

March-April, 2021

# *Affaire de Coeur*

*Bringing You Honest Reviews Since 1980*

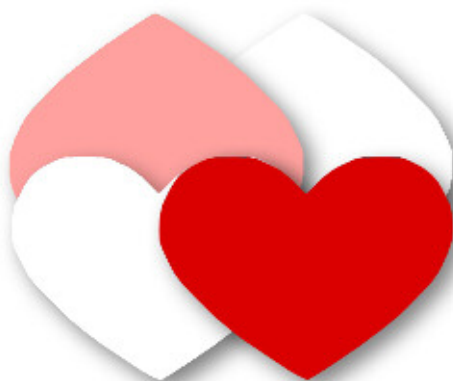
**Reviews!**

**Reviews!**

**Reviews!**



**Look What Spring Brought In—Two Hot Authors  
C.A. Szarek (l.) and Cathy McDavid (r.)**



# *Affaire de Coeur*

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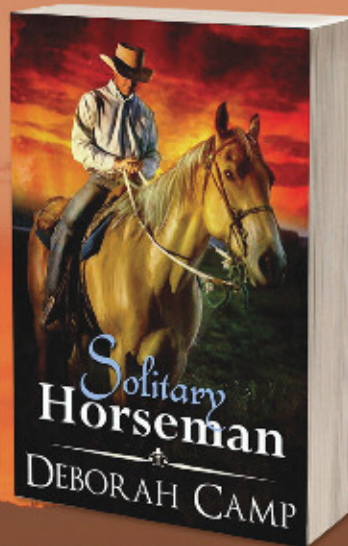
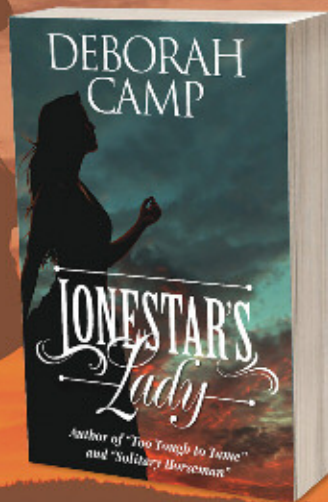
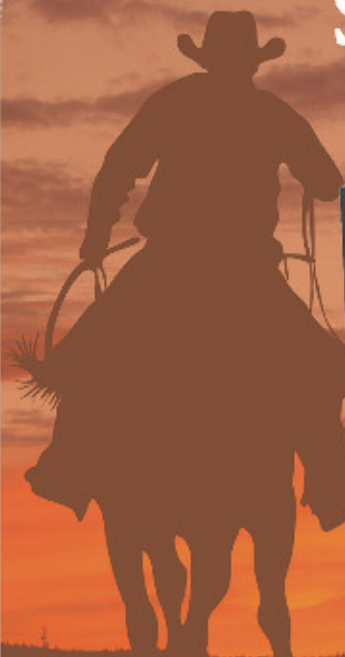
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# Stories as Beautiful and Spirited as America's Fabled West



*Read all of her western romances.  
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*Lonestar's Lady* ~~ Lonestar. His name fit him perfectly. It fed every fantasy that Gussie Horton had conjured about Indians and forbidden love. His neighbors whispered that he was a murdering half-breed, which was true. But Gussie believed in second chances, and more importantly, her heart told her to believe in Max Lonestar.

*Solitary Horseman* ~~ The Civil War is over but the battles continue. Brought together by bad luck and cruel twists of fate, Callum and Banner forge a partnership they hope will keep them afloat even as neighboring Texas ranchers go under and their land is snapped up by opportunists.

*Ropin' the Moon* ~~ He had tumbleweed in his blood, moving from one town to the next. Traveling to where there was trouble, he was hired to tame wild places with a fast draw and an iron will. Lacy knew that Dalton wouldn't be around long and she shouldn't be tempted by him. But like the moon, his pull on her was a natural, powerful force that she was helpless to resist.



# *Forced into Self-Publishing*

by Pamela Ackerson



Authors self publish for different reasons. It's not because it's easier to do so, but many feel backed into a literary corner when it comes to getting their book out.

Many feel "forced" into self publishings. Either it's choose that route or let your novel die on the vine.

"Forced" Right there. Those words immediately put warning lights up in my head.

Why?

Let's look at the numerous reasons why someone might choose to go this way. There's no doubt it can be risky. If you try to wing it on your own, without professional input, you will most likely not succeed.

There is also a difference between a well-known author who has decided to self-publish her next book, and a newbie dipping into the self-pub waters for the

first time. However, even with name recognition, success is not guaranteed. Despite that, some will take the plunge. Why?

Publishers won't publish the type of book I'm writing.

I don't want anyone changing my story.

My book doesn't need to be 'fixed'.

Publishers want me to write it their way.

It's my story. I'm doing it my way.

It takes too long. I want it out now.

They have a ridiculous long list of requirements.

Their rules and requirements take away from my story.

My story was written this way for a reason. I don't want them telling me that's not how it's done.

I want to write what I want, not what they want.

I'm not following their 'rules of writing'.

The problem with most authors who have mentioned the above complaints; their next step is to complain they're not selling any books.

There are many crucial reasons why publishers want books a specific way:

The biggest reason? Their way sells books!

They have been in business long enough to know what sells, and how to sell them.

If you wrote a novel/short story for your own personal pleasure and don't intend to sell it, then do it any way you like. Who cares?

It's for your pleasure.

If you want your story purchased by readers, there's a reason why publishers want books written a specific way. Listen to them. They know what they're doing. If you choose not to go with a publisher, mimic their business plans, but don't feel forced into self-publishing.

Finding the right publisher for your novel, whether it be non-fiction or fiction, is a must-do. If you write taboo or erotica, you don't want to submit your manuscript to someone who only publishes mainstream fiction. Finding the right fit for your manuscript can be challenging, but it is possible.

That said, self-publishing can be a moneymaker for the author if it's done correctly, and professionally.

# The Spotlight is On....

## Cathy McDavid

*Cathy McDavid has been penning Westerns for Harlequin since 2005. With over 50 titles, she spends her days writing stories about handsome cowboys riding the range, busting broncs, and sweeping gals off their feet—oops, no. Make that winning the hearts of feisty, independent women who give them a run for their money.*

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

**CMcD:** Currently, only one contemporary (western) romance. In the past, I've written romantic comedy, western historicals, and even a paranormal. A handful of those previous titles are available now.

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

**CMcD:** Who doesn't love a cowboy romance? That's my tag line, and what I most enjoy writing. Having lived in the country and owned horses most of my life, I suppose contemporary westerns are a natural fit. I often explore the challenges of modern relationships in my stories and what I call family drama: an illness or disability, parenting children, losing/gaining/changing jobs, recovering from a past trauma, to name a few.

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

**CMcD:** I do. Book two of my current "Wishing Well Springs" series, *How to Marry A Cowboy*, will be out April 1<sup>st</sup> at retailers and in Wal-Mart stores June 1<sup>st</sup>. Book three, *A Secret Christmas Wish*, is coming November 1<sup>st</sup> and the last book in the series, as yet unnamed, around mid-2022. Wishing Well Springs is a wedding barn and miniature western town that's at the center of each book.

**AdC:** *Favorite quote?*

**CMcD:** Favorite writing quote: *"If I waited for perfection, I would never write a word."*--Margaret Atwood

Favorite other quote: *"You can't reach out if your arms are crossed."*

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

**CMcD:** Marketing, and by that I mean the creative aspects of marketing. I write my monthly newsletter. Make graphics and excerpts for social media posts. Search for beautiful or funny or interesting pictures to use down the road. Read articles online for ideas or inspiration. I find that being creative in a way other than writing can sometimes unlock my brain and allow me to get back into the writing groove.



**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?*

**CMcD:** I write everyday about something I haven't experienced. I've never ridden a bucking bull. I've never lost my leg while serving as a Marine in the Middle East. I've never had breast cancer or been the mother of an autistic child. I've never been a wedding dress designer (my current heroine's profession). Come to think of it, I've never owned a wedding barn and miniature western town.

But I'm comfortable writing about these things and feel I can do them justice because I've experienced a part of them in my own life. I've attended many rodeos, studied the sport, and am acquainted with professional rodeo cowboys. I'm good friends with disabled individuals. My son is a former addict (six years sober now). I've been married in a unique wedding venue. I



# Who Doesn't Love a Cowboy Romance?



Coming in 2021

*How to Marry a Cowboy*  
and  
Book 3 of the  
Wishing Well  
Springs Series

CathyMcDavid.com  
@CathyMcDavid

have a close family member suffering from serious mental illness. I meticulously research, and that includes deep personal interviews, to enhance the authenticity.

However, I never attempt to write something I can't portray accurately or with appropriate sensitivity or that I don't feel I have enough personal knowledge to do the character(s) justice. I can't realistically portray, for instance, a Black or gay main character because I wouldn't be writing from a place of personal experience. I haven't been pulled over simply because of the color of my skin or been bullied in high school because of my sexual orientation. I can imagine, but my imagination is minor compared to reality.

That said, I wouldn't tell an author what they can or can't write about. The choice is theirs. When I've tackled difficult subjects that are beyond my immediate personal experience, such as the book where my heroine had a son with autism, I used a sensitivity reader. She helped enormously and made sure I not only got the facts right but the mother and son's emotions, thoughts, and responses to situations.

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

**CMcD:** Get your book professionally edited. At least have it professionally proofread. Readers are unforgiving when it comes to unedited books.

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

**CMcD:** Writing-wise, at least once a year, I attempt something completely different. Even if it winds up being just a few chapters. In 2020, I wrote my first ever inspirational romantic suspense. I'm currently playing around with a general fiction book that has a singular point of view throughout the entire story. It's amazing what a boost it gives my writing and my creativity, even when I go back to writing those cowboy contemporary romances!

