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Spring Brings Two of the Best:



Ms. March Harlowe Savage



Ester López



**Debra Parmley presents
cover model Tony Brettman**



Affaire de Coeur

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March/April 2022

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March, April 2024

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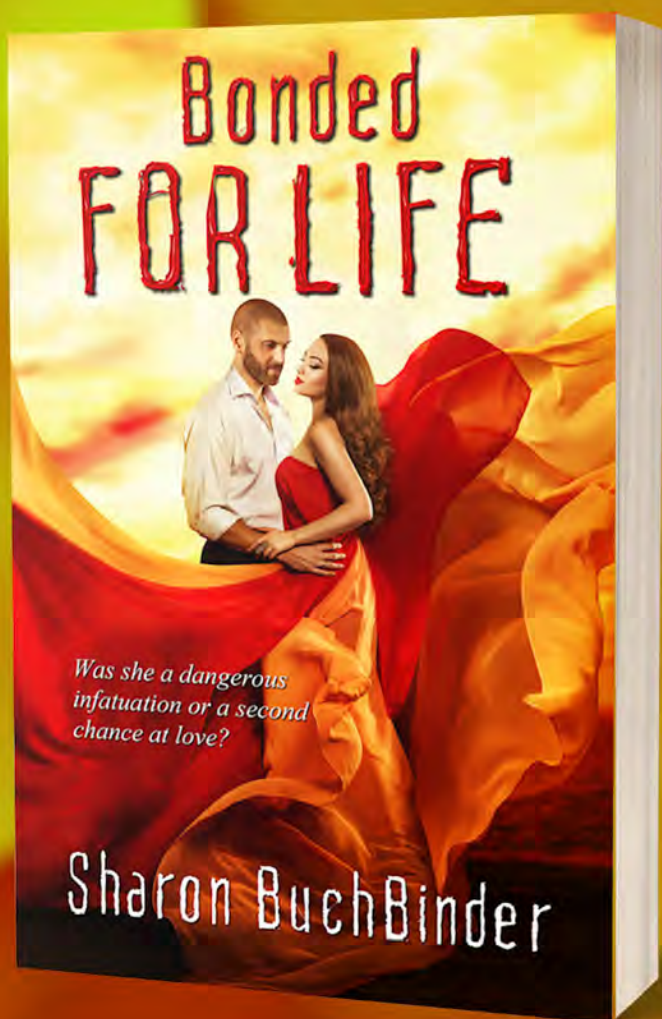
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Is she his long-lost love or a deadly temptation?

Lola Getz and Webster Bond felt an instant spark when they met as high school students in Victory Shores. But their budding romance was cut short when Lola's parents died in a plane crash and she had to return to Mexico.

The widow of a Mexican criminal, Lola's life is in danger when armed men break into her house. She flees to the only place she feels safe: her twenty-fifth high school reunion. Webster, a by-the-book cop, is surprised and thrilled to see her again—and vows to keep her safe.



Sharon Buchbinder is the author of the Hotel LaBelle Series, the Jinni Hunter Series, and the Obsession Series. When not attempting to make students and colleagues laugh or writing, she can be found walking her pugs, Agent Frank and Igor Valentino, waiting on her Maine Coon cat, Buster Brown, or breaking bread and laughing with family and friends.



SharonBuchbinder.com



Dear QWERTY

by Pamela Ackerson

Writing Out the “ings”



Dear Qwerty,

No matter how hard I try, I can't seem to get rid of the ing words. How can I do that?

Writing Out the Ings

First of all, as a writer, you need to understand that you can't write out all the ings. It's virtually impossible and doesn't make for a good story. Too many past progressive verbs can slow a story down. Past progressive verbs are verb phrases that include has been/have been. Those helping verbs add meaning to the action.

- Has been talking.\Has been thinking.
- Has been singing.
- Have been talking...

They're okay. Just keep them limited to a moderate amount. If, as a writer, you start worrying about the multiple “don'ts” in writing, you'll lose your story.

Ings are a very important part of storylines. They're needed.

Ings also depend on the tense.

- I go.
- I am going.
- I was going.
- I have been going.

Or person:

- She goes.
- She is going.
- She was going.
- She has been going.

When the helping verbs are overused, it weakens the story. Moderation is the key. Choose your ing words carefully and make sure they're giving you the full potential of the impact you want to make on the reader.

Using the has been/have been ing words slow down the story. Especially if you're writing 3rd person past tense.

Consider re-writing, moving the sentence around, or switching it to a past tense word that doesn't need has been, had been, or was.

The House on Cedar Ridge Book One

In the great house of Cedar Ridge, secrets whispered along the corridors and hidden crevices. The morning sunlight upon the walls of the museum cast a deceiving appearance of serenity.

There were those who wouldn't know gentle repose, who must be denied peace, because the walls within harbored dangerous and frightening secrets.

PamelaAckerson.net
ASIN: B09TRXK532
Ebook, paperback and large print



From award-winning, bestselling author Pamela Ackerson, a new time travel adventure has begun. Grab your copy today.

THE HOUSE ON CEDAR RIDGE

PAMELA ACKERSON

He had been going to the store every day but...
He has been going to the store every day but...
He was going to go to the store today but...
He intended to leave for the store but...
He anticipated his daily trip to the store but...

As a writer, your job is to pen words that create a voice and vision in the reader's mind. Many times it's got to be about how you, the author, want to impact the scene. It boils down to how you want your words to affect the reader.

For example: When no one was around, she sang like there was no tomorrow.

When no one could hear her, she was singing like there was no tomorrow.

It can be tweaked to personal preference and the flow of the

story.

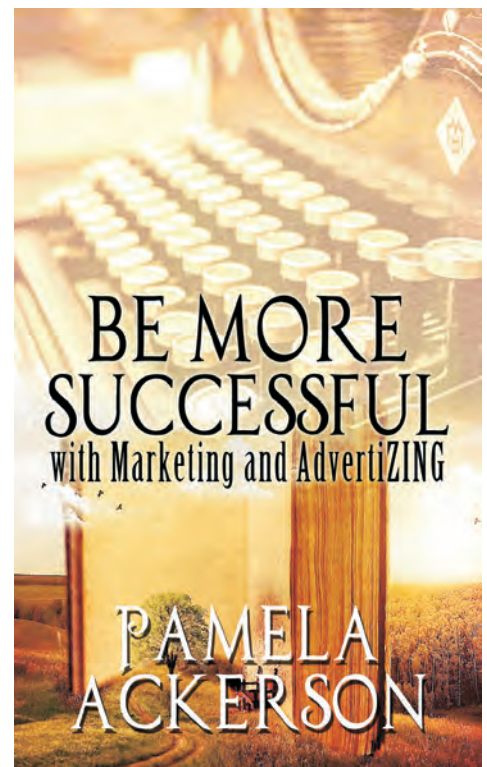
You can also use a stronger description, stronger verbs, depending on what you want to say.

When no one was around, she regaled her pretend audience with her beautiful voice as if she was a famous diva.

Sometimes, re-writing a scene with a stronger verb can curtail the ings.

Just remember, ings aren't bad as long as they're written into the story with moderation.

Good luck!



The Spotlight is Shining on Ms. March

Harlowe Savage



HARLOWE SAVAGE

Harlowe Savage is a 29-year-old queer author dedicated to creating stories that depict queer romances. She firmly believes that the gap between the amount of LGBTQIA+ erotica and heterosexual erotica in the mainstream is far too large and intends to rectify this through normalizing queer romance and increasing the accessibility of the genre. In her free time, Harlowe enjoys reading, watching anime, studying languages, writing fan fiction, and spending time with her loved ones.

AdC: *Tell us about the genre(s) you write and the type of characters you love to write about.*

H.S.: I write queer, historical romance; though I have recently been brought on to work on a more...fantastical based spicy, queer romance project that I am also very excited about. I love writing characters that haven't previously been given the depth and character development that they deserve. Just because a book is spicy, doesn't mean it also can't tug at your heartstrings and have you rooting for the characters' overall success.

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

H.S.: The second book in the "Queer Historical Romance" series, *Emperor*

Ai came out November 1st of 2023 and recounts the love story between China's most notoriously bisexual emperor, Emperor Ai of Han and his lover Dong Xian. 2024 will bring the publication of the third book in the series, more information to come soon!

