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real gifts for the holidays





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ROMANCE
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AND A GIRL WHO
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SHE WON'T FALL
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(SPOILER ALERT!
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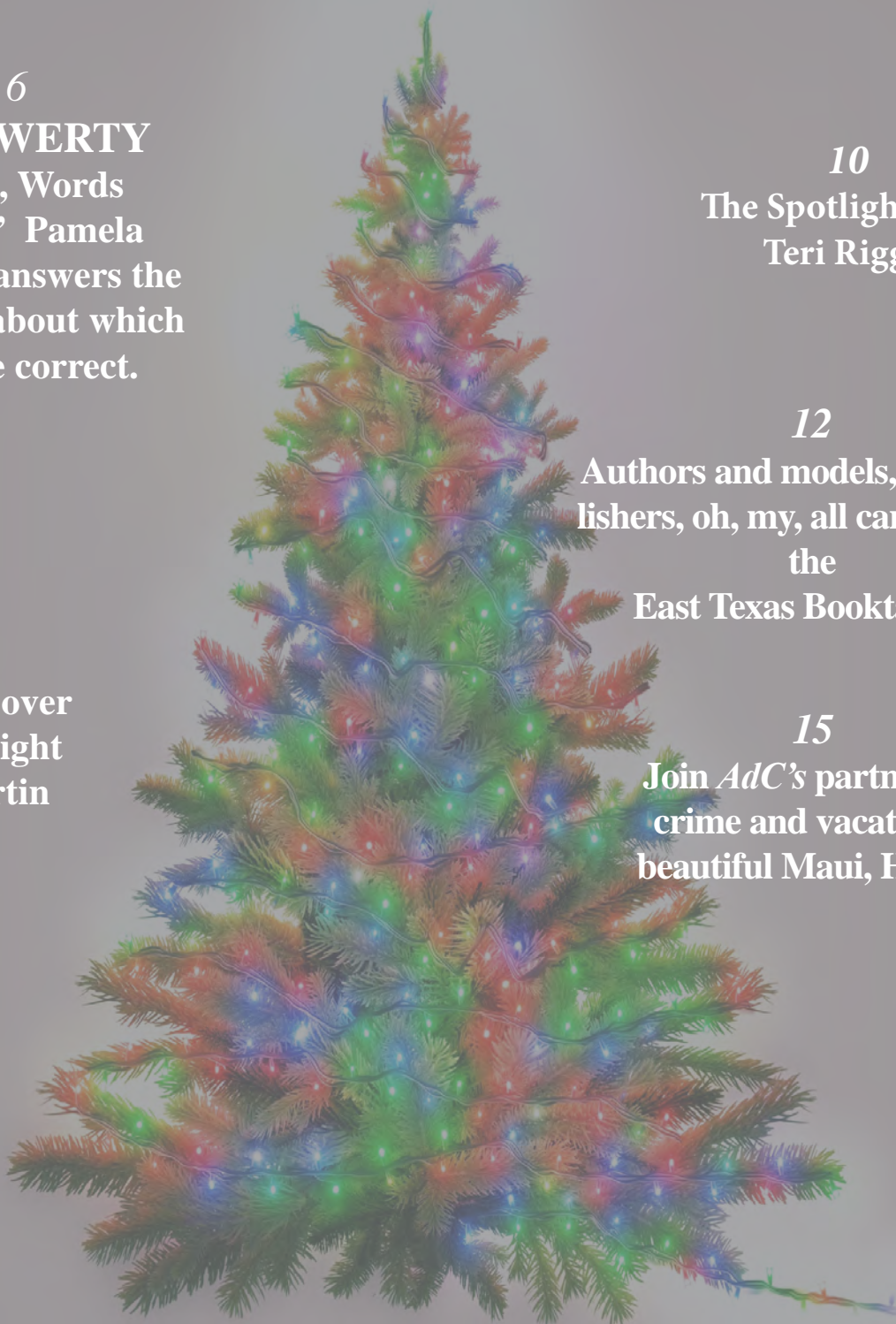
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*Happy Holidays
from the staff of
Affaire de Coeur*



Literary Reviewers



Dear QWERTY

by Pamela Ackerson

Words! Words! Words!

Which ones are correct?



I'm so confused!

Some say English is an easy language to learn, but many would disagree. Even to native English speakers, the language can get confusing. There are words that sound the same, but have different meanings. Some words are spelled the same, but are pronounced differently. The focus of our QWERTY discussion this time are words that have very similar meanings, but are not interchangeable. Let's start with:

Affect vs. Effect

Many times, it's difficult to determine whether to use affect or effect. My editor will tell you, even though I understand the differences, there are times when I use the wrong word. It happens.

It doesn't help when a dictionary states the defini-

tion of affect is: to have an effect on; make a difference.

No wonder we get confused!

Affect is a verb. It means to influence, modify, or to act upon usually with emotion. (Think affection.)

For example:

Tears didn't **affect** his opinion.

The hurricane **affected** our summer plans.

He was **affected** deeply by the loss of his long-time pet.

Anger **affects** people's well-being.

The hurricane affected our vacation and the after-**effect** of the winds caused damage to our yard.

Effect can be a verb or a noun. As a verb it means to achieve or cause. As a noun it means result, impression, or consequence.

For example: The boss's bad day was **effected** by his attitude.

The bruise on his knee **effected** how he bowled.

We need to vote if we want to **effect** change.

The boss's bad mood had a terrible **effect** on the employees.

The special **effects** in the movie were fantastic.

His PTSD was an **effect** of working as a bomb diffuser.

The second shot of Novocain had no **effect**.

I had a professor in college give us a tip to avoid confusion. If it has to do with emotions, use affect. If it has to do with anything else use effect. So far the tip has helped.

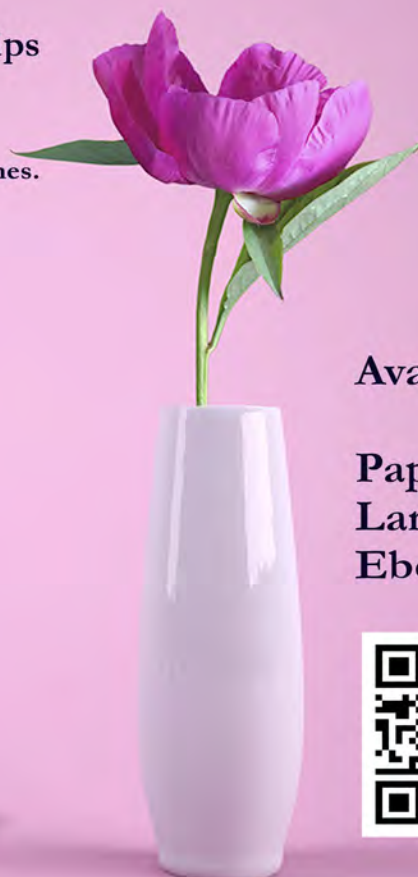
Lie vs. Lay

This one I have trouble with sometimes, just ask my editor! The confusion about these two words rests in the fact that they are both verbs. As verbs, they are conjugated, meaning they are adjusted to describe something that is happening now, something that is ongoing or something that happened in the past. There are rules that verbs usually follow to indicate a different time, but, of course, "lie" and "lay" don't follow the rules.

As a verb, "**Lie**" means to recline or rest on a surface. As in, you lie down to go to sleep. But what if you did it yesterday? The past tense of **lie** is lay. He lay in the bed

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all day yesterday.

Lay is also a verb with its own definition. It means “to put in place.”

You **lay** the keys on the table.

See why I’m so confused? How about...

Set vs. Sit

People **sit** on something.