Life-wise, I go beyond my comfort zone all the time in little ways. Big ways, too, like trying ziplining a few years ago (I'm scared to death of heights). Just this past Monday I reached out to a local film company with the hope of pitching one of my books. That was scary! And, no, they weren't interested. But, hey, I did it. And I learned something in the process.



# Sneak Peek

## *How to Marry a Cowboy*

By Cathy McDavid

### An Excerpt

"I'm not saying I can turn a former bucking horse into a kid's mount, no way. A Western pleasure or trail horse?" Channing shrugged. "Maybe. A cutting horse or penning horse? Naw. A therapy horse? No way. But if I wind up with a few extra pickup horses for the hands to ride, I'll be happy."

Kenna hesitated. "I'm going out on a limb here, but I assume you've tried riding some of these retired bucking horses?"

"I have. I got thrown. But I also think a couple of them showed potential and acted like they might respond to a bit."

She could hear the excitement in his voice and her own excitement blossomed in response. "Rehabilitating former bucking horses would be good publicity for the arena."

"I'm way ahead of you." He leaned closer. "I'd like to put on an exhibit at the arena."

"That could be your entertainment at the women's bull riding."

She also leaned in, and the air between them snapped, crackled and popped with anticipation. Kenna went still as his gaze traveled her face.

"Would you...?" He paused, his hand poised as if to touch her again.

*Do it, do it*, she thought. "Would I what?"

"Want to see the bucking horses? Work with me in rehabilitating them?"

She snapped up straight. "Yes! Are you kidding?"

"It could be dangerous." The corner of his mouth turned up.

"You just compared trick riding to bull riding."

He did reach for her then and, this time, instead of skimming his fingertips across her skin, he cradled her cheek. "I don't want anything to happen to you."

She closed her eyes for just a second, feeling the heat from his palm. "I'll be fine."

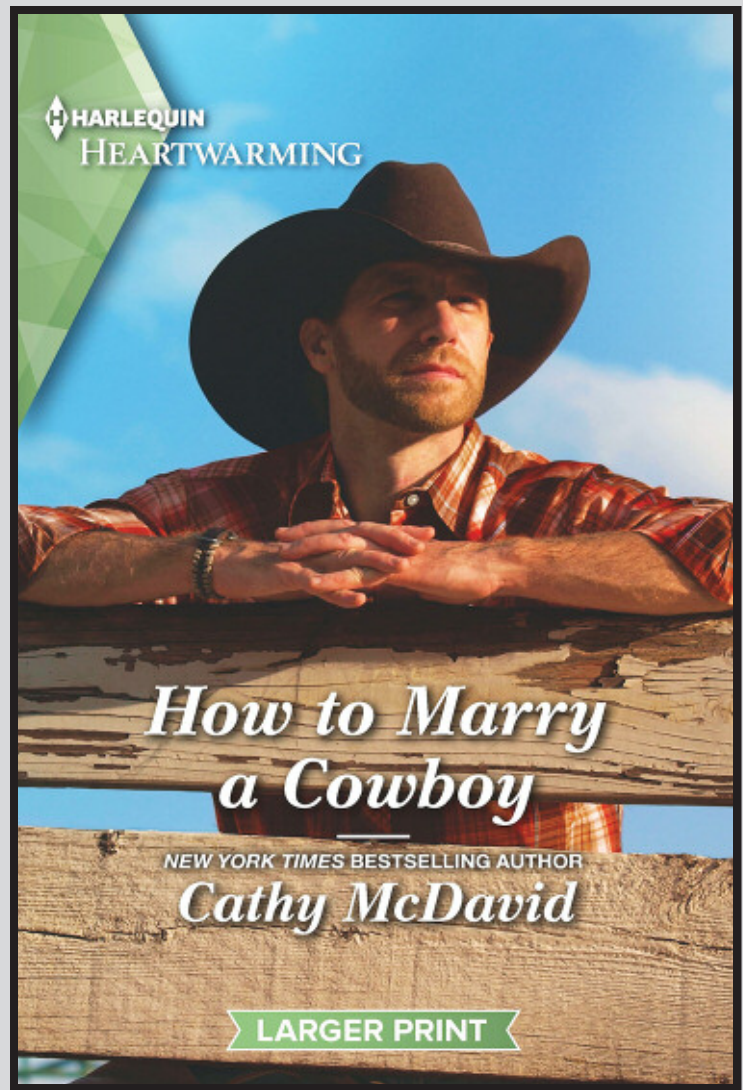
"I worry about you." He narrowed the distance separating them by another few inches.

Was he going to kiss her? If he did, how would she respond?

Kiss him back.

Not the smartest move. She knew it. He knew it, too, and the two of them stayed where they were, caught up in the spell the other cast.

Eventually, sadly, common sense prevailed. She took his hand in hers before gently pulling away. "This, um... We



shouldn't."

He didn't disagree, and her heart sank a little. Squeezing her fingers, he released her.

Spotlight continued

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

**CMcD:** I will as soon as the pandemic is over, and there are book signings and conventions to attend. I can't wait!

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

**CMcD:** Find your community and be active in it. There is nothing to keep you on this amazing journey like other authors. Whether you join a critique group or a writer's group or a professional organization, getting together regularly with your peeps will fill your well.

**Please give us the following contact information:**

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Twitter: [www.twitter.com/cathymcdavid](https://twitter.com/cathymcdavid)

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



# Romantic Traveling London

“England Swing Like a Pendulum Do”--Roger Miller

Well, not this week. They’ve lost a Royal, one who has been around forever--Prince Phillip, the man who never would be king but didn’t seem disturbed by that fact--Queen Elizabeth’s husband. To pay our tributes, we’ve settled on London, England’s capital, a place where, despite the bustling, standoffish crowds, is a place for romantic traveling.



*Ornate Buckingham Palace*



*Lion and Statue across from Buckingham  
Some people (like my daughter here), just have no respect.*

Long before we set a toe on English soil, we knew some of its history. My knowledge is steeped in the movies and supplemental reading. We all know how skewed the tale gets when Hollywood gets hold of it. This is my capsulized tale. The history may be a little convoluted, but there is enough truth to make it intriguing.

When it comes to British history, there are some indisputable facts: there was a woman, Eleanor of the Aquitaine, who left her French husband Louis VII, who also happened to be the King of France and with whom she birthed two daughters, for Henry Plantagenet, a man who had to be promoted from his low rank so he had enough status to marry her. Ain’t that love? Well, if she had not tried numerous times to kill Henry, we could call it that, but who’s to say she didn’t love him despite her numerous attempts to murder him and him having her imprisoned for 16 years? He probably provoked her with his affairs and younger women.

They had five sons (and three daughters) who were nothing short of pernicious. William died when he was three; so he was innocent. The rest of the boys all wanted to be the King of England. Let’s see; there’s the fighting Crusader, Richard the Lionhearted who was king for ten years. When he died, John became king, got the *Magna Carta* while allegedly fighting Robin Hood at the same time. John who may or may not have killed his young nephew Arthur (son of deceased Geoffrey and next in line for the throne) so he could be king; John lost Normandy to his rival Phillip of France, but barred from entering England while Richard was away, he joined forces with Phillip to fight Richard. (No one apparently told him Richard was a bad ass.) Poor Geoffrey II knew he wouldn’t be king. He wanted Anjou, a prize piece of land, and fought his brother for it until he died. You think your family is dysfunctional.

Then there are the Tudors. Love, true love--Henry VIII fell in love six times. No one told him where boys came from, so he kept getting married, and when said present wife presented him with a daughter, it was “off with her cheating head!” Not exactly. Catherine was annulled (though she gave birth to Bloody Mary, who ruled as queen for five years), Anne was beheaded though she gave birth to Elizabeth I who reigned for almost 50 years. Anne spent her last days



*Many a head rolled at the Tower of London*

and was beheaded at the Tower of London, a creepy must see on your London tour. Jane died in childbirth, and the boy she gave Henry did not live until adulthood. Anne of Cleves, deemed too ugly by Henry, was annulled. Catherine Howard was beheaded, the little cheat; Catherine Parr was his widow. So, after he died, the girls ruled. It would take Scotland Yard, a definite on your London tour, to figure how many laws Henry broke and whether he should have been beheaded or not.



*Where's Sherlock?*

Fast forward to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first thing you remember about England is that dreadful song you learned as a child: "London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down..." It didn't, and you can take a tour of it below it on the Thames in a boat or walk across it.

You board the tour boat that takes you up and down the Thames at their famous ferris wheel which is called the London Eye because it gives you a birds-eye view of London. It lights up beautifully at night, providing a carnival atmosphere. There are 40 cars on the wheel and it takes an hour to rotate completely. Either way is fun. Unfortunately, I was there during the day. So, the background on all of my pictures as you can see are clouds. After all, London is known for its rain

I'll bet the second thing you recall is Diana's mar-



*London Bridge*



riage to Prince Charles. Though Westminster Abbey is beautiful and Diana herself was breathtaking, I felt sorry for her, though I didn't know why. Later, when she said there were three people in their marriage, I admired her courage and her very huge heart for stepping out of Hyde Park, leaving Buckingham Palace and their Beefeaters and guards, and going to Africa to help children victimized by A.I.D.S. Though their lives (and even her death) were steeped in scandal, I didn't worry about her two boys because I knew she was teaching them the right way. They named a street after her. I guess





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that's better than nothing.

Now her boys are young men, each taking different routes in life with an interracial intolerance scandal nipping at the aristocratic heels of the occupants of Buckingham Palace. Prince Phillip is gone, leaving Elizabeth on her own for the first time in decades. At her age, she is still fighting scandals. As we have seen over the years --the Monarchy cannot possibly survive, though we know it will. They just need to take a lesson from the folks in *Bridgerton* who've made it an art form when it comes to surviving a scandal. Or, perhaps because of Prince Phillip's death, some reconciliation will take place.

