITCHES**

GHOSTS

BOO

SPIDERS

Trick or Treat



Answers on page 35

P U Z Z L E R

These are things/events you can expect to see in the Fall!

Across

1. Pigskin season.
5. November's flower.
7. Drink made of #18. Down
9. Topaz is the birth stone for this month.
10. National _____ Day (book writers).
13. October 31st is _____.
17. _____ Friday--big sale day in November.
19. Mexico's Day of the _____.
20. September's blue stone.
23. October's birth stone
25. Time when the sun is directly over the equator.
26. All _____ Day--November 1st.
27. MLB's championship--World _____.
28. Night of fireworks that occurs in the U.K.
29. One of September's birth flowers.
31. Lincoln gave this most famous address in November.

Down

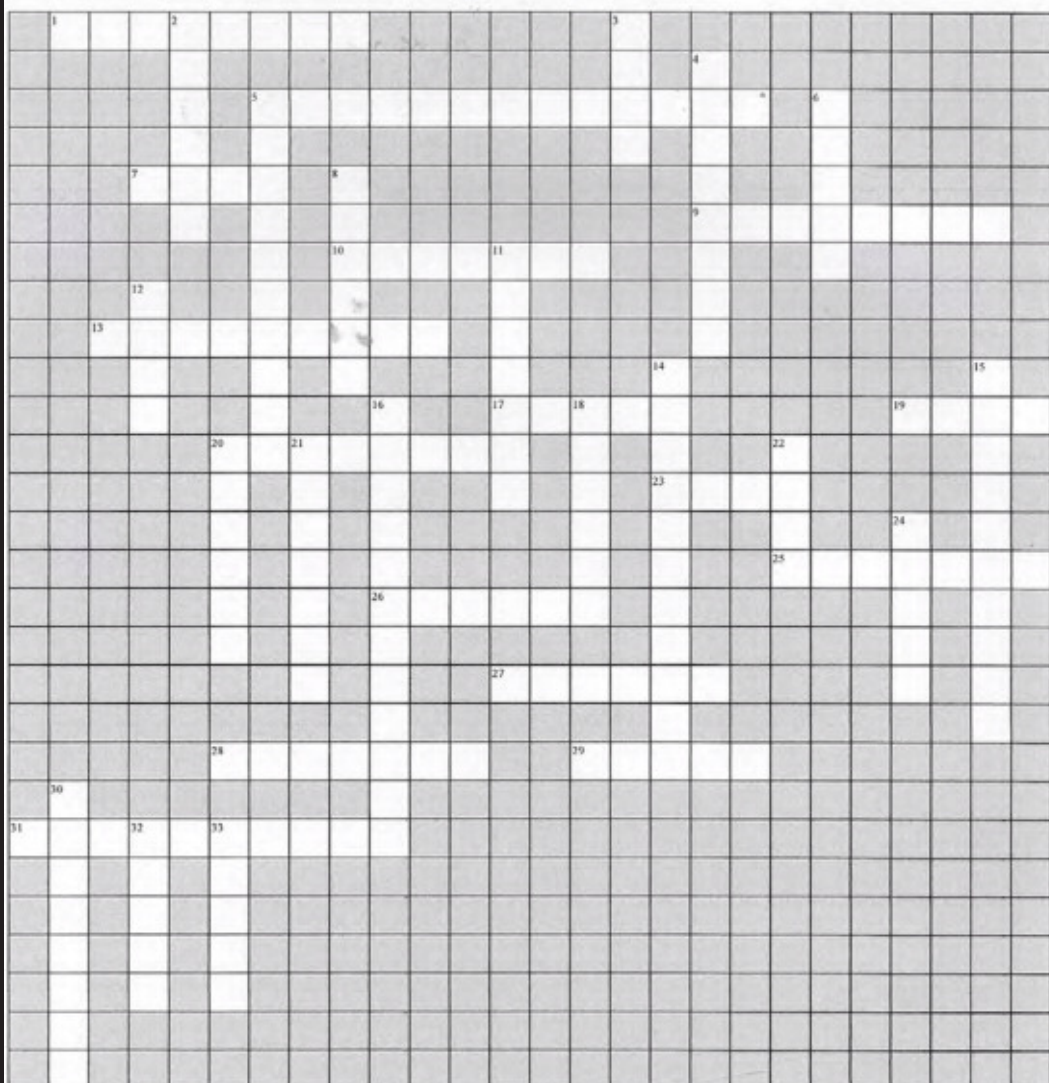
2. Favorite meat on #16 Down.
3. The last of the Tennis Big 4 is the NY _____.
4. Fourth Saturday of November--Support your local small _____.
5. Horn of Plenty.
6. Grab your electronic device. It's _____ Monday.
8. New England's changing the color of the _____.
11. Marigold and Cosmos are the birth flowers for this month.
12. Ghana's Festival of _____. (similar to sweet potatoes.)
14. This holiday originated in Munich, Germany.
15. _____ Admission Day, state of Hollywood, L.A. and the Golden

Gate Bridge.

16. Fourth Thursday of November
18. MacIntosh, Granny Smith, Galas, Winesap, Delicious are all _____.
20. Back to _____ (Maybe)
21. Flavor and spice from this squash are prevalent in this season.
22. Last full moon of the summer.
24. Drink made from #18 Down.
30. November 11th, the day to honor our military.
32. _____ or treat!
33. The lady picks the dance partner on _____ Hawkins's Day.

Answers on page 33

Expect this in the Fall!





Contemporary Romance Reviews

Her Renegade Cowboy

Lora Leigh

St. Martin's Press

Trade Paperback

978-1250252012

★★★★1/2

Lilly Donovan leaned on the corral fence at her cousin's ranch ogling the perfect backside of Jacob's latest ranch hire. She and her sister Shay were definitely appreciative of the way he filled out those blue jeans. Lilly really appreciated these moments of "normalcy" in her life. She's been hiding out, in plain sight, in her hometown of Deer Haven, California. She had declined witness protection after testifying against her university psychology professor who had been her mentor, lover, then turned into a monster raping and killing his students. He had tried to rape Lilly, but she had escaped, turned him in and later testified against him. All of this had been done anonymously, per Lilly's wishes, so she didn't feel like she needed protection. Only her sister Shay and Jacob's wife Stella knew what had happened to her. Then, Graham Brisbee, along with two other convicts, escaped from Susanville prison, intent on extracting revenge from Lilly, the one who "got away." But even after being notified by the U.S. Marshals service that he had escaped, Lilly still refused protection. She refused to allow Graham the power of making her move away from everything and

everyone she loved and live in fear in some strange town. She could take care of herself.

U.S. Marshal Levi Roberts, an ex-Army Ranger with scars of his own, was sent in undercover to protect Lilly...in any way he could. The only problem was that the ranch where he was working as a ranch hand was owned by Lilly's cousin Jacob, an ex-Marine who brooked no employee of his messing around with any of the women in his family, including Lilly. Jacob was aware that something had happened to Lilly while she was at the university and she had chosen to come home to finish her studies online, but that was all he knew. But that was enough. Lilly had been hurt and Jacob vowed that no one would ever hurt her again. And that included his latest hire, Levi Roberts, who was showing a little too much interest. But Lilly was an adult and Jacob could only do so much until Lilly showed she needed help. Levi had picked up on Lilly's interest and pursued that interest heavily. What better way to protect her without her knowing, than to go out with her? But what he didn't count on was that Lilly was his soulmate, the one person who could calm his soul, and he vowed that absolutely no one, including Graham, would ever hurt her again. But how could he protect her when she stubbornly refused help from anyone?

Her Renegade Cowboy is a smoking hot, sexy romance that looks into the psyche of two tortured souls who need each other. She's fighting off debilitating fear while trying to keep safe from a psychopath. He's suffering from childhood traumas that make him want to protect everyone.