She **sits** on the bed. **Sit** down on the ground.

Objects are placed on something.

He **set** the drink next to him on the table.

Ensure vs. Insure

Ensure is the act of making certain something happens.

She **ensures** us the book will come out on time.

Insure is used in ‘official’ capacity. As in insurance...

I **insure** the warranted covers the airbag replacement.

Elicit vs. Illicit

Elicit is a verb where you get a response out of someone.

He **elicited** a confession from the suspect.

Illicit has to do with anything illegal -- catch the ill and you’ll never mix them up again.

His **illicit** behavior put him in jail.

Complement vs. Compliment

Complement enhances.

The pillows around the porch **complemented** the view of the house.

Compliment is to praise someone.

She **complimented** her on the elegant gown she wore to the masquerade ball.

Do you have a subject you’d like Dear Qwerty, to cover? Let us know, DearQwerty@adcmagazine.com

The Spotlight is Shining on...

Teri Riggs



Teri Riggs

Teri Riggs lives in Marietta, Georgia, with her hubby and two puppies who own their hearts. Teri and her husband were high school sweethearts and have been together for fifty years. And she thinks this definitely qualifies her as an expert on romance!

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

TR: I write contemporary and historical western romantic suspense. Currently I'm working on a paranormal trilogy. I have one romantic comedy.

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

about.

TR: Alpha heroes and strong-willed heroines.

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

TR: I'm releasing a new western romantic suspense in December. It's the first book in a trilogy. I have my first paranormal book releasing in January. It's part of a trilogy about three sisters who have psychic abilities.

AdC: *Favorite quote?*

TR: Never give up.

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

TR: I read. I read at least one book a day.

AdC: *What do you like to read? Do you have a favorite genre?*

TR: I read romantic suspense mostly.

AdC: *Do you have any comfort characters or characters that must go into your stories?*

TR: I like characters who overcome a difficult past and come out stronger.

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

TR: I like to travel to new places. I'm ready to get back into going to new places.

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

TR: Right now I'll be at Book Obsessed Babes in March, Space Coast Book Lovers in June, and Orlando Reads in August.

AdC: *What's something about you -- personality traits, habits, background, etc., that has been useful in your writing?*

TR: I was a NICU nurse before I quit to raise my daughters. A medical background comes in handy when you write suspense. I'm always shooting and trying to kill my characters. Especially the bad guys.

Teri Riggs

Teri-riggs.com.

[Twitter.com/TeriLRiggs](https://twitter.com/TeriLRiggs)

[Facebook.com/Teri-Riggs](https://facebook.com/Teri-Riggs)



***Only a strong woman
with a strong heart
can conquer the West***

Nothing will stop her from reaching her goal

Teri-Riggs.com @TeriLRiggs



An Affaire de Coeur

Sneak Peek

Heaven's Beach Love Stories

by Teri Riggs



“Sunsets and New Beginnings”

Mandi Waters had the worst day ever. She lost her job, found her fiancé in bed with her best friend, then discovered he'd been stealing from her. She seeks refuge with her beloved aunt in the peaceful seaside town of Heaven's Beach. Her ability to trust may be in tatters, but the handsome businessman with the surfer boy looks, might have her reconsidering.

Josh Foster's mother has her greedy eyes on the only

waterfront property left in Heaven's Beach. Unfortunately, it belongs to a woman unwilling to sell. Her solution is simple: coerce Josh into seducing the owner's niece in hopes she'll sell. However, Josh will never get involved in the same kind of sordid relationships his mother had, especially when he meets Mandi. She's the kind of woman he could love--until he discovers Mandi is the prey his mother means to trap in her tangled web of deception.

Mandi and Josh have both sworn off love. But if they will let it, the magic of Heaven's Beach may help them find a way to let the sun set on the past and together discover a new beginning.

“True Love Never Dies”

Samantha has mourned the tragic Christmas Eve death of her husband for three years. During that time, she's moved to a home in the small seaside town of Heaven's Beach, has made plenty of new friends, and owns the local

Continued on page 10



art gallery. She should be happy. Instead, she misses Nate, the love of her life, to the point of distraction. To make matters worse, her mind seems to be playing tricks on her lately and she begins to see images that can't possibly be real.

With the help of her friends and mother-in-law, Sami has finally decided it's time to pull her life together once and for all. But is it ever truly possible to move on?

Or is it a fact that *True Love Never Dies*?

“Forever Paradise”

Lindsey James has just graduated from grad school and is ready to begin her life. A stalker has other plans for her. She swears off men and runs to Heaven's Beach to hide, the place she feels safe and loved. The place her stalker knows nothing about—or so she thought.

Zack Simmons has promised Lindsey and her friends that he would keep her safe while she is living and working in Heaven's Beach. Immediately Zack finds himself drawn to her, but after a recent and disastrous breakup with an ex-girlfriend, he plans to pursue the bachelor life.

Zack soon learns that keeping things professional in order to protect Lindsey isn't quite as easy as he thought. Lindsey finds giving up on men to be a much bigger chal-

lenge when it comes to Heaven's Beach's sexy sheriff.

“Love At The Twilight”

Sadie's mother called it a gift. Sadie calls it a curse. Can a woman with psychic abilities ever find a man who will accept her as she is?

“Love At First Touch”

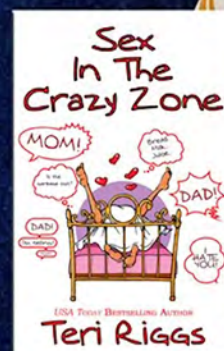
Gift or curse? It no longer matters as long as Kelcie can avoid the debilitating visions that plague her.





TERI
RIGGS

USA TODAY
BESTSELLING
AUTHOR



Teri-Riggs.com

East Texas Booktacular

Hosted by Laura Folkes Goff, East Texas Booktacular was a fantastic event held at the Coppergate Ranch in Mount Pleasant, Texas, on October 21st and 22nd.

The “Meet and Greet” was an event held on the 21st of October, where everyone enjoyed a great meal at The Jalapeno Tree. On Saturday, the day began bright and early. Everyone set up their Halloween themed tables, enjoyed a fantastic lunch, and an exciting book signing event with twenty-five authors.

Plans are already in the making for next year’s event. For more information: www.facebook.com/ETBooktacular



Laura Folkes Goff and Daughter, Brittney



D. Preston Davidson



Friday Night Author Meet and Greet



Friday Night Meet and Greet 2



Martha Rodden



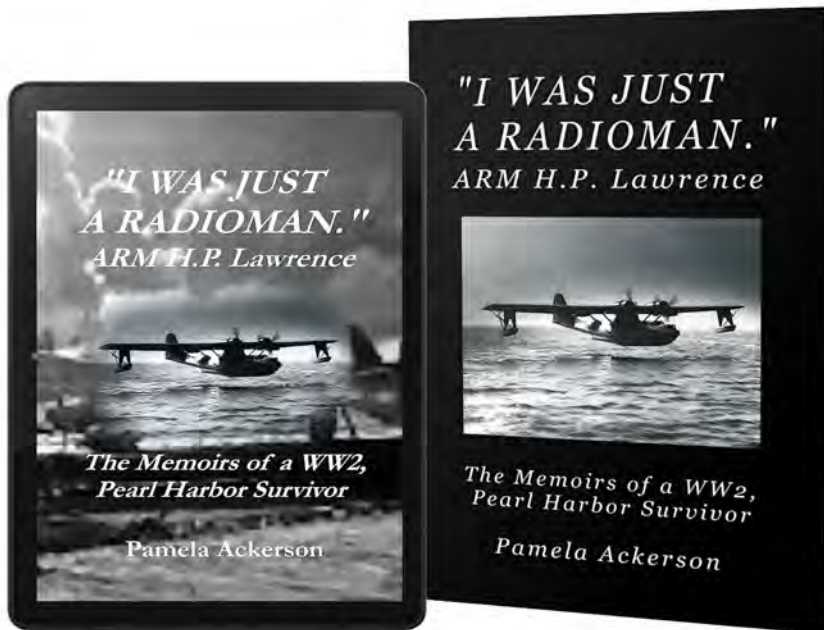
*Pamela Ackerson
(right sitting)*



R R Born



ET Booktacular Group Photo



December 7, 1941

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will live in
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was just
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Romantic Traveling Maui



It's not the biggest island. That's Hawaii. Nor is it the most popular. (Which translates into too many tourists.) That would be Oahu. Maui is the best of both worlds. It's laid back and popular enough that there are lots of things to do without the crippling crowds. It's not so small that one can see it all in one day.