Scandal or no there are so many other places to see while visiting. Harrah's is the largest department store I have ever seen. Of course, there is a scandal associated with the owner of Harrah's. It was his son who died with Diana in that car crash. Labeled a department store, it has almost everything--I even purchased a variety of candy and bottled water there.

The subway is fun, going to places I associated with old London. The food is not great I don't think we got our culinary skills from there But you can find a place like Hard

Rock Cafe, which has food that is not unfamiliar and consistent from one day to the next.

Please keep in mind that my visit was before Covid-19, and I am certain they are taking precautions and have altered operations as we have in the U.S. Check it out before you go. You don't want to get stuck in a quarantine. unable to go anywhere. Have fun and be safe.



Harrah's Department Store

# The Other Spotlight is On....

## 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!

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

**CAS:** I write a lot more than I have books out for, LOL! I am published in Epic/High Fantasy Romance, Romantic Suspense and Historical Fantasy (Scottish Highlander Time Travels), and I also write Paranormal and YA, but I don't have books out--yet.

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

**CAS:** Alpha males and strong females. They're interesting and flawed and have cool jobs. They usually introduce themselves to me.

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

**CAS:** Life has been crazy and taken me away from writing more than I like, so my latest release has been out for a while. However, that's the best thing about books, they're forever.

*King of Hearts* is the first book of 4, about the Giovanni family, who own a casino on the strip in Las Vegas. Gio is a broody detective that hooks back up with an old flame, Maddie, who's a US Marshall. It's a bit steamier than my other books, because they really like each other, or love to hate each other (at least, at first!).

**AdC:** *Favorite quote?*

**CAS:** From author Anne McCaffrey:

*"Who wills--Can  
Who tries--Does  
Who loves--Lives"*

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

**CAS:** I never "don't feel like writing." LOL! I always have to steal my time to write. However, I do watch way too much TV.



**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?*

**CAS:** Personally, I don't have any gay characters at this moment in time, but my characters always "introduce" themselves to me, so if one tells me he/she is LBGT, that would be fine with me. I don't have plans for any at this moment in time, but it could happen. Love is love, and I personally love to read M/M, and as we know, a lot of gay romance writers





are not gay. I feel like authors can write what they want/feel, and their own take on their characters/subject matters are on them. There are ways to be authentic. I have never been a doctor or an FBI agent, or even a kindergarten teacher, yet I have several characters who are. That's what research is for. They do say, "write what you know" and I disagree with that on its face. It makes our worlds too small. We can research and tell a good story.

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

**CAS:** Editing is even MORE important than writing. I wouldn't publish a pamphlet without getting it edited. Editing is also the most expensive cost an indie author will spend before the book comes out, but it's so very important. There are editors of all costs out there, and most (if not all) will do a sample edit so you can see how they work. I am an editor, and I work with authors; payment plans when necessary. It's possible. My advice: Get your book professionally edited or don't publish it. It will save you negative reviews or issues with vendors.

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

**CAS:** As long as everything goes smoothly (and they have it), I will be at Writers on River, in East Peoria, IL, July 17, 2021.

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

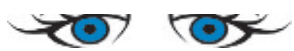
**CAS:** Never ever give up.

*Please give us the following contact information:*

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Twitter: [www.twitter.com/caszarek](https://www.twitter.com/caszarek)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/caszarekca@caszarek](https://www.facebook.com/caszarekca@caszarek).



## Sneak Peek

### An Excerpt

"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 Olin-sky.

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

## King of Hearts

by C. A. Szarek



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 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. "Bull."

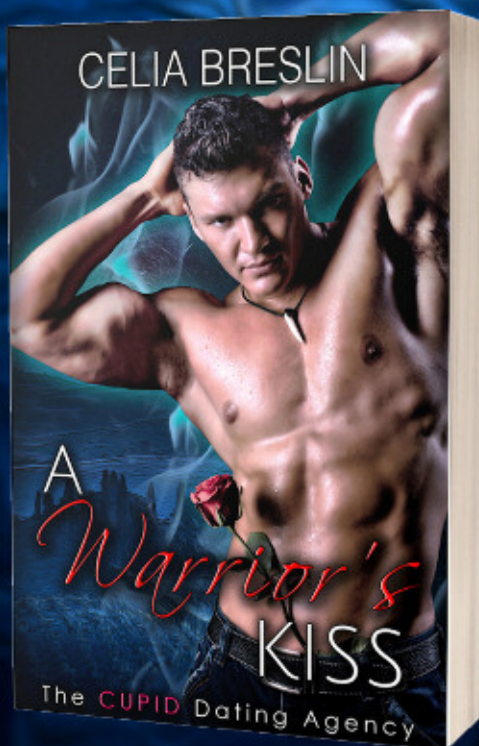
Maddie shuddered and wanted to rub her arm, but couldn't move when he looked at her like that.

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

"It doesn't matter how many



## Pulse-Pounding Love on the Wild Side



She's chasing  
her dream.

He's after her heart.

CeliaBreslin.com @CeliaBreslin

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 taskforce. 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.

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 taskforce? Olin-sky 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 taskforce.

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."

C.

A.

S



# The Wonderful World of Book Events

## Book Obsessed Babes

March 19-21, 2021

Yes! Book Obsessed Babes, aka BOBASE, began the 2021 year with a fantastic book event. Three cheers to Taira Wilds and her wonderful assistants.

The long-awaited event began with an Olde St. Augustine Trolley tour. Fun for all. Friday evening was the Meet and Greet, and an incredible 80s Party. Photography Credit to Kim Gauger.



*Hostess, Tiara Wilds*



*Meet and Greet the Participants*

Saturday was the long awaited and anticipated Book-Signing Event. Woohoo! Fantastic readers and Fantastic Authors!



*Author, Robbie Cox*



*Author, Debra Parmley*

Saturday evening we had a farewell – see you again soon, party.





## G.O.A.T.S.

### Across

6. This African-American genius was a mathematician at NASA.
9. Greatest athlete of all time.
11. The first woman in American to receive a medical degree.
14. Won 88 times on the LPGA Tour and six Majors.
18. Comedienne, actress, and producer of the 50's who was the first female head of a major Hollywood studio.
19. Loss of sight and hearing proved to be no obstacle for this woman.
20. This Madame was a famous French scientist who was the first woman to win the Nobel Prize.
21. First woman to be a Justice in the U.S. Supreme Court.
23. Mexican portrait artist Kahlo y Calderon.
26. Famous folk artist who began to paint at the age of 78.
28. This Hepburn has won more Oscars than any actor.
31. The first woman to co-anchor a network news program.
32. African-American actress who was the first of her race to win the Oscar.
34. As president of Hewlett Packard, she was the first woman to lead a Fortune Top-20 company.
35. Considered one of the best women's basketball coaches ever!
36. "I do everything the man does, only backwards and in high heels!"

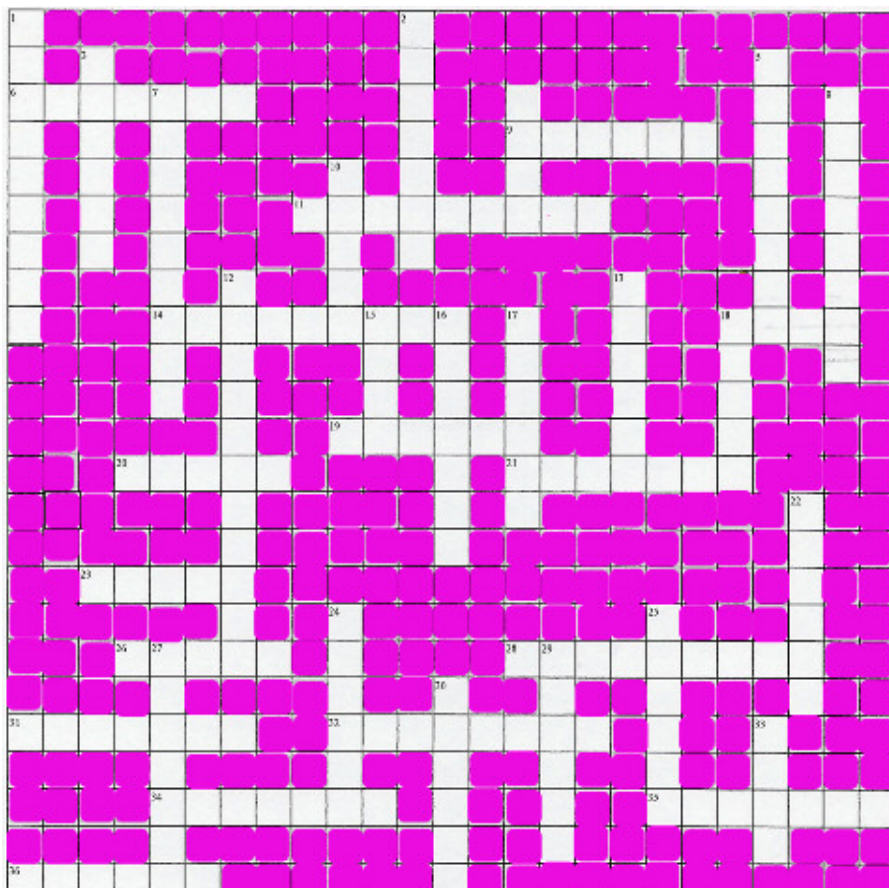
### Down

1. "Ain't I a woman?"
2. Entertainer who has won the most Grammy Awards.
3. This producer brought us *Grey's Anatomy*, *Scandal*, *How to Get Away With Murder*, and *Bridgerton*.
4. She represented women in the work force during WWII.
5. Together with Masters, \_\_\_\_\_ Johnson developed the human sexual response cycle.
7. Shoshone woman who, at 16, assisted Lewis and Clark.
8. The first African-American woman in the U.S. Congress.
10. The fastest woman of all time.
12. The first nurse.
13. African-American actor who became the

Duchess of Sussex.