Contemporaries

Ms. Leigh has created two loving people who find each other during the most traumatic of times and come through better on the other side. The only reason this reviewer did not give this five stars was the constant tiresome reminder from the heroine how she couldn't put anybody else in danger and her insistence on doing everything alone. But if you can look past that, this is an excellent, sexy read that you won't want to put down.

Lani Roberts

The Lights of Sugarberry Cove

Heather Webber

Forge Books

E-book

978-1250774637

★★★★ 1/2

Sadie Way Scott has been on the road recording people's stories and recipes until a fateful accident eight years ago. Her life was miraculously saved by the famed magic of the lake. Since then, she has never been the same. Home is a place of painful memories that she just wants to avoid as much as possible. Her mother's heart attack brings her home and gives her a second chance to reconnect to her family, including her sister Leala Clare, who is struggling with a widening gap between herself and her husband. Can a little hometown magic and time together help to heal broken family bonds?

The Lights of Sugarberry Cove is a charming magical realism novel set in small-town Alabama. The characters are well developed and endearing in all their imperfections. The point of view shifts between the two sisters is an ingenious device that allows the reader to experience the book from their very different vantage points. Local color and authentic portrayals of the often rocky interpersonal dynamics within a family invest readers in this story. Regrettably, the romance seems to take a back seat in an otherwise fully dimensional tale.

Danielle Hill

Ravens in the Rain (A Noir Love Story)

Christie & Jeff Santo

BookBaby

Hardcover

978-1098369675

★★★★★



She walked into the casino with the ever-present hope that something good would come her way. It had to; she was at the bottom of her "hope" chest and desperately needed a place to stay for the night. She knew she could always go back to Doug's, but that was her last choice, right above a shelter.

Pru had been couch surfing for years. It seemed like the only luck she had was bad luck; so she never wanted to impose on her "friends" any longer than necessary. When she spotted the old cowboy drop a hundred-dollar bill on the floor at the blackjack table, she felt no compunction about taking a few steps, covering the bill with her foot while dropping her purse, and coming up a hundred dollars richer. As she glides onto the stool next to Cowboy Boots and places her bet, all he can see is her exotic beauty and, after placing his bet, that both of them have finally won a hand. She IS good luck!

He noticed her the moment she walked in. How could he not? With her long, black silky hair, legs up to her ears even without the stilettos and the little black dress that truly covered not much, every red-blooded male in the room had noticed her. He knew he didn't stand a chance but was willing to try. Horribly pockmarked from acne as a youth, he was the only son of an Oscar-winning movie idol whose movies still played even after his death. He mostly tried to keep his scarred face (and body) hidden from view but had decided to venture out this night to see if his luck would change. As the old cowboy decided to give it up for the night, Carney slid into his seat next to Pru. As she turned and gave him a pleasant smile, he was astonished to see that there was no expression of distaste or recoil from his ugliness, just a sincere sad smile. And, just like that, Carney was in love.

This reviewer has never been a fan of noir, whether films or novels, so this was my first time reading something of this genre. And, I must admit, *Ravens in the Rain*, was very well-written and held my interest more than any noir film has done in the past. Carney and Pru are both lost souls with nothing to look forward to in their futures. As their paths cross and intertwine, they discover that, together, Lady Luck becomes their friend. But they both have secret past lives that they are reluctant to share with each other until a murder on their doorstep changes their cat and mouse game. A fascinating and unique read for first time authors Christie and Jeff Santo. Well done and hope there are plans for another one!

Lani Roberts

Recipe for a Homecoming

Sabrina York

Harlequin Special Edition

Paperback

978-1335408143

★★★★★



"It was a beautiful thing surrendering to love... there was such peace in it."

After surviving an abusive marriage, Veronica James is returning to her hometown to help care for her grandmother. The comfort she finds in the familiarity of her Gram's bookshop as well as catching up with childhood friends is exactly what she's needed. So, when she bumps into her first love, Mark Stirling, she begins to wonder if she could possibly find love again and what harm could possibly come from agreeing to test the waters by being friends with benefits. But when Mark starts to want more and Roni's past comes looking for her, these friends to lovers are going to have to decide if they are ready to put all their cards on the table and take a leap of faith or fold and walk away.

Dear Reader, Sabrina York's romances are so heartfelt, and I'm so in love with this series! This installment to her "Stirling Ranch" series shows no matter how broken one may feel, there is healing strength in being accepted unconditionally. "Anything is possible if you just don't give up..."

Loved and highly recommend!

Sharing what I love,

Veronica

When Sparks Fly

Helena Hunting

St. Martin's Griffin

Trade Paperback

978-1250624703

★★★★★



Avery Spark and Declan McCormick, have been best friends since college. After graduation, they moved in together. There has never been any sort of romance between them. Oh, they both realize the other is attractive, but it's always been purely platonic.

One night Avery goes on a date and Declan is shocked to find himself upset. To take his mind off these confusing feelings, Declan gets drunk and brings a girl home. The next morning, he's too hungover to keep his promise to drive Avery to an important business meeting. Feeling betrayed, she leaves to drive several hours in the rain on bald tires. The last thing Avery remembers is a pickup in her mirror weaving in and out of traffic.

Avery wakes up in the hospital barely able to move. Her right arm is in a cast past the elbow, and her left leg is in a cast from her foot to the top of her thigh. She's lucky to be alive.

When Avery's released from the hospital, Declan says he'll take care of her. Neither of them realizes just how much care Avery is going to need. Declan is a great nurse. He takes care of all her needs. Well, all but one.

As the weeks pass Avery becomes more and more horny. She's never gone for more than a couple of days without masturbating. But with her right hand in a cast, Avery can't take care of herself. It's a problem Declan's happy to help with. It starts out as one friend helping out another. But soon their feelings begin to change. They have to decide. Is the chance of finding a soulmate worth the risk of losing a best friend?

Warning: This book contains vulgar language and graphic sex. Nonetheless, it's a really fun book.

Sheila Griffin



Historical Romance Reviews

The Highlander's Pirate Lass (The Brothers of Wolf Isle #2)

Heather McCollum

Entangled

E-book

978-1649371188

★★★★★



"I want him always. I want no one else."

Beckett Macquarie and his brothers are committed to rebuilding their ancestral home on Wolf Isle. Cursed for over 100 years, they won't find it an easy endeavor, but with hard work, they have faith it can be done. While his brothers are working on rebuilding their clan, Beck is determined to bring justice against the bloodthirsty pirate Jandean, and builds a ship to set sail to do that very thing. But fate steps in, and Beck is placed in the path of a beautiful siren, one who had escaped the clutches of Jandean when she was a child and is just as ruthless in her quest for revenge. The more time Beck spends with this pirate lass, the more he realizes he has to come to terms with his feelings. Will the bond they are

forming be strong enough to finally break his family's curse?

Eliza Wentworth watched her family be butchered in front of her at the young age of 12 by the infamous pirate Jandean. Luckily, she was rescued by privateer Captain John and was raised and treated like one of the crew and loved like a daughter. When she is left on an isle while Captain John seeks out the whereabouts of Jandean, she comes across a brawny highlander, Beckett Macquarie. Never one to be shy about what she wants, Eliza pursues Beck with a passion like she's never felt before. Could this be love?

Once again, Heather McCollum has weaved a funtastical tale full of smexxy highlanders, wicked pirates, and family curses! From start to finish *The Highlander's Pirate Lass* is a romance that's impossible to put down! Can't wait for the next installment and highly recommend! *Sharing what I love,*

Veronica

Historicals

Kissing Under the Mistletoe

Suzanne Enoch, Amelia Grey and Anna Bennett

St. Martin's Press

E-book

978-1250797445

☆☆☆☆

Kissing Under the Mistletoe celebrates Christmas holiday romance Regency historical style. In "Great Scot" Suzanne Enoch showcases a chance for love between a widower architect, Brennan Andrews, and Jane Bansil, a firmly on-the-shelf companion as the large, rowdy MacTaggart family congregates in the Scotland highlands.

