

Affaire de Coeur

May/June, 2022

Multi-genre Author and
Helpless Romantic,
Sheri Lynn

*Get to know the 'Magic' of
Darynda Jones*





Five short stories full of mystery, intrigue, and romance, offer their own unique slant on the Regency era.



Amazon/BethAndrews

May/June, 2022

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Dear QWERTY



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Authors

May/June, 2022

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Affaire de Coeur

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Literary Reviewer, Lacy Hill
See Her Bio Inside

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Dear QWERTY

by Pamela Ackerson

Tips That Finally Unravel Those Annoying Grammar Questions

This, That, These, Those, and Next!



This, that, these, those, and next can all represent a person, people, thing(s), or ideas for the present or near a place in time, thought, or action. People don't have a problem with most demonstrative pronouns.

For example:

This book is paranormal.

That book is historical fiction.

Those books are young adult.

These books are contemporary.

However, I'm not really sure why people get them confused when referring to present, time, action, etc. If you look at the words as describing distance, perhaps it may help.

This person, someone near you.

That person, someone who is a distance from you.

These children, a group near you.

Those children, a group a distance from you.

"This car is mine." This would pertain to the car nearest to the speaker.

"That car is mine." Referring to the car in the distance of the speaker. As in, "Over there, that is my car. Not this one."

"This box is mine." (nearby)

"That box is my husband's." Referring to something nearby that isn't mine.

"These are mine." (nearby)

"Those boxes belong to another author." Boxes in the distance, away from the speaker.

It can get confusing if not spoken correctly. People understand distinction, and when it's not forthcoming, confusion sets in. This, that, and next referring to time can throw some people through a loop as well.

Three decades of observing the impacts of racial identity in America



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This week, next week, this Saturday, and next Saturday. It doesn't help when one person considers Sunday the beginning of the week and one person considers Monday the beginning of the week. But, we'll not go into that right now.

To avoid confusion, we'll go with Monday as the beginning of the week.

On Tuesday morning (the 17th), your boss says the package will arrive next Thursday. You're thinking it's arriving on Thursday, the 19th. Thursday comes along and no package arrives. You do what you're supposed to do. Find out why it didn't arrive, right?

Except, he said it would arrive next Thursday, meaning the 26th. If he'd said this Thursday, it would've been arriving on the 19th.

This being closer in time, and next being farther away.

Another example: It's Thursday, and you're told the package will arrive next week.

Easy! Even if Saturday or Sunday is the last day of the week for you, next week is definitely any time after the last day of the week. Why? Because this week is the present. The week in which you're presently working. Therefore, next week, when the work week begins will be on Monday. The following week (next) of your present day/week.

Signing off with this article, and we'll see you with more "Dear QWERTY" in the next issue!



The Spotlight Is Shining On ...



Darynda Jones

New York Times and *USA Today* Best Selling author, Darynda Jones, won both a Golden Heart and a RITA for her manuscript *First Grave On the Right*. But even before then, she couldn't remember a time she wasn't putting pen to paper.

When she was five, she would pick up a pencil and notepad, scribble utter chaos onto the page, and ask her mom to read her masterpiece aloud. Thankfully, her mother would play along. Darynda wrote plays for the neighborhood kids, made up stories for her brother as he played cars, and fell in love with Captain Kirk. Those raging, seven-year-old hormones only fueled her imagination, prompting her to create fantastical stories for Barbie and Ken to enact. Ken was such a bad boy back then.

After years of being repeatedly sent to the principal's office for

daydreaming in class, she managed to make it to high school where she almost finished her first manuscript. Sitting with her BFF in a corner booth at the local Tastee-Freez for hours at a time, Darynda wrote a post-apocalyptic story about a group of teens who bore a remarkable resemblance to the members of Van Halen and who were trying to escape the tunnels of a huge government fallout facility decades after World War III had destroyed the surface of the earth. It was a science fiction version of *The Warriors* and destined to be a classic.

Life was good. Writing was good.

While in Albuquerque, Darynda decided to see the cup half-full and go back to college. After graduating *Summa cum Laude* from the University of New Mexico with a degree in Sign Language Interpret-

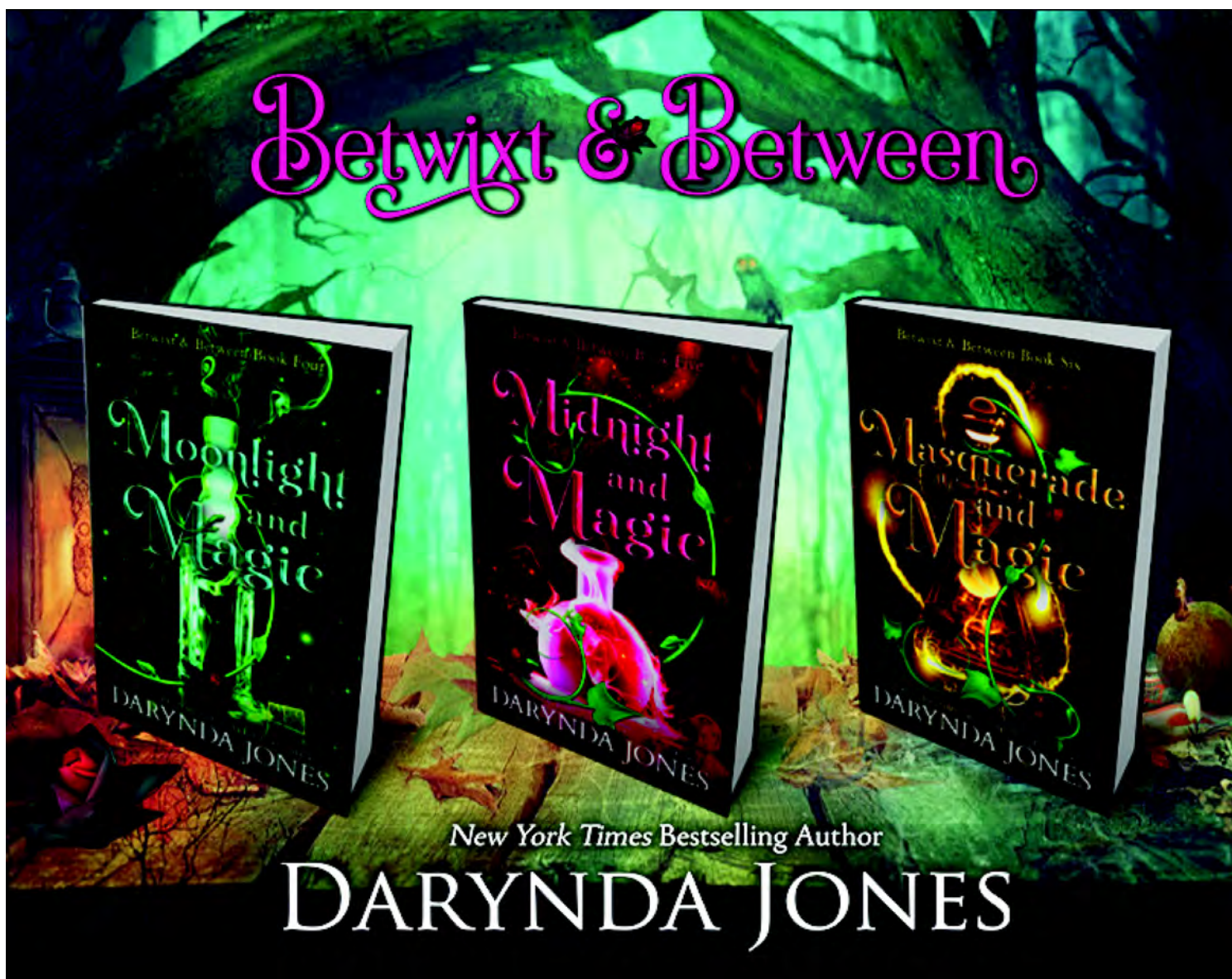
ing, she moved back to her hometown and got a "real" job, mostly teaching at a local college and interpreting pretty much everywhere.

The desire to write needed its way back to the surface. Unable to squelch it any longer, Darynda started writing seriously again in 2002 with one goal in mind: A publishing contract.

Practice makes almost-perfect and three complete manuscripts later, she won that Golden Heart, landed an amazing agent and sold to St. Martin's Press in a three-book deal.

She has several series, most notably the sultry Sunshine Vicram Mystery Series and the sexy Charley Davidson Paranormal Mystery Series, both with St. Martin's Press. She hopes you enjoy reading them as much as she enjoys writing them.

This month, she is introduc-



ing her current series, the “Magic” series, not one to miss. See a sneak preview from her series on page 11

Darynda lives in the Land of Enchantment, also known as New Mexico, with her gorgeous husband and two beautiful sons, the Mighty, Mighty Jones Boys.

Here is Daryna’s contact information:

Web site: Darynda.com
 Twitter: twitter.com/darynda
 Facebook: facebook.com/darynda.jones.author



Take a whimsical journey with Ellery and her magical bicycle.



Ellery and her bicycle share many wonderful new experiences together; lonely yet curious Ellery finds adventure, love, and friendship, as well as weathering sorrow and loss.

Fun, heart-warming
children's picture books

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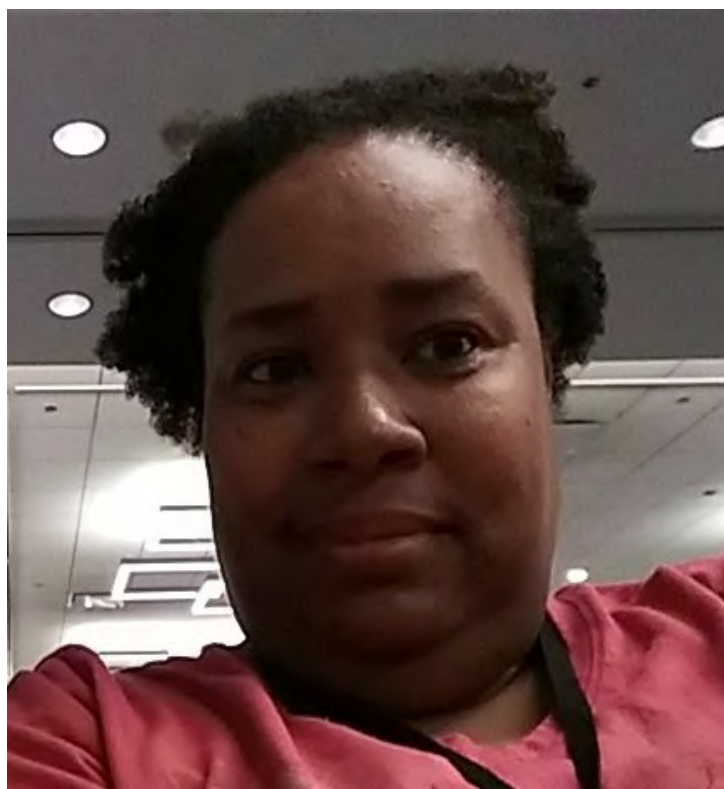
Biography of Lacy Hill

Hi, my name is Lacy (it's really Lacynda) and I have a problem...I am head-over-heels for romance. And I am obsessed with books, ice hockey, swimming, dancing, music, tv, movies, and words.