AdC: *Which tasks/projects do you find you tend to procrastinate on and why?*

H.S.: I tend to procrastinate on actually sitting down to do the writing. Once I sit down and actually get into it, I can write for hours at a time, it's just a matter of starting.

AdC: *If you had to pick any character in one of your books, who is most similar to you, who would you choose?*

Why?

H.S.: Barsine, from *Alexander*. Without spoiling anything or hinting too much at the role she ends up playing in the story, Barsine has a lot of my humor and stubbornness. She's been through a lot and is determined to stand up for herself despite the potential consequences, even if she doesn't always know the right way to go about it.

AdC: *If you were transported to the setting of the book you're currently reading or writing, where would you be?*

H.S.: Well, I am currently reading the "Heaven's Official Blessing" series, so I suppose my answer would be ancient China.



AdC: *If you saw a doorway/portal in the middle of the forest, would you enter it?*

H.S.: No. Anyone who has ever dabbled in paganism of any kind will probably know why lol.

AdC: *What do you wish you were better at?*

H.S.: I wish I was better at understanding what neurotypical people want from me in any interaction, honestly.

AdC: *What is something you say a lot?*

H.S.: It really do be like that sometimes.

AdC: *What do you do when no one is around?*

H.S.: Read fan fiction and do puzzles.

AdC: *When running away for fun, where can you most likely be found?*

H.S.: Either a library, bookstore, tea shop, or thrift store.

AdC: *Where is one place you don't like to be?*

H.S.: Anywhere enclosed or too crowded. I like to be able to move freely and leave if I need to. Therefore, elevators are my worst nightmare.

AdC: *You get in trouble, who are you most likely with?*

H.S.: Probably my friend Maddison. We've known each other for close to 22 years now and we tend to feed off of each other's chaotic energy when we are together.

AdC: *What are one of your quirks?*

H.S.: I like to be left alone when working, all the better to devolve into my full gremlin form until my task is completed. It's how I work best.

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

H.S.: Phoenix Fan Fusion 2024 - May 24-26 - Phoenix Convention Center

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

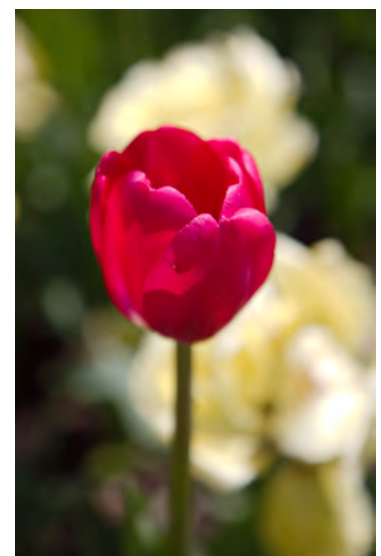
Personal web page:

<https://www.harlowesavage.com/>

Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/HarloweSavage> - @HarloweSavage

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php>





An Affaire de Coeur *Sneak Peak*

An Excerpt from

Alexander

by Harlowe Savage

Alexander took Hephaestion's extended hand and sat up slowly. After ensuring that Alexander wasn't going to pass out from sitting up, Hephaestion grabbed the bandages he'd set to the side and began wrapping up Alexander's torso.

"You really should be more careful with yourself," Hephaestion scolded, clicking his tongue on his teeth.

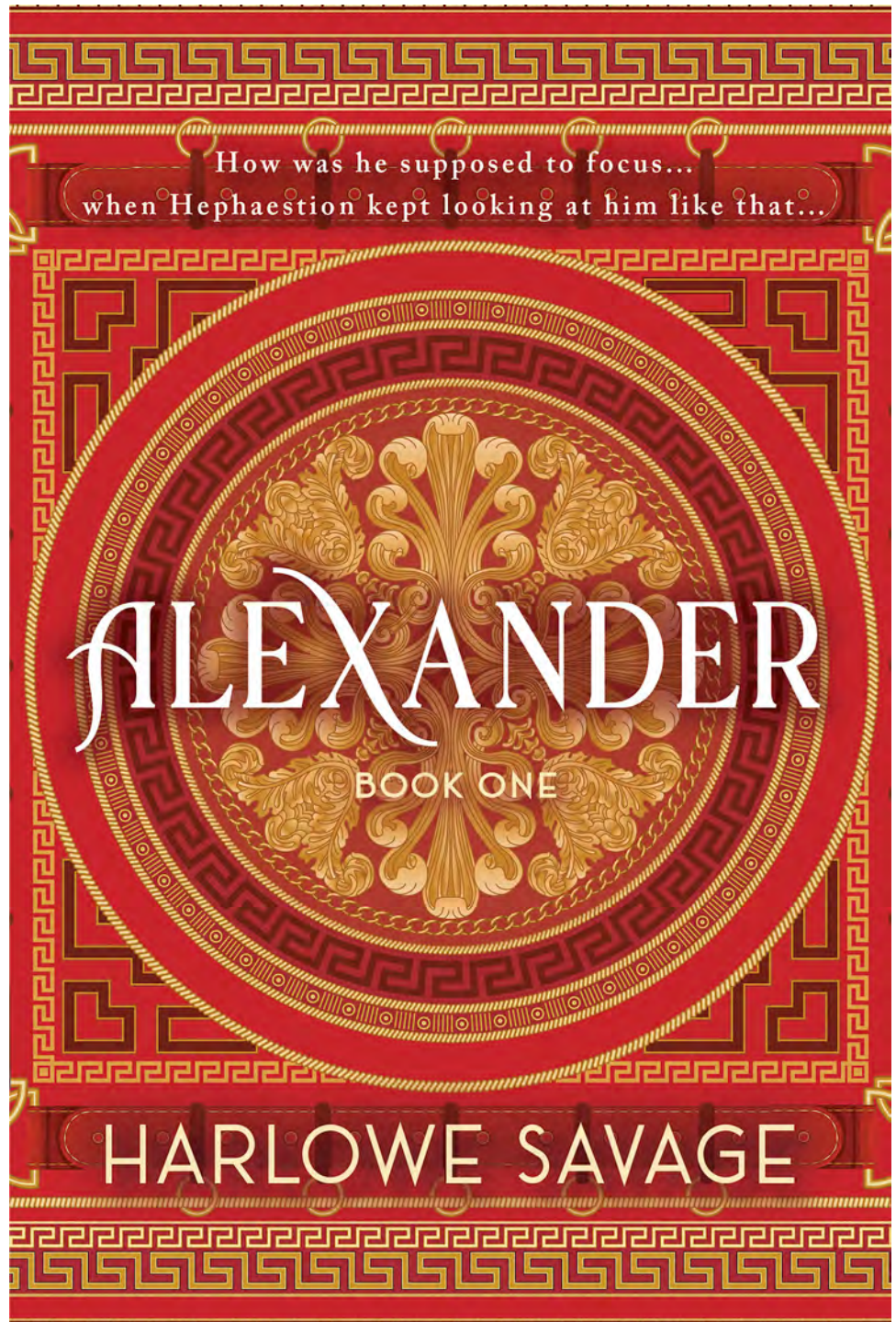
"I know." Alexander shrugged. The room was beginning to stabilize, so he covered one of Hephaestion's hands with his own, trapping it between his hand and bandaged torso. "Thanks."

When Hephaestion didn't respond, Alexander looked up and found himself in a very familiar situation. Once again, Hephaestion was very close to his face - from leaning in to bandage him - and he found himself locking eyes with the dark-haired man yet again. Alexander parted his lips to say something, but as soon as he did, he suddenly found that he couldn't remember what he was about to say.

Was it hot in here? Or was it just the blood loss?

Wait... No... blood loss made you cold.

Hephaestion looked back and forth between Alexander's eyes, and he could have been hallucinating due to the blood loss, but Alexander



swore that he looked down at his lips like Hephaestion had done the night before in the tent. Hephaestion took his free hand and slid it up Alexander's arm, softly gripping his bicep, and despite himself, Alexander found himself leaning forward slightly into his touch.

He always took such good care of him... and he was so pretty... gods, Alexander really wanted to kiss him.