In Amelia Grey's "Christmas at Dewberry Hollow," Gate, the Duke of Notsgrave's grandson, and Isabelle Reed, an English countryside noblewoman innkeeper, are brought together out of love and duty to their families, only to discover an irresistible bond together, in spite of the time limit on their happiness.

Anna Bennett's "My Mistletoe Beau" finds Eva Tiding, the daughter of a widowed viscount, and Jack Hardwick, The Earl of Frostbough, at odds due to their parents' past troubled connections agreeing to a fake courtship in exchange for returning something of high sentimental value.

Readers will cherish the time spent with the couples in this trio of atmospheric and steamy short romance stories. Enoch's story is a breath of fresh air, a story about two quiet people normally overlooked in a romance story and their beautiful relationship. Grey's hero's evolution from a rich nobleman with no real purpose in life to a devoted man who is willing to sacrifice all for his beloved is sigh-worthy. But Bennett's outing steals the show with a couple who goes from near-constant verbal sparring to a deep love bond in a believable and utterly ravishing way. Fans of holiday romance will get three different but all enjoyable kinds of stories to enjoy in *Kissing Under the Mistletoe*.

Danielle Hill

When a Duke Loves a Governess

Olivia Drake

St. Martin's Press

E-book

978-1250174505

☆☆☆☆

Tessa James has scrimped and saved in the hopes of opening her own hat making shop. When she hears that the new Duke of Carlin seeks a governess for his unruly daughter, she applies, hoping that working for a duke will give her the opportunity to search for her highborn father so that she can ask for a loan to open her shop.

Guy Whitby, recently returned from his world travels and overwhelmed with his new ducal role, is skeptical of a young, pretty woman having experience enough as a governess, but she proves herself, forming a bond with his motherless daughter. Guy can't help being attracted to Tessa, but he has no intention of marrying again and knows that only a cad would seduce his employee. But his heart isn't listening. Is a future together possible?

When a Duke Loves a Governess is an enjoyable Regency romance. The scenes of Tessa bonding with young Sophy, helping father and daughter connect, are the spotlight. The developing relationship between Tessa and Guy is sweet and believable. They spend time with each other and connect on all levels. Tessa is an endearing heroine, quick witted, determined, and practical. Guy is a very sweet guy, honorable, and strong but vulnerable in his insecurities as a father. While the romance satisfies, the suspense felt underdeveloped. More time could have been spent developing that part of the story. Despite that, *When a Duke Loves a Governess* will appeal to historical romance readers.

Danielle Hill

Paranormal Romance Reviews



Layla

Colleen Hoover

Montlake

Kindle Edition

B085ZZFKBV

☆☆☆1/2

"Perhaps what we desire can sometimes be so strong it overpowers our fate."

Leeds is a musician and song writer stuck playing in a band that is slowly killing the muse inside him. It's yet another wedding they are performing, and Leeds is beginning to wish he was anywhere else but playing the same songs in front of drunken guests. Then, he sees the girl dancing like no one is watching and most certainly not to the beat of their music. This girl, this beautiful girl with a passion for life, catches his eye, his heart, and suddenly his world is turned upside down.

Leeds and Layla embark on a whirlwind affair neither

wishes to end at the end of the night. So, what started out as a one-night stand turns into Layla moving in with Leeds where they become inseparable—until tragedy strikes these lovers down.

Can true love pass from one life to the next? Do our souls recognize their other half? How far are you willing to go to save the one you love or to be with the one you love? These are questions Leeds and Layla will face as they work towards overcoming a tragic event in their lives, one that will cause them to question everything they believe in.

Colleen Hoover's *Layla* is a difficult romance to review in that if a spoiler is revealed, the mystery behind the romance is potentially ruined for the reader. So, I will leave it to you, Dear Reader, to suspend what you believe is reality, and keep an open mind to the "what if's" of finding your soul mate. *Layla* is an interesting story with a bizarre love triangle I'd recommend to fans of this genre.

Sharing what I love,
Veronica



Bring Her Home (Boyle & Keneally #1)

S.A. Dunphy

Bookouture

Digital

978-1800196445

★★★★

“The Devil reached out of the darkness and called to him...the time of darkness was almost upon him...the Dance of the Dead was about to begin...”

Criminal behaviorist Jessie Boyle has been called to the scene of a murder...one that has personal ramifications. Needing to take a break, she heads to Ireland where she, once again, finds herself in the middle of a kidnapping linked to a series of cold case murders. The police commissioner forms a small task force to investigate, and Jessie is paired up with Detective Seamus Keneally. Together they work feverishly against the timeline the kidnapper has set, but one of their sources is a deadly incarcerated murderer who hints of a serial killer tied to Jessie's past, and Jessie soon learns that not everything is what it seems and that the past has a way of catching up to

everyone...

S.A. Dunphy is a new to me author, and I was totally enthralled with this story! While I did get bogged down a wee bit with so much history on the mythology weaved into the mystery, I did enjoy the banter between the characters and how everything unfolded as they got closer and closer to finding the truth behind the kidnapping. Looking forward to reading future installments to this series! Highly recommend to fans of crime thrillers!

*Sharing what I love,
Veronica*

Dark Ride Deception (Nostalgia City Mysteries Book 4)

Mark S. Bacon

Archer & Clark Publishing

E-book

B098G9CKJK

★★★ 1/2

Tom Wyrick is a genius who works for Nostalgia City theme park. He has developed AI software so

Mysteries

advanced there is no way of knowing what it will be able to accomplish. Unfortunately, Tom has disappeared, taking his research with him. Tom's boss wants Lyle Deming, a former cop and current park employee, to find him quickly and quietly. Did Tom sell the technology to the highest bidder, or has he been kidnapped?

Kate Sorensen, Lyle's girlfriend, also works at Nostalgia City. She's busy wrangling the cast and crew of a movie being shot at the park. They run into problems before filming even begins. The original male lead has to drop out at the last minute. His replacement is Cory "Psycho" Sievers. The last time he worked with supporting actor, Julian Russo, Cory threatened to kill Julian. But Cory is clean now. He promises there won't be any problems. As the shoot begins, one disaster follows another, culminating in Julian's death. Did Julian kill himself as the police believe, or did Cory finally snap and kill the old man? Kate intends to find out.

This is a continuation of a series that can be read alone. The lack of details of the futuristic theme park rides was a disappointment. It made this just another mystery, and not a particularly interesting one at that.

Sheila Griffin

The Girl Upstairs

Georgina Lees

One More Chapter

Kindle Edition

978-0008485412

☆☆☆1/2

"Memories bite...little pockets of time that we'll never have again and that's what makes them so painful, not just the moments when it was good, but the moments I can never change..."

Suzie has a new upstairs neighbor, Emily. The floors between the flat are not soundproof, and Suzie can hear every step Emily takes...every nuance of her day or evening routine...so much so that Suzie has come to know Emily quite well, even if they've never actually met. But Suzie is living in a world of darkness...one where memories are plaguing her mind and the noises above are beginning to crush against her...suffocating her...and they have to stop... but at what price?

When Emily suddenly goes missing, Suzie finds that perhaps she may have known her neighbor better than anyone. When the police stop investigating her disappearance, Suzie convinces herself that finding Emily may help her atone for the guilt she's been living with since her own world was shattered. With each puzzle piece Suzie

puts together retracing Emily's last days before vanishing, she slowly discovers curiosity can be a killer.