It all started with books, thanks to my mom! See, my earliest and favorite memory is my mom taking my sister and me to the library. When I got those books in my hands I felt like the luckiest little girl in the universe! My sister and I used to wait at the local library to get picked up after school when we were older. So, I had all this extra time and free access to books nearly every day. I still love the library.

First Love from Silhouette teen romances were my favorites. But when I discovered her stash of paperback romance novels in the basement and started sneaking down to read them—game over. LOL!

My mom used to play all genres of music and take us to the movies. Romance...Action/Adventure...Musicals...Sci-fi/Fantasy. TV's *Fame* brought me joy with music, dancing, and romance every week. Then



Continued on page 11

Sneak Peek



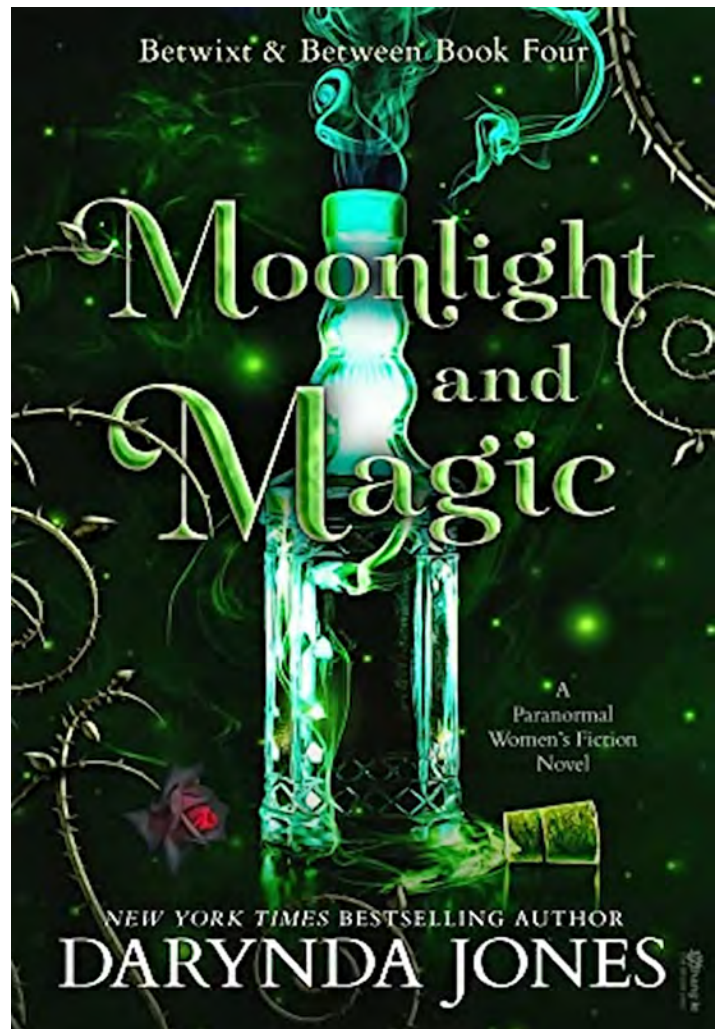
Coming Soon to Your Favorite Bookstore!

Darynda Jones' *Moonlight and Magic*

Forty-something Annette Osmund always knew she was psychic. She's not, but that didn't stop her from giving those non-existent abilities her all. What she is, however, is a very powerful witch who has just inherited magics she never dreamed possible.

Starting over in a new town with her BFF has been an adventure. Defiance's status as a powerful type of witch called a charmling has kept Annette busy. But while Deph, a seeker, is still learning to use her magics, to control the power at her fingertips, Annette is overcome with powers of her own. Turns out, her being besties with Deph was not an accident. They were drawn to each other even before their powers emerged, and Annette learns she is also a charmling, a healer and an alchemist. But what does that even mean?

Fortunately, there's one way to find out. She consults the house they're living in. Or, more to the point, the delicious entity haunting the house. Because,



like her, he was once an alchemist. Maybe he will have the answers she so desperately seeks before she kills someone. The fact that he was once a stunning specimen of masculinity has nothing whatsoever to do with her desire to learn from a man who may or may not have been a powerful warlock.

Lacy, continued

came Hallmark Movies! Or any romantic comedy/drama movies. I watch and love them all. Louise refers to me as one-half of the dynamic Hill Sisters. She piles on the praise for my diversity in reviewing. I read everything from contemporary to historical to LGBTQ lit, and I listen to everything on audiobooks.

I'm a freelance writer, editor, and researcher. I love words. So, that tracks. I fell into hockey—my new love—after health issues. Watching Chicago Blackhawks compete in the Stanley Cup Playoffs got me through. I went all in, even dragging my sister with me to their convention. I'm teaching myself to play guitar and write—what else? Love Songs.



Weekend With the Authors

We finally made it back to Nashville, Tennessee, for a wonderful book event, hosted by author Sandy Sullivan, that had brought many authors and readers together—BC. (Before Covid)

It was gobs of fun. It was refreshing and it felt so fantastic to get together with a group of people who love books! We had three days of games, books, parties, and delicious food together with over fifty bestselling authors and book lovers. An abundance of prizes were awarded along with the baskets raffled for donations to the Sarah Cannon Cancer Center.



Hostess, Author Sandy Sullivan



Elle James



luncheon



Elaine Meece

Rockets ~ Beaches ~ Books

Cape Canaveral
Florida

Meet Actor/Model
John Antorino

June 23 - 26th
80+ Authors



SpaceCoastBookLovers.com



Keynote Speakers Henry and Cynthia D'Alba



Lots of fun at the after party.

Fun! Refreshing! And Educational!



Pam Ackerson and Elle James

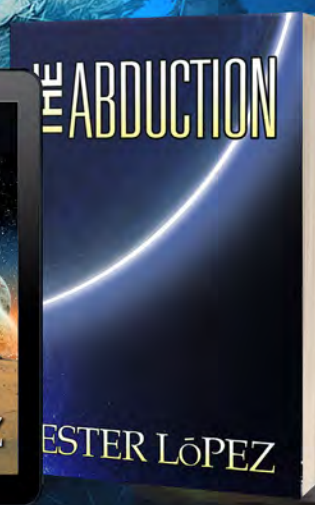


Can't Wait Until the Next One
Join us! We'd love to see you there, and re-
member
Affaire de Coeur loves conferences. Invite us.

The Vaedra Chronicles Series

Eno ni Esrith, a lieutenant in the Vaedran Star Force, and Willow Tree Moon, a police officer, join forces to rescue two little girls and soon discover a different kind of war going on planet-side...

EsterLopez.com



Spotlight On Author Sheri Lynn

Sheri Lynn, also writes as Sheridan Knight, is a USA Today best-selling author. She writes romance across several genres-contemporary, vampire, Western, futuristic/post-apocalyptic, historical fantasy, and a few novellas she categorizes as historical suspense. A hopeless romantic, she can find a happily ever after in most situations and settings. First published in 2015, she has followed with over thirty additional single or anthology titles.

Growing up an Army brat, her childhood consisted of moving every three years until her father retired to Alabama. Currently she splits time between Alabama, Florida, and Wyoming with her husband, two golden retrievers, a chihuahua and a turtle.



about.

S.K.: My characters deal with real life issues and insecurities. My heroines are independent, goal-oriented, and usually not looking for love and certainly not welcoming it. My heroes are generally protective, strong, handsome of course, and devoted. My characters get a happy ending, but it's not an easy road.

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

S.K.: I have something a little different releasing at the end of June. It's more of a contemporary thriller romance, *Shattering Desire*.

I have a novella in *My Heart Belongs in Deadwood: A Wild Deadwood Reads #WDR2022 EXCLUSIVE PRINT* Anthology, now through June 30th, 2022, is here! [My Heart Belongs in Deadwood Anthology \(google.com\)](#)

About my story: “The Splendor and Secrets of Sunny Creek.”

Horace Harrison spent almost two decades journeying the Great West before deciding in 1874 to plant his roots in South Dakota. He sends for his seventeen-year-old daughter, Winifred, to join him and they start a ranch of their own. The two-hour ride between them and the rough and unlawful town of Deadwood doesn't safeguard them from suffering its wickedness.

Margaret Jean Miller left Minnesota in 1878 with her parents and a group traveling to Oregon. Arriving in Deadwood, she gets separated from them. She endures scandalous abuse before escaping and finding refuge in the home of the very woman she was mistaken for, Winifred Harrison.

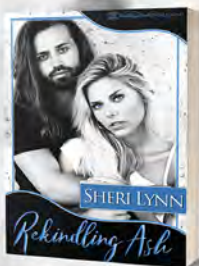
It's 2022, and Jeannie, an Alabama resident, learns she is a descendant of deeded property in South Dakota. Though disbelieving and disinterested, she heeds the advice of her employer and the enthusiasm of her best friend and decides to view it.

Sunny creek is spectacular. It is enchanting. It carries many secrets. Secrets that like the creek flow continuously.

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

S.K.: I write romance, but in several sub-genres. If I get inspired, I go with it. My westerns and pirate stories involved a lot of research. I don't want to be the writer who gets their facts incorrect. I tend to fall into research loops I can't get out of. When I write sci-fi/post-apocalyptic or historical fantasy, I can take it wherever I want and create my own worlds.

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



Rekindling Ash

Together they were combustible, but every fire can burn out of control.



Resisting the Ranchers

Two women fleeing from similar circumstances. Two men looking for brides. Should be easy, right?



West End Wonder

A decade without her couldn't silence his doubts about losing her the first time.



Sheri Lynn
SheriLynnauthor.com
[@SheriLynnAuthor](https://twitter.com/SheriLynnAuthor)



Secrets that unlike the creek, run deep.