15. Astronaut who was the first American woman in space.
16. First Native American to be appointed a U.S. cabinet post (Secretary of Interior).
17. Filmmaker who is considered Queen of romantic comedy films--*When Harry Met Sally*.
18. African-American female CEO of Mozilla Firefox.
22. The first woman computer programmer.
24. Abolitionist and conductor of the Underground Railroad.
25. Many firsts for her--first African-American, first Asian, first female vice president.
27. From the Southwest, she was known for her paintings of enlarged flowers, New Mexico landscape, and NY skyscrapers.
29. Queen of Soul!
30. The scientist behind the development of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine.
33. Considered one of the best female soccer players of all time.

Answers on page 26





## *Contemporary Romance Reviews*

### **A Cowboy Kind of Love (Heart of Texas #6)**

*Donna Grant*

**St. Martin's Press**

Mass Market

978-1250250094

☆☆☆1/2

Jace Wilder is still trying to move on with his life, but he's still yearning for the love of his life Taryn who mysteriously disappeared. She returns to town years later just as suddenly, hiding dangerous secrets tied to her disappearance, her life in peril. Even though he knows he shouldn't get involved with her again, how can he not?

Seeing her again brings all those emotions and desires that he's been trying so hard to bury--with work, alcohol, anything--rushing back to the surface. On the night that Taryn Hillman left the man she loved behind in Clearview without a word, her whole life fell apart. She takes her one chance to free herself from the horror show that her life has become, returning to her hometown and to Jace. Reluctant to involve him, possibly endangering his life, she finds she doesn't have much choice. Can they trust and rely on each other and take a second chance to rediscover love?

*A Cowboy Kind of Love* is an entertaining romantic suspense novel with an original, dark, and kind of crazy, dramatic story that has surprising twists and turns and an

interesting cast of characters, including truly heinous villains. Taryn and Jace are likeable characters readers can't help but root for and want them to succeed. Rich description and character development draw readers right into the story, which is a quick read once the suspense and action kicks in. While the suspense elements are nicely developed, the romantic conflict between Jace and Taryn feels like it may be resolved just a little bit too soon before readers can really connect to both characters and their relationship fully. However, readers who don't care for unnecessary drama may appreciate this. The novel can be read as a standalone, but characters and references to prior storylines do appear in this one. Readers who love emotional romantic suspense that is a bit dark in content, should like this one.

*Lacy Hill*

### **Float Plan**

*Trish Doller*

**St. Martin's Griffin**

Trade Paperback

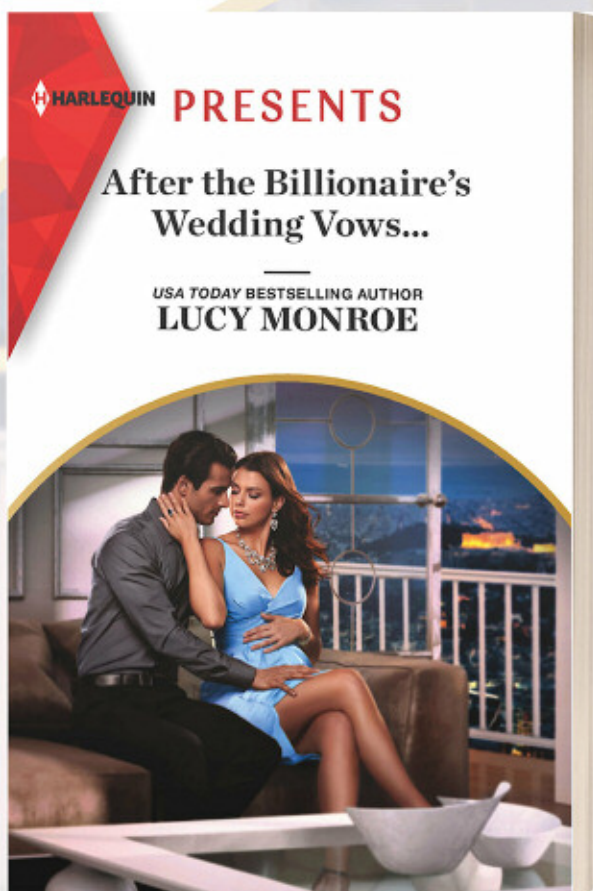
978-1250799760

☆☆☆☆

*Float Plan* by Trish Doller is an inspiring, sweet, angsty, and humorous romantic novel about facing your fears, taking risks, grief, moving on with your life after tragedy,



## What comes after “I do”?



With his marriage on the line, Andros must choose—because closing the distance between himself and Polly will mean destroying the protective barriers he’s long fought to keep intact...

**LucyMonroe.com**

discovering your inner strengths, and finding out what you want from life. Anna is overwhelmed, grieving the loss of her fiancé, and is feeling confined and limited by her family and the confines of her daily life. When she gets the calendar notification reminding her that her and Ben were going to set sail for the Caribbean that day, she impetuously decides to make the trip by herself, even though she’s never been sailing on her own. Realizing she’s in over her head after a rough first night at sea that could’ve turned deadly, she hires professional sailor Keane to help her make the trip. Keane is grieving a loss of his own and struggling to accept changes to the life he thought he would have as well. Doller’s slice of life exposition told from Anna’s first person POV is vibrant, descriptive, and affecting as Anna and Keane sail the Caribbean, befriend other travelers on their journey.

Anna and Keane are likable and relatable characters who are wounded and each suffering in their own way. They butt heads as he contradicts many of her views on life, causing her to rethink things and open her mind to different ideas and perspectives on all sorts of things, including faith. Keane helps Anna to find peace and space to grieve the loss of her fiancé in her own time and in her own way, discovering that she can live her life without him. But Anna is not the only one whose perspective on life is changed by

the experience. Keane may have been helping Anna to learn about sailing, but he taught her so much more, and along the way she helps him to begin to find peace and discover new dreams for his life. Without realizing it, Anna and Keane slowly shift from two hurting and scarred strangers --Anna emotionally and Keane physically--to friends and a seamless partnership, to becoming two halves of a whole. But whether their ships will sail in separate directions or they will be sailing the same ship together becomes an interesting predicament.

The novel’s pacing is great and the novel flows nicely from start to finish. Intriguing and welldeveloped characters draw readers into the story, keeping their interest throughout. Doller’s inclusion of indepth details about sailing, sail boats, and sailing and island culture helps with world-building and provides a sense of real life to balance out the dreamlike quality of Anna’s POV of the trip. *Float Plan* is a pleasant surprise. Instead of being depressing, it is a beautifully written, sweet romance about how sometimes the best surprises are the ones that we get when we take the biggest risks, because that’s when we find out who we really are.

*Lacy Hill*





## Historical Romance Reviews

### Devil in Her Bed

*Kerrigan Byrne*

St. Martin's Press

E-book

B0893SGC4H

★★★★

In the final installment to the “Devil You Know” historical romantic suspense series, the notorious Francesca Cavendish, Countess of Mont Claire, is close to fulfilling her years’ long plan for vengeance on those who killed her family and destroyed her childhood. Her path crosses a dangerous man of many disguises, the Devil of Dorset, whose dark work for the Crown includes assassination. Their relationship is fraught with passion and tinged with hazard. Is love together possible for two people who constantly live on the edge of darkness?

*Devil in Her Bed*’s strength is in its two distinctive, well-matched leads. Francesca is fearless, a warrior, and a survivor. She is fiercely independent, strongly loyal, intelligent and determined. The Devil of Dorset is formidable, a volcanically alluring combination of lethal ice, fiery passion, and ruthless violence guarding a deeply

tortured, heartbroken soul. It’s extremely rewarding to experience Francesca melt through his iron resolve, paired with the gratification of a powerful woman like Francesca finding a man unafraid of his mate standing toe-to-toe with him. Their romance is lush, sexy and emotionally satisfying, but the suspense conclusion does fall somewhat flat. Readers looking for an edgy Victorian historical romance will appreciate *Devil in Her Bed*.

*Danielle Hill*

### The Duke Heist

*Erica Ridley*

Forever

Kindle Edition

B089SNZF7Q

★★★

Lawrence Gosling, the Duke of Faircliffe, finds himself in desperate need of a rich wife to pull himself out of the debts his father has accumulated. After a chance encounter with one of the infamous Wynchesters, he starts

*Affaire de Coeur*



# Historicals

wondering if he will be able to forsake his duty and instead follow his heart.

Chloe Wynchester and her ragtag bunch of siblings who were adopted by a wealthy baron, vow to uphold his dying wish--get back a painting that was stolen from them by the now deceased Duke of Faircliffe.

Seeking out his son Lawrence, the Wynchesters devise a plan to steal back what is theirs, but there is just one problem--the new Duke of Faircliffe is slowly stealing Chloe's heart.

In Erica Ridley's first installment to her "The Wild Wynchesters," she's introduced a host of interesting characters. While this reviewer has fully enjoyed her previous books, this one left me a little flat--I just couldn't feel any chemistry between Lawrence and Chloe and found myself skimming across the pages to finish. As with all stories, some characters readers connect with, and some they don't. That being said, if you are a fan of this genre, give it a read! It could very well be your next fav!

*Sharing what I love,*  
Veronica

## Earl of Alnwick (Wicked Earls' Return--Book 1)

Meara Platt

Self-Pub

Kindle Edition

B08HJ9TFXW

★★★★ 1/2

Niall Jameson, Earl of Alnwick, was bathing naked in a side pool of the river that separated his and his neighbor's estate, when he heard a bloodcurdling scream! He had no idea where the scream came from until he spotted his lifelong bane of existence (in her wedding dress, no less!) hurtling out of control down the slope straight into the deepest part of the river! Now Niall came from a long line of rakes and reprobates, but when he became earl, he decided not to follow in his father's and grandfather's footsteps. But the only thing he had not been able to overcome was his annoyance at his neighbor, The Perfect Miss Pringle, as he had named her early on in their childhood.