I attended a wedding in Maui in 2019, and it was truly lovely. Why did I go back so soon? It had a lot to do with Southwest Airlines reducing their fares to Hawaii to ridiculously low prices. (And they're doing it again right now.) The tickets, usually ranging between \$500-600 were \$85 each way if, unlike me, you are smart enough to get them early. If not, they hovered around the \$120 rate for about three weeks before going back to normal, still a bargain. Last week, one could get post Christmas tickets for \$105 each way. That is almost unheard of for peak season during high inflation.

This time, instead of my husband, I coerced my partner in crime and all things fun, Lanelle Brent, AdC editor and reviewer, to come with me. Therefore, this is not a romantic traveling article as the title indicates, but with the right substitutions, it can easily be turned into one.

Hawaii is beautiful, no matter which island you chose. If warm breezes, endless, beautiful beaches and huge sea turtles that come up to the shore walls are your thing, you should consider Maui. There are more than ninety beaches in Maui, all with different sizes, shapes, resorts and accommodations. State parks are numerous and varied. Within the state parks, one can find the Black Sand beaches and the Black Rock Beach. On one of my stays, I was at Lahaina, which seemed

to have everything, including jumping off the rocks into the water if you are brave enough.

Maui is all things outdoors. From biking to hiking to zip lining—if you want to do it, there is somewhere that can accommodate you. If you look closely at the picture at the top of this article, you will see a boat...attached to a para-sailor. Would yours truly do that? Never! But, there is something for everybody.

The tennis courts are magnificent. And, one of the hotels provides all surfaces on which to play the King's game--clay, grass, and hard surfaces for the player who wants a specific type of court. Of course, there are many, many golf courses for those who crave the irons and the doglegs. Wanna go helicopter riding? Go right ahead.

Blue Hawaiian Helicopters will take you almost anywhere. Volcano tours are also available to those who want to go.

Large sea turtles come in with the tide.



As with any other famous tourist spots, Maui has tours of almost anything you can think of. Particularly popular are boat tours of many kinds--sunset, dinner, whale watching. Like many other islands, Maui is a home of water sports. Kayaking is popular as is paddle boarding. Have you even heard of ocean rafting? It looks like a lot of fun, but as a non-swimmer, I pass.

Do you surf? It would be a cardinal sin not to hang ten with the surfing animals in Maui. Though you can surf almost anywhere, the Hamoa Beach is noted for its big waves. You do have



There's nothing like seeing a whale breach!



Unless it's seeing two whales breach



Or three lad whales a leaping



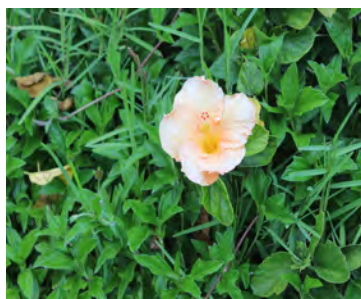
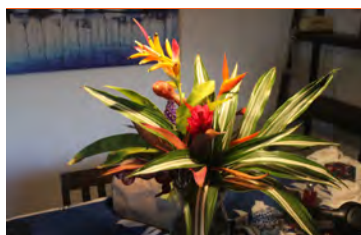
'Bye, y'all. I'll see you in about 25 minutes!

When you see their tails like this one, they're on their way to the bottom.

to watch out for the sharks. If you're not chauvinistic, you might want to learn techniques from the Maui Surfer Girls who have a school for people who need to develop or hone their skills.

Of course, you can choose a less strenuous activity like snorkeling. The array of underwater life is unimaginatively beautiful and the one time it's okay to "swim with the fishes." The recommended beach for that is Checkup Beach. If whale watching appeals to you, Maui is a must. One can observe numerous pods of whales *vis à vis* their blow holes and magnificent waving tails without really trying and certainly without paying for a whale-watching tour. In many instances, you can see them from the beach. Speaking of blow holes, there is a not-well-known geyser call the Nakalele Blow Hole. It's off the beaten path. In fact, there is no path to it. You would have to hike to get to it. However, many attest to the fact that the geyser is worth the walk.

Is horticulture part of your repertoire? The pineapple farms and macadamia nut processors not only educate you, but they tease your taste buds. Maui also owns one of the best Lavender farms known. The Kula Botanical Gardens holds the many and varied species of flora in the islands. O'o



With a climate like Maui's a horticulturist's dreams come true.

Farms offers a tour of their farm with a gourmet lunch. You can also go to one of the Alpaca farms on the island.

Hana Highway is not available all year round, especially during Hawaii's rainy season. When it is open, it provides a scenic route through Hawaii's rain forest. The highway is 64.4 frightening miles long and features virgin landscapes and huge waterfalls. Driving by car, hiking, walking, bicycling and zip lining are all ways to travel through this scenic rain forest. Driving is treacherous and scary with a very narrow road—hardly enough for one car to travel. If that rattles you, you can always take a tour bus. Driving there by car is an all day affair, taking three to six hours to reach the heart of the park. Located in the middle of Haleakala National Park are the Seven Sacred Pools, called the most beautiful and iconic waterfalls in Maui. Warning: you can look, photograph, walk around, etc., but you cannot swim or skinny dip in the Seven Sacred Pools.

The Maui sunset is legendary. There are many tours offered so that you can see it from whatever point of view you like. We watched it from a sunset dinner cruise, and the next night we saw it from the beach. It was breathtaking both times.



One of the Luau performers

Lanelle and I both enjoyed sitting on the beach and relaxing while watching the sunset. Since neither of us swim, we tried to stay away from the waves as much as possible, especially, after Lani sat down on the beach at the edge of the wave and was almost sucked out to sea as the tide swept in. She said it happened so fast—one minute she was enjoying the lapping waves, the next she had lost her balance on the shifting sand (Yes, she was sitting down!), and the undertow was dragging her out to sea! Thankfully a kind tourist was walking by and noticed her distress and gave her a helping hand.



Several phases of the Maui Sunset

(Inject an imaginative romantic scene: A handsome stranger's hand coming out of nowhere, their eyes meet as he pulls her out of the water to safety...No such luck. He was a kind, middle-aged father walking the beach with his wife and children. But one could dream. After all, we were in Hawaii! Not realizing that she had been in distress, I was happily filming the entire thing!

The single most famous activity offered in Maui as well as the other Hawaiian islands is the luau. At Ritz-Carlton, it's an all you can eat dinner affair. It is a luau, and traditionally a pig is roasted, and there were meats of different kinds. There was not much, however, for the vegetarian who paid the same \$150 as the meat eater. When you're finished with dinner, there is a program that tells the story of Hawai'i. Women whose hips seem like they're on rollers, dance the story of ancestors padding across the Pacific and landing in Hawai'i. The men—I was so awed by their fire-handling techniques as well as their dancing, I didn't know what story they were telling. It was a visual feast. The only downside to attending a luau as an individual tourist is you need to make your reservations months before your arrival.