AdC: *What is your favorite quote?*

S.K.: “You’re killing me, Smalls” or “Lighten up, Francis.” Not sure if you wanted one of mine, but those are the first two that come to mind because I use them every day.

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

S.K.: If I have a deadline, I set an obtainable word count goal. I force myself to move forward. Any words are better than no words.

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

S.K.: When I was younger, I read mostly romance. I think for awhile and currently, I gravitate to mystery suspense.

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

S.K.: I don’t think so. My heroines do usually have a close friend or sister who

is less inhibited than my heroine and encourages her to take a chance.

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

S.K.: Read reviews. I know authors who preach to never do it, but if I can gather good constructive criticism from even one, it’s valuable.

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

S.K.: I am attending Capital City Author Event in Montgomery, Alabama, May 21-22, 2022.

Wild Deadwood Reads in Deadwood, South Dakota, June 18, 2022.

Space Coast Book Lovers in Cape Canaveral, Florida, June 23-26, 2022.

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

S.K.: As a military brat, I lived in a lot of different states and overseas. I am also lucky to have had the opportu-

nity to travel. I’m a stickler for doing research in my stories if needed (especially historical), but it’s a bonus to be able to draw from my own experiences. My book, *West End Wonder*, takes place on the island of Roatan, Honduras. I spent a lot of time there from around 2006 – 2009. I changed the names of the bars and resorts, but they were places I frequented. The scooter accident is based on a true event. As were the conditions of the two-room hospital and the surgery.

I also write about Alabama as I spent most of my life there. I enjoy small town, rural living and it emerges in my writing.

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

Personal web page: <https://sherilynnauthor.com>

Twitter: [@SheriLynn](https://twitter.com/SheriLynn) / [@SheriLynn](https://twitter.com/SheriLynn)

Facebook: [Sheri Lynn](https://www.facebook.com/SheriLynn) | [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/SheriLynn)

Sneak Peek



West End Wonder

by Sheri Lynn

Traveling to the island of Roatan, Honduras, for her college best friend's wedding, it never crossed Sophia's mind that her college boyfriend, Trevor, could be in attendance. She hadn't heard anything from or about him since graduation when he left to bounce around to different locations and pursue his immature dreams. She assumed no one else had either. Wrong. He has quite a reputation in West End, Roatan.

Trevor was told of and agreed to the unlikelihood of Sophia traveling to the simple island destination. He didn't give it a second thought. Until he saw her sitting on a barstool at the tiki bar. Now he can't stop thinking about her. Fantasizing about her. She still has flowing, auburn hair and a fiery attitude to match.

Both recognize the fire still burning between them. But neither is inclined to relight the match.

They wanted different things. They took separate paths and found success. Did either find the happiness they had together? Will either act on the passion between them? If they do, it will force them into the exact dilemma they suffered a decade ago.

Can and will Trevor let her return to the lucrative lifestyle she always wanted and obtained? A decade without her couldn't silence his doubts about losing her the first time.

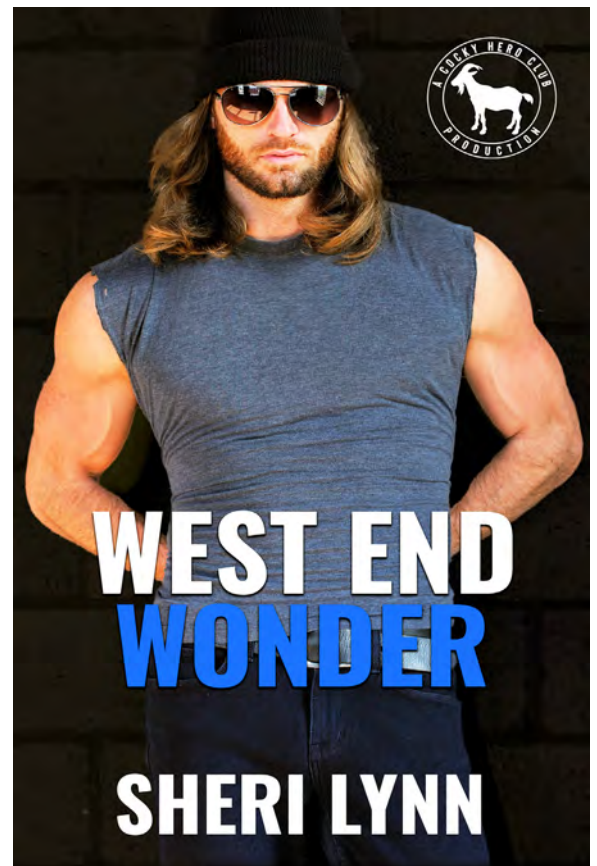
Will Sophia leave her 'West End Wonder' living the satisfying life he chose for himself? She's dated the high-powered business moguls she dreamed of. But she's never appreciated and enjoyed them as much as she does Trevor and experiencing his laid-back island lifestyle.

Excerpt: Sophia

Disappointment overcame Sophia. She caged her heart after her breakup with Trevor. She threw herself into her work and her ambition escalated. The satisfaction she got landing her first notable position and earning a substantial salary waned. She wanted more. She needed more. So, she focused on making connections and branching out on her own. Nothing filled the voids in her heart though.

For the seven years since she made the leap and started her own company, her career consumed her. She denied how lonely she truly felt. She rejected the possibility that she made a mistake. Keeping and achieving the promises she made to herself at age fourteen failed to provide the contentment she expected.

She vowed to never return to the trailer park. She committed herself to living in a beautiful home. Making a shit load of money and never



wanting for any of the barest necessities and anything materialistic she desired. It all came true. She did it. But what had it cost her?

The hard truth stabbed at her heart and mind long before she saw Trevor again. And now she couldn't escape it. She obtained the greatest gift of all. Love. And she let it go. All because of her inability to compromise and her obsession to be rich and successful.

She could've taken his advice and accepted his plea. Take a year, even a few months, travel with him and visit different locations. Take a little job, enough to get by, and reward herself. Enjoy life and expose herself to new things.

She refused to stray from her course. And she criticized his choices. She referred to him as an immature dreamer and preached about him wasting his business degree. He argued he had a degree and could employ it as needed.

He never wanted to work cooped up in an office all day. He loved being outdoors. He didn't squander his education. He utilized it exactly how he intended to—living and doing what inspired him.

Could she say the same? Had she made a terrible mistake and now it was too late?



Summer Fun

Across

3. These tours, sometimes from busses, are conducted for visitors to see what's local.
4. Leaving home to go on vacation.
6. This place is famous for its 'falling bridge' and its tower.
7. Place to put one's pet when they go on vacation.
9. Peachtree city.
10. Cooking on the grill.
12. This sport is played by the 'boys' of summer.
19. This celebratory display is popular on the 4th of July.
21. Themed community celebration i.e., Garlic _____, Freedom _____ etc.
25. Island where you can find jerk chicken.
26. This boat requires cloth canvases to move.
28. Neismith's game winds down in May and June.
29. The ceremony that rewards the culmination of high school and college.
31. His plays are often performed in the park.
33. Home of Micky and Minnie--- land and world.
35. Outdoor sleepovers.
36. Walking that is usually done on a trail, mountain, and woods.

Down

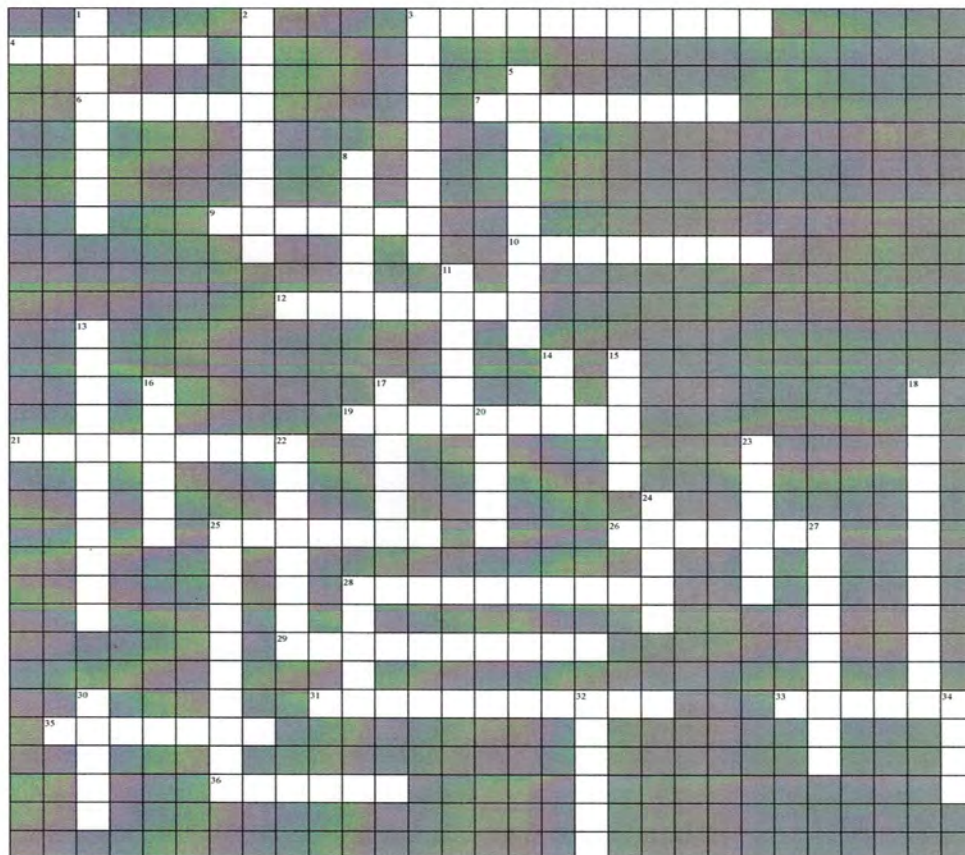
1. This activity involves hot air .
2. State of 1000 lakes.
3. Popular San Francisco icon.
5. This can be played on an inside court or on the beach--with two players per team or a full team.
8. This sport has two tournaments in summer--Wimbledon and the French Open.

11. Marching bands, baton twirlers, and floats are in a _____.
13. This activity involves a boat and someone going into the air.
14. ____ shows involve acrobatic planes.
15. Going to someone's place to pay a _____.
16. Water involves a boat pulling someone.
17. Outdoor dining ie. in a park.
18. Another name for the 4th of July-- _____ Day.
20. _____ watching involves looking for these mammals in deep water.
22. Physical activity that involves strokes--back, side, etc.