She was ALWAYS perfect; perfect white gloves; hair perfectly coiffed; not a spot of dirt on her anywhere; perfect manners and perfect behavior. But the one thing he did know about her "perfectness" was that she drove him mad, was untouchable and couldn't swim. She'd never learned how. So, despite his nakedness, Niall decided he had to rescue her and just hoped she wouldn't notice his state of undress.

Katie Pringle was a mess. She had run away from

## Highland Warrior (Sons of Sinclair #2)

Heather McCollum

Entangled

Kindle Edition

B087ZY1XPX

★★★★★



*"I love you. I need you to know that. I could not imagine the pain of dying without being able to tell you what I have only now discovered in my heart."*

Joshua Sinclair was War incarnate, the second Horseman of the Apocalypse--at least that was what his father raised him to believe. Growing restless, Joshua leaves his home and Clan Sinclair behind to seek out those in need of his talents to train men for battle. But this fierce warrior's world is about to turn on its axis when he stumbles upon a Norse beauty and queen of her people who offers him a night of pleasure that, in turn, becomes a temptation to help break her people free from the tyranny of the Stewarts.

While setting out to teach the tactics of war, Joshua has met his match in the fair Kara Flett. But when her life is put in jeopardy, there is no fiercer foe than a highlander's sword and his thirst for vengeance. If that highlander just happens to be one of the fabled Horsemen, let it be known there is no force on earth that will deter the mighty Joshua Sinclair from protecting what is his. He had never seen anything so beautiful before in his life. He would battle a million wars to keep them safe, or sail a thousand seas to take them to safety, or build a hundred castles to protect them.

\*Happy Dancing\* Oh, dear Reader, I am sooooo excited that Heather McCollum has returned to her "Sons of Sinclair" series! These four brothers have been raised by their father believing they are none other than the four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and each of their stories thus far has matched the hero with a lover who is off the charts in chemistry, and offers them a happily-ever-after they never dared dreamed to receive. *"Love was risky. It could tear one apart, but it could also build one into a mountain of strength. It made life sweeter, brighter, and so worth living."*

While this is the second in the series, it is written well enough to be read as a standalone with no cliffhangers. If you are a fan of highland romances, I can't recommend this author enough! Loved loved loved Joshua's story and sooooo looking forward to the next installment!

*Sharing what I love,*

Veronica

her wedding in London the week before because she had caught the "perfect" man her parents had picked out for her *in flagrante delicto* with her best friend and maid of honor right before they were to walk down the aisle. But the worst was when Katie confronted them, they both laughed at her, so she left, and fled home. Well, not exactly home, but to Niall's home next door. Neither her parents nor anyone else knew

where she was, and there was a huge reward posted and Bow Street Runners looking for her, so she appealed to Niall to help her. And, in contrast to Niall's opinion of her, Katie was anything but perfect. That had all been her parents' doing in order to prepare her for the perfect marriage. And all she had ever wanted to do was be herself, get into some mischief, get dirty climbing trees, and love Niall.

*The Earl of Alnwick* is one of those romances where you find yourself rooting for both the hero and heroine equally. They both have their faults (Katie not so much), but their faults are perfect for each other. Together, they discover the fun of living life to its fullest while working hard to achieve their goals. Proving that she's not just a pretty face, Katie is Niall's equal in all of their adventures together. Ms. Platt has penned a wonderful romance of adventure, misunderstanding, laughter and love that will have you sitting up all night to finish. This is the first in the "Wicked Earls' Return" series, and I can't wait for the second!

*Lani Roberts*

## How to Train Your Earl

*Ameila Grey*

**St. Martin's Press**

Mass Market

978-1250218803

★★★★ 1/2

Amelia Grey's final book in the "First Comes Loves" Regency historical romance series features a carefree rake who inherits an earldom and an altruistic, committed widow.

Zane Browning, Earl of Blacknight, gets rescued in questionable circumstances by a beautiful young woman in Paris. An instant connection forms between them that neither of them forgets. When they meet each other again in London, Zane takes the chance to win the lady for himself. It will take a wager to reform his ways in a month to claim Brina Feld's hand. Can the gambler and rake win the woman of his dreams?

*How to Train Your Earl* is a delightful read. Brina and Zane feel like real people a reader would want to know. Zane might be a rake, but he's a really kind, sweet, wonderful man. It's easy to root for him to win Brina's hand. Brina might be a rule-following stickler on the surface, but her loving, caring, passionate depths are very clear, and it's so enjoyable to see that bond strengthen between these characters as she keeps this rake on his toes. The end will make readers cheer. While someone has to lose the wager, both ultimately win each other. And the reader wins along the way.

*Danielle Hill*

## The Spinster and the Rake

*Eva Devon*

**Entangled**

E-book

978-1682816141

★★★

*"If you must train me to be a better duchess, I must train you to be a better man."*

Miss Georgiana Bly can't bear the thought of having to deal with those attending the ball at the Duke of Thornfield's residence. Hiding away in a library is more to her liking--until a grumpy bear of a man dares to intrude into her sanctuary. How was she supposed to know he was soon to be her future husband?

Edward Stanhope, Duke of Thornfield, has had enough of young ladies throwing themselves at him in the hopes of becoming his duchess. Eager to hide away, Edward goes into his private domain, only to discover someone is sitting in his chair, and no matter how much he huffs and puffs, she won't be budged--until he dares her to allow him a kiss. That one kiss is only the beginning of what becomes a battle of wills between one very grump of a duke and the opinionated mistress that will tame him.

*The Spinster and the Rake* is an enjoyable Regency romance. I'm still trying to figure out what it was about these characters that just didn't quite click for this reviewer, and when that happens, it's difficult for me to do a proper review. Overall, the author did a fun twist on the *My Fair Lady* storyline, and I would recommend to fans of this genre.

*Sharing what I love,*  
*Veronica*



# Paranormal Romance Reviews



## **The Warrior King (Inferno Rising #3)**

*Abigail Owen*

**Entangled: Amara**

Mass Market

978-1640639997

★★★★

*The Warrior King*, Book 3 of Abigail Owen's "Inferno Rising" series, features excellent character development and growth, lively description, exciting action, and a steamy, emotional romance between phoenix Meira Amon and dragon-shifter Samael Veles.

Unlike her sisters, Meira is more reserved and isn't as comfortable with people because of their untidy, complicated emotions. She's a techie who loves her tablet. Nevertheless, she feels she has no choice but to come out of hiding to become queen to the dragon-shifter King of the Black Clan, an ally, to help her and her sisters get revenge for the murder of her parents by the Rotting King Pytheios. Her plans are complicated by her deep connection to one of the King's most

trusted warriors, Samael. Lowborn, Samael has spent his life working to prove himself worthy. His pledge to protect his King with his life and his loyalty to his clan—once the only things important to him—become secondary to protecting Meira, who he sees for the first time in a reflection and can't get out of his mind. Unfortunately, the next time he sees her she is the intended bride of his King. When her phoenix fire kills the King after the wedding, Samael faces the daunting task of protecting her from his own people.

Owen's description draws the reader into the action and suspenseful elements of the story. Meira is so relatable as a character because when the story begins, she is fiercely protective of those she loves. She's so much stronger, powerful, and special than she knows, and her strength lies in her differences from her sisters, to whom she constantly compares herself and feels she comes up short. Ultimately, though, she may find strength and happiness in her relationship with Samael who is a great match for her. Like Meira, he has his own issues of self-worth. Being lowborn and not of royal blood, he feels he is unworthy of her. They face many obstacles they must get past before they can be together.



# Paranormals

*The Warrior King* is an entertaining, steamy paranormal romance about finding your own voice, confidence in yourself, fulfilling purpose for your life, and your soul mate. While it can be read as a standalone, it reads like books in this series are closely interconnected and reading them in order might improve the reading experience. Readers who love steamy, emotional fantasy/paranormal romances with shapeshifting dragons, phoenixes, magic, and action should enjoy this one.

Lacy Hill

One Book  
Two Book  
Three Book  
Four

We love  
books  
and we've  
got more!

Chapter Previews  
Author Interviews  
Blogs  
Articles

AffairedCoeur.com

## A Pocket in Time (Time Weavers Inc. #2)

Lexi Post

Entangled Publishing

E-book

968-1649371306

★★★★★



*"Love is the only reason to be alive. To die with never knowing what it's like to love and be loved is the cruelest sentence."*

Welcome to Time Weavers, Inc. (TWI), where the agents have the power to travel in time to fix ripples caused by the Disruptors.

Katz Almira grew up on the streets and is now using her street smarts to be one of the best agents TWI employs--one of the best agents to bend the rules just a wee bit to make sure the job gets done. Her newest mission is to travel back to Regency London and intercept a note that was placed in the wrong hands causing a disruption to the time line in the future. Posing as a fellow pickpocket, Katz befriends a group of lost boys to get in good with their benefactor Lord John Byron. But the one thing Katz didn't plan on was falling in love with her mark. With the future of the world at stake, Katz must decide if creating a pocket in time is worth saving her love.

LOVED IT! LOVED IT! LOVED IT! Oh, did I mention I LOVED IT? Regency romances are a fav, and add the time travel *Quantum Leap* scenario, and this chick is one happy reader! Katz is as strong a heroine you could ask for that falls for a hero who manages to melt the ice she's built around her heart. Impossible to put down and one of my fav reads of the year!

While this is the second in the "Time Weavers," series, the author has written it to be a standalone. Loved and highly recommend!!

Here's a cheat sheet of the Rules for Time Weavers, Inc., (TWI) Agents:

Rule One: Don't change history; only change it back.

Rule Two: Never travel back to a period and place already visited.

Rule Three: Travel no more than once a day.

Rule Four: Do not hint at anything in the future.

Rule Five: Do not make friends.