I cannot complete this article without mentioning the very kind people of the island. Sure, there are the hustlers and merce-

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With performances like these, do you really care what food is served?

naries, but there are the genuinely nice people. One of them was Kimberly Quamo who saw two frisky ladies who didn't have leis. She hand made one

for each of us out of lilac-colored lilies which were truly beautiful. After all, she said, you can't come to Maui without getting lei'd.

When you go to Maui, plan to spend a lot of money or flexible plastic. Because the islands are somewhat isolated and not close to other commerce, almost everything is expensive. It was like that 30 years ago, way before Covid 19. Almost every venue that hosts a luau is booked months in advance; so don't wait until you arrive on the island to plan to go to one. You won't get in, and it's a Hawaii an experience you won't want to miss. Knowing that, plan carefully. Still, the beaches are free as are many other spots of interest. I guarantee you, you will find fun activities that won't break the bank if you look. With that, I will say "Aloha." If you decide to go, have a wonderful time.

The Spotlight Is Shining On ...

Holly J. Martin page 19



Holly J. Martin's mother always told her she was in love with love. And guess what, she was right! After all, what is more exciting than a crush? When Holly isn't writing steamy, crush-worthy romance novels, she can be found running (she has several marathons under her belt), reading steamy romances (of course), enjoying a glass of wine with her husband (always her favorite crush), or binging on Netflix.

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

HJM: I write mostly contemporary/erotica fiction.

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

HJM: I write about strong men who struggle when they fall in love. They're usually overprotective, jealous, and crazy about the girl. The females are strong but sometimes quirky. They live life on their own terms. They too struggle when they fall in love with an alpha male.

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

HJM: The new boxset for the Johnson Family is now available. Book 1-10 is the story about a Maine family, a large Maine family. The first book is about the youngest and only female out of ten kids. Jack Elsie Johnson. The other nine books are standalone stories of each of her brothers.

AdC: *Favorite Quote?*

HJM: "He's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same." Emily Bronte

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

HJM: I go for a long walk and the story begins to flow again.

AdC: *What do you like to read? Do you have a favorite genre?*

HJM: I love all books. I find that because I'm surrounded by romance constantly, I enjoy a good thriller.

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

HJM: In my writing, I find that when a character is going through a difficult time, I'm right there with them. I take their stress, fear, or grief with me in my everyday life. I haven't found a way to separate myself from my characters' pain. I don't necessarily see this as a weakness or a flaw but how much my characters are real to me. So, I guess I haven't found a way to go beyond it.

AdC: *What's something about you – personality traits, habits, background, etc., that has been useful in your writing?*

HJM: I'm an introvert so I love to be alone and write. My love of books has been lifelong. My grandmother always read romance as did my mother. My mother used to tell me that I was in love with love! I worked at the State House in Augusta, Maine, for many years before I took early retirement so I could write full-time. The only drawback is that I can go days without seeing another human besides my

No Past

No History

No Accident



He's committed himself to a step-by-step plan for future success that doesn't leave any room for wildcards...

A dark secret lurked in Sarah's past. It was all dreadfully mysterious—and Beau didn't like being on the receiving end of a mystery.

HollyJMartin.com

@Princess33Holly

husband. But refer back to my first sentence – introverts love to be alone!

AdC: Please share your contact information

Holly J. Martin - Personal Web Page
- [Holly J. Martin - Steamy, Contemporary Romance Author \(hollyjmartin.com\)](http://HollyJ.Martin-Steamy,ContemporaryRomanceAuthor(hollyjmartin.com))



Season's Greetings
from the staff of *Affaire de Coeur*

Pam Binder

New York Times
USA Today
Bestselling Author



Gingerbread Knight

Together they devise
a dangerous plan,
knowing failure
means they will never
see each other again.

PamBinder.com



Christmas Knight

To find her mystery man,
she must travel through time.

Christmas Deadline

Will Holly and Noel manage to
write a happily-ever-after for their
fictional couple—and themselves
by their Christmas deadline?





A Few of Our Favorite Things for Christmas

Across

3. Bracelets, rings, necklaces, etc.
7. Fitbit, Apple, Timex, Gucci.
9. _____ soldiers.
10. "All I want for Christmas is my two front _____."
12. Snow _____, shake them and see magic.
13. "_____ keep fallin' on my head."
15. Worn on Christmas morning.
17. Lots of _____, that's what Elvis wanted.
19. These rides usually involve a horse.
20. The three little kittens lost theirs.
21. Ken, Barbie, Chatterbox, etc.
22. Chocolate chip, oatmeal, peanut butter, etc.
26. Big bird on the Thanksgiving table.
27. Atari, PS5, X-Box are _____ games.
30. *Eau de* _____.
32. Sauce or gel, this is served with #26 Across.
33. Peta objects to a coat made of this...
34. Worn around the neck.
36. This weed compels couples to kiss.
37. Baby horses.
38. Austrian pastry with sweet stuff inside.

Down

1. In "Santa Baby," Eartha wants one of these boats.
2. Birds that "fly with moon on their wings."
4. Coldest of the four seasons.
5. Ribbons that go around the

waist.

6. Vessel for brewing tea.
8. Thin slice of pounded meat.
11. "Ring" is the name of one that lets you see who's there.
14. Women don't REALLY want these for Christmas.
16. White precipitate.
18. A break from the routine.
22. Cadillac, Tesla, Porsche, Ford, etc.

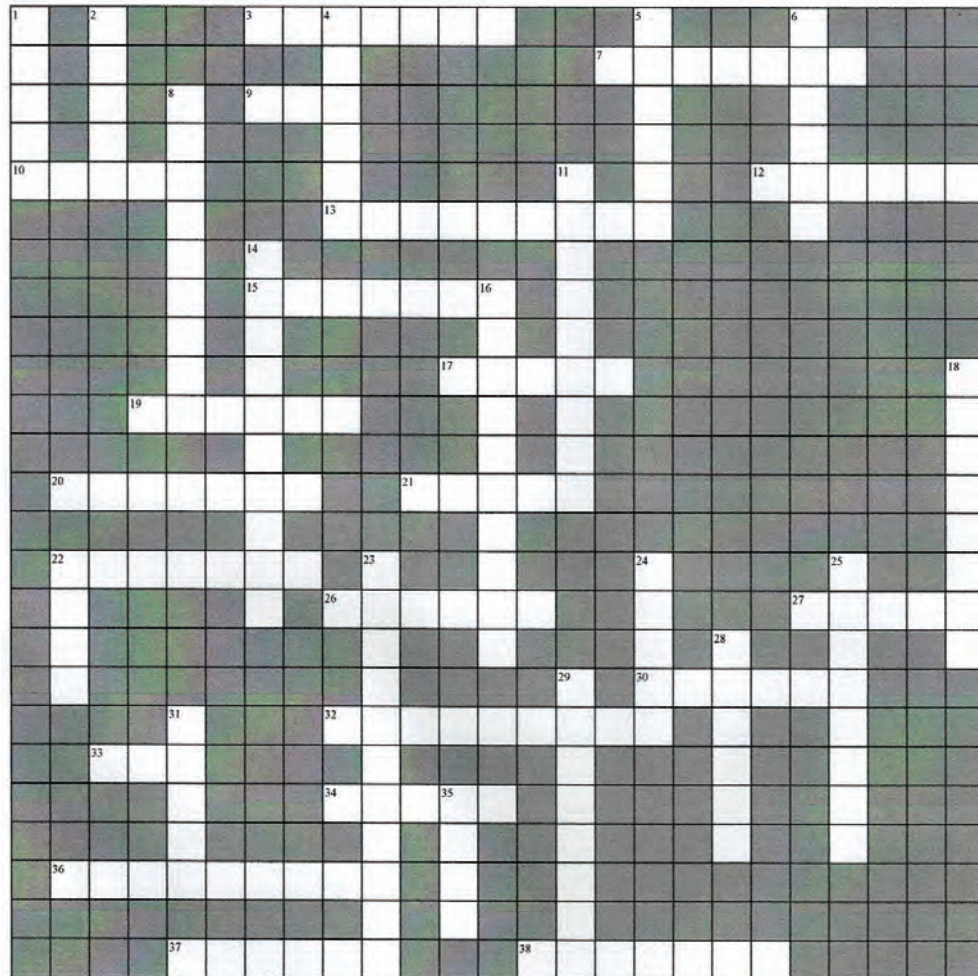
23. These were used to open peacans.