Reader, this is a sad and depressing tale of two women who are fighting their own demons in different ways. If only they would have stopped and helped one another, perhaps their stories would have ended differently. This is a train wreck of a mystery that will keep you turning the pages if only to discover what will become of poor Suzie, and will she find Emily, the girl no one seems to care is missing.

Enjoyed and would recommend to fans of this genre!

Sharing what I love,

Veronica

The Hidden

Melanie Golding

Crooked Lane Books

Kindle Edition

B082H24WV4

☆☆☆☆

"Forgiveness wasn't about the other person...It was about drawing a line under something and moving on."

A toddler is found wondering around the seaside in a quaint little village with no parent in sight. Social services is called and the police arrive just as a frantic mother swoops up the little girl calling her Momma Bee. She explains that her little one dashed off and that she is so thankful for them finding her baby girl. Mother and child are released from custody, and no further questions asked...

It's Christmas Eve, and DS Joanna Harper is called to the scene where a body has been found in a bathtub full of water. Thinking this is an accident, most of the officers dismiss foul play. When DS Harper looks closely at the body, the head wound proves not to be an accident...and this is no dead body. The man is still alive!

As DS Harper starts fitting the pieces together of the man found left for dead, she discovers that her estranged daughter may be connected to the crime scene as well as to the mysterious abandonment of a child found along the seaside village...

WOW! There is a lot, and I mean a lot, going on in this story! Melanie Golding has woven several points of view around the love between mother and child and how far one is willing to go to protect each other. Toss in the injured man, the folklore of the Selkies, and you're in for a page turner of an adventure! Enjoyed and would recommend!

Sharing what I love,

Veronica

Mysteries

Mocha She Wrote

Ellie Alexander

Saint Martin's Press

E-book

978-1250789433

★★★★

Pastry chef and business owner, Juliet "Jules" Capshaw is looking forward to a summer of possibilities. Her bakery, ice cream shop and winery are all thriving, and she has reconciled with her husband, Carlos. But then, she has to solve a murder very close to home. Her employee Andy is the main suspect when a judge in the Barista Cup contest is murdered and the weapon appears to be the Spiced Honey Latte that Andy made for him. Jules uses her well-honed sleuthing skills to investigate the suspects in the competition to determine who has the biggest ax to grind with the judge who was known for his mean reviews and spiteful temperament. Along the way, delicious food is made.

Mocha She Wrote is tailor made for foodies who love sumptuous, mouthwatering descriptions of food and drink. The beautiful scenery of small town Oregon is also a feast for the senses. The characters are well drawn with Alexander's gift for writing vivid imagery. The mystery is on the straightforward side, leaving the reader plenty of breadcrumbs along the way, without making it too easy to guess whodunnit. This is a book for cozy mystery readers who like the atmosphere just as much as the mystery. Readers will find themselves hungry and thirsty when they finish the book, so it's a good thing that there are recipes included.

Danielle Hill

Trick or Treat (DS Imogen Grey #7)

Katerina Diamond

Avon Books UK

E-book

978-0008484095

★★★★

"This was all like a surreal nightmare he couldn't quite get his head round, but then, life had been like that. Maybe he died that night in the van. Maybe this was hell."

Justin is royally peeved that he caught his girlfriend cheating on him. While he knows that she was "slumming it" being with him, he's determined to teach her a lesson. Knowing she's on holiday, Justin breaks into her home and begins vandalizing it. When he sees a white van pull up and snatch the little boy he just helped with his bike,

Secrets to the Grave (Detective Meredith Somerset #1)

Steve Frech

HQ Digital

E-book

978-0008471026

★★★★



"We all wear masks, and the time comes when we cannot remove them without removing some of our own skin."—André Berthiaume

Detective Meredith Somerset has been called to the scene of a body found face down in the street. The body is of a young teen age girl who apparently was strangled... a young girl found in an upper middle class subdivision... a young girl who bears a striking resemblance to her sister who disappeared so many years ago. "I miss you, Meredith..." the voice of her sister is so clear in her mind, but Meredith has to shake off her haunted past in order to find justice for the murder of this young victim.

While investigating the scene, Detective Somerset finds it highly unusual that no one has come out of their homes to ask what is going on. No one is peeking out their windows. No one is out walking their dog. It's as if Willow Lane is completely devoid of anyone but the emergency response personnel and the dead body in the street. Going door to door inquiring of the residents if they saw or heard anything brings up more questions than answers, and Detective Somerset's investigative senses are all atingle. Someone knows what happened to this young girl, and she will uncover the secrets of the Willow Lane community...one way or another...

How well do you know your neighbors? Would you know if a killer lived amongst you? *Secrets to the Grave* is an intriguing thriller that will keep readers guessing as to what exactly everyone is hiding. While the sleuth in you may unravel fragments of the mystery, there is still that wee bit you never quite guess! I've enjoyed Steve Frech's other works, and this may be his best yet! Looking forward to the next installment to this new series! Loved and highly recommend!

Sharing what I love,

Veronica

Justin quickly snaps a picture of the kidnappers with his phone. But what to do with it? If he shows the police, they will arrest him for breaking and entering. If he doesn't, what will happen to the boy?

After an anonymous tip to the police, DS Imogen Grey has been called in to check out a potential kidnapping of a six-year-old boy in an upper-class neighborhood. After

meeting the parents who claim there has been no foul play, DS Grey suspects someone is not telling the truth. But what type of parent could possibly cause harm to their own child?

Six-year-old Marcus Carlyle has been warned never to talk to strangers, so when a teenage boy approaches him offering to help with his bike, Marcus is skeptical. But what little Marcus doesn't realize is that this stranger will become tangled in a deadly web—he could either become Marcus' executioner or his savior. "Trick or Treat."

When I requested this book, I did not realize it was part of a series. The author actually did a good job of making this installment read stand-alone. I enjoyed and would recommend this very emotional crime thriller! I will also be going back to read the previous books in the series!

Sharing what I love,
Veronica

Stranded

Sarah Goodwin

Avon Books UK

E-book

978-0008467371

★★★★★



"I have learned that there is no justice, there is only survival and the victor tells the story—if it was to be survival of the fittest, I would play to win."

If the world was ending, how would you survive? How do you picture the end? How do you resolve conflict? These are questions posed to contestants vying for a spot on a reality show where eight strangers are left on Buidsearch Island for a year. The contestants are allowed to bring items they feel could be useful, and are provided a few cache boxes of supplies. There are no hosts or camera crews following them around filming their exploits. They each wear a solar powered camera, and the only other occupants on the island are two employees of the show to be contacted only for life-or-death emergency situations.

So, what happens when food rations run low and tempers run high? Do you have what it takes to survive when the most dangerous element on the island is your fellow man?

WOW! This story is absolutely impossible to put down once you start! It is both dark and disturbing as we are told the story of a woman forced to match wits against the other occupants on the island in an ultimate game of survival. By the last page, readers will be left wondering if you could live to tell the tale of being *Stranded*.

One of my fav reads of the year! Loved and highly recommend!

Sharing what I love,
Veronica

Mysteries

Swindler's Revenge (A Karina Cardinal Mystery Book #5)

Ellen Butler

Power to the Pen

978-1734365016

★★★★★



"Lucy, you've got some 'splaining to do!"—
Ricky Ricardo

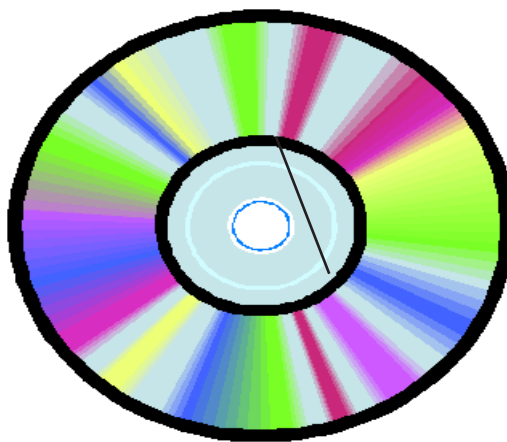
While spending a lazy morning binge watching HGTV, Karina Cardinal (KC to her friends) is startled out of her TV coma to the sounds of pounding fists at her door. She is shocked to see it's the men in black (aka the FBI) storming inside her apartment brandishing a warrant and demanding to know where she's hiding her boyfriend, FBI agent Mike Finnegan. After setting the guys in suits straight that Mike is a very ex-boyfriend and he's not hiding inside her closet, under the bed or behind the couch, KC's mind starts to wonder what could possibly make the FBI think one of their own was taking bribes?