Forever in Darkness

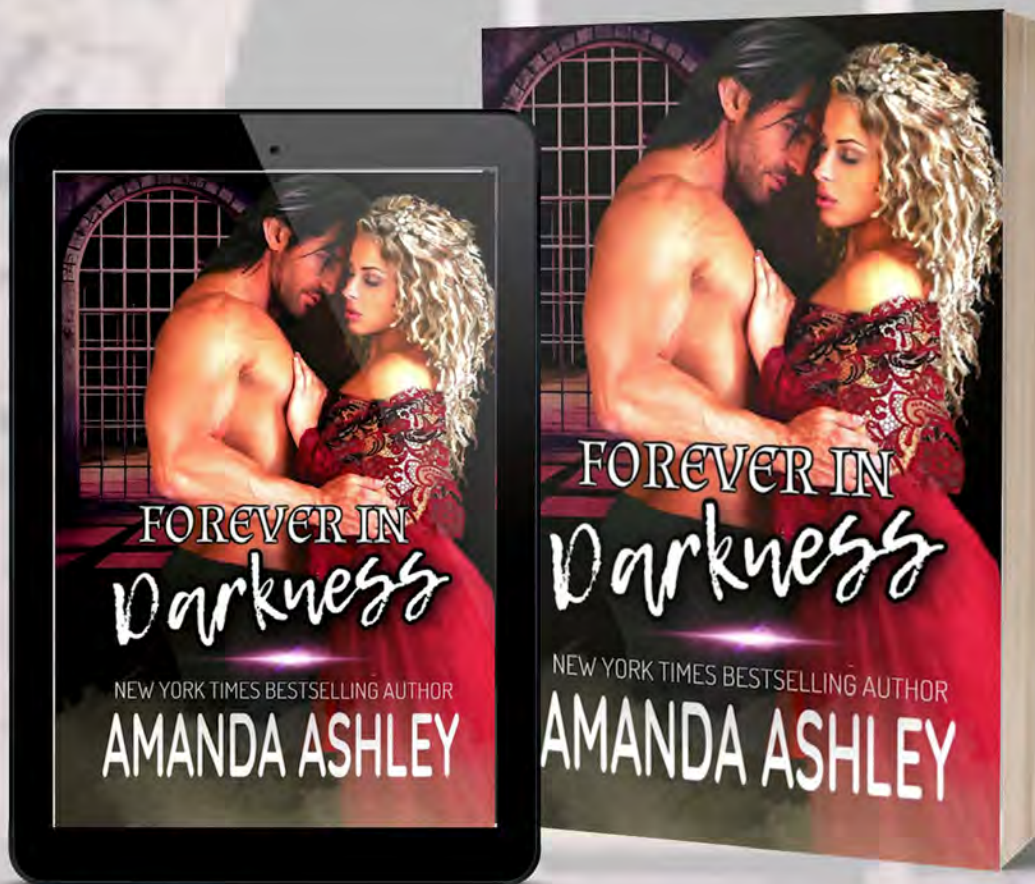
UNLIKELY LOVERS

Vampyres and Elves have little in common, yet for Xander and Alyana, every day is a matter of life and death. Captured and caged by an evil sorcerer, they must depend on each other for their very survival.

Gradually, Alyana's fear turns to affection, and Xander's desire for her blood wanes as his desire to make her his in every way grows stronger.

When, at last, Xander escapes, he can't bring himself to leave Alyana behind. Although no longer prisoners, the two of them now face another challenge when Xander learns that Alyana is Elfin royalty and feels a strong sense of loyalty to her people. When her father refuses to accept Xander, she must decide between her heart and her duty.

Available March 25, 2024



AmandaAshley.com



AdC Loves Conferences

Romance Atlanta Writers and Readers

RAWR Book Event

Hosted by author Leah Taylor, the RAWR – Romance Atlanta Writers and Readers, book event was held at the Douglasville Convention Center in downtown Douglasville, Georgia.

It was a fantastic event with 60 + authors. Raffle tickets were sold and all proceeds were donated to a very worthy cause, the Georgia K-9 Police Foundation.

Plans for next year's RAWR event are in the making and will be held Saturday June 28, 2025, at the Columbus Convention & Visitors Bureau in Columbus, GA.



Hostess, and Author Leah Taylor



Author, Lana Kate



Author Group Photo



**Rockets Above Us
Beaches Beside Us
and a Book in our Hands**

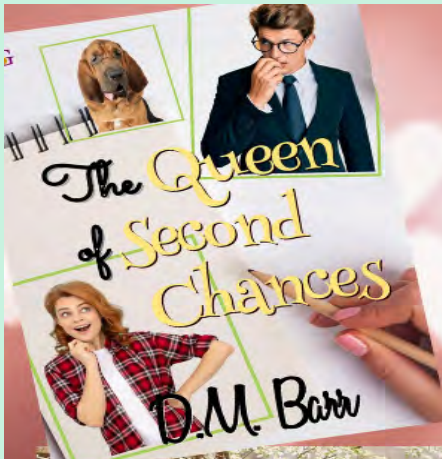
**The 7th Annual Space
Coast Book Lovers Event
Cape Canaveral, FL
June 22nd - June 25th
75+ Multi-Genre Authors**

**Radisson Resort
at the Port
8701 Astronaut Blvd
Cape Canaveral, FL**

**Tickets that fit all
budgets from Free
to \$95!**

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SpaceCoastBookLovers**

SpaceCoastBookLovers.com



Fun, flirty,
and sweet!

Romantic stories
to put the sigh in
your life.



Author B. Livingstone



Author C.M. Kane

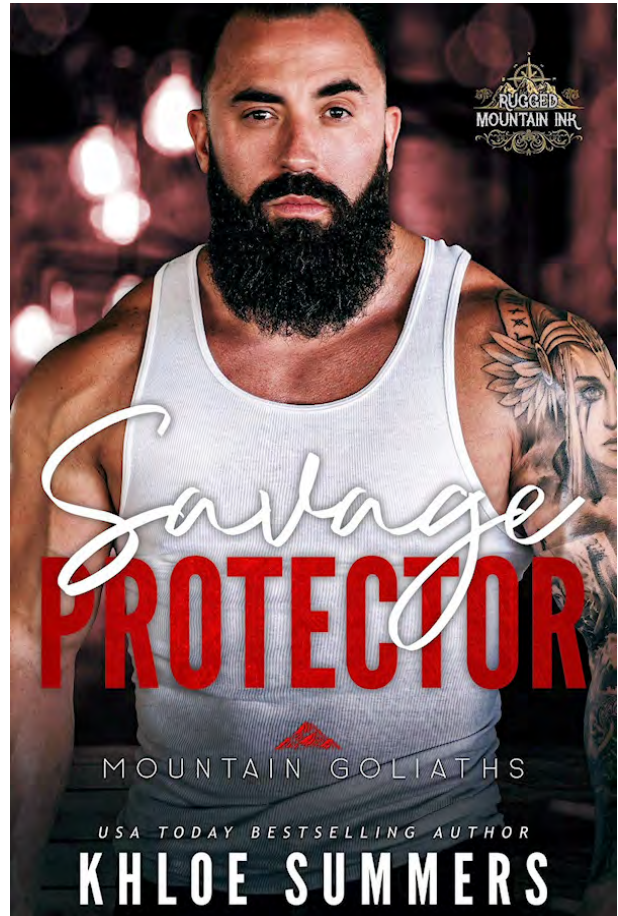


Author Livell James

Debra Parmley's Cover Model Corner

An Interview with Cover Model

Tony Brettman



Debra Parmley's Cover Model Corner

Interview with Tony Brettman

Debra: Welcome to Cover Model Corner, Tony.

What was the first cover you appeared on and how did this come about?

Tony: The first cover that I appeared on was *Balls to the Walls* by Giulia Lagomarsino. It was a custom shoot that was setup by Reggie Deanching and the author.

Debra: If you could do a photo shoot anywhere in the world for a cover, where would you most want to go?

What sort of shoot would it be?

Tony: I would absolutely love to shoot somewhere exotic, but I think it would be super cool to shoot in front of the pyramids in Egypt.

Debra: That would be a great location for a photo shoot! Beyond romance novel cover shots, what other projects or jobs keep you busy?

Tony: I am currently trying to pursue fashion modeling and promotional modeling. I have been working with a beard brand called BeardGuyz and shooting commercial



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.



The MIA Groom
Jillian Gilmore's wedding day has arrived. Unfortunately, her groom has not.

Bringing Her Home
Jessica Lane had been dumped by the love of her life, Tommy, after she was seriously injured during an FBI field op.