24. Man's best little friend.
26. A girl's best friend.
28. Round decoration that goes on the door.
29. These go on the tree.
31. This cake is not welcomed by all during the holidays.
35. Engagement, class, friendship-worn on the fingers.

Answers on page 24

Favorite Things for Christmas

Louise B. Snead



Affaire de Coeur

REVIEWS

| | |
|-------|-------------------------------|
| ★★★★★ | Amazing/Excellent |
| ★★★★ | Good |
| ★★★ | Average |
| ★★ | Something's missing |
| ★ | More than one element missing |

Sometimes a book does not quite fit into the description above. That is when the reviewer will use 1/2 to indicate it is better than its description but not quite at the next level.

Books are evaluated on (1) Characterization (2) Plot (3) Pacing, (4) Writing and (5) Originality



Contemporary Romance



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The Lost Ticket

Freya Sampson

Berkley

E-book

978-0593201411

★★★★

When Libby Nicolls' boyfriend breaks up with her and kicks her out of their shared house, she is forced to stay with her older sister in London, filling in as a glorified nanny to her nephew. On the 88 bus, she meets an older man named Frank who entralls her with his story of his dream girl he met forty years ago on the very same bus. Libby decides to help Frank reconnect with the girl of his dreams by finding her. She works with Franks' care-giver, Dylan, whose Mohawk and Goth demeanor contrasts with his inner "softie" personality. In helping Frank and spending time with Dylan, Libby just might find some meaning in her life and the courage to seek out her own dreams.

The Lost Ticket is an engaging, thoroughly enjoyable novel about

Affaire de Coeur

relationships. It delves into the complicated but rich connections that humans make through their lives, with relatives, lovers, even acquaintances that may initially start out as casual, but become in strange ways, integral to their lives. There are touching and bittersweet moments in this quick moving narrative that will stay with readers. Libby shows a lot of growth and becomes more comfortable in her skin as she involves herself in the quest to help Frank and finds new friendships along the way. The romance between Libby and Dylan progresses in an authentic, perfectly paced way. Dylan is a sweetheart with flaws that make him more endearing. Although the suspense near the end felt a little contrived,

The Lost Ticket delivers a very satisfying read that will leave a smile on the reader's face.

Danielle Hill

Contemporary Romance

Single with Cat

Rosa Silva

Self-published

E-book

B09LVW6TS7

★★★^{1/2}

Single with Cat starts out with her mother nagging her about not being in a relationship yet...aka not married, and becoming, for shame—a spinster!

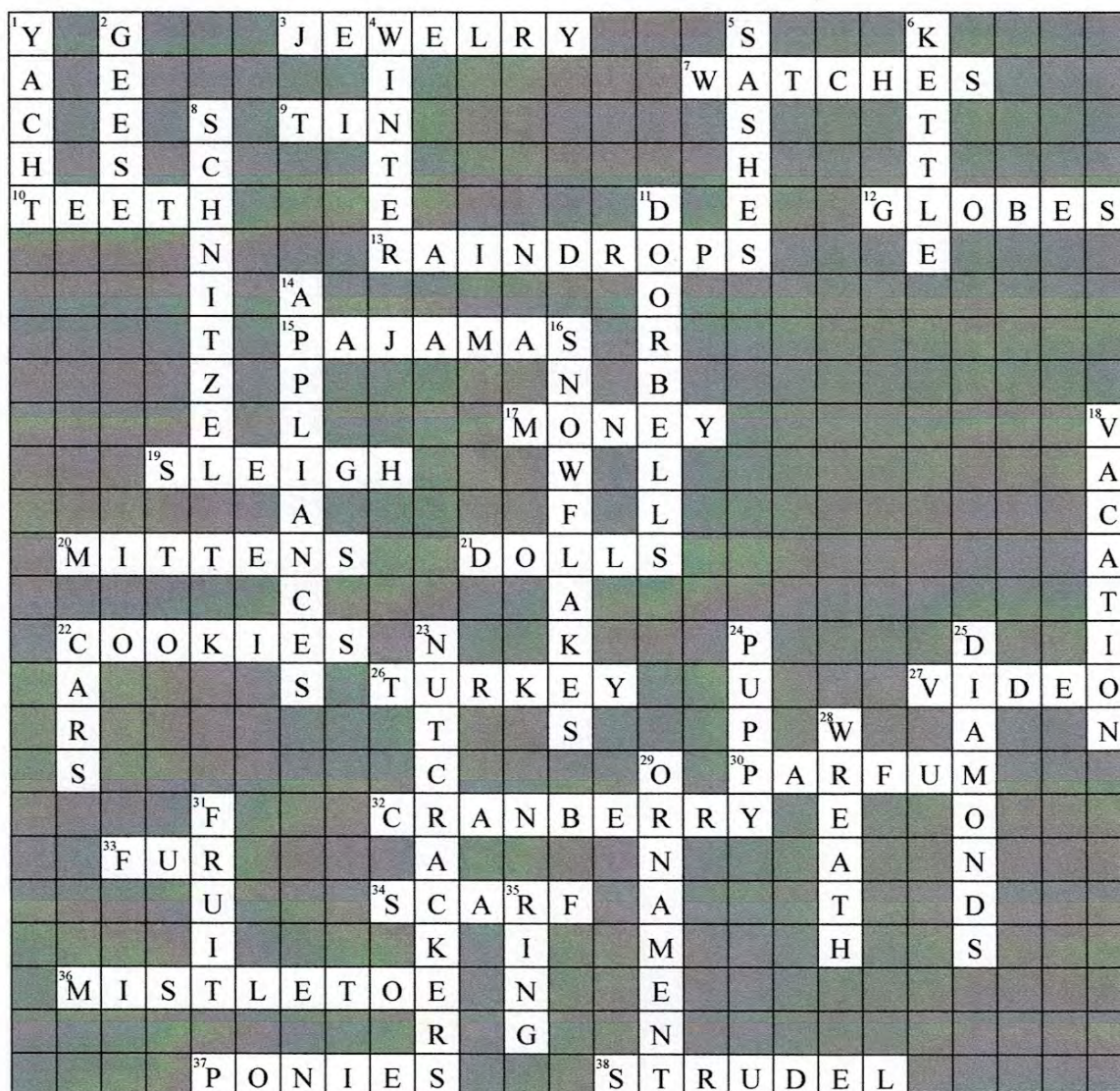
Moving forward a few chapters, the story finally got to a great plot. Olivia inherits a bookstore and begins a new life. Uh-oh! In comes a gorgeous man to make her life an interesting adventure, a bank manager threatening to foreclose on the bookstore she just inherited. Gabriel, of course, irritated the bejeebers out of her, but her cat, Chili, loved him.