While they had ended the affair on friendly terms, KC knows that Mike's in trouble, and she'll do whatever she can to help. Though Mike may not have always approved of her uncanny ability to find trouble, KC knows he's going to be in need of one of her hair-brained schemes to uncover who's out to frame him. As always, once KC starts down the rabbit hole to unravel a mystery, there's no turning back. She just has to hope her luck isn't about to run out.

If you've been following the misadventures of KC and the Silverthorne crew, then you know nothing will stop Karina once she sets her mind to helping a friend in need! Each installment of the "Karina Cardinal" series just keeps getting better! Absolutely loved and wish I could give more than 5 stars!

Reader's Note: The author has written these mysteries to be stand alone, and there are no cliffhangers. But to fully enjoy, I'd recommend reading in order.

Sharing what I love,
Veronica



AUDIO BOOK REVIEWS

The Dating Dare

Jayci Lee

Performed by Natalie Naudus

Macmillan Audio

CD's

B08KSGGRF8

★★★★★

The Dating Dare, book two in Jayci Lee's "A Sweet Mess" series, is a standalone romance focusing on Tara Park, Aubrey's best friend from *A Sweet Mess*, and Seth Kim, Landon's brother.

Tara prefers life with her overprotective Korean family and avoids serious relationships. She doesn't have one-night stands with strangers either. She is, however, tempted by Seth, who is both a stranger and connected to family—complication personified. After Aubrey's and Landon's wedding, her resistance is low, and Tara agrees to have drinks with Seth. A game of Truth and Dare ensues, and she accepts Seth's dare to go on four dates with him that hit roadblocks just as they get interesting. Then, they embark on a no-strings, short-term fling. After all, it can't go anywhere, both are too smart to fall for each other, and he's leaving for Paris in a month to start a new job.

Intelligent, beautiful, and funny, Tara puts Seth in his place. Seth is charming, smooth, and handsome with a more than a healthy ego. Still bearing the scars and emotional baggage of the past, both worked hard to become secure and confident.



Seth and Tara will win readers over from the first scene with interactions that are sexy, brimming with so much pining and layered with hidden depths of emotion they work so hard to keep contained. Lee deftly develops and explores their connection with dialogue and love scenes that are steamy though not detailed. She brilliantly balances moments of emotional intensity with lighter moments of humor and sweetness.

Natalie Naudus' narration captures all the fiery chemistry, humor, and emotion of Lee's novel, bringing it vividly to life. She gives life to and differentiates between each character, using cadence, tone, accents, and dialects that capture the essence of the character. Her narration gives perfect voice to each character, but her narration for Seth stands out.

Dating Dare is a sweet, funny, emotional, sexy romance that will captivate readers' hearts and imaginations from the opening scene. It sparkles with flirty/snarky banter, sizzling chemistry, and an unexpected and emotional connection between likable and excellently developed characters.

Lacy Hill

Sweethand (Island Bites #1)

N.G. Peltier

Narrated by Chrystal Bethell

Dreamscape Media, LLC

Cd's

B08W7KMOV2K

★★★★★

Sweethand is an enemies-to-lovers novel written in alternating POVs focusing on Cherrisse, a pastry chef, and Keiran, a music producer. Keiran has part of the same cir-

Dangerous Beauty (Dangerous Beauty #1)

J.T. Geissinger

Narrated by Aiden Snow and Lidia Dornet

Brilliance Audio

CD's

978-1721362318

★★★★★



Dangerous Beauty, Book 1 in J.T. Geissinger's "Dangerous Beauty" romantic suspense trilogy, is a dark novel written in dual POV and narrated by Aiden Snow and Lidia Dorn and not a standalone romance.

Mysterious, handsome, and former Special Ops soldier Nasir is assigned to follow Evalina, a Russian mobster's runaway wife. He is to report on her activities in Mexico. Naz breaks his one rule of not getting too close when she's in danger. Drawn to her beauty and wanting to be close to her, he cannot stay away from her. Eva is a beautiful, intelligent, Russian dancer, clearly running from something terrible. Eva is nothing like the rich, spoiled woman he expects when assigned to watch her. Escaping a life and past she wants to forget, Eva fled to the island to make a new life for herself where no one could find her. After being rescued by the stranger, an ex-cop on vacation, she feels safe with him and trusts him despite herself. Growing closer, their connection becomes perilous because Eva and Naz keep secrets that can get them killed.

Geissinger's detailed descriptions and skillfully developed suspense and characters—even while their motives and backstory are a mystery—quickly suck you into the story. The connection between Eva and Naz is intensely emotional and sexual. Their interactions are sweet, sexy, and so entertaining, as they verbally spar/banter with the feel of classic cinema. While the novel has an overall noir feel to it.

Dornet's and Snow's dual POV narration perfectly brings Geissinger's novel to life. Capturing the intensity and emotion that flows between these two, as well as their witty repartee, Dornet and Snow put you in the heart of every scene they share. The voices for each character are unique, reflecting moods, tones, emotions, dialects, and accents (i.e., Russian). Dornet's voice for Naz is excellent, as is her Russian accent. At times Snow's narration for Naz is a little over the top, but overall, it captures his intense personality. Dark romantic suspense lovers should love this romantic, sexy, sweet, and suspenseful novel.

Lacy Hill

Audio Book Reviews

they'll be thrown together for all the wedding activities, especially after the bride and groom ask them to plan a joint shower as maid of honor and best man. Long denied feelings come roaring to the surface, shaking their preconceived notions about themselves and each other. Their simmering chemistry is clear to anyone with eyes, and soon enough, their one-upmanship, banter, and snark lead to unexpected passion and hidden feelings coming to light. *Sweethand* is a novel that perfectly fits audio.

Despite Cherisse's determination to focus on expanding her pastry chef business and taking a break from dating—especially musicians—after an embarrassing public showdown with her cheating ex-boyfriend, her mom keeps meddling and setting her up on blind dates. Despite the fact that Cherisse is talented, vivacious, and independent, she needs time to heal. Instead, she humors her mother, going on dates anyway. Determined to be his own man, Kieran has returned to Trinidad and produces music with his business partner instead of working with his father. He prefers to avoid the spotlight and medi, and make the kind of music he wants. Kieran is an enigma, stubborn, arrogant, opinionated, but also generous, kind. And, Kieran has always secretly liked Cherisse, despite himself.

Chrystal Bethell's narration is enthusiastic and flavorful. Unfortunately, her narration for all the characters, particularly the main characters, is fairly indistinguishable, except for a few times. Better narration like this for Cherisse, Keiran, and their circle of friends would have taken *Sweethand* to another level. Nevertheless, her exuberant narration delightfully brings the characters and story to life for an entertaining and fun listen, despite a halting start, once Bethell gets into the flow of the novel.