Teri-Riggs.com

@TeriLRiggs



Sunsets and New Beginnings
Mandi Waters seeks refuge in the seaside town of Heaven's Beach.

True Love Never Dies
Samantha has mourned the tragic death of her husband...she begins to see images that can't possibly be real.

Forever Paradise
Lindsey James is ready to begin her life. A stalker has other plans for her.

type content. Outside of that, I attend book events and I try and engage with the book community as much as possible.

Debra: What's one question you wish an interviewer would ask you?

Tony: Why is it so important to do things the right way when it comes to carrying oneself both personally and professionally?

Debra: You set a good example for new cover models to follow.

If you wrote a book, what would it be about?

Tony: I want to write a kids book about being adopted, I'm adopted, and I have a unique perspective on adoption. I want to help with the message of inclusion and that special bond families have throughout that

journey.

“Start with something you can do every day, build a healthy habit and compound on that.

Drink more water”

Debra: I would love to see you write that book.

I was also adopted.

Now, this question is almost always asked in interviews because your fitness level is beyond the average persons. What is your exercise routine and what sort of nutrition plan do you follow to achieve and maintain your

level of fitness?

Tony: I work out about five to seven days a week, I do mostly high intensity interval training in trying to exhaust the muscles.

Nutrition is super important, so I try to maintain a pretty strict diet, heavy in protein and carbs but moderate to my goals!

Debra: If you could share three simple fitness tips the average romance reader could do every day to stay healthy, what would they be?

Tony: Start with something you can do every day, build a healthy habit and compound on that.

Consistency is key.
Drink more water.

Debra: It's your birthday dinner and the calories don't count. What's on the



menu and what are you drinking?

Tony: Cake and ice-cream, specifically Oreo ice-cream and vanilla cake.

Debra: Describe the perfect romantic evening:

Tony: Set the scene: beautiful summer night, walking by the lakefront and entering a nice restaurant to have a fine feast of delicious food

After dinner, we take a short walk to a horse-drawn carriage where we take a mini-tour around the town.

After that, head back to the house, put on comfy clothes and cuddle up in front of a funny movie and have some treats that may or may not include Sour Patch Kids.

Debra: Please share one unusual fact about you or your life:

Tony: I was interviewed by the news while wearing a Spider-Man costume.

Debra: Eight Quickie questions:

1.) Watching the sunrise or watching the sunset and the stars?

Tony: Watching the sunset.

2.) The beach or the mountains?

Tony: Mountains

3.) Primitive camping or luxury hotel?

Tony: Primitive camping

4.) Snow skiing or water skiing?

Tony: Water skiing

5.) Favorite movie:

Tony: *The Godfather*

6.) Best book you ever read:

Tony: *The Shining*

7.) Fav. Sport to play:

Tony: Soccer

8.) Fav. Sport to watch:

Tony: Soccer

Debra: Thank you for visiting with me today. It's been fun getting to know you.

Before we say goodbye, how can fans stay up to date on your latest news? Do you have any news or announcements to share?

Website: www.tonybrettmanmodeling.com

Facebook: facebook.com/tonybrettmanmodeling

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

Debra Parmley writes suspense, military romantic suspense, historical romance, fairytale romance, and urban fantasy romance. She lives in a motorhome fulltime with her husband as they travel the U.S. She has interviewed cover models since 2011 and enjoys sharing interviews with readers of Affaire de Coeur Magazine. She loves to hear from you! Readers (and Models who wish to schedule an interview) may contact debra@debraparmley.com



Debra Parmaley

An erotic retelling of a Jane Austen classic.

Characters you thought you knew... well, they're ready to reveal their secret selves.

Mr. Darcy is a Dominant. Miss Elizabeth Bennet is submissive. Jane Bennet might be the only "handsome" woman in Meryton, but puppy-like Charles Bingley needs a Mistress. Mr. Darcy doesn't think Jane has what it takes and separates the couple.

His growing lust leads Mr. Darcy to confess his desire to dominate Miss Elizabeth – a proposition that she mistakes for a proposal. Already accused of less-than-gentlemanlike behavior, Darcy must find a way to win the submissive heart of a woman who abhors him.

K. S. Banks: "This is a phenomenal twist on the classic! It is an incredibly gripping & titillating ero/rom read! A must read for everyone who loves historical romance and light erotica!"



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[@NiaFarrellTwitter](https://twitter.com/NiaFarrellTwitter)

The Spotlight is Shining on Ms. April Ester López



Ester López

AdC's Ms April 2024

Ester is a writer and publisher and lives in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee, along with her husband, Jerry, their two miniature horses, Pepper and Bucky, and their new puppy, Chewie. She has been writing sci-fi and paranormal/inspirational adventure romances for over 30 years, writing on the edge of reality. Her non-fiction children's books are true stories told in a fictional way. She is currently working on a second sci-fi series, *The Vaedra Saga*, in the "Vaedra Chronicles" series. She recently finished her "Angel Chronicles" series with six books. When Ester isn't writing, she enjoys photography, sewing, crafts, making her own wine, canning vegetables, and gardening.

AdC: *Tell us about the genre(s) you write, and the type of characters you love to write about.*

E.L.: I write sci-fi and paranormal adventure romances as well as children's stories. Most of my characters are people who need a second chance at something.

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

E.L.: My current work in progress is a sci-fi which takes place in the Vaedra system on a prison planet.

AdC: *Which tasks/projects do you find you tend to procrastinate on and why?*

E.L.: Lately, I've been procrastinating on my new sci-fi story (doing crafts and painting the interior of my house) until I added a fantasy element into the story. I think things will start moving along now.

AdC: *If you had to pick any character in one of your books, who is most similar to you, who would you choose? Why?*

E.L.: Bailey Jackson in *Bailey's Irish Dream*. Mostly because I think I'm a nurturing person and she (Bailey) made me realize that. Plus, in my travels to Ireland, I experienced some of the

scenes and places she visited. And it was my dream that made the story come alive.

AdC: *If you were transported to the setting of the book you're currently reading or writing, where would you be?*

E.L.: In the current book, I'd be on the prison planet, Plumaris in the Vaedra System, deep inside a mine, digging for rubies.

AdC: *If you saw a doorway/portal in the middle of the forest, would you*



Two spiritual entities One wants her soul, the other wants her heart.

After thousands of years fighting bullies, Alona Gabriel seeks a quiet, normal life and chooses downtown Miami. Always worrying about discovery, she keeps her secret to herself until a loving, stray dog enters her life and she confides in him.

Little did she know, the quiet life wasn't going to last very long.



EsterLopez.com @EsterLopez1



enter it?

E.L.: Yes, but I'd bring someone with me.

AdC: *What do you wish you were better at?*

E.L.: I wish I could draw better. I see so much in my head that I want to put on paper, but I don't know how to do that. I can sometimes draw what I physically see, but things that are in my head are harder to manifest on paper.

AdC: *What is something you say a lot?*

E.L.: "Thank you, Jesus!" He's helped me out a lot.

AdC: *What do you do when no one is around?*

E.L.: If I'm in my car, I'm usually singing.

AdC: *When running away for fun,*

where can you most likely be found?

E.L.: If I plan the "run away," I'd be at the beach, soaking up the sun.

AdC: *Where is one place you don't like to be?*

E.L.: Outside in the cold.

AdC: *You get in trouble, who are you most likely with?*

E.L.: I avoid trouble as much as possible.

AdC: *What are one of your quirks?*

E.L.: I usually write my stories in long-hand first, then put them into the computer (while editing it).

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

E.L.: I'll be at MidSouth Con in

cont. on next page



Ester López at print book signing event

Spotlight cont.

Ocean Springs, MS, this March.

I'll be in North Carolina in April at the 3rd Annual Sun Valley Commons Spring Market.

In July, I'll be at the Greenbrier Mountain Festival in Pittman Center, TN.

In October, I'll be at the Indie Romance Convention in Lebanon, TN.

AdC: Please give us the following contact information:

Personal web page
www.esterlopez.com

Twitter
www.twitter.com/esterlopez

Facebook
www.facebook.com/EsterLopezAuthor

An Affaire de Coeur Sneak Peak



**Capital City
Author Event
Montgomery, AL**

**75+ Authors
Book Signing
Event**

May 17th to 19th, 2024
Meet and Greet
Fun
Games
Did we say lots of fun?