This reviewer had a hard time warming up to the story. Starting a story with dialogue is irksome and disorienting, leading the reader feeling as if he/she has jumped into the middle of the story and to question: Where are we? What's going on?

Lauren Calder

Favorite Things for Christmas

Louise B. Snead





Historical Romance

Reviews

The Highlander's Holiday Wife (Clan Kendrick)

Vanessa Kelly

Zebra

Mass Market

978-1420154535

★★★★^{1/2}

One night as Dr. Braden Kendrick is making his rounds in the slums of Edinburgh, he is cornered by two thugs. Fortunately, two masked strangers come to his rescue. To Braden's astonishment, one of them is a woman!

Samantha Penwith is determined. She is going to bring her hus-

band's murderer to justice and find the orphans who've recently disappeared. Samantha's friend, Bathsheba, confronts her. Samantha must stop going out at night accompanied only by her manservant, Donny, searching for answers. Bathsheba warns that if Samantha's grandfather-in-law discovers her activities, he will remove her deaf sister-in-law from Samantha's custody. He's ashamed of the girl and wants to hide her away. She knows it's risky, but Samantha can't stop. No one believes that Roger was murdered; so no one's looking for his killer. No one believes that the children are in danger; so no one's looking for them either.

Bathsheba's husband introduces Braden to Samantha. Braden recognizes her as the woman who rescued him. He realizes with Donny incapacitated she intends to continue her sleuthing alone. Braden insists on accompanying Samantha.

Braden and Samantha are attracted to each other. But she will not allow herself to love again until Roger's killer is brought to justice. The Kendrick clan joins in to help Samantha find the truth.

This is a continuation of a series. It can be read alone. It is a really good book.

Sheila Griffin

Never Rescue a Rogue: A Novel (The Merriwell Sisters Book 2)

Virginia Heath

St. Martin's Griffin

Trade Paperback

978-1250787781

★★★★^{1/2}

Giles Sinclair, the next Duke of Harpenden, has a secret. He's a bastard. Someone has threatened to reveal the truth. In response, Giles's father quickly arranges to marry a young woman to provide a legitimate heir. But before the wedding proceeds, the duke dies. Giles is in a horrible position. If Giles admits he's a bastard, his vicious uncle, Gervais, will take over the estate and destroy it. If the truth comes out, Giles will be disgraced and possibly deported. He needs someone to help ferret out who's discovered the truth. Giles turns to a woman who is as clever as she is irritating.

Diana Merriwell has a secret too. She is the feared investigative journalist, the Sentinel. Her family thinks that Diana is merely a gossip columnist. If they knew the truth, they would force her to quit immediately.

Giles asks Diana to use her investigative skills to find out who threatened his father. To their astonishment as Giles and Diana work together, they fall in love. If Diana gives in to her love for Giles, she will be giving up her independence. If Giles marries Diana, she risks the same ruin he faces. And yet, how can they live without each other?

This is a continuation of a series. It can be read alone. It's a fun and interesting story that leaves the reader excited to read the rest of the books.

Sheila Griffin

The Whispering Tongues Beth Andrews

Joffe Books

E-book

978-1804055786

★★★★^{1/2}

Anthea Halliwell, the hermit of Bath, broke her vow of self-reclusion to request an unannounced audience with Mr. Rodrigo, an acquaintance of her father's. Her proposal? To help her open a milliner's shop. She couldn't ask her father...they were destitute; his gambling out-of-hand.

Mr. Rodrigo attempted to help her with solutions, to avoid "lowering" herself to work in a shop and move to the wrong side of town. He refused to lend her the money. However, he did come up with another more enticing solution to her problems. Unsure of how to proceed to bring his daughter out into society, he needed help, and Anthea had the knowledge and connections. She assumed he wanted her to be a companion to his daughter, but his proposal went beyond that. Mr. Rodrigo wanted Anthea to be his wife...

What a wonderful story! Beth Andrews has given her readers, an enchanting, feel-good story that brings a smile with each turn of the page, right to the very end!

Elena B



The staff of *Affaire de Coeur* mourns the loss of author Desiree Holt. Readers may be familiar with her alpha heroes and the non-alpha women who loved them.

A prolific writer of more than 250 titles, Ms. Holt was a *USA Today* bestselling author who wrote in many genres—including sports, contemporary, military, romantic suspense, western, and paranormal. She left no hulk unturned---special forces, cowboys, hot Scottish mountain rescue heroes—her main criteria for them is they were hot! Adored by the news media, Ms. Holt has been interviewed CBS "Sunday Morning" and in various newspapers such as *U.S. News & World Report*, and *The Huffington Post*. An award-winning author—winner of the EPIC, the Holt Medallion and the Authors After Dark awards, she was one of the first to write and have published erotic romance while she maintained her strong plots and characterizations.

She will be missed among the talented authors of today. We send our prayers to her family, friends, and fans.



Historical and Contemporary Whodunnits?

Muffin But the Truth

Ellie Alexander

St. Martin's Press

E-Book

B09XLGLGNL

★★★★

Fans of the “Bakeshop Mystery” series should be delighted to revisit Ashland, Oregon, and a familiar cast of characters in this 16th book in the series.

Pastry chef Juliet Capshaw, owner of Torte Bakeshop, can't seem to stop getting involved in the intrigue that seems to always find its way into this small Oregon town. When she's hired to cater an adventure camping trip along the Rogue River, ostensibly meant to promote bonding among the employees of a company named Bamboo, trouble begins right away with an overly demanding assistant and a CEO who goes beyond obnoxious into toxic.

What should be a pleasant interlude enjoying nature is marred by infighting among the employees, insults from the sneering, never satisfied CEO, and then things really take a turn for the worse when one

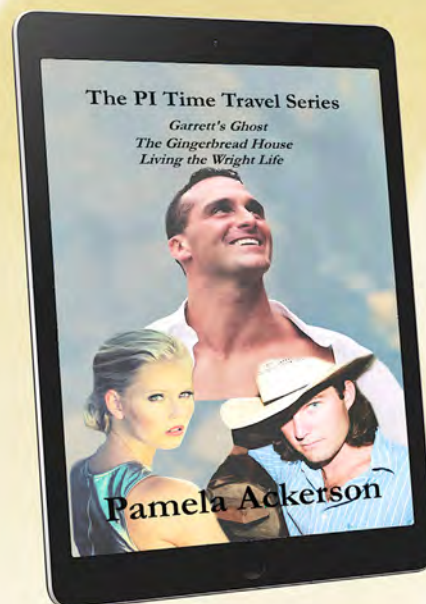
of the employees is murdered. Or was it some sort of accident? Because many accidents are occurring during this trip. Juliet is determined to learn not only “who-dun nit,” but why. And she has to do it before anything else goes wrong.

In addition to the mystery, we catch up with her relationship to her husband Carlos, her excellent staff, and many members of the community who have become a fixture in this series. Nevertheless, this book can be enjoyed as a standalone for anyone who hasn't read the previous books.

It's a challenge to go along with Juliet to try to solve the murder while also drooling over descriptions of the tasty pastries and meals she is preparing in the bakeshop.

Hannah Rowan

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This May End Badly

Samantha Markum

*Narrated by Samantha Markum
and Heather Masters*

OrangeSky Audio

Digital audiobooks: CD's
978-1667068152

★★★★

Heather Masters narrates Samantha Markum's *This May End Badly* in which Doe and Wells, high schoolers from rival schools, fake a relationship to one-up their nemesis—Three.