The characters are sexy, funny, and slightly angsty, featuring a charming cast of complex, diverse, well-drawn characters who will remind readers of their friends and family, *Sweethand* is a thoroughly entertaining romance that is hard to put down. With colorful descriptions, Peltier explores themes of familial pressure, self-esteem, trust, friendship, and how the preconceived ideas we form of a person rarely capture the whole of who that person is set against a vibrant backdrop of Trinidadian culture and island life. Readers cannot help but be drawn into the world and lives of these characters and won't be ready for the audiobook to end.

Lacy Hill

cle of friends on the island of Trinidad, and has irritated and sparred with Cherisse since childhood. After Cherisse's sister and Keiran's close friend announce they are getting married, they must figure out how to get along as adults. Inevitably

Audio Book Reviews

The Silenced (Krewe of Hunters #15)

Heather Graham

Narrated by Phil Gigante

Brilliance Audio

Cd's

978-1491505069

☆☆☆ 1/2

The Silenced by Heather Graham, *Book 15* of her "Krewe of Hunters" series, is engagingly narrated by Phil Gigante. Meg Murray's childhood friend Lara Mayhew disappears on her way home after leaving Meg a message telling her she's going home to Richmond, Virginia, because she's disillusioned. Meg is convinced she may have been kidnapped when Lara, a congressman's media assistant, never arrives. When bodies of women who look like Lara are found in nearby rivers, the possibility she's the victim of a serial killer becomes all too real, and Meg is not ready to accept it.

Meg's first assignment is with the FBI's unit of paranormal investigators, the Krewe of Hunters. Working with the Krewe is Meg's dream job after starting out as a Richmond police officer. Her partner is special agent Matt Bosworth, who has worked with the Krewe for eight months. An FBI agent for several years after first serving with the military, Matt is intelligent, thoughtful but also sensitive.

At first, they are at odds because Matt, confused about Meg's assignment with the Krewe straight out of the Academy, is frustrated at being saddled with a rookie agent. But they quickly discover they share more in common than differences, and both want to find Lara and stop a serial killer. While searching for Lara, retracing the paths she traveled back home—paths Lara and Meg had taken many times before—their reluctant partnership shifts to friendship and then to romance.

Gigante's voice suits the novel's procedural mystery feel with his somber, "just the facts, Ma'am" delivery and tone, not so much the romance elements. His narration offers distinctive voices for the novel's diverse characters, capturing their mannerisms, moods/states of mind, dialects, and accents i.e., southern/ethnic characters. While Gigante's choice of voice for Matt is perfect, Meg's voice is grating and the worst of all the female voices used. It's a curious choice, as her voice is central to the novel.

The novel's best parts are the mystery and suspenseful story elements. Although romance takes a back seat, Matt's and Meg's relationship is sweet, balancing out the story's darker aspects. With a nicely developed diverse cast of characters and an intriguing mystery, the *Silenced* is a thrilling, creepy, paranormal romance aptly narrated by Phil Gigante.

Lacy

Unchained: Blood Bond Saga Volume 1

Helen Hardt

Narrated by John Lane and Lauren Rowe

Brilliance Audio

Compact Discs

978-1978639621

☆☆

Unchained is part one of Helen Hardt's erotic vampire love story between Dante Gabriel and Erin Hamilton. Vampire Dante escapes from the female vampire who had been holding him captive for her blood slave. Starving for blood, he goes to the ER blood bank, encountering ER nurse Erin. She should turn in the gorgeous man she discovers vandalizing the blood bank but doesn't because she is driven by a strange connection and unfamiliar emotions to protect him.

Dante, captivated by Erin's scent, shares this connection. Unable to resist their sizzling chemistry, they can't stay away from each other. Dante, however, haunted by his captivity and driven by blood hunger, fears he will be unable to control his need for Erin's blood if they become involved. So, begins the Dante/Erin love saga, further complicated by a secret Erin's hiding and Dante's kidnapper lurking in the shadows.

Unchained gets off to a thrilling start with an equally intriguing story and vampire mythology. Unfortunately, all too soon, the suspense and thrills become overshadowed by the needlessly fruitless drama Dante engages Erin in. Overly melodramatic, repetitive, and nonsensical, *Unchained* is frustrating because neither the story nor characters progress or develop near their potential. It's aggravating to see Dante repeating the same behaviors over and over throughout the novel. He doesn't seem to learn from his experiences or mistakes, continually refusing to try and break out of his arrested adolescence. Unfortunately, Erin is not much better, barely able to put more than one thought together at a time to think about the recent events in her life to figure out what's going on around her. All either of them can think about is having sex with each other.

Narrators Lane and Rowe offer perfect narration to capture the novel's soapy melodrama. Lane's voice for Dante flows from confusion to seduction to rage and the edge of madness effortlessly, at times easily over the top, but a pitch-perfect match for Dante's mental state. Rowe captures Dante's personality and issues well also. They skillfully provide distinctive voices for each character that accurately reflect the mood and emotion of each scene and capture the nuances of the character's personalities.

Unchained is a disappointing listen because it had the potential to be an entertaining erotic and paranormal romance. Readers interested in erotic vampire romance who are not too concerned with the development and progression of story and characters, however, may enjoy the explicitly steamy scenes between the lovelorn couple.

Lacy Hill

Affaire de Coeur

Booty from the Other Genre



Bloodless (Pendergast #20)

Preston & Child

Grand Central Publishing

Kindle Edition

B08PV5J8BT

★★★★★



"The world according to Pendergast was a far stranger place than he'd ever imagined."

In the 20th installment to the "Pendergast" series and the first in a trilogy, Preston and Child take the reader on a wildly entertaining ride starting with the infamous unsolved D.B. Cooper hijacking of Flight 305. If that wasn't intriguing enough, suddenly bodies are turning up in Savannah completely drained of their blood. What could the D.B. Cooper cold case possibly have in common with the bizarre murders of bloodless bodies being found and linked with the legend of the Savannah Vampire? Nothing and everything which is exactly why FBI Special Agent Pendergast has been called in to solve what appears to be the unsolvable. Along with his ward, Constance, and unwilling FBI partner Coldmoon, Agent Pendergast has been put on the clock to solve the case quickly, but in the process, he could quite possibly lose what he holds most dear.

Welcome back Pendergast! Being an avid fan since the publication of *Relic*, I honestly didn't find this case too far fetched. On the contrary, it was refreshing to be taken back to the cases with the over-the-top element that has always, in my opinion, made these mysteries stand out from all the other crime/mystery thrillers on the shelf. If you are new to the series, go back to the beginning. Learn how Pendergast controls the scene with such finesse and sometimes lethal charm. Discover how he became Constance's ward, and how he un-

covered her secrets. Grow just as attached to these characters as those of us that have long loved this series! And yes, there is a cliffhanger at the end, but remember this is a trilogy, and we'll just have to wait out reading the next installment ever so impatiently.

This series is one of my all time favs, and I honestly can't recommend them enough!

*Sharing what I love,
Veronica*

Forgotten in Death

J. D. Robb

St. Martin's Press

Hardcover

978-1250272812

★★★★ 1/2

The year is 2061 and Homicide Lieutenant Eve Dallas, along with her partner, Detective Peabody, has started her day off with a murder. This day, she ended up with two murders with three victims, one of them a 32-week fetus. And to add to the complications, both murders were on construction sites--the first owned by her husband Roarke and the second owned by the uber-rich, old money Singer family with ties to Russian mobster Bardov. This was going to be a fun (not!) investigation.

Alva Quirk was the name of the first lady tossed into the dumpster on her husband's construction site. After determining that Roarke was not involved (he hadn't always been an upstanding citizen in his past life), she discovered that Alva was homeless and most folks around the construction site and the homeless camps knew who she was. She was nicknamed "CC" which stood for Concerned Citizen, and had a habit of watching people, especially at

Booty

night, and writing out tickets for their indiscretions. She gave out tickets for jaywalking, littering, theft, etc. and would confront the person doing the “crime” and explain what they had done wrong while “writing them up.” She also gave out origami birds and animals that she made, plus had a lifelong habit of writing down everything that she did or happened to her in little notebooks. Which is probably what got her killed. She was a woman down on her luck and Eve was determined that her death was going to be vindicated and she would not be forgotten.