**Facebook.com/groups/
CCAERedReaderGroup**

An Excerpt from...

Nephilim, the last book in the “Angel Chronicles” Series by Ester López

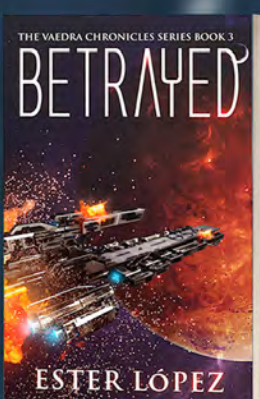
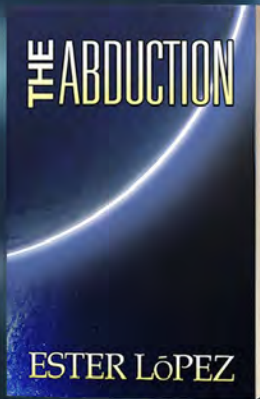
Her name, Noura Hashim, means light destroys evil. And that’s what she had done for the last two thousand years. But the times had changed, and she had to adjust.

When her secret got out, she had to change her name and move to another town, another state, another country, and finally another continent. Her crusade was to stop bullies and fight evil wherever she could. It used to be easy, but with the changing attitudes, it was more difficult to deal with the criminals of each town.

She found herself in Miami. It was the perfect mixture of different races and cultures, and she blended in well. She settled down there and changed her name to Alona Gabriel. She bought a small shop and set up business in the downtown area.



Writing on the Edge of Reality



Sci-Fi
Paranormal
Inspirational
Adventure
Romance



The Angel Chronicles
The Vaedra Chronicles
Children's Adventures

EsterLopez.com

@EsterLopez1





When She Took Pen to Paper....

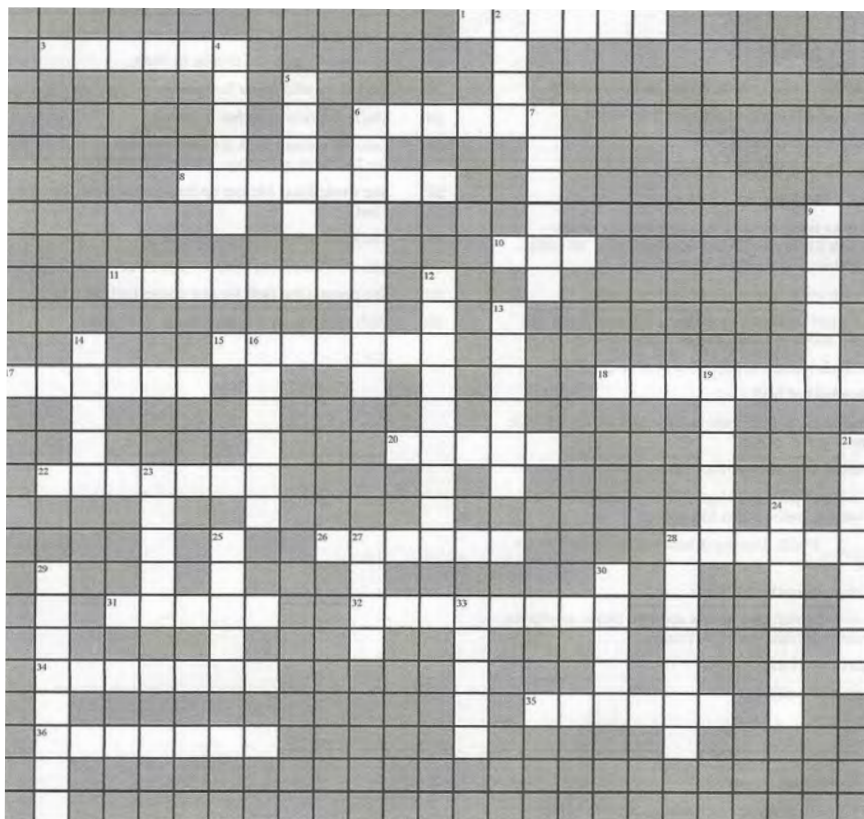
Across

5. Easter reminds us of rabbits and this author.
6. "I'll have what she's having."
7. She created Scarlett O'Hara.
9. Best solo artist who created her own songs.
10. Her talent and beauty has brought her a bee hive.
12. Purple was her color.
13. First lady who wrote *Becoming*.
17. She sold the most books in history.
18. She interviewed vampires.
19. She's responsible for *Grey's Anatomy*, *Bridgerton* and lots between.
20. She has written over 85 books and holds the record for weeks on the *NYT* bestselling list.
21. She wrote of a famous black horse.
24. *To Kill a Mockingbird*.
27. Her books set the standard for romance while exposing the plight of women in the 19th century.
29. She wrote of the March sisters in post-Civil War.
30. _____ Smith, British-African author wrote of white teeth.
31. "There was no there, there."
33. Between her romance novels and Eve Dallas mysteries, she has written over 200 books.
34. She penned the *Bell Jar* and committed suicide.
35. She knew why the caged bird sang.
36. She wrote of post-apocalyptic times where men ruled and women were treated like slaves.

2. She exposed the sins of slavery in her Civil War book.
3. The daughter of a President, she wrote mysteries.
4. She created a monster.
8. Both mother and daughter wrote mysteries.
9. Her books liven up the Christmas holiday on the Hallmark Channel with movies about Mrs. Miracle and *Dashing Through the Snow*.
11. Her sister starred in *Dallas*. She wrote glitz and glamour.
14. This African-American woman wrote time-travel and exposed social injustice and climate change.
15. First black woman to publish a book in English.

16. This Bronte sister wrote *Jane Eyre*.
18. She is the richest author in history.
22. These heights were written by Emily Bronte.
23. The TV series *Bones* is based on her life work.
25. She wrote *Silas Marner* under a man's name, George Eliot.
26. She wanted women to lean into work.
28. Kelcey's woman took it to major companies about she not getting royalties for songs she had written.
32. She won the Nobel prize for literature.

cont. on page 32



Down

1. Who's afraid of *her*?

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

Be Our Guest



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.

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Kestrel

Becca Jameson and Pepper North

Self-published

E-book

B0C136FD61

★★★★★



Kestrel

A mysterious billionaire saved my life. Now, I owe him. My team save Zara from lurking threats. Now I must convince her she's mine.

Zara

I've tried to avoid attention all my life. But there's bad guys everywhere. Danger Bluff should be a safe place to hide... If only that devastating pilot didn't ooze Daddy vibes.

Zara is on the run from human traffickers and ends up hiding out at Danger Bluff. She never counted on Kestrel. Kestrel is smitten from first sight and not just because she is physically beautiful. He falls for her innocence and her strong heart.

As a reviewer, I just fell for

Affaire de Coeur

these two and was rooting for them from first page to last. I loved Coco and laughed out loud when Kestrel jumped at her stare.

D. Antonio

The Perfect Witness (Secure One #2)

Katie Mettner

Harlequin- Romance

Mass Market

978-1335591487

★★★★

Security expert Cal Newfellow protects Marlise, a star witness in a high-profile trial. When someone attacks and forces them into hiding, keeping Marlise and himself alive tests their will and courage. Marlise's life mission is to ensure that dangerous criminals face justice. Achieving her goal means trusting Cal who is haunted by and battling his demons. But he's sworn to help her heal and survive this experience.

Cal is an ex-military special forces veteran who was injured in a

Contemporary Romance

military operation that went bad. He and Marlise work for his brother's private security firm, Secure One. Cal excels at keeping people safe, but he doesn't trust that things will work out because experience has taught him safety is an illusion. A protective, meticulous brooder without roots, Cal is hard on himself and stuck in the past. He never plans to fall in love again, but he doesn't expect Marlise. She came to the team broken and afraid. He trained her in self-defense and gun safety. Now, he feels responsible for her.

On the road to healing and recovery, Marlise becomes Secure One's cook. But she's hiding secrets from her time at Red Rye House. After being homeless for years and then controlled by her ex-boss, she's experienced humanity's dark side. At her limit of not having control of her life, she takes control despite being emotionally and physically scarred.

Cal and Marlise work perfectly as partners. Despite their fiery, deep connection and attraction, each believes they aren't good enough for the other and avoids getting too close. Mettner develops their relationship through interactions charged with sexual and romantic tension. Their sexy, steamy, and intimate love scenes reveal and evolve their characters and the plot. The novel features fantastic disability and mental health representation with its security team of disabled and recovering trauma survivors. Their humorous, snarky, supportive, and emotional interactions have a found-family feel.