23. Princess, Carnival, Norwegian are _____ ships.
24. Princess Grace's home—Monte _____.
25. This new federal holiday signifies the day slaves in Texas were apprised of their freedom.
27. Activity that involves planting veggies and or flowers.
28. Sandy area at the edge of the water and land.
30. One of the top ten European cities to visit.
32. This is the train that travels all over the country.
34. New _____, home of the Broadway play.

Summer Fun

Louise B. Snead



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



Do you think you can write a fair and honest review of a book you've recently read? Here's your chance. We accept guest reviews. If you would like to submit one, pick a book that has just come out, whether you liked it or disliked it, and write a review of it. It's not as easy as you think. Send it to our website at www.adcmagazine.com.

Authors,

We'd love to review your books! Are you brave enough for an honest review? If so, send it in at least three months before the pub date to adcreviews@att.net

Starry-Eyed Love (Spark House #2)

Helena Hunting
St. Martin's Griffin

Trade Paperback
978-1250624727

★★★★ 1/2

London Spark is in no mood to be hit on. So when a sexy guy flirts with her, she shoots him down. Three months later in the middle of a business meeting, guess who strolls in—the hot guy from the bar, Jackson Holt. Apparently, he's the CEO of the company that's proposing a lucrative partnership with the Spark family. By the end of the meeting, plans are in motion for a charity auction to be held at Spark House. Jackson and London schedule a call to work out the details.

Instead of calling, Jackson shows up in person. London gets up her courage and asks him out. Jackson says that it isn't a good idea and abruptly leaves for the airport. London is mortified. What London doesn't know

is that Jackson has been informed that he can't date her before the auction. If Jackson asks her out, it could appear that his company's involvement was contingent on London dating him. Jackson has agreed to not pursue her until after the event, but he can't seem to stay away.

The second the auction is over Jackson and London begin dating. But not everyone is happy with their relationship. Will the couple's love be strong enough to survive the social media storm that is unleashed on them?

This is a continuation of a series. It can be read alone. It is a fun, sexy book.

Sheila Griffin

Contemporary Romance

Wyatt's Way (Last Chance #7)

Lexi Post

Self Pub

Kindle Edition

B09VM896XN

★★★★★



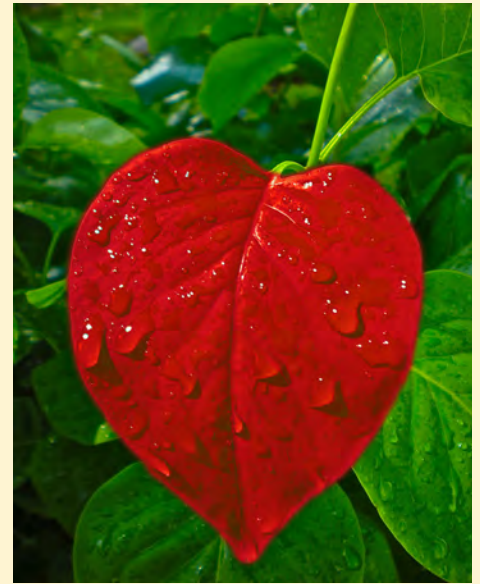
"It's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then."—Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Welcome to Last Chance Ranch, a working ranch set up to care for rescued and abused horses. For Wyatt Ford it is, perhaps, a second chance at finding a place to call home.

If you've been following this series, you're in for a much-welcomed return to familiar characters from the past. But if this is your first visit to Last Chance, pull up a chair and get ready to fall head-over-heels over Wyatt and Alyssa's story.

Wyatt's Way is a roller coaster of a romance full of witty banter, past turmoil, and smexxy new beginnings. Lexi Post has an amazing talent for bringing her characters to life within the written word, and I always look forward to her next read! Loved and highly recommend!

*Sharing what I love,
Veronica*



**Happy
Father's
Day**



**Medieval England
Time Travel
Witch Hunts
Magic
Witchcraft
and Adventure!**

978-1647501525

B08NW6BM6Z



Historical Romance

Reviews

A Daring Pursuit (Ruthless Rivals #2)

Kate Bateman

St. Martin's Press

Mass Market

978-1250801609

☆☆☆1/2

A Daring Pursuit by Kate Bateman explores the thin line between love and hate as Carys Davies and Tristan Montgomery, rivals of feuding families, make a scandalous bargain that forces them to question their views of each other, themselves, and their futures. Carys must hide a ruinous secret

to protect her family. To keep it from being revealed, she's avoided marriage for two years by dissuading potential suitors with brazen behavior and outrageous outfits, scandalizing the ton. She puts on a façade of bravery, boldness, confidence, and being carefree, but in her heart, she's disillusioned with men and love and straining under the burden of keeping her secret.

Unfortunately, Tristan, her favorite sparring partner and the only man who makes her heart race, sees through her charade. Tristan, an intelligent, proper, honorable, and analytical architect, values self-control and calm. He's hard-pressed, however, to restrain himself and hold onto his self-control, composure, or care about what's proper

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whenever he's close to Carys. At her suggestion, they agree to a week of clandestine meetings in which Tristan shows her what she's missing by deciding not to marry. Unexpectedly, both experience as much pleasure from their passionate trysts as sparring. But, after becoming involved in a treasonous plot, will they trust one another with their secrets, hearts, and lives or continue to push each other away?

Carys and Tristan capture readers' imaginations and hearts from the first scene with their sexy, sweet, funny banter, pining, and stubborn determination to stick with their life plans despite their desire for each other. Bateman's vivid description will have readers' hearts aching for Carys, her situation's

Historical

sheer horribleness, and the loneliness it causes her. But she's strong, courageous, and perseveres silently. She and Tristan are perfect for each other. They challenge each other to be true to themselves and not settle in their choice of partners and lives. His genuine affection and respect for her are evident beneath his cool façade.

A Daring Pursuit is an amusing, sexy, angsty, snarky, steamy, enthralling enemies-to-lovers historical romance with intriguing twists, adventure, and suspense.
Lacy Hill

Rules for Engaging the Earl (The Widow Rules #2)

Janna MacGregor
St. Martin's Press
978-1250761613
☆☆☆☆

Janna MacGregor's *Rules for Engaging* is a friends-to-lovers and marriage of convenience historical romance about best friends Constance Lysander and Jonathan, Earl of Sykeston. After Constance's husband dies, leaving her penniless and about to give birth to their child, facing the scandal of two other wives of whom she had no knowledge, she needs to marry to preserve her child's legitimacy. Fortunately, Constance isn't alone with her aunt and the other wives—now close friends—beside her. However, she has no time to look for the perfect husband with a shipping business to run, a new baby coming, and someone threatening her livelihood. So, she asks her childhood best friend Jonathan to marry her.

Though Jonathan has returned home a war hero, he doesn't feel like one. His re-entrance to society has been challenging, with severe and disabling war injuries and burdened by secrets. His feelings for Constance remain deep, drawing him from the safety of his self-imposed seclusion. Yet, there's nothing he wouldn't do for his best friend—who owns his heart. Will this marriage of

Highland Justice (Sons of Sinclair #3)

Heather McCollum
Entangled
Kindle Edition
B0951S3H8P
☆☆☆☆



"The world is not so orderly—people and lives are messy with emotions and reasons not everyone knows."

Raised as one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Gideon Sinclair has been known and feared for being the harbinger of justice. No one is above the law, and Gideon stood before those accused as both their judge and if need be, executioner. So, when he stumbles upon a thief in his bedchamber, he's ill prepared for the kiss he's given by the lass and even more surprised to discover she's none other than Cait MacKay, the same beauty he had met in the woods. As Gideon works towards rebuilding the trust between the Sinclair and MacKay Clans, he's continuously drawn to Cait and her strength, compassion and beauty. But when she's accused by one of King James' men of treason, can Gideon let go of his years of training being the Horseman of Justice, or will his heart tip the scales?

Heather McCollum has become my one-click, must-read for highland romance and adventure! With her the "Sons of Sinclair" series, I totally keep adding highland hotties to my book boyfriend list! Loved and highly recommend!
Sharing what I love,
Veronica

convenience give them the chance to explore the feelings and attraction simmering between them as they help each other heal from the wounds and scars neither seem ready and willing to share?

Though dual POV, in a nice change of pace, much of the novel is from Jonathan's POV. MacGregor takes her time developing Jonathan's and Constance's relationship with sweet, angsty, tender, deeply emotional, steamy moments/interactions, furthering their characters' and the story's development. Constance is serious, intelligent, stubborn, kind, and passionate. Her responsibilities to her inherited family's business—her passion—make it easy for Jonathan to dutifully marry her and then return to his seclusion from society and her. A man of honor, Jonathan is brave, courageous, reliable, broody, and frustratingly set on having things his way. Jonathan and Constance often clash but are meant for each other. If

only Jonathan could believe and accept it.

They must start fresh as adults before regaining their childhood friendship's comfort and familiarity, using it for the well-founded, adult partnership a lasting happy marriage requires. MacGregor keeps that journey emotionally compelling with serious tumult. Although the novel's pacing is initially slow, it picks up once they interact more. It's a slow-burn romance that draws readers in immediately.

Rules for Engaging the Earl is an angsty, steamy, humorous, romantic, captivating historical romance.
Lacy Hill

And There He Kept Her

Joshua Moehling
Poisoned Pen
Press
Kindle Edition
B09DTKXRHV
★★★★★



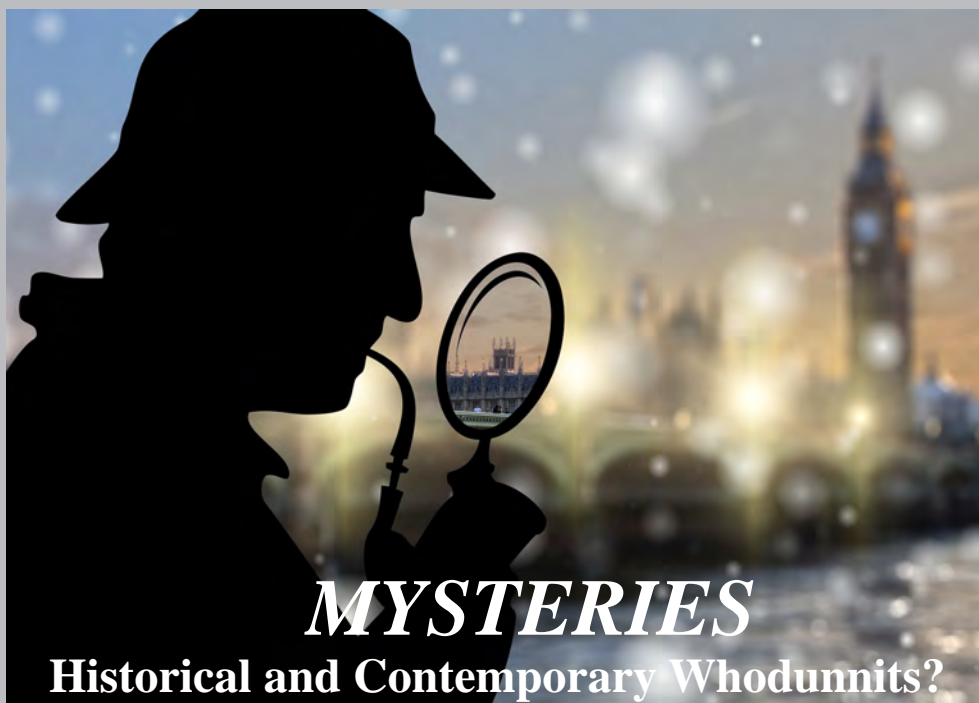
"Some things would never go back to normal...Some things would stay with him the rest of his days."