Eve's second homicide was two bodies walled up in the base of a restaurant that was under construction over 40 years ago. She and her unborn child had been killed and dumped at the construction site to cover up the crime. Even being a 40 year-old crime scene, Eve was determined to discover who she was and why was she killed. She, too, would not be forgotten!

Forgotten in Death is a complex murder mystery that contains many twists, turns and unexpected complications thrown at the reader throughout the book. There are many characters involved that the reader has to keep track of, so may be a little confusing to first time readers of J.D. Robb's novels. But it is definitely worth it to keep reading because, as you get deeper into the mysteries, the characters and their involvement become clear and fascinating. J.D. Robb pulls the reader into the lives of the two adult victims to the point that you cry for their lives and cheer for Eve's persistence in getting them justice. This reviewer is not a fan of murder mysteries, but *Forgotten In Death* changed my mind! Fascinating read!

Lani Roberts

Her Perfect Life

Hank Phillippi Ryan

Tor Forge/Tom Doherty Associates

Hardcover 978-1250258885

E-Book 9781250258830

★★★★

Internationally famous Boston TV reporter Lily Atwater seems to have the perfect life. Her assistant, Greer Whitfield sees to her every need and makes sure Lily maintains the façade of perfection, aided by a nanny and a cadre of TV station employees. Lily and Greer should have known things were happening too easily when they received a string of useful story tips from the mysterious Mr. Smith.

Suddenly the elusive Mr. Smith transforms from an ally to a threat. What would happen if the fans who believe Lily is perfect discover that her seven-year-old daughter is the product of a brief fling with a married man? Or if they knew

Good as Dead

Susan Walter

Lake Union Publishing

Digital

978-1542029025

★★★★



*"Got a secret,
Can you keep it?
Swear this one you'll save.
Better lock it in your pocket,
Taking this one to the grave.
If I show you then I know you
Won't tell what I said.
'Cause two can keep a secret
If one of them is dead.
The Pierces (Pretty Little Liars)"*

What price can you put on silence? Holly Kendrick married her high school sweetheart, and together they've made a happy home for their daughter, Savannah, even if they were considered white trash poor. But this loving family is about to face a choice of conscience after Holly's husband is killed by a hit-and-run driver, and Holly is left with a shattered leg and a concussion.

Laid up in a hospital bed unconscious and in dire need of surgery, Holly has no idea that her teenage daughter is meeting with a “fixer,” a man who is promising to make all their dreams come true with the assurance of purchasing them a perfect home in an upper class neighborhood with excellent schools and more money than they could possibly spend. The cost? All they have to do is keep quiet—tell no one of their arrangement and say nothing about the vehicle that fled the scene. But what happens when guilt starts eating away at all the parties involved?

Told from alternating points of view with a “Then” and “Now” chapter sequence. *Good As Dead* is like nothing I've read before. A tale full of tragedy and second chances is created when the author weaves the characters through a series of events that build until they fall like dominos one after another. *“While you may be quick to judge when the last page is turned, stop and put yourself in their place. Take a long look in the mirror. What price would you pay to protect the ones you love?”*

Loved and highly recommend! This is one of those mystery/thrillers I'll be telling all my book peeps to read!

*Sharing what I love,
Veronica*

Booty

the shameful circumstances under which her older sister, Cassie, disappeared so many years ago?

This fast-paced story carries the reader through twists and turns of betrayal, secret identities, and serious danger before reaching a satisfying and surprising ending.

Hannah Rowan

The Orphan Witch

Paige Crutcher

St. Martin's Griffin

Trade Paperback

978-1250797377

☆☆☆ 1/2

Persephone May was abandoned when she was a baby. She was moved from one foster home to another. Persephone discovered that every time she looked someone in the eye, they harmed themselves. Persephone realized

she could never safely have a friend. Then Persephone met Hyacinth Ever. The women exchanged emails for over a year. Hyacinth invited Persephone to visit her.

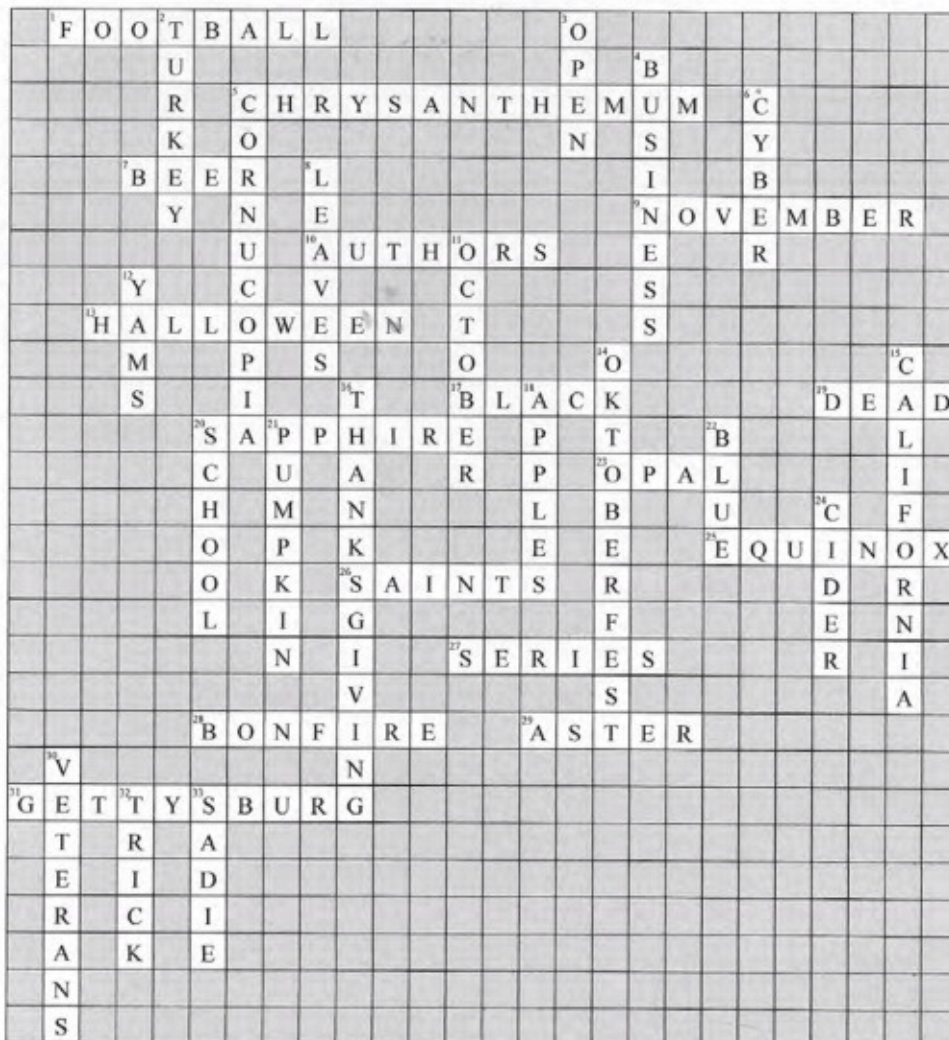
Persephone loses another job due to the harm that befalls her coworkers. She decides to accept Hyacinth's invitation. From the moment Persephone set foot on Wile Isle she feels magic welling up from it. Persephone feels like she's come home. Hyacinth and her sister Moira are witches and so is Persephone.