Mettner draws readers in with her narrative style, excellent pacing, and vivid, detailed writing that reads like a criminal investigation show, crime drama, or mystery/thriller.

Well-constructed action/fight scenes and gripping suspense elements keep readers on the edge of their seats. *The Perfect Witness* is a fast-paced, captivating, suspenseful, dark, intense, steamy, emotional, and intriguing romance.

Lacy Hill

Soul Match

Declan Ryder

Destiny Ink

E-book

978-1738559107

☆☆☆ 1/2

Sara is lonely and wishes for the romantic soul mate and the happily-ever-after. After a time, tired of the lack of a good relationship, she tried SoulMatch, an AI matchmaking app recommended to her by her friend. Sara was immediately stunned at how quickly the app found Alex, a 98% match. She was skeptic and astonished.

The two of them conversed in the message box for hours on multiple occasions. He was so perfect for her. It was a total online relationship. During one of their many conversations, Alex nonchalantly mentioned a romantic vacation to the Maldives, Sara's dream vacation. Yet, they hadn't met in person. A few video calls didn't cut it for her. He seemed to avoid wanting to meet. And then he stood her up.

A fast-paced great story. A must read!

Kitty Lane

The Trail of Lost Hearts

Tracey Garvis Graves

St. Martin's Press

978-1250280275 Hardcover

978-1250280282 E-book

☆☆☆

Wren Waters hopes to recover from a broken heart by leaving the comfort of her Ohio home to travel the West Coast geocaching. She follows coordinates via GPS to discover hidden containers, hoping to be the first to enter her name in the enclosed log, and leaving behind a small treasure for the next person to find.

While hiking in the Oregon wilderness, she encounters a fellow geocache enthusiast and tries her best to find the treasure before he does. Instead, she finds two unsavory characters who make her realize that maybe hiking alone in a forest in a strange place

might not have been the smartest idea. Fortunately for Wren, the man she met on the path, Marshall Hendricks, comes to her rescue and they make a hasty escape.

Neither is looking for a relationship because they're both trying to heal from heartbreak, but they decide to team up to search for the geocaches, strictly as friends. Wren decides that having another person nearby when she's in isolated places makes sense for safety reasons, and Marshall sees a partnership as a way to alleviate some of his loneliness.

How long can they adventure together before they start to feel more than friendship? In spite of growing feelings, when their time away from real life ends, they part ways. And even if she wanted to contact Marshall again, a very big secret makes Wren believe that would be impossible.

In many ways a lighthearted story, this *The Trail of Lost Hearts* doesn't shy away from some deep emotional issues. Both Wren and Marshall have demons to face before they can consider moving on with one another. It's a journey worth following.

Hannah Rowan

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Historical Romance Reviews

Sincerely, The Duke

Amelia Gray

St. Martin's Press

E-Book

978-1250850447

☆☆☆☆

Roderick Cosworth, the Duke of Stonerick, was constantly being “harassed” by his well-meaning mother to produce an heir and it was his duty to do so. Rick enjoyed his life just as it was—playing cards, honing his expert marksmanship, and fencing with his friends. He tried to argue with the dowager duchess about his matrimonial state, but with his head hurting so badly and his body weak from fever, he figured the quickest way he could get home to his bed was to go along with whatever scheme his mother had dreamed up this week to get him married. Besides, maybe it was high time he settle down and produce an heir before he ran out of time. So, when his mother produced a list of this Season’s eligible

young ladies, he randomly picked a name off the list, hastily wrote a note saying, “Will you marry me?” and promptly forgot about it.

Miss Edwina Fine had one shot to fulfill her beloved father’s dying wish for her to find a husband and to make sure her sisters were both settled before the *ton* discovered their secret. She couldn’t hide her red hair and green eyes, but the fact that she was one of triplets, could never be found out. Her father had drilled into all of them the superstitions and innuendoes that surrounded red-haired, green-eyed women and multiple births; that they would be called witches, they were able to read minds, they were to be avoided at all costs, etc. So, when Edwina received a written proposal of marriage from a duke, no less, sight unseen, she and her aunt traveled from the rural village where her father had raised them to keep them safe, to London to 1) see if it was a real proposal; and 2) accept.

na get off to a rocky start. He has no memory of writing a proposal, much less posting it, and Edwina has no intention of letting him off the hook. Fortunately for Edwina, the Duke does not believe in superstitions, so when he first meets her, he is stunned by her fiery beauty and her sheer determination to get past his butler to see him, since he has no idea who she is. Later, he is perplexed by her insistence on him finding her sisters husbands immediately and this vow she made to her late father and the secrecy and fear behind all of it.

With her latest, *Sincerely, the Duke*, Amelia Gray does not disappoint. Her superb writing skills and ability to weave a story about two unlikely lovers fighting ignorance and superstition (and each other) will have you laughing and crying as you sit up all night reading. Ms. Gray truly is a master storyteller!

Lani Roberts

Needless to say, Rick and Edwi-

Paranormal Romance Reviews

Fantasy
Vampires
Shape Shifters
Time Travel
Werewolves...

Caleb's Mate

Becca Jameson

Self-published

E-book

B086J2YC1D

★★★★★



The small town of Canyon Springs, Colorado, is filled with warm, welcoming people and breathtaking views. Is that why visitors often decide to stay for the rest of their lives? Or is it something else?

Elena isn't worried about spending a week in Canyon Springs settling her aunt's estate. She's never bought into the notion that shifters can somehow lure people into their dens and brainwash them into staying in town. That has to be a myth.

She and her twin sister have never met this estranged aunt, so they aren't exactly in mourning. Elena intends to spend the week reconnecting with her sister. Hopefully, she'll find the spine to tell her sister what a failure her career has been. But what if the lore is true? In an unexpected twist, Elena finds herself instantly falling for Caleb, the sexy wolf shifter who approaches her on her first night in town. She can fight the pull. She can deny the illogical facts. But in the end, does it really matter why the heart chooses who to love?

Elena is barely getting by in Chicago so when the chance to go to



Canyon Springs, Colorado, to settle her great aunt's estate, catch up with her twin and reassess her life she figures why not. Family secrets and a hot wolf shifter definitely keep her mind off her career woes.

Caleb's Mate is a sassy, sweet and smexy romp that will have readers wanting to Gibbs smack a few old ladies and break out a fan or two. Can't wait to hear Hunter and Layla's story.
D Antonio

The Highlander's Heart

Mikea Howard

Self-published

E-book

B0CWYQK15F

★★★★★

Knox Cameron of the berserker werewolf clan of the highlands always put duty first. Serving his family and father took priority until a chance meeting in an Edinburgh bookstore. His world tipped on its axis the moment he saw his fated mate.

Fenella had always been a sheltered lowland girl in the well-to-do Clan Cunningham. She found her escape in books and had a pleasant life. One glimpse of her berserker though and she knew her old life could never be enough.

The Highlander's Heart is a short but sweet tale of the magic of love. I laughed, sighed, and cried but it was so worth it.