Sharing what I love,  
Veronica





## Deadly Games

Steve Frech

HQ Digital

Kindle Edition

B08JPXMLKH

★★★★

*"I know everything about you."*

Opting for a fresh start, Clay throws a dart at a map and ends up in the small town of Avalon.

Bartenders are needed everywhere; so there's never a problem finding a job. Clay has found his rhythm and enjoys his new life--that is up until the night when Emily Parker is found dead in a hotel room with her throat slit and all clues to her murderer are pointing towards him. Now Clay finds he is caught in the middle of a deadly game, one where with each step he takes trying to prove his innocence, it buries him deeper in guilt.

Steve Frech has written an interesting whodunit psychological thriller that keeps the reader's interest in trying to piece together the clues of who killed Emily Parker. Would recommend to fans of this genre.

*Sharing what I love,  
Veronica*

## The Dinner Guest

B.P. Walter

One More Chapter

E-book

978-0008446079

★★★★



*"Four people walked into the dining room, but one would never leave--at least not alive."*

Told from multiple points of view with a deadly countdown, *The Dinner Guest* is a highly character-driven mystery with the cast having so many secrets, the reader will be guessing the motive behind the murder up till the very last page!

Dear reader, I thought for sure I had it all plotted out, but the author reminded me that revenge is a dish best served cold. I'll not spoil the fun in solving the mystery in a review. You will just have to snag your own copy! Loved and highly recommend!

*Sharing what I love,  
Veronica*



# MYSTERIES

## The Silent Suspect (Paige Northwood #3)

Nell Pattison

Avon

Kindle Edition

B08KFT4H59

☆☆☆1/2

Sign language interpreter Paige Northwood is determined to leave her amateur sleuthing behind. She's acquired a good job interpreting for Sasha, a profoundly deaf social worker, as well as enjoying time spent with her boyfriend Max. Everything is finally going well--but of course, with her luck, that all comes to a screeching halt.

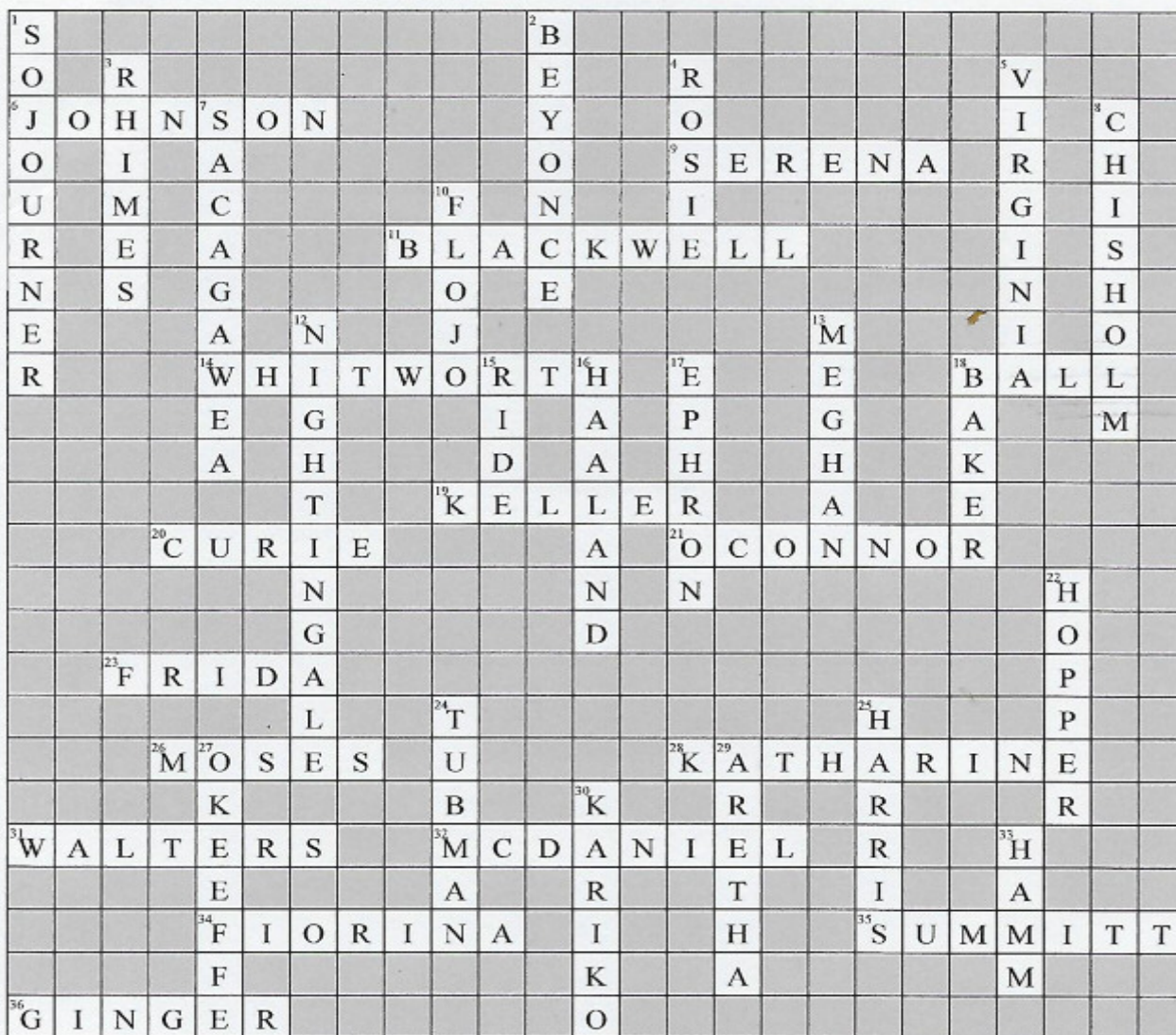
While having dinner with Max, he asks her to move in with him at the same time she receives a video chat from one of Sasha's clients, Lucas, frantically signing for her to call the fire department because his house is engulfed in flames--and his wife Nadia is inside! After the smoke clears, Lucas is arrested for murder and refusing to communicate to the police or anyone else, Sasha is demanding her help in proving his innocence. Max is wanting an answer--even though she knows better, Paige just can't stop herself; she has to find out who killed Nadia and why Lucas is remaining a silent suspect.

In case you missed it, this is the third installment to this series. While the author did a good job in making this a standalone mystery, if you'd not read the other books, the side characters have an ongoing storyline, which could prove to be a little confusing. My biggest disappointment is that I figured out the ending, but perhaps that was the author giving good clues for the reader to follow. Overall, I enjoyed and would recommend to fans of this genre.

*Sharing what I love,*  
Veronica

## G.O.A.T.S.

Louise B. Snead







## Spells, Charms, and The Book of Cures

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

[JoAnnSmithAinsworth.com](http://JoAnnSmithAinsworth.com)



# Booty from the Other Genre



## Black Coral (Underwater Investigation Unit #2)

Andrew Mayne  
Thomas and Mercer

Kindle Edition

B0847NLRGW

★★★★★



*“Once upon a time, you could outrun your sins.”*

Sloan McPherson is the daughter of a pirate--no, not the eye-patch wearing kind, but the diving in the deep blue sea and other watery locales for lost artifacts and buried treasure kind. Sloan's background has made her a perfect detective for the Florida Underwater Investigation Unit (UIU).

Sloan is called to a scene of a car submerged in a pond known to house the infamous Big Bill, a 13-foot alligator that the local authorities want no part of. Sloan's crew works with Fish and Wildlife to try to keep track of the monster in order keep him away from the crash site while Sloan dives to retrieve the body or bodies before it's dinner time for Big Bill.

Sloan gets more than she bargained for in this dive. In addition to the wreckage she was sent to salvage, Sloan discovers a van that has become a crypt. Held within the doors of this watery coffin are the bodies of four teenagers who went missing 30 years ago.

Now Sloan can't stop the nagging voice telling her this is more than just another accident--this is the work of a serial killer who has only become more evolved over time. Throwing caution to the wind, Sloan and the UIU follow the

clues of the past to hunt down this madman before he strikes again.

*Black Coral* is my first read by author Andrew Mayne, and it won't be my last! I'm still reeling from that heart-racing ending and so ready to go back and read the first in this series. Please note that while this is book 2, it is written to be standalone. The cast of characters in the UIU play so well against each other, and Sloan's snarky inner monologue is fantastic! If Netflix is looking for a new series/movie to pick up, I hope someone puts this novel in their hands! Wish I could give more than 5 stars! Loved and highly recommend!

*Sharing what I love,  
Veronica*

## Broken Brain Better Life

Patricia Lynn Denning

Self published

E-book

B08Q77QWN8

★★★

Even though the injury and emergency surgery happened over ten years ago, there was a tense heartfelt and raw honesty about the author's journey to recovery.

If she hadn't trusted her instincts and pushed for her selfcare, she may not be here to tell her incredible story of survival.

She came out of the tragedy, stronger and better.

This was a very difficult read. It was written in first person present tense, and tended to switch to first person past



## Nothin' But a Good Time: The Uncensored History of the 80's Hard Rock Explosion

Tom Beaujour, Richard Bienstock

St. Martin's Press

Kindle Edition

B08BYBNGMW

★★★★★



*"Cum on feel the noize  
Girls rock your boys  
We get wild, wild, wild"*

Quiet Riot

"Anthem rock," "hair bands," "heavy metal," "glam rock," whatever you want to call it, in my opinion, those who grew up listening and attending those concerts in the 80's are the specific fan base who will luv this book for the sheer joy it will bring in walking down memory lane. I certainly loved it, and vividly reminisced of concerts featuring Motley Crue, Whitesnake, Faster Pussycat, Cinderella, Tesla, Bon Jovi, Poison, Ratt, Quiet Riot, Twisted Sister and the list goes on and on. These kick-ass metal heads showed the music industry that rock wasn't dead, and the loyal following of those bands continues to this day.