Emmett Burr is a chain-smoking, slovenly obese senior citizen who relies on his prescription of OxyContin just to heave his extreme bulk out of a chair. So, when he stumbles across two teenagers breaking into his secluded home, he lets his shotgun do the talking with the boy—and the girl—well, there is a special room in his basement—and there he kept her.

Deputy Sheriff Ben Packard has retreated to the small Minnesota town of Sandy Lake, thinking no one will guess his secrets. But Sandy Lake is no ordinary small town, and when he's contacted about a couple of missing teens, Sheriff Packard is led on an investigation that goes beyond potential runaways—even beyond his own troubled past. Sandy Lake has secrets some thought long buried—until a couple of teenagers break into the wrong man's house and set in motion events that will uncover the truth.

Joshua Moehling's debut novel is not at all what I was expecting when I started reading. Perhaps the cover and blurb tricked me into believing it's a run-of-the-mill murder mystery novel, which most will interpret it to be. In all actuality, it's a horror story, one where the monsters aren't hiding under the bed or in the closet—they are walking amongst us. There is no greater monster than what one human is capable of doing to another.

And There He Kept Her is absolutely terrifying, and this reviewer is looking forward to more thrills and chills from this author, as well as the continuation of one Deputy Sheriff Ben Packard's tale! Loved & highly recommend! Attention Netflix, if you are looking for a new show idea, this is it! *Sharing what I love,*
Veronica



Deep Water

Emma Bamford
Gallery Books
Kindle Edition
B09JPH6TY
★★

"In the end, you have to choose whether or not to trust someone."

C. Sophie Kinsella

After receiving a distress call, Naval Captain Tengku has his ship pull alongside a yacht, finding it inhabited by a young couple, one of whom is gravely injured. When Virginie sobs out a confession saying "It's all my fault. I killed them," Captain Tengku quickly concludes there is more to this story and slowly gets Virginie to tell him what happened to the owners of the boat, how did her husband become injured and why were they in the middle of the Indian Ocean. As Virginie weaves her story of how she and Jake decided to sell all their worldly possessions to buy a used yacht to enjoy an adventure of a lifetime sailing to wherever they pleased, Captain Tengku is pulled into her naivete of the simple life she's describing. As she starts down the path of how they became stranded on a boat not theirs, Captain Tengku must decide if she's telling the truth or if she's hiding something she's buried in the deep water.

Oh, Dear Reader, it has taken me some time to write this review. Alas, I do so dislike rating books this

low because it may hinder someone from finding their next fav read. So let me say if you enjoy sailing adventures with lots of jibber-jabber about building boats and sailing boats, you may enjoy this story way more than I. When I saw the blurb and it's reference being similar to *The Ruins*, I was sold! Oh, how I so enjoyed the creepy paranormal element to that story, and I was straight up disappointed that there is nothing, nada, zip, zero, ziltch of any type of supernatural in this tale. Kinda made me feel like I'd been baited and switched—sigh.

So now we've come back to would I recommend. Honestly, I did not enjoy any aspect of this story. The writing is solid, so gave two stars rather than one. What I would highly recommend is for the promotion team to re-evaluate the blurb and remove the comparison to *The Ruins*. It's false advertising. *Deep Water* is more a story of human nature and how some are so eager to trust, while others are quick to take advantage. If that appeals to you, give this a read.

Sharing what I love,
Veronica

Donut Disturb

Ellie Alexander

St. Martin's Press

E-Book

B09LSYXLJV

☆☆☆ 1/2

The quaint little town of Ashland, Oregon, is home to Torte Bakery, owned by pastry chef Juliet Capshaw. In this final book of a 15-book cozy mystery series, Juliet is simply trying to cater a wedding for a close friend in the town park. But the process isn't so simple when she is faced with one obstacle after another.

First, the bride-to-be's estranged father, who has been in prison, chooses this time to come back into her life. His existence has been a secret from her fiancé. Before she can decide how to reveal her secret, her friend Juliet discovers the murdered body of one of the wedding band members as they are setting up for the reception. The father's return becomes even more stressful as he is arrested as a suspect in the murder.

Juliet has her doubts, however, and runs through a series of suspects as she applies her amateur investigative talents to searching for the killer, who may or may not be the bride-to-be's father. Could it be a corrupt judge? A fellow band member? The groundskeeper? Possibilities abound while local law enforcement attempts to discourage Juliet's interest in the case.

Donut Disturb is rife with descriptions of yummy pastries in the midst of the murder mystery. It got off to a slow start because of the author's tendency to relate much of the backstory before getting to the action, and perhaps a little too much detail about the inner workings of a coffee shop and bakery. Yet Juliet's determination to get to the bottom of things keeps the reader guessing until the very end, making for a satisfying story.

Hannah Rowan

Fish Swimming in Dappled Sunlight

Riku Onda

Alison Watts (Translator)

Bitter Lemon Press

Trade Paperback

978-1913394592

pp 1/2

It's the last night Hiro and Aki will spend together. Before they go their separate ways, there's one last issue to clear up. Which of them killed the hiking guide during their trip last year?

Hiro knows he didn't do it. Why won't Aki just admit she killed the guide? Aki won't be confessing since she didn't kill the man. Is Hiro planning on killing her, too? If he isn't going to be a part of Aki's life anymore, does she care if Hiro kills her?

Fish Swimming in Dappled Sunlight is a very odd book. It's filled with inconsequential details. There are two plot twists, and yet it's not an interesting story. The book was originally written in Japanese. It's possible that something was lost in translation. Or it may be that the style of writing is too foreign for this reviewer to appreciate. Readers with more sophisticated tastes might enjoy it.

Sheila Griffin

Monkey in the Middle

Loren D. Estleman

Tom Doherty Associates/Forge Books

E-book

BO9C4FPPTS

☆☆☆☆

In the summer in Detroit, private detective Amos Walker is not in the mood to take on a new case after his ex-wife just died. But a young aspiring journalist piques his interest when he asks for help protecting a woman wanted by the FBI for allegedly leaking sensitive government information. Out of curiosity, Walker follows the young man to the woman's hiding place, and as a result becomes embroiled in a case with increasingly high stakes, including

the death of a federal agent on their trail.

This fast-paced mystery showcases a cynical private eye, a naïve young reporter, a wanted woman who may or may not be guilty as charged, and a refreshing cast of secondary characters placed in dangerous situations.

Amos Walker is an ongoing character in Estleman's novels, a hard-boiled detective reminiscent of Sam Spade. Laced with a touch of humor, this unpredictable story keeps the reader guessing until the very end.

Hannah Rowan

The It Girl

Ruth Ware

Gallery/Scout Press

Kindle Edition

B09JPJMS5X

☆☆☆ 1/2

"Sometimes things look bad and they're really not. Sometimes there's another explanation for what's going on."—Emily, *Pretty Little Liars*

April Clarke-Cliveden has it all—beauty, wealth, popularity. She is the "It" girl on campus. Hannah Jones has worked hard and was accepted into Oxford based on merit. When she finds herself April's roommate, she's hurled into a world that's completely the opposite of what she's accustomed.

April has built an entourage of friends whom she regularly pranks in a somewhat cruel and controlling fashion. Will, Hugh, Ryan and Emily along with Hannah develop a kinship revolving around the world that is April Clarke-Cliveden—until she's found murdered. Based on a testimony given by Hannah, one of the school porters, John Neville, is convicted of the crime and dies in prison still proclaiming his innocence.

Ten years later, Hannah and Will are married and expecting their first child, but they never fully recovered from the death and the circumstances around April's murder. Looking for answers to finally try to lay the ghosts of the past to rest, Hannah works with a young journalist who has uncovered new evidence that may show John

My Wife is Missing

D.J. Palmer

St. Martin's Press

Hardcover

978-1250267887

★★★★★



"The thing about guilt is no matter how fast you go, you can't outrun it."

Michael and Natalie have hit a crossroads in their marriage in that trust has been lost and fear has become a new norm. Natalie has allowed her speculations about her husband's infidelity take over her ever waking moment. Now it has bled into sleepless nights. The insomnia she suffers from has become "an insidious beast, a predator of the mind." She knows she must do something to take back her life and protect her family, but how far is she willing to go?

Michael has high hopes this family vacation to NYC will be just what Natalie needs to see that they can work past her delusions brought on by her insomnia. But when he returns to their hotel room finding it empty of his wife and children, how will he explain to the authorities his wife is missing without uncovering a long-kept secret?

Wowza! I mean WOWZA! If you are new to D.J. Palmer's mind-blowing twisty thrillers, welcome to your newest addiction! This reader loved every heart-stopping, nail-biting, did-not-see-that ending coming minute! 5+ Stars!!

Sharing what I love,
Veronica

all she's the daughter of a serial killer. Doesn't murder run in the blood?@

When I first saw the title, thought it was a sequel to the first book by this author, *The Serial Killer's Wife*. It is not. This is another twisty tale of a family and how the evil of one affects all the lives around them. While I guessed who the killer was, still found this to be an enjoyable read and would recommend to fans of this genre!

Sharing what I love,
Veronica

Neville was, in fact, innocent. As each of April's secrets is revealed, Hannah begins to doubt her past judgment—could one of her friends actually have been the killer?