D. Antonio

My Oath to You

Cassidy K O'Connor

Celtic Hearts Press

E-book

B0CT772SQV

★★★★★



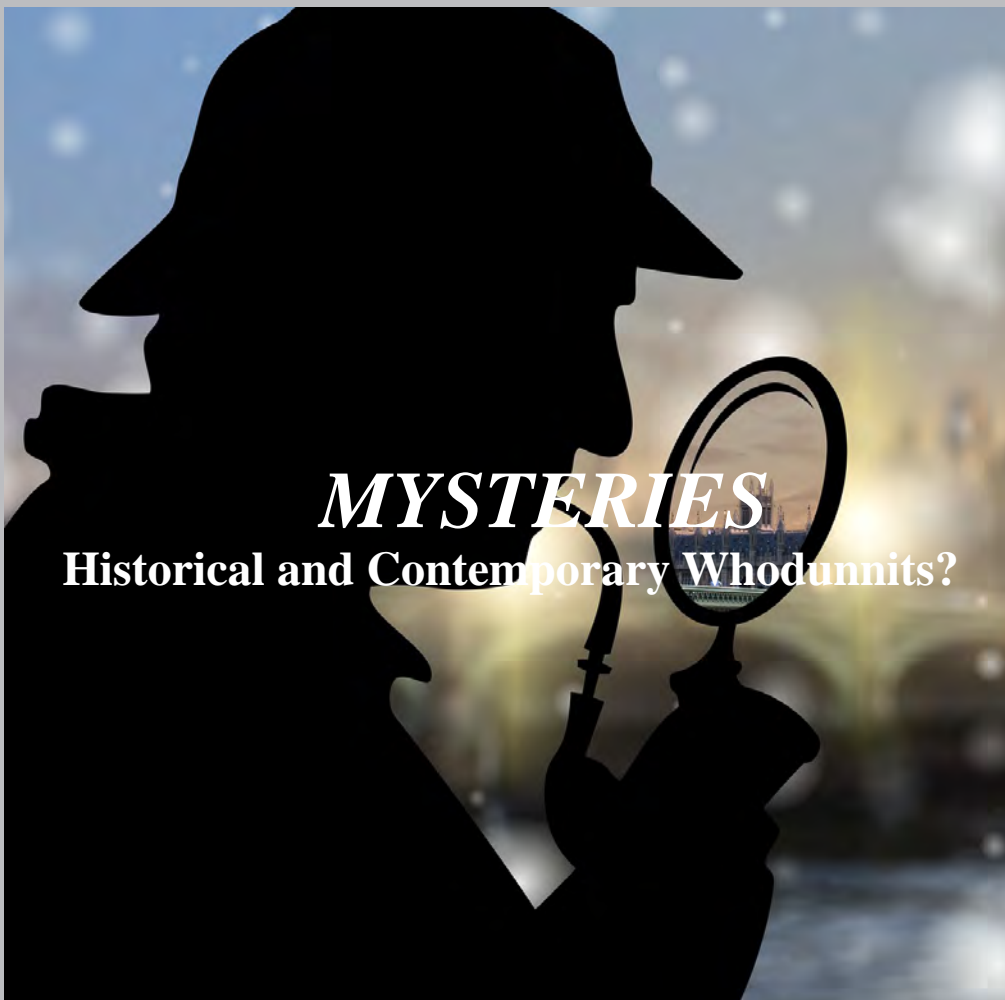
Aeslyn Walker and her partner Ash have a successful private investigative business. When the phone rings, they expect the usual requests for help. But when Gerri Wilder calls, life gets interesting. Aeslyn's oath to protect people has her willingly agreeing to Gerri's favor. She has no idea her next case will be protecting her own mate.

Sebastian Rutledge was a medic in the Air Force. He made an oath to save as many soldiers as he could. He had his dream job and his dream life until he lost a patient he couldn't recover from... home from service now, he has turned his attention to the important things in life.

A missing cat leads to instant attraction, and Seb knows he has to keep Aeslyn around. He doesn't know Aeslyn is staying around for her own reasons. Secrets, danger and heartache, can love be here, too?

Sweet, sassy and smexy. Liger shifter Aeslyn is hired to keep human single dad of twins Sebastian safe from a stalker. What she didn't plan on is him being her mate. This was a truly fun read.

D. Antonio



MYSTERIES

Historical and Contemporary Whodunnits?

Templeton still mourns the loss of his ex-wife Catharine, who died in what was believed to be a freak accident. But when another woman turns up dead a year later, that assumption comes into question. Both women had antique gold coins in their possession. Was it just a coincidence? And where did the coins come from? Local legend has it that notorious pirate Bluebeard buried his treasure on the island before his ship went down. Could these coins be part of that treasure? The mystery heightens when the local pastor finds yet more gold coins in his collection basket.

Chief Templeton is officially off the case because of the connection to his ex-wife, but that doesn't stop him from teaming up with Eva in an effort to find out just what's going on in their once quiet little town. Along the way, it's possible that William and Eva discover more than the answers to the mystery, but also a way to start their romantic lives over again.

The Seafarer's Secret blends romance and a unique twist on an old legend. Did Bluebeard really bury his treasure in Eden? Excerpts from a journal from the 1700s written by a woman who may have been the pirate's lover only heighten the suspense.

Hannah Rowan

Death at the Drive-In

Angie Fox

Moose Island Books

E-book
B0C2DTTP3R

★★★★★



For ghost hunter Verity Long, 'helping out a friend' can mean anything from passing the peas to solving a homicide. This time, it involves digging into a cold case that's been on ice since poodle skirts twirled and Elvis's hips shook the nation.

In 1956, Kitty Cunningham disappeared on the way to the Starlite Drive-In. Now the first real evidence of foul play is coming to light in the ghostly realm—and it links directly to a modern crime. Only a sleuth with one foot in the past can solve the mystery and make things right.

Armed with her wits and flanked by a wise-cracking gangster ghost, Verity explores the hidden side of 1950's Sugarland—from the haunting echoes of the abandoned drive-in to the dusty secrets of a long-forgotten mob vault. As she stirs spirits and secrets alike, she finds some corners of

Sugarland's history are darker and more dangerous than she ever imagined. Can Verity bring the truth to light, or will she be the next one to suffer death at the drive-in?

Verity takes on a case for her ghost buddy Frankie when his girlfriend Molly gets possessed by the ghost of a teen killed at the drive in. This mystery is chock full of surprises and fun. This series is smart and witty and this installment will leave you with a smile.

D. Antonio

The Seafarer's Secret

Carol Ann Collins

Beaufort Books

978-0825310287 Trade Paperback

E-Book

★★★★★

By local standards, Eva Knightly is a newcomer to Eden, North Carolina, a small town on the Outer Banks. Yet Eva plays an important role as historian for the local historical museum as she prepares for the annual Bluebeard festival which brings crowds of tourists to the small town each year.

Police chief William

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The Almost Romantic: How to Date Your Fake Husband (How to Date #3)

Lauren Blakely

Narrated by Vanessa Edwin and Teddy Hamilton

Lauren Blakely Books

Audiobook

B0CWHGVZ3R

☆☆☆

Flirty banter, simmering heat and chemistry, and a hilarious setup draw Elodie and Gage into each other’s lives. Unfortunately, they can’t pursue their attraction after becoming business partners. Elodie is a chocolatier shop owner, and Gage is the bartender at his bar/restaurant. Gage and Elodie pretend to be engaged to land a deal to provide economic security for their families. When Elodie’s business rival threatens to expose their make-believe romance, what else can they do but get married for real? Remaining business partners and platonic friends in a one-year marriage proves more complicated than expected.

Edwin’s and Hamilton’s narration brings Blakely’s characters to life, drawing readers into the multilayered novel from the opening scene. Their

voices match well, perfectly fitting the characters.

Blakely’s sharp, witty storytelling, makes her novel fly by. While the tone is lighthearted and fun, she still deftly develops her characters and their relationships beyond the surface. Further, she explores emotional and impactful subjects affecting the characters’ lives and driving their actions. Readers will love Gage and Elodie’s friendship/relationship, which Blakely develops through hilarious, snarky banter, and swoon-worthy love scenes that evolve their characters and further the novel’s plot. Their honest communication and maturity are among the novel’s and their relationship’s best features. Compatible—in and out of bed—they balance each other.

The Almost Romantic: How to Date Your Fake Husband has quick pacing, and the tone is mostly lighthearted, humorous, and a bit angsty. Sweet, steamy, hilarious, and fast-paced, the *Almost Romantic* is an absorbing listen perfect for fans of fake dating, pretend engagements, marriages of convenience, single parent/sibling guardian, and heroes fall first romances.

Lacy Hill

Affaire de Coeur

The Takeover

Cara Tanamachi

Narrated by Donald Chang and Chieko Hidaka

Recorded Books

Audiobook

978-1705083499

☆☆☆

Former high school rivals Nami and Jae take their rivalry to the next level as Nami tries to save her company from a hostile takeover by his. At 30, Nami’s life hasn’t turned out as expected. She’s not married to the man of her dreams, and the tech company she co-founded is about to lose funding.

Nami’s birthday wish is to find her soulmate. Instead, she gets



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Audiobooks

her hate-mate, Jae Lee—her high school nemesis. Unfortunately for Nami, Jae is still just as appealing, sophisticated, and effortlessly cool. Worst of all, he works for the company planning a hostile takeover of her start-up. Nami and Jae trade insults and banter. She discovers that more than her company is in danger of a hostile takeover when passion of a more intimate kind flares up. Nami's in danger of losing her heart to Jae, too.