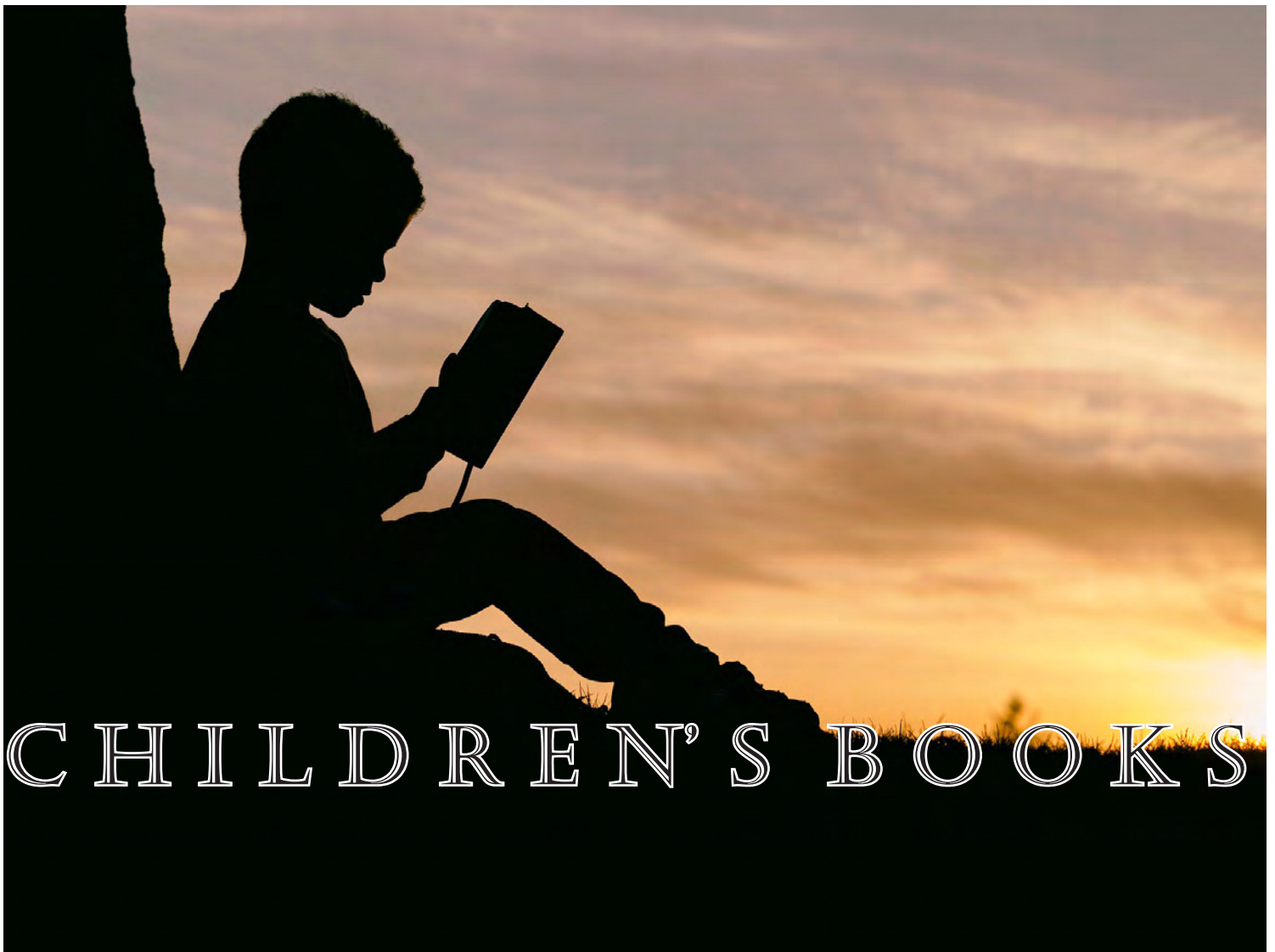
Hyacinth and Moira tell Persephone that the island is cursed. One of their ancestors had a vision that in one hundred years the curse might possibly be broken. The sisters believe that Persephone is the key to ending the curse, but she only has a few months to learn how to control her magic. If the curse isn't broken by Samhain, the island will be cursed forever.

This is an interesting story despite the confusing writing style. The part before the heroine arrives on the island is a page turner. It is after her arrival that the story becomes hard to follow. It's a very good first novel. This reviewer looks forward to reading future works by this talented author.

Sheila Griffin

Expect this in the Fall!





Christmas With Godiva

Anyeah Banks

Illustrated by Tanya Russits

Self Published

Hardcover

978-1735283708

★★★★ 1/2

Godiva is a Havanese puppy, one who's had questionable behavior throughout the year. He doesn't dwell on that, though, until he is confronted on Christmast Eve by the Big Man himself. It seems poor Godiva's behavior has wound him up on the "Naughty" list, and there's nothing he can do nor no one to convince Santa to put him on the "Nice" list but himself.

Christmas With Godiva is a delightful read, suitable for children of all ages. Didn't we all wonder sometime in our youth whether our naughty acts were going to catch up with us? The author's use of poetry threw this reviewer off in places. Nonetheless, the diverse characters—Santa and Godiva's human family—are people of color, expanding

the awareness of children who had not thought of diversity when it comes to Christmas and Santa. The illustrator used colors and drawings that brought life to the characters. Who wouldn't love Santa's striped socks? Kudos to both ladies for a wonderful book!

Mildred Burkett

Lou the Poo

Gasper

Writers Republic

Paperback

978-1637283295

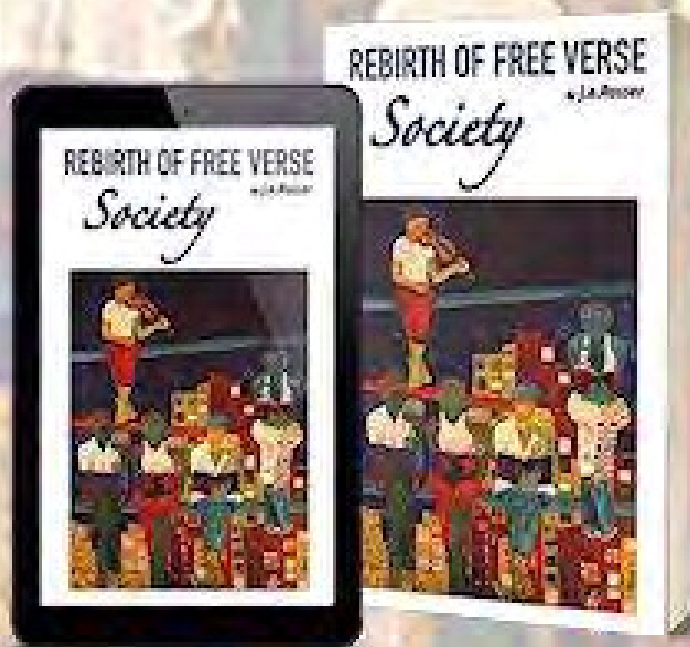
★★★★

Lou the Poo is a very helpful poo. The young boy in the story had too much candy, which caused some painful issues.

Lou the Poo explained why the boy was having problems, and gave him helpful advice on what he should and shouldn't eat.

This is a cute way of getting children to understand

Literary boundaries are transcended by the melding of poetry and journalism



This collection of poems captures three decades of social observations that illuminate how people, places, and history form identity.

j.e. Rosser

bodily functions.

A good read for first readers and for young toddlers.

Lauren Calder

Nature Ninjas

Kayla Klassen

Self published

Paperback

978-1777709402

★★★★

Riley and Milo are best friends who absolutely love nature and nature walks. Nature Ninjas is the special name they have given their animal friends who live in the woods near their house.

They don't just enjoy the wonderful creatures but love to explore the different plants and flowers along the way.

This is a fun story for children to read or have read to them.

Lauren Calder

Trick or Treat