There is a reason I took a quote from the TV show *Pretty Little Liars*. From the beginning of this friendship drama driven book, I kept picturing April being the ever popular but cruel Allison from the TV show, and was ever so excited to dig in! But alas, while the book had a strong beginning, the story went on and I started disliking the characters, and then I guessed who did it about half way in. Perhaps that ruined the big "Ah ha!" moment at the end. Ruth Ware's newest is still an enjoyable read (not my fav), but overall, if you are a fan of her works, give it a read!

Sharing what I love,
Veronica

The Serial Killer's Daughter

Alice Hunter

Avon Books UK

E-book

978-0008524630

★★★★★

"Our worries and questions will eat away at us if we keep them buried. Like poison waiting to claim a victim."

Jenny has spent years escaping her troubled past. Being the daughter of a serial killer has left her traumatized to the extent that she periodically blacks out and has no memory of where she has been or what she has done. So, when a local woman turns up missing on the same night as one of her black outs, Jenny begins to worry what she might have done, especially when the woman in question had an affair with her husband. Will Jenny be able to unlock the secrets in her mind before the police discover her true identity? After

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Her Renegade Cowboy (Moving Violations #3)

Lora Leigh (Author)

Lidia Dornet (Narrator)

Macmillan Audio

Audiobook

B08TZM3H8Q

★★★★

Schoolteacher Lily Donovan suffered a traumatic experience in college, leaving her emotionally scarred, suffering from nightmares and anxiety, and unwilling to let her guard down and trust a man again. She returns to her hometown and family ready to put the past behind her.

Former Ranger Levi Roberts is an undercover operative assigned to find a dangerous escaped fugitive who may come after Lily for revenge. To keep an eye on her and watch for him, Levi takes a job working as a ranch cowboy for Lily's cousin Jacob.

Lily is all attitude. She needs to be strong and protect her family from the person who once tried to break her. She is also mysterious, stubborn, and gorgeous. One of the agency's best fugitive recovery agents and an expert undercover operative, Levi is guarded, protective, and will keep Lily safe at

any cost. From his first sight of Lily, Levi knows he's in trouble and should stay away, but he can't. She hasn't been the least bit tempted by any man until Levi. Neither can resist their strong connection and attraction.

Lidia Dornet narrates *Her Renegade Cowboy, Moving Violations #3*. Her voice complements Leigh's sexy, suspenseful, emotional novel beautifully. She nicely captures the characters' personalities, moods, and emotions, giving them distinct voices with pitch, dialects, and accents. Her narration for Levi and Lily is perfect and particularly shines during intimate, emotionally intense, and suspenseful scenes.

Leigh's writing is lively with vibrant descriptions, colorful dialogue, and complex and well-developed relatable characters. Levi and Lily exchange snarky and humorous banter and their love scenes are sweet, romantic, steamy, deeply emotional, and sexy. Levi reawakens Lily's passions, making her feel safe, and Lily brings Levi's heart and soul back to life.

Her Renegade Cowboy is a steamy, intense, thrilling, emotional, fast-paced, sexy, and captivating romance with a dark and disturbing yet satisfying pulse-pounding conclusion.
Lacy Hill

Affaire de Coeur

Never Been Kissed (Boy Meets Boy #1)

Timothy Janovsky (Author)

Mark Sanderlin (Narrator)

Dreamscape Media

Audiobook

B09V95DR86.

★★★★

Wren Roland's never been kissed. For years he's been planning, dreaming about, and longing for a perfect first kiss just like a scene from a movie. Feeling nostalgic after a night out with his best friends before his birthday, he sends emails to the boys he crushed on and almost kissed before coming out.

Unfortunately, Derick Haverford, Wren's high school BFF and #1 pre-coming-out crush who ghosted him after their senior year—suddenly re-enters his life as his drive-in theater's new social media intern. Even worse, Derick received and responded to his rashly sent email. Wren's convinced Derick doesn't feel the same way about that almost kiss that blew up Wren's life. Working together to save the drive-in from closing, they renew their friendship, verging on a deeper relationship. Maybe Wren's dream of a movie perfect kiss before the ending credits will come true.

Mark Sanderlin narrates Timothy Janovsky's *Never Been Kissed*. His narration nicely complements Janovsky's emotional, humorous story and film referential narrative style. His narration is filled with emotion and cadence, bringing Janovsky's characters and story to life with distinct voices—female and male—capturing their emotions, personalities, and moods for each scene.

Janovsky's characters are complex, quirky, and fascinating. It's exciting how diverse the characters' ethnicities, sexualities, and genders are and how it influences the story and the characters' reactions and evolution. Janovsky writes about Wren's exploration and confusion about his sexual identity with nuance, depth, introspection, and sensitivity, brilliantly

Audiobooks

depicting the complexities of sexual identity. Wren's friends are so affirming and encouraging of Wren's searching, questioning, and exploration of his sexual identity. Instead of pressuring, judging, or pushing, they listen and offer information, advice, acceptance, and support. These scenes are among the novel's best. Sanderlin's narration wonderfully captures Wren's emotions during these scenes especially.

Janovsky excellently develops relationships between his characters that feel authentic. They challenge, support, frustrate, love, and drive each other crazy from one moment to the next. I love Wren's friends circle. Janovsky skillfully develops Derick's and Wren's relationship through a combination of sweet, funny, angsty, and tension-filled texts and personal interactions. He deftly describes that ache of being distant from a friend to whom you were once so close.

Never Been Kissed is a sweet, angsty, funny, and thoughtful LGBTQ friends-to-lovers romance about self-discovery, sexual identity, friendship, first love, and second chances.
Lacy Hill

Pride and Prejudice

Jane Austen

Narrated by Adjoa Andoh

Saga Egmont Audio

978-8726975550

☆☆☆

The Bennet daughters risk losing their home and income when their father, passes with no male heir. Marrying well is the only way the Bennet sisters can save their family. Elizabeth Bennet, however, wants to live her life on her own terms, choosing when and whom she'll marry for herself, despite her family's pressure—particularly Mrs. Bennet. When Mr. Darcy arrives broody, haughty, and impervious to Elizabeth's charms, his behavior disconcerts her. Additionally, she's confused by her reaction to him. While they parry

and thrust around ill-conceived ideas and beliefs about each other, Elizabeth's mother schemes and manipulates to ensure her daughters wed properly. Consequently, the Bennets, Darcys, their friends, and families all are drawn into an entertaining, captivating comedy of errors filled with intrigue and drama.

Austen is a classic, some say the creator of this genre. Her work needs no analysis.

Adjoa Andoh's English accent and cadence set the tone with just the right pacing, placing Austen's readers front and center in Derbyshire and Hertfordshire, England. She gives the characters distinct voices. While her narration captures the personalities of annoying characters like Mister Collins and Elizabeth's mother, unfortunately, it doesn't fit Elizabeth. Andoh's narration makes Elizabeth sound mean, temperamental, and discourteous most of the novel. Her voice is grating, and it's frustrating because she's the main POV character for the story's emotional arc, but she doesn't sound/feel like the Elizabeth readers know/love from movies/the book. Similarly for Darcy sometimes but not as irritating because she captures his character's general peevishness and standoffish. Nonetheless, Andoh's narration amazingly captures the novel's and characters' essence—excluding Elizabeth—making the audio worth a listen.

Pride and Prejudice is a funny, witty, and romantic featuring the quintessential enemies-to-lovers romance.
Lacy Hill

That Cowboy of Mine

Donna Grant

Narrated by Monica King

Tantor Audio

978-1666194647

☆☆☆

Dillon is thrilled when she unexpectedly inherits her aunt's ranch—which feels like home to her, where she can be herself. But strange things

have been happening since she's taken ownership like someone's trying to scare her off the property. Dillon has received several offers she's firmly rejected, and things become more menacing with each rejection. She suspects neighboring wealthy ranch owner Hank Stephens, who hasn't kept his interest in her property a secret. He's not a good guy, and he will do or hire someone to do whatever it takes to get what he wants.

Cal wakes up with a hangover and a beautiful woman standing over him with a shotgun. He doesn't know where he is or how he got there. But after saving her from being shot, he's more than willing to keep her safe while they discover who is after her ranch and why. He suggests they pretend to be lovers. Sparks of attraction between Dillon and Cal gradually ignite into passion as the danger lurking at every turn places them in close quarters. Can Dillon trust Cal at his word that he wants to protect and keep her safe, or is he only with her working on behalf of her enemy to sabotage her ranch?

Monica King brings Donna Grant's *That Cowboy of Mine* to life, capturing the novel's emotion, excitement, and danger. She gives the characters distinct voices reflecting their personalities and feelings in each scene, doing a great job with its heroine and predominantly male characters. Her narration for the relatable and likable protagonists Dillon and Cal captures their characters as well as the detestable villains.

Although King's narration nicely captures the characters and the emotional conflict between the characters that runs throughout the novel, the narrator's Texas, more-of-a-western accent and voice may not be pleasing for all readers. Nevertheless, *That Cowboy of Mine* is a thrilling, suspenseful, steamy, angsty, and entertaining audiobook with an intriguing mystery plot and complicated yet heartfelt romance.

Lacy Hill



Book of Night

Holly Black

Tor Books

Hardcover

978-1250812193

☆☆☆☆

Charlie Hall spent half her life working for gloamists, magicians who manipulate shadows. A gloamist can use shadows to do anything from peering into a locked room to strangling someone while they sleep. Some shadows have even become sentient. Most shadows remain attached to their person, but some are able to separate from their humans. These shadows can be sent to do whatever the individual wants. Usually, it's something illegal. But Charlie isn't part of that world anymore. In an effort to be a good influence on her little sister and to be worthy of her boyfriend, Vince Diamino, Charlie's gone straight.

Years ago, Vince's shadow was stolen. People say that's when his soul was stolen, too. Charlie doesn't know about all that. What she does know is that Vince is the kindest, most gentle, sincerely good man she's ever dated. Charlie also knows that it's just a matter of time before she does something stupid and he leaves her. Charlie is talked into helping a woman find her missing

boyfriend. Agreeing to this brings some very dangerous people back into Charlie's life. Is this the bad decision that is going to send Vince running? Or is it the one that's going to get her killed?

This is an interesting novel.

Despite a lackluster ending, it's a good book. Hopefully this is the beginning of a new series.

Sheila Griffin

December 41

William Martin

Forge

Hardcover

978-0765384249

☆☆☆☆

This World War II thriller begins in Southern California on the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The FBI is investigating groups of Nazi sympathizers in the United States just as the country is set to go to war with Germany as well as Japan.

Bund member Martin Brown travels across the country to fulfill his mission, intending to assassinate President Franklin D. Roosevelt as the president lights the Christmas tree on the White House lawn on Christmas Eve.