They inadvertently become friends, catching feelings for each other while pretending to date to get under Three's skin. Doe's gifted at creating and pulling pranks with her BFFs/Weston Girls with whom she's set on winning the century-long war against their rival boy's school Winfield Academy before senior year ends. Unfortunately, Weston's planned merger with Winfield next year sends their longtime feud into warp speed, spiraling the school and their lives into chaos.

Doe wants to prove the schools' students don't mix to protect Weston starting with her nemesis Three, Winfield's boy king and Wells' cousin. She makes a deal with Wells that he will

fake date Doe, and she'll help him get his rightful family heirloom back from Three. To keep their relationship secret, Doe lies to her friends and family. As they spend time together, Doe's feelings for Wells become real and deep. Ultimately, Doe must choose between winning the school rivalry or joining forces with rivals when a teacher that Weston students have always suspected of inappropriate behavior hurts a younger Weston girl.

Markum's dynamic writing style, vibrant and detailed description and deftly developed likable, fascinating, and complex but imperfect characters draw listeners in and keep them glued to her novel. Three's and Doe's chemistry delight listeners with funny interactions, and intimate conversations and moments. Masters' narration perfectly match Doe's and Wells' characters, plus others. She skillfully provides distinct voices for each character, using tone, cadence, and emotion to capture their personalities, moods, and egocentricities. Her voices for Wells and his cousins are so good listeners might believe there are two narrators.

This May End Badly is a funny, angsty, sweet, and entertaining YA romance with a multi-layered story that explores themes of friendship, bullies,

dysfunctional families, sexism, first love, and self-discovery.

Lacy Hill

Vanishing Hour

Laura Griffin

*Narrated by Laura Griffin and
Julia Atwood*

Dreamscape Audio

Audiobook and cd's
Romantic Suspense/Mystery/Thriller
978-1666617252

★★★★ 1/2

Julia Atwood narrates Laura Griffin's romantic suspense audiobook *Vanishing Hour*. Native rural Texan and corporate lawyer Ava Burch moved to the small town of Cuervo, trading in the big city, daily grind for the dry, rugged wilderness near Big Bend National Park. Her father raised search-and-rescue dogs when she was a child and trained her dog Huck, with whom she volunteers for search and rescue (SAR). On such a search-and-rescue mission, they discover an abandoned campsite.

Deputy Sheriff Grant Wycoff's first impression of Ava is of a city slicker who's out of place working search-and-rescue in Cuervo. But he rethinks it after getting to know her. The abandoned campsite reminds Grant of an unsolved case of a missing young woman from two years ago. Together he and Ava investigate the campsite. Shortly thereafter, another woman disappears under peculiar circumstances. Ava and Grant battle Texas' brutal heat, work against the clock, and try to fight their smoldering chemistry while solving the mystery of missing women.

Griffin establishes Ava and Grant's smoldering attraction early on, transitioning their relationship to friends, then lovers with humor, banter, and sexually charged and steamy/intimate conversations and interactions. Her vivid and detailed descriptions, brilliantly plotted and suspenseful narrative make for a compelling romance. The action/suspense scenes are tautly written, exciting, and well-executed. It's an intense novel with more than a few nail-biting moments. Griffin's SAR

Audiobooks

sequences are fascinating and feel authentic and well-researched. Atwood's narration complements Griffin's writing style, and the novel's suspenseful tone and small-town Texas setting. Her pleasing voice draws you in with her calming, gentle, and natural-sounding Texas/southern accent. She provides distinct voices using intonation, dialects, pacing, emotion, and tone to differentiate between the characters, capturing their personalities and moods. Atwood's voices/narration for Ava and Grant fits them perfectly. The huskiness and concise, guarded, and inquisitive tone in Grant's voice hint at his intense nature and dedication to his job. Atwood effortlessly shifts through the

novel's varying tones. Brilliantly expressing the characters' feelings and motivations, Atwood's reading style brings Griffin's words to life with emotion while preserving Griffin's procedural/thriller narrative style.

Vanishing Hour is a deftly plotted suspense/mystery with a sweet, sexy romance, *Vanishing Hour* is a captivating read highly recommended for romantic suspense, small-town mystery, and romantic thriller fans.

Lacy Hill





An Amazing Thing Happened on the Way to the Future

Michael Segedy

Self-published

E-book

Sci-fi Fantasy

B0BD5XDGS2

★★★ 1/2

Jacob Ladder and Emma Fine are touring a library facility and follow Dr. David Sagan with interest learning about the different nano technology, holographs, and telepathic communications.

The next section of the book begins in first person referring to their parent.. This was a bit confusing, as the reader has no idea who is narrating and there are a lot of random thoughts about the narrator's parents...

The next section goes back to Jacob and Emma. Dr. Sagan arranges a guide at the Health and Restoration center. This is where they learn the future 'generates' babies and other various changes the future has to offer.

There are a lot of plot twists

to this story. It's not, in any way, the typical sci-fi fantasy. It was a bit hard to follow, but in itself, a darn good story.

Lauren Calder

Art

Marin

Fontreal

E-book

978-1989661277

★★★★ 1/2

This is a story about an artistic and autistic circus artist. The author worked as a janitor in the circus and personally knew Art. Art was a musician, artist, and one of the stars of the show along with his teddy bear. The teddy bear was Art's only friend, and he believed the bear was magical.

The artwork throughout the book is absolutely beautiful

This reader would've loved to have known more about Art. The book is perfect to always keep on display for friends and family to enjoy, whether it be face forward on a shelf, or on the

coffee table.

Lauren Calder

The Complete Self-Publishing Blueprint

Rudo Muchoko

Self-published

Self help

E-book

★★★

The Complete Self-Publishing Blueprint is a collection of information on how to become a published author. It weighs the significance from becoming an author—traditional vs. self-publishing—the importance of reviews, and a touch of marketing and advertising.

For someone looking into self-publishing, it is a good book as a beginning read for research. The information is not in-depth, but the author approaches each section with facts and necessary requirements for the potential author.

If you are looking to becoming an author, this book is a good start to in-

Booty

clude in your research along with other books that can help you succeed in your goal.

Lauren Calder

Destiny of Determination

Cathy Burnham Martin

Quiet Thunder Publishing

E-book

978-1939220615

☆☆☆

Destiny of Determination is a wonderful story of the hope and faith of an Armenian family who came to the U.S. to escape persecution.

Cassie and Roy Mavin arrive home to discover their home had been ransacked and burglarized. Everything that would be considered valuable—pawn-worthy—had been taken. But the one thing that was taken that hurt the most was the family wedding ring, a ring that had been in the family for generations.

The story jumps to her grandfather, Hrant Gulumian, and their family's emotional, and adventurous ocean journey to the United States. After going through the necessary channels, they'd arrived at Ellis Island, and their American journey began.

This is an incredible story of the faith and determination endured by those who chased the American dream.

Lauren Calder

Expect Obsession

JoAnn Smith Ainsworth

Self-published

E-book

B0BHG875LZ

☆☆☆

Gertrude Whitehead waited impatiently at Union Station for Tillie Weber. Gertrude's assignment was to assume the identity and infiltrate Hamilton House, the U.S. Watch Committee's facility. Hitler wanted The Book

of Cures, an ancient book of spells, and she was assigned to retrieve it.

Isadora Turgenev wanted to prove herself to the upper echelons at Hamilton House. Danger was coming from different directions, and Isadora's crystal ball warned her of the impending peril. When Isadora made the decision to protect the niece of a Nazi enemy, several committee employees were not happy with her. They were already on edge waiting for Tillie Weber to arrive to cover as a temp...

As always, Ms. Ainsworth's "Operation Delphi" novels continue to impress with her fast-paced and page-turning stories. It has all of my favorites wrapped up into one story, history, paranormal, and cozy.