*Nothin' But a Good Time* is a time machine in book format that transported this 80's hair band luvin' chick back to one of my fav eras! Written in an oral narration format, it was like handing me a VIP backstage pass to all my favs and giving me the opportunity to read in their own words of how they achieved success and rock and rolled all night and partied every day! Oh baby, talk dirty to me! That being said, I'm not sure the new age of cancel culture could stand for some of the antics of these youths gone wild. So if you are in the easily offended line, move on, nothing to read here.

Dear Reader, if you were like me growing up and devoured every magazine that had a cover of Motley Crue or spent your lunch money on the next Poison album, you will devour this book! It's a fun read that will make you crank up "Hair Nation," and I highly recommend!

*Sharing what I love,  
Veronica*

tense, and then reverted to present tense, which resulted in some confusion. Nonetheless, the journey is real as are the emotions that accompany them.

*Lauren Calder*

# Booty

## Home Bartending

Vassilis A. Issaris

Self-published

E-book

B08PC7SVC8

★★★★ 1/2

What a wonderful way to share! Not everyone has the ability to mix drinks properly. This is a great way to learn how to do some great drinks. My favorites, Honey Mead and Dark and Stormies. After the world closed, many people were wondering how to keep the adventure alive.

For those who enjoy a sip or two, this is a wonderful book of mixed alcohol recipes and a few tidbits and stories of where and how they became favorites.

*Lauren Calder*

## Peculiar Combination

Ashley Weaver

Minotaur Books

Hardcover

978-1250780485

EBook

978-1250780492

★★★★

In 1940's London, expert safecracker Electra (Ellie) McDonnell and British federal investigator Major Gabriel Ramsey certainly make for a peculiar combination when they team up to break into a safe to retrieve important blueprints before they fall into German hands.

Ellie was raised by her Uncle Mick, who taught hereverything he knows. An accomplished locksmith, he supplements his income by robbing empty houses where he knows the safes contain valuable jewels. When the pair is apprehended during a heist that was supposed to be routine, they're offered a deal by Major Ramsey—in exchange for their expertise.

The blueprints that could give enemy Germans crucial information are stored in a safe that Major Ramsey wants Ellie and Uncle Mick to open so he can plant alternate, incorrect plans. Of course, the operation doesn't go as planned, and Ellie finds herself more and more involved in the race to track down the missing blueprints and apprehend the double agent who wants to deliver the plans to the Germans.

In spite of a potential relationship with her long-

# Booty

## The Shadow Man

Helen Fields

Avon

Mass Market

978-0008379315

★★★★★



*"The world you inhabit is not the same as everyone else's. Mine is even less so."*

Dr. Connie Woolwine, American forensics psychologist, has been brought in to offer her expert opinion on the disappearances happening around Edinburgh. The missing persons don't appear to have any commonality and have the police scrambling for direction and answers.

London detective Brodie Baarda has been assigned to liaison with Dr. Woolwine, and together, they follow the bread crumbs left behind each crime scene until they track down a serial killer with a chilling proclivity towards an unfathomable collection.

Holy serial killers, Batman! was this story creepy and gave this reader nightmares! The tale is gritty, fast-paced and guaranteed to keep you turning the pages! I triple dog dare ya to read!

*Sharing what I love,  
Veronica*

time friend Felix, Ellie finds herself attracted to the young, handsome major as the two of them race against time and increasingly difficult obstacles to retrieve plans that could lead to England losing the war if they fall into the hands of the Germans.

*A Peculiar Combination* is a fast-paced, exciting book with many surprising twists, and is the first book in the author's new "Electra McDonnell" series.

*Hannah Rowan*

## The Perfect Daughter

DJ Palmer

St. Martin's Press

Kindle Edition

978-1250267935

★★★★ 1/2

*"Ever heard the excuse, 'the Devil made me do it'?  
Well, what if you're the devil?"*

Grace was a mother blessed with two sons but longed

for a daughter. Her prayers are answered in a most unusual way--a child has been abandoned in the park--a young girl so traumatized she is unable to speak. Grace immediately bonds with the girl, and they name her Penny. While finding love and security amongst her new family, Penny's trauma still emerges by transforming and splitting into various personalities--and one of them could prove to be deadly.

Holy jaw-dropping endings, Batman! I'll not spoil the fun of all the psychological twists and turns in DJ Palmer's newest thriller in a review, but I will say this is a story that not only delves deep into the psyche of the mind, but also the lengths a parent will go to save their child and the unconditional love needed to care for one with mental illness.

Another fantastic read by DJ Palmer! Loved and highly recommend!

*Sharing what I love,  
Veronica*

## The Songbird's Sting

L.J. Martin

Wolfpack Publishing

E-book

B08WWSF9PS

★★★★★



Singer and entertainer Elizabeth Ann Grey seems to be accompanied by mayhem as she travels west by stagecoach to clear her brother of wrongdoing.

Unaccompanied on this journey by her usual entourage of manager, and Skeeter, a mountain of a man, a free man, employee, protector and loyal friend, the mayhem begins before she even steps into the Stagecoach.

Part way into the ride, the coach is stopped by highwaymen. She and a Spanish ranch owner are taken to be used as ransom. Heading south toward the border, the ruffians make their plans. Little do they know this songbird is ready and able to defend herself with her hidden pistol, long hatpin and a strong will to survive.

Their disappearance gets much attention by the law and her faithful friend and employee Skeeter who is determined to find her safe. The desperadoes are chased across the desert, hounded by thirst and Indians.

The story begins with excitement then settles down for a moment as the author extensively builds the characters to set the tone of the tale to come complete with accents of the Old West. Finally, it comes alive with the realities of the day. It quickly starts back into action to carry the reader on the long journeys of the villains and heroes to a great end.

L.J. Martin brings us another Western winner!  
*Lauren Calder*





# Late Reviews

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

## Flashpoint (Forged in Fire #1)

Skye Jordan

Collective 20

Mass Market

978-1944765071

★★★★

*Flashpoint*, Book 1 in Skye Jordan's "Forged in Fire" series, is a contemporary romance about Natalie and Cole, two close friends who are at the precipice of becoming more.

Cole has been in love with Natalie for a long time--from the first time he met her before she married Evan, and he's still in love with her even now that she's his widow. He'd firmly walled up those feelings and his emotions so he could just be her friend. Knowing the last thing Natalie will ever do is marry another firefighter makes it easier for him to deny his feelings for her, especially with the secret he is keeping from her. It's for the best, since Cole lives for his job as a firefighter. But an earth shattering kiss they share after a fight sparked by Natalie's first date after Evan's death breaks down that wall, bringing those feelings rushing back to the surface. That mind-blowing kiss also reveals she may have feelings for him too. One complication after another must be overcome before they can explore those shared feelings and the intense attraction they share.

The interactions between the characters and their development may be one of the best things about *Flashpoint*. Each of the relationships and interactions felt genuine

and effectively moved the plot along. The characters are relatable, likeable, and well-developed. Evan's and Natalie's relationship and their interactions are filled with chemistry and emotion. Natalie's and Cole's relationship is mostly impacted by Evan's death. Evan as his best friend and Natalie as his wife/widow obviously, but their close friendship also has been deeply affected. Cole is burdened by the secret he is keeping from her and guilt about that and his feelings for her. The last thing Natalie wants from her closest friend is to be treated with pity or as a duty to be fulfilled. But, unfortunately, after Evan's death, that's the vibe she gets from Cole with his dropping by to fix things but disappearing without hanging out like he used to. Losing his friendship on top of losing Evan makes things more difficult and increases the loneliness. Once Natalie and Cole kiss, the barrier blocking each of their denied feelings for each other falls away and their intense chemistry is revealed. Crossing the line from friends to lovers is scary for both, but for Natalie being with Cole in this new way has her questioning some things about herself and her relationship with Evan she has never considered before. Her self-reflection helps her along the path to healing. After finally being intimate with Natalie as he has longed to Cole begins to confront whether his need to prove himself through career advancement and focusing on his career to the exclusion of all else, should continue to be the driving force of his life or is there room or if there is room for love, family, and Natalie.

Natalie's relationship with her mother is developed and explored, not just written as a side note and is key to the story, Natalie's character, and her development. It's through

## Action-Packed Romance



## Late

her mother's eyes that we see more of not just who Natalie is, but also Evan and Cole, as well as an outside unbiased perspective of Natalie's relationships with both men. Natalie's interactions with other widows and firefighter families reveals and further develops her character, helping us to connect to her. The friendship between Tucker, Logan, and Cole reveals Cole's character. We see them working, hanging out, and supporting each other in a variety of settings, which reveals who they are and their connections to each other, adding to Cole's character development, allowing us to see different sides of him that may not come out around Natalie and connect to him. Their love and respect for each other comes through clearly. They're not just coworkers, but friends and brothers. I can't wait to read Tucker's and Logan's books and learn more about them. Natalie's progression as she works through the grief of losing her husband to making an

affirmative choice to start living her life again for herself and following her dreams is affecting and flows naturally.

*Flashpoint* is a poignant, emotional, angsty, sweet, and steamy romance that is about so much more than the journey from friends to lovers. It's about finding peace in the storms of life and discovering who we are and want to be separate from our loved ones and all the emotional drama attached to our relationships with them.

*Lacy Hill*







# Children's Books

## 21 Fun Recipes

*Leszek Zajak*

**Self Published**

E-Book

B08LTPW8P3

★★★★

This is a cute and educational illustrated cookbook. It's not only great for kids, but it's a must have for adults as well, especially if eating fantastic food, and cooking with a healthier goal is on the menu!

Recipes include breakfast, lunch, dinner, and of course, dessert.

Looking forward to trying the breakfast salmon recipe and the macaroons.

*Lauren Calder*

## Eve's Ducklings

*Maria Monte and Emelie Wiklund*

**Bonny Books**

Hardcover

978-0987513038

★★★★

*Eve's Ducklings* is a warm story about a little girl, her grandfather, and ducks at a nearby lake. At first Eve is intrigued by the ducklings, but they are not intrigued with her and though she offers her hand, they stay away.