Kevin Cusack, who evaluates scripts in Hollywood, decides to quit

his unfulfilling job and become more involved in helping the FBI. As an undercover confidential informant, he's already familiar with the Nazi group, but as he travels cross-country to head to his former home for the holidays, he is also thrown into close quarters with the would-be assassin as they travel on the east-bound train together.

Nothing goes easy for Cusack, who is in the wrong place at the wrong time, leading the L.A. police to suspect him of murder. Not only must he surreptitiously follow Brown, trying to figure out the Nazi's game plan, he must also avoid capture as a wanted man.

Intrigue abounds as Cusack tries to decide whom to trust and to unravel Brown's nefarious plans. It's a race against time as one obstacle after another is thrown in his way.

The reader will race along with this gripping tale just as Kevin Cusack races cross-country in an effort to foil the Nazi plot. The question is whether he'll get there on time.

Hannah Rowan

Booty

Juneteenth Researchers Incorrect about Slaves in Texas (They Knew Before June 19, 1865)

Wally G. Vaughn
Outskirts Press

Trade Paperback
978-1977243911
★★★★1/2

Juneteenth Researchers Incorrect about Slaves in Texas is a fact-based chronological account of the military actions in Texas from January, 1863, through June 19, 1865, “proving” that the reason for the Juneteenth celebration is based on a false claim. According to Mr. Vaughn and his research, the army and navy were sent to the coast of Texas by order of Abraham Lincoln to help liberate the slaves after the Emancipation Proclamation was in effect. Many slave owners moved their slaves into the interior of Texas so it would be harder for their slaves to escape to the naval ships anchored offshore or to the army units stationed on the coast because once the slaves reached either of them, they would be declared free. The Texas slave owners were trying to keep their slaves from running, but mostly to no avail.

Wally Vaughn has done extensive research regarding the Juneteenth “myth” and how it came about and has concluded that the initial researchers only used “General Orders, No. 3 published by Major General Granger on June 19, 1865.” When asked, “Why did it take the news of the *Emancipation Proclamation* so long to reach Texas?” And the answer from the so-called experts was, “It just took the Union Army a long time to get there,” was wrong. The Union Army had been in Texas since 1863 and stayed for the duration of the war. He concluded that the “experts” had failed to do all of the research regarding the Civil War, or they would have found the same documents that he had that are listed in his book.

Therefore, he concludes that basing a celebration on a false premise is a false celebration. “The celebration

is connected to the claim and the claim connected to the celebration. One secures credence in and from the other. If the claim is without credence, the celebration of observance is without credence.” “How do you celebrate or hold an observance for that which never took place? How do you commemorate an event that never occurred?”

A fascinating read that may disappoint and upset many.

Lani Roberts

Twisted Fate

Linda Boroff
Champagne Book Group

E-book
978-1957228334
★★★★

A mysterious pandemic hits the world, only this time, the people don’t fall for much of the propaganda and fear mongering. Although, many remained compliant knowing that there was truth between the lines.

A twisted prion, a novel virus that targeted the brain, had gone rogue—Zoe was negative; Brian was not. They injected a microchip, deep within him where it couldn’t be removed.

The twists and turns in this story created a page-turner that all dystopian lovers will absolutely love!

Lauren Calder



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Affaire de Coeur

CHILDREN'S



Ellery's Magic Bicycle

Written by Maria Monte

Illustrated by Zoe Saunders

Bonny Books

Hardcover

978-0987513076

★★★★ ½

When we first meet Ellery, she is a little girl with pigtails who finds an old purple bicycle. It turns out that this bike is magic, capable of responding to commands. It is also protective of Ellery as well.

Ellery meets Charlie who moved next door. He's not very friendly at first, but after a rock fight, the three of them—Emery, Charlie, and the bicycle become good friends.

Fast forward to Ellery's teen years. Charlie moves away, leaving her behind. Her bicycle consoles her. Like most teens, she comes distracted and has little time for her bike. Eventually, the bike got put away, deserted by her

friend left to collect spider webs in her spokes.

Ellery's Magic Bicycle is a delightful book, aimed at the 4-7 year age group. The lesson it brings is an old one about discarding old friends when new ones show up. Children will love this book and may be drawn

in emotionally. The illustrations, done by very talented Zoe Saunders, are marvelous and will hold the interest of the intended audience. *Ellery's Magic Bicycle* is a book they will want to read over and over again.

Mildred Burkett

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Late!

Didn't quite make in the last issue



Includes all genre and all time periods

Beauty and the Baller, Strangers in Love #1

Ilsa Madden-Mills

Montlake

Trade Paperback/E-book

978-1542034784

★★★★★

In Ilsa Madden-Mills' *Beauty and the Baller*, former beauty queen Nova Morgan sneaks into a high-profile party—in a barely-there costume of one of his favorite characters—to capture the attention of her favorite quarterback, Ronan Smith. Unfortunately, their one-night stand ends on a sour note. Two years later, Nova returns home to Blue Belle, Texas, broke and desperate, to discover Ronan is her neighbor and doesn't remember her. Ronan proposes he and Nova fake date to convince the booster club to stop throwing women at him to get him to stay

in town as the high school's new football coach. It would also help Nova by creating a barrier between her and her high school sweetheart. The sparks and connection between them intensify and deepen the more time they spend together, becoming even more complicated when Ronan recognizes Nova as the woman he's dreamed of since she drew him from the depths of despair that out-of-this-world night they shared.

Madden-Mills' vivid description, beautiful storytelling, and deft development of multi-faceted, fascinating characters, draw readers into *Beauty and the Baller* at once, making it hard to put it down! Ronan and Nova are made for each other. Ronan's balanced personality doesn't quite fit the stereotype of a star athlete. He's nerdy, honest, humble, full of integrity, faithful, and not a manwhore. Nova's spirit is

bright, and she's personable, vulnerable, beautiful, and yet not the typical beauty queen. She's strong and brave, which she needs to be, living in the town where she hoped never to return. She's committed to being the best sister and substitute parent she can be for her teenage autistic sister after their mom's unexpected death. Nova and Ronan play, laugh, and have blistering hot sex but also support, encourage, and build each other up. Their interactions are sweet, funny, and full of intense emotions and heat, and they balance each other out, helping each other heal, move on from the pain of the past, and find their bliss.

Beauty and the Baller is a sweet, captivating, angsty, funny, steamy, charming fake dating romance.

Lacy Hill

Good Hands (Bears Hockey II #2)

Kelly Jamieson

Kelly Jamieson Inc.

978-1988600680

★★★★★

In Kelly Jamieson's *Good Hands*, an unforgettable one-night stand between a hockey player and businesswoman leads to a series of hookups and friends-with-benefits. Unexpectedly, both catch feelings, and she accidentally gets pregnant.

Sexy, charismatic, emotionally controlled hockey player Brandon Smith avoids getting too attached to his teams or involved in serious relationships, believing love and family only leads to fights and heartache. Hot vacation sex with Lola, whom he meets in a tropical beach side bar in Aruba, leaves him with longing and thoughts of her.

Gorgeous, funny, intelligent, workaholic Lola McGrath loved being with him but knew she'd never see Brandon again. It's probably better. Focusing on being promoted and proving herself to her employer, coworkers, and

Late!

parents leaves no time for dating/relationships.

Jamieson deftly develops Lola and Brandon, their relationship, and the novel with vivid description, lively dialogue, and sexy banter. Brandon and Lola spend time connecting and talking to each other—even that first night. They become friends not just lovers. Both have emotional baggage from their childhoods and relationships with their parents, driving their lifestyle choices in careers and relationships. Their love scenes are pivotal to the story and character development and evolution, outside of the accidental pregnancy, which occurs well into the novel. Jamieson writes beautiful, passionate, emotional, sexy, and intense love scenes, highlighting Lola's and Brandon's growing connection and the intensity of their feelings.

Exploring how unresolved family issues/baggage can affect adult relationships and choices, *Good Hands* is a steamy, intensely emotional, sexy, funny, sweet contemporary romance about facing fears, believing in yourself, and learning to communicate, deal with, and express emotions.

Lacy Hill

Mall You Need Is Love

Sarah Robinson

Author Collective 20

E-book

979-8796544655

☆☆☆

Sarah Robinson's *Mall You Need Is Love* is told in dual points of view from two neighboring shop owners in the local shopping mall. Gamer Amara Hart owns a retrostyle gaming arcade, and jewelry designer Valentino Rossi owns a jewelry store. Bitter and jaded from heartbreak and disappointment, Amara has given up on finding love, believing it doesn't last. A total romantic who believes love is eternal and likes all things about romance—silly

love songs, gifts, candlelight dinners—Val's life work is helping others express their love by picking out just the right gift for a loved one and selling his custom-made jewelry. Days before Valentine's Day, Val's store is robbed. Since the robbery might be connected to a blackout originating in her store, Amara agrees to help him. When Val discovers that Amara hates all things love and romance, he plans to help her have an unforgettable Valentine's Day.

Based on noise complaints about her arcade from Val, rumors about his dating and heartbreaker exploits, and cynicism about romance, Amara develops preconceived notions that have her prepared to dislike Val before even meeting him. Other than calling her arcade to ask her to try and keep the noise down, Val doesn't know much about Amara. At first, their interactions are antagonistic and confrontational, but a surprising, mutual, reluctant attraction simmers beneath the animosity. While spending an evening together on security patrol for the mall's neighborhood watch, Amara and Val get to know each other better, pay it forward, compete for top scorer, and experience a hilarious, wild encounter. Before they know it, they're becoming friends.

Robinson develops her characters and story with colorful descriptions and sweet interactions filled with clever, humorous banter and dialogue. Though short, *Mall You Need Is Love* is a sweet, romantic, funny, and entertaining Valentine's Day new adult, enemies-to-lovers, and opposites-attract novella about rediscovering hope and romance and opening your heart to love.

Lacy Hill

Summoning Up Love

Synithia Williams

Harlequin Romance

Mass Market and e-book

978-1335408518

☆☆☆

Synithia Williams' *Summoning Up Love, Heart & Soul 1*, introduces paranormal investigators Dion Livingston and his brothers.

After losing her job and fiancé on the same day, TV news reporter Vanessa Steele travels to her grandmother's beach house to heal. Inconveniently, her grandmother has hired the Livingston Brothers to investigate suspicious paranormal activity at the house. Determined to protect her grandma from their nefarious schemes and skeptical of their motives, Vanessa investigates them and the paranormal activity herself.