Lauren Calder

Exultation of the Moirai

Kathi Haacke Morehead

Self-published

E-book

B0BDPG95RV

☆☆☆ 1/2

Molly Richards is a successful employee with a bright future in an established New York public relations firm. Her love life, for the moment, is another matter. Jason, her boyfriend, is expecting to marry her, but she isn't satisfied with the relationship and breaks up with him.

Jason isn't one to take no for an answer. Before they parted ways, he made it known to her it wasn't over and he would have her. It wasn't a good scene, but she left thinking it was done. Jason is persistent and contacts her constantly. Having had enough, she decides to take a sojourn. Unbeknownst to Jason, she owns a small cottage by the sea and ignores Jason's advances. Molly adores her Grandmother Nan and invites her to go with Molly to get away to the cottage and chill.

A voice inside her softly guides

her, but it's not hers. It's an entity unto itself. Sometimes contrary, it becomes an occasional companion.

Her sojourn by the sea is good, but it's about to be interrupted. The voice in her head, along with her grandmother's help, Molly gets through a difficult time when she finds her ex has finally found where she's staying. The story is about Molly. It's extensive in it's telling of her day-to-day activities and interactions with other people, occasionally touching base on the plot. The hitchhiker in her mind is sporadic through the story, barely an acquaintance. She deals with the voice and moves on.

The story tends to feel like it's a bit long, but, still is enjoyable. Follow this character in her day-to-day affairs.

Lauren Calder

The Lost Witch

Paige Crutcher

St. Martin's Griffin

Trade Paperback

978-1250797391

☆☆☆

Brigid Heron begs her goddess to give her a child. The goddess refuses. Then Brigid met a demigod who impregnates her.

Dove, Brigid's daughter, is twelve when the wasting sickness strikes. In desperation, Brigid takes her to the lough and forces Dove to drink from it. She's healed instantly. Then a tentacle reaches from the lake, grabs Dove and pulls her into its depths. Brigid repeatedly dives after Dove but there's no sign of her. The goddess appears, the air ripples and Brigid disappears.

When Brigid opens her eyes, she is in her house, but she has no memory of how she got there. There are photographs of two young women that Brigid doesn't recognize. A metal beast pulls into the driveway disgorging one of the women from the photos. The girl

Booty

getting out of the car is Ophelia. For the past thirteen years ago she and her sister, Finola, have been protecting the village from the monsters that began to arise from the lough when Brigid disappeared 100 years ago.

The girls tell Brigid that she has the power to seal the lough. No more monsters will rise from it. Brigid informs the girls that she doesn't know what they are talking about. Will Brigid be able to regain her memory and reseal the lough? Or are the townspeople doomed?

This book is very confusing and not very interesting.

Sheila Griffin

Paperback Jack

Loren Estleman

Forge Books

Hardcover

978-1250827319 Hardcover

★★★★

In post-World War II New York City, returning veteran Jacob Applebaum struggles to reclaim his formerly successful career writing for pulp magazines. While he was overseas, the sensational magazines gave way to something new—the paperback novel. Even Jacob's well-worn typewriter refuses to cooperate in his quest for publication, but when he enters a pawn shop looking to purchase a replacement, he is unable to make a deal with the surly pawnbroker.

In an uncharacteristic act of desperation and revenge, Jacob returns late at night, smashes the pawn shop window, and grabs the machine. He twists the circumstances of the theft into a novel that catches the eye of an editor eager to publish the new genre of pulp novels with colorful covers graced with half-naked women. At his editor's behest, Jacob becomes Jack Holly, newly minted and successful writer.

The House on Cedar Ridge: Locke Manor

Pamela Ackerson

Self-published

E-book

B09ZTJ2V55

★★★★



No peace could be found; the walls within harbored dangerous and frightening secrets. A mysterious ivory fan, a forced marriage, and a vengeful witch were among them and threatened those who sought repose in the great house of Cedar Ridge. Danger and deception whispered along the corridors and hidden crevices. The sunlight upon the walls of the museum cast a deceiving appearance of serenity.

I enjoyed this story just as much as the first one. The intricate plotting and wonderful descriptions kept me on the edge of my Kindle! Thalia really has her hands full now! Five stars from me!

Mark Schultz

His writing career adds many twists and turns to his life, from a stint in Hollywood to work on a screenplay, to a writing class where he meets his own love interest. Friendship with a crazed cover artist leads him to even more adventures, from association with a mob boss to investigation by the House Select Committee on Pornography and Juvenile Delinquency, spurred on by outrage

over the racy covers. *Paperback Jack* not only gives the reader a sympathetic main character but provides insight into a period of our history that's often overlooked, as well as a peek into the workings of the publishing industry. We can follow along his travails and triumphs in a story that's hard to put down.

Hannah Rowan



Affaire de Coeur



Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus

Lauren Martin
Self-Published

E-book
979-8353793151

★★★★ 1/2

Eight-year-old Virginia asked her father if Santa was real. Her friends were telling her differently. He told her that it was in the local newspaper; so it must be true. Virginia decided to write a letter to the editor of the newspaper.

The editor answered her email, encouraging her to believe—even if she couldn't see it, and explained many ways that Santa was real.

"The amount we understand is the size of an ant."

Absolutely precious!

Elena B

Stan and Allen

Huxley Ren Bunn

Illustrated by Huxley Ren Bunn
Archway Publishing

Oversized Paperback
978-1665731171

★★★

Stan and Allen is about two allegators friends walking together in the rain.

No it isn't. The author uses two allegator friends walking in the rain to discuss a current social issue--the need for and appropriateness of gender identification nad how to be gender neutral. Within that discussion,

Stan identifies the prounous--hi, her, them and him, they she--and gives some of the rules of gender identification i.e. "you can always use a gender neutral greeting." He uses this to emphasize how one must consider the feelings of others as he warn that failure to do so migh result in someone's feelings being hurt.

Kudos to Bunn for facing this

issue head on and cleverly with the discussion occurring between friends. However, the presentation is distracted by its graphics. the changing of fonts and font sizes for no specific reason. The pictures are not the type that draw a child to a book to it, and this reviewer is not sure the chil would stick with it. The author uses rhyme to tell the story, and that, too, becomes a distraction. . The blurb on the back kof the book says that this book is appropriate for children of all age groups. This reviewer disagrees, as children should have a basic knowledge of English grammar, specifically pronouns o understand non-binary substitutions. Still, this is an important topic and it is current--who doesn't struggle with which pronoun to use? Bunn recognizes we have to start somewhere with children and the earlier the better. *Stan and Allen* is a good way to start.

Mildred Burkett



The Luminaries

Susan Dennard

Tor Forge

Hardcover/eBook

978-1250194046 Hardcover

Teenage Fantasy

★★★★

Nightmares come alive in the forest by Hemlock Falls, where the entire city is dedicated to keeping them under control and keeping the outside world safe. The Luminaries must contend with all manner of supernatural creatures who threaten human existence, including werewolves, ghosts, selkies, banshees, vampires, and more.

Winnie Wednesday grew up dreaming of becoming a nightmare hunter, which requires years of training and passing rigorous and dangerous tests. Her dreams are shattered when her father is convicted of being a traitor, and her entire family is stripped of status for ten years. At the age of sixteen, after enduring four years of being an outcast, Winnie takes it upon herself to redeem their position in society, facing many

life-threatening trials and learning who her true friends are.

Fans of *Harry Potter* or *The Hunger Games* will be drawn to this secret world, and who can help but root for Winnie as she overcomes her fears and strives to attain her dream?

Hannah Rowan



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SEASON'S GREETING
FROM

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