Eventually Eve and Grandpa (identified as Papou in the dedication) stop visiting the ducklings in favor of going to the playground. In their absence, the ducklings become very active, but Eve and her Grandfather miss out on it because they are at the playground. Will she ever get the attention she craves from the duckings?

*Eve's Duckings* targets the very young—preschool and pre-kindergarten as evidenced by the illustrations by Emelie Wiklund and the simplicity of the story, written by Maria Monte. Children will love the ducks and their antics. If they're paying attention, they will see some antics from Eve in her quest to attract attention. Cute!

*Mildred Burkett*

# Young Adult Reads



## **Malice**

*Heather Walter*

**Del Rey**

Kindle Edition

B08D8K92QR

☆☆☆

*“Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there, wondering, fearing, doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before.”--Edgar Allan Poe*

Alyce barter her potions and magical abilities to various patrons in Briar. Although she is considered a monster and a mongrel by all those around her, there is one who sees past all those perceptions and falls for the bright soul buried within--the Princess Aurora. But the kind and beautiful princess is cursed to perish unless Alyce can find a way to save her--with true love's kiss.

*Malice* is an enjoyable reimagining of the fairy tale most commonly known as “Sleeping Beauty,” but what if the beautiful princess fell for the “villain” rather than the handsome prince?

The beginning of *Malice* was a little slow, but it did pick up in the second half, and there is a slight cliffhanger (sorry). I don't want to give too much away in a review and spoil the world building the author painstakingly created between Aurora and Alyce so if the blurb caught your attention, I'd recommend giving this a read!

*Sharing what I love,*

*Veronica*

34

## **Perfect on Paper**

*Sophie Gonzales*

**Wednesday Books**

Hardcover

978-1250769787

☆☆☆☆

With humor, wit, romance, a down-to-earth relatability, interesting characters, and a touch or two of angst, *Perfect on Paper* explores the ups and downs of first love and friendship as well as the discovery of teen sexuality.

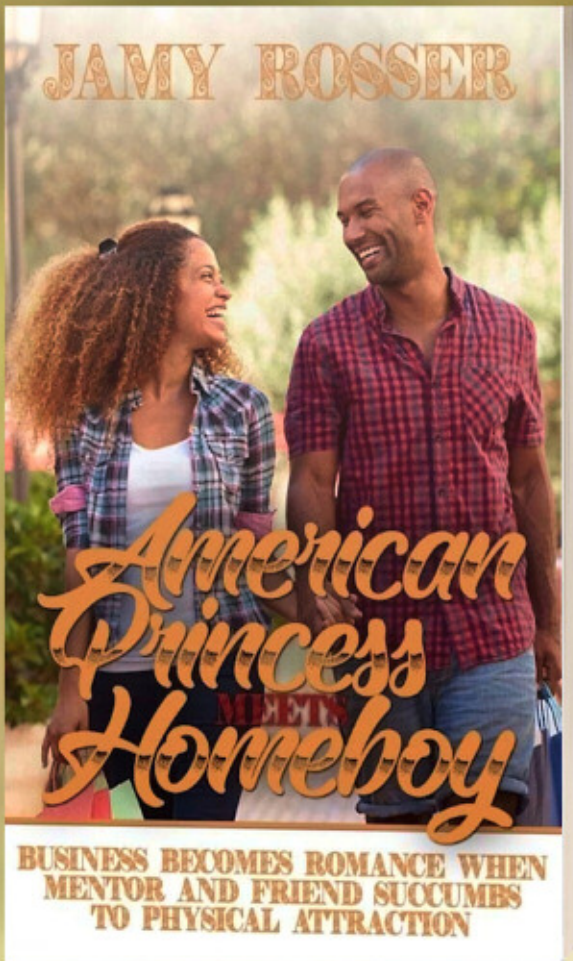
Darcy Phillips is an average teenage girl. She's in love with her best friend Brooke, who's in love with someone else. Darcy earns extra cash by charging for relationship advice in her private high school under a secret identity. No one at school knows about it, including her friends, until Alexander Brougham--whom she cannot stand--catches her retrieving letters from locker 89 that were placed there for her anonymously by students. Let's just say that Darcy may have done some not so nice things with the information she has available to her as the school's resident relationship expert. Since she needs to keep her secret identity from getting out, especially to Brooke, she agrees to be Brougham's dating coach and helps him get his ex-girlfriend back in exchange for keeping her secret.

While the characters are likeable and relatable, they are by no means perfect. Darcy is well-meaning, but like most teens--and adults--she can be self-involved. She genuinely likes helping people and puts in the work to offer students helpful advice. But when it comes to her BFF

*Affaire de Coeur*



# American Princess Meets Homeboy



David's life has shifted in a different direction.

Will his success change him or will he still be the man Hope fell in love with?

Amazon/Jamy-Rosser

## Young Adult

Brooke, whom she has on a pedestal, she believes that if she can just have her undivided attention, she will see her as more than just her friend. Brougham is handsome, serious, and a loyal and supporting friend. While he is rich, popular, and appears to want for nothing, there is a lot more going on behind his somber façade. He challenges Darcy at every turn, questioning her methods and motives for offering advice to students, making her genuinely think about what she is doing and why. Being his dating coach pushes her outside of her comfort zone, leading her to question herself and deal with some revelations about her sexual identity she had never before been comfortable accepting or speaking about. Their

partnership leads to some positive changes in Brougham as well, and brings out the best in each of them.

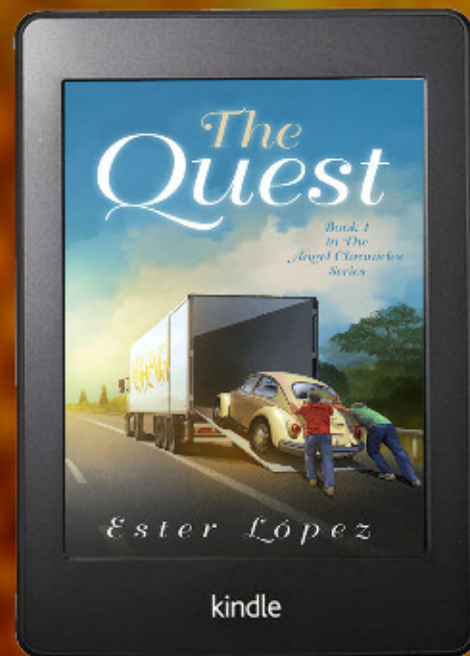
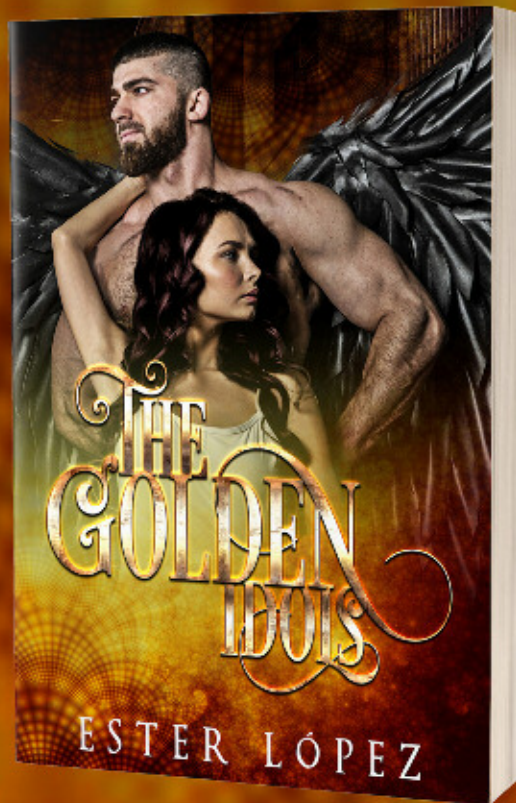
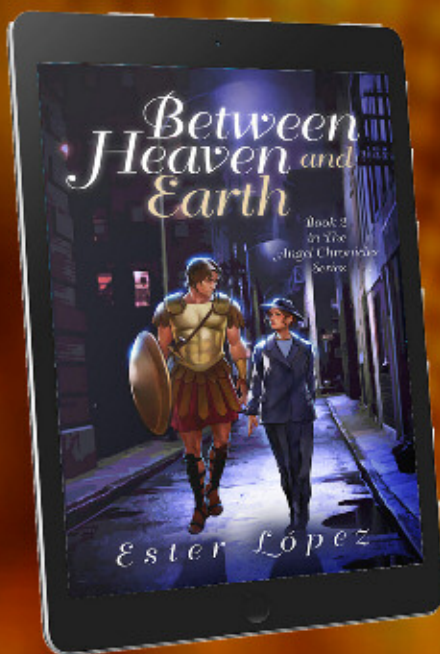
The best things about *Perfect on Paper* are its positive way that the teens are given the freedom and opportunity to talk about and express their sexuality and gender identities in the novel by both peers and adults. The tone is so down to earth as it approaches these topics with respect and sensitivity like the natural and fundamental aspect of teen lives that they are. *Perfect on Paper* is a quick read with a story that immediately grabs the reader's attention. The novel is nicely paced, flowing from one scene to the other without any lag.

*Perfect on Paper* is a YA romance that requires a willingness to take a risk. Readers who like sweet and funny LGBTQ+ rom coms in a high school setting should love this one.

Lacy Hill



# *The Angel Chronicles*



## **Mystery, Intrigue, Temptation, and Inspiration**

### *The Golden Idols*

A detective and her angel partner must capture a criminal before he kills again, or die trying.

### *Between Heaven and Earth*

Mike has been Maria Rojas' Guardian Angel for twenty-two years. The day he rescues her from two criminals, he discovers his human past.

### *The Quest*

Toby's father invested money with a friend years ago and believes he has a way out of his financial problems, and sends his son on a quest to retrieve his fortune.

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