Williams' vivid and detailed description, skillful plotting, and intriguing story draw readers into the novel. Her natural, lively dialogue and colorful use of language give the book a light-hearted yet suspenseful tone and excellent pacing. Williams deftly develops her complex, likable, and relatable characters. Intelligent, analytical, and confident, Vanessa knows she will get her career back on track. Each brother has a distinct personality and specialty area. Steady, calm, and responsible, Dion sacrifices to keep his younger brothers together, safe, healthy, and happy after their parents' deaths. The characters' relationships—especially Dion's and Vanessa's—are the novel's best features. Dion's and Vanessa's attraction is instantaneous and primal. Their chemistry is electric, and the fiery, sweet, sexy, and flirty banter they exchange reflects their transition from antagonistic to friends-to-lovers. How they encourage one another is sweet and special, considering the brief time spent together before becoming involved. Their shared connection is deep, filling spaces inside

them they didn't realize were there.

While more paranormal activity and suspense would've been great, Williams nicely balances the romance and suspense, focusing on Dion and Vanessa balancing their relationship with the challenges causing them career stress/anxiety. *Summoning Up Love* is a sweet, steamy, slightly angsty, funny, and suspenseful character-driven romance about sacrifice/taking risks for love and achieving your dreams.

Lacy Hill

Summer Nights with a Cowboy (Kittredge Ranch, 3)

Caitlin Crews

St. Martin's Press

Mass Market

978-1250750020

☆☆☆☆

Sheriff Zack Kittredge is suspicious of his eighty-seven-year-old neighbor's new live-in nurse, Janie Atwood. She moves around a lot, and her patients have a tendency to die while Janie is in their employ. Sure, she's a traveling nurse and her clients are elderly and in poor health. Those facts are irrelevant. Zack knows that Janie is up to something, and he intends to find out just what it is.

Janie does have an ulterior motive for moving to Cold River. But it's nothing nefarious. After her grandparents died, she found a letter from them. It said the answers to Janie's questions about her past are in Cold River. Janie has always been a good girl. Zack thinking she's up to no good makes him even more attractive to her. Zack intends to avoid Janie until he finds out her secret. Somehow Janie keeps winding up in Zack's arms, and eventually she winds up in his bed. How can Zack be falling for someone he suspects is up to no good? How can Janie fall for someone who doesn't trust her?

This is a typical romance. It's a good romance but there's nothing extra to set it apart from every other romance. If that is the type of story the reader enjoys they will like this book.

Sheila Griffin

That Cowboy of Mine

Donna Grant

St. Martin's Press

Mass Market

978-1250820280

☆☆☆☆

That Cowboy of Mine by Donna Grant gets off to an exciting start when Dillon Young finds Cal Bennett passed out drunk on her ranch. Luckily, he's in the right place at the right time to push her aside when someone shoots at her.

Dillon is thrilled at unexpectedly inheriting her aunt's ranch because it feels like home to her—she can be herself. But strange things have occurred since she's taken ownership like someone's trying to scare her off. She has received several offers to buy her ranch that she's firmly rejected. With each rejection, things get more menacing for the ranch and her safety.

Cal wakes up hungover with a beautiful woman standing over him with a shotgun and no memory of where he is or how he got there. After saving her life, he's resolved to keep her safe while they discover who's after her ranch and why. He suggests they pretend to be lovers until then. Sparks of attraction between Dillon and Cal gradually ignite into passion as danger lurks at every turn, placing them in close quarters. Can Dillon trust that Cal wants to protect and keep her safe, or is he collaborating with her enemy to sabotage her ranch?

Brave, courageous, stubborn, and fiercely beautiful, Dillon's been holding her own against attempts to drive her from her ranch. She finds Cal's sexiness, toughness, and directness irresistible. But she doesn't know whether to trust her heart or mind—his mysteriousness confuses her. A no-nonsense-talking bull riding cowboy at a crossroads, Cal's instantly attracted to Dillon. Driven to help her, he feels a connection with her he wants to explore. Scarred, bruised, and tired, he's ready to stop bull riding and settle down.

Grant's vivid description, nicely developed characters, mysterious and absorbing plot captivate the audience while Dillon's and Cal's steamy, emotional, and complicated relationship keep them enthralled. *That Cowboy of Mine* is a suspenseful, steamy, angsty, contemporary western romance with an intriguing mystery plot, surprising twists, and a complicated yet heartfelt romance.

Lacy Hill

Westmoreland Legacy: The Outlaws

What Happens on Vacation...

Brenda Jackson

Harlequin—Romance

Mass Market and e-book

978-1335735522

☆☆☆☆

In Brenda Jackson's *What Happens on Vacation...*, Westmoreland Legacy: The Outlaws 4, Alaskan senator Jessup Outlaw finally explores the explosive chemistry between him and Hollywood star Paige Novak. Both are in Napa Valley for vacation at the same time. Their attraction/chemistry has been intense since their first meeting at a Westmoreland family wedding six years ago. Paige flirted with him, mak-

Late!

ing her interest known. But Jess didn't act on his feelings because the timing hadn't been right with him needing to stay focused on his senatorial campaign. He's satisfied with his career, and after years of regrets, he's finally ready to act on his attraction to Paige. Hopefully, he won't miss his chance with her if he gets one this time. Jess takes advantage of a ruse as Paige's pretend boyfriend to seduce her.

Paige is a likable character.

Sweet, beautiful, smart, straightforward, and kind, but not a pushover, she knows what she wants and doesn't play games. It's cool how together and mature Paige is and that Jess is the one here who's a hot mess! Jess is a stubborn, honorable, handsome man still haunted by a past betrayal who cannot/won't get out of his own way. Despite finding him irresistible, Paige believes he's not truly interested in her. Jackson nicely develops Paige, Jess, and their relationship

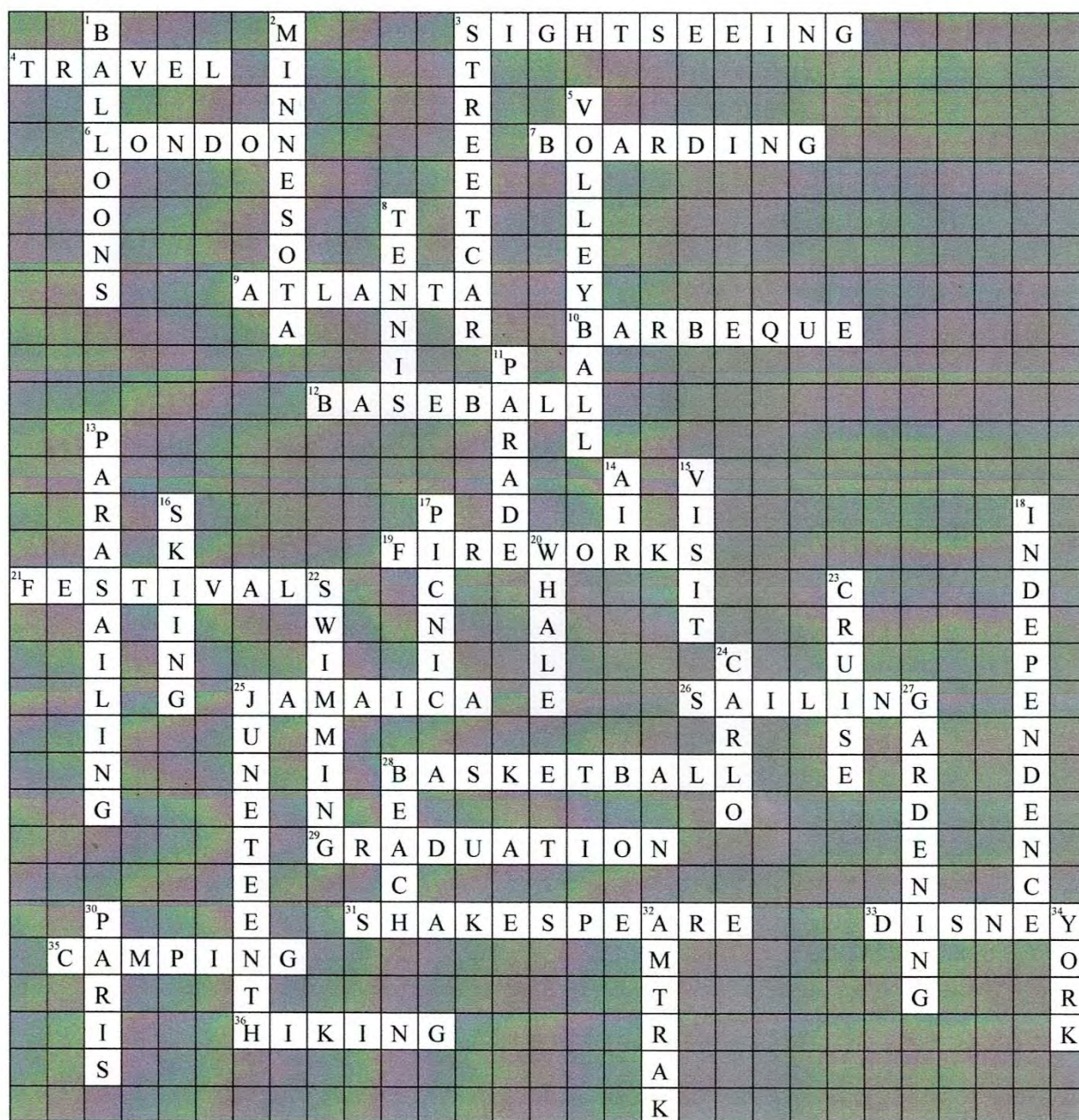
with sweet, steamy, and chemistry-filled interactions.

What Happens on Vacation... is a quick steamy, sweet contemporary romance read with a fun, humorous scene near the end. Fans of Jackson's "Westmorelands" and "Outlaws" series should enjoy this one.

Lacy Hill

Summer Fun

Louise B. Snead





Small-Town Sweethearts
Love—and kittens—to the rescue!

Olive Downing has big dreams for her Victorian bed-and-breakfast.

Cal Pope isn't the average busybody. The gruff firefighter can be sweet, charming—and the perfect partner for the town fundraiser.



Enchanting Royal Romance
The only man to tempt her? A prince!

Jenna Beals put love to one side and worked hard to achieve her dream career.

Catapulted into an incendiary fling with gorgeous Prince Dimitri, she knows it has an expiration date—she's not looking for a crown!



Book Chat

Lucy Monroe and Carrie Nichols get together and talk about books. They livestream it so readers can join in the chat as well. They often invite other authors to join, both just to chat and because we may be talking about their books.

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