Chang's and Hidaka's lively, expressive narration complements Tanamachi's snarky, introspective, and vibrant narrative style, delightfully bringing her hilarious novel to life. The narration perfectly fits the characters, regardless of age or gender. While Chang's voice is smooth, deep, and full of personality, Hidaka's higher-pitched voice works better for Nami.

To differentiate between the characters, they use all the tricks of the trade. The narrators shift between the novel's hilarious, intimate, angsty, intensely emotional, and sizzling tones without affecting the pacing. They portray the characters beautifully during intimate scenes.

Tanamachi's storytelling combines detailed descriptions using the senses-rich world-building, lashes of memories with the present, and excellently developed fallible characters. She develops Nami and Jae's connection and evolving romantic relationship with chemistry-filled variety of tactics. Nami is determined to beat Jae eventually but constantly finds herself in ridiculous situations. In these moments, she's free, happy, and enjoys herself. Jae loses himself in his drive for success. Nami and Jae help balance each other's lives. He helps her to have fun and not be so serious, and she motivates him to be his best self.

A hilarious, fast-paced story, *The Takeover* is an audiobook highly recommended for enemies-to-lovers, rivals-to-lovers, family-centered romance, and heroes who fall fast and

hard for the heroine romance fans.

Lacy Hill

Walk of Shame

Avery Flynn

narrated by: Robert Hatchet and Savannah Peachwood

Recorded Books

Audiobook

978-1705064337

☆☆☆☆

Astrid O'Malley rejoins her father's hockey team's staff, discovering that her one-night stand, Cal Madsen, is her upstairs neighbor and the team's new goalie coach. Unfortunately, he will be training her childhood sweetheart, who dumped her at the altar five years ago. After experiencing the height of public humiliation, Astrid O'Malley walked away from hockey after having her heart broken, becoming a laughingstock in the hockey world, and being blamed for everything. For her, that means No-strings casual relationships--all about sex and NOT her heart.

Cal is a raw wound that's still healing. He's not looking for a relationship or forming any emotional connections. Flynn describes their immediate attraction vividly and develops their relationship effectively through sexy, snarky, funny, and steamy interactions that clearly display why Astrid and Cal are inevitable and stand no chance of staying away from each other. The emotional connection sneaks up on them and you as they try to resist the intense pull between them working in forced proximity.

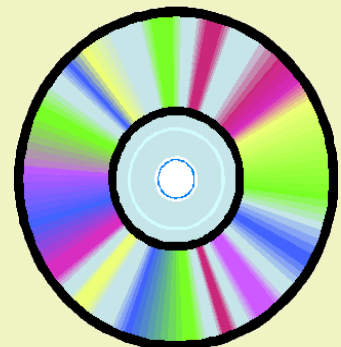
Flynn writes a balanced, sexy, funny, and emotional love story with fascinating characters. Her colorful, hilarious, and natural-sounding dialogue perfectly suits her characters, setting, and theme. Watching Cal and Astrid fall victim to their passion and desire is enjoyable. Their attraction and chemistry is instant and fiery. They share much

in common—especially hockey—and balance one another well. Their humor is at the same level, and they're evenly matched sexually, meeting one another's needs magnificently. Although it starts super sexy, steamy, and funny, the relationship development felt slightly different from Flynn's other novels, lacking a balance between sexual and emotional connection.

Peachwood and Hatchet's lively dual-POV narration complements Flynn's narrative style, drawing readers into this nicely paced romance. Their narration perfectly fits Astrid and Cal. When they switch POVs for Astrid and Cal and narrate for characters of different sexes, their narration is fine, but it's better the other way around. Nevertheless, they provide distinct voices/narration for each character, differentiating them using accents, dialects, tone, pacing, intonation, and inflection that reveal their personalities, quirks, and feelings.

The novel's quick pacing, lighthearted, humorous tone, with a bit of angst, vivid description, fascinating characters, and natural-sounding dialogue make it a fun read. Sweet, steamy, hilarious, sexy, emotional, and fast-paced, *Walk of Shame* is a perfect read audio for those who like one-night stands to more hockey romances, and forbidden relationships.

Lacy Hill





Booty

Reviews from other genre

Ghostly Command

R.K. O'Brien
Self-published
 E-book
 B0B3YS1V65
 ★★★

Joanna Davis is middle-aged, divorcee, and an author. While she was trying to write, the banging and work sounds from the construction workers was distracting to her. She was having a typical day when her cat started acting oddly. Then she started hearing things go bump in the night.

A specter had appeared. It wasn't anything surprising. She'd seen ghosts and felt their presence many times. When the ghost appeared to her again, Joanna knew without a doubt the ghost had been murdered. Joanna was going to figure out who did it and what happened.

Ghostly Command is very slow with unnecessary fillers. It doesn't really get started until about forty pages in. Once the reader got past that point, the book took a turn for the better.

Lauren Calder

Happy, Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise

Jill Wright
Grow Like a Mother Press
 E-book
 B0CKY9XGS3
 ★★★★★ 1/2

A resource for everyday life, *Happy, Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise* is a book the author has created to be read a few pages at a time for a personal growth journey. She begins the book in a positive tone.

Happy, one must have a dragon, a warrior and friend. This is a wow story. It's unique, inspiring and dark all at the same time. A must read!

Lauren Calder

Never Whistle at Night: An Indigenous Dark Fiction Anthology

Edited by Shane Hawk and Theodore C. Van Alst
Penguin Random House
 978-0593468463
 ★★★★★ 1/2

Twenty-six authors deliver unique dark fiction tales in this anthology by and about Indigenous Americans. The stories vary in tone and content. Overtly horrific stories share a collection with sober meditations on the issues faced by Indigenous communities.

Horror is subjective, and *Never Whistle at Night* provides an opportunity for those outside of these cultures to experience existential terrors: the loss of culture and identity and the ability to live their lives according to the treasured beliefs and values intrinsic to their community.

Fear is anything from the man-eating demon of nightmare legends stalking in the night, the avenger of your people who strikes fear in your abusers, an abusive lover or family

Booty

member, the lack of hope that drives a person to drink or abuse drugs, the devastation wrought by forced assimilation and separation from one's culture, the illogical and vicious hatred projected at you every day and the way that it destroys your life and soul, and being forced by the invading colonizers to erase everything that makes you who you are—your essential heritage and being.

The writing was extremely high caliber with all the stories. While the stories are united by addressing the viewpoint of indigenous people, they are diverse in subject matter as each person is unique in what their experiences are. While *Never Whisper at Night* is not in any way an easy read, it is an important and valuable anthology using dark fiction and horror themes and tones to tell important stories about real people and real issues. I strongly recommend it to horror, dark fiction, and speculative fiction fans and readers interested in horror stories from the viewpoint of writers from marginalized cultures.

Danielle Hill

Piñata

Leopoldo Gout

Tor Nightfire

Hardcover

978-1250781178

☆☆ 1/2

Carmen Sánchez is an American architect. She is in Mexico supervising the renovation of an abandoned abbey. It's summer so Carmen brings her girls. Eleven-year-old Luna is thrilled. Izel, Carmen's sixteen-year-old, is not.

Luna and Izel are visiting the work site when a scaffold collapses. It breaks open a secret chamber. Inside are several ancient artifacts

including a piñata, but not the kind that children break at parties. No, this is a tlalxoktli, a clay pot filled with flesh, entrails, cartilage organs and blood. These piñatas were smashed as offerings to the god, Huitzilopochtli. Unbeknownst to anyone, Luna sneaks the piñata out of the abbey.

Carmen's company is unhappy with the delay that the discovery causes. They recall her to the states. Once home, Luna hides the piñata in her room. Overnight she changes from a happy, outgoing child to an angry, secretive one.

Carmen can't help noticing how moody Luna has become. At first, she dismisses the behavior as preteen hormone changes. But it becomes apparent that it's something more serious. Carmen becomes convinced that something evil has followed them home. It's trying to possess Luna and seems to be succeeding.

Piñata is confusing. Day-to-day events are interspersed with paranormal occurrences. It is hard to tell what is real and what are visions.

Sheila Griffin

Sorine: Legend of the Scroll

J.J. Ollofson

Self-published

Trade Paperback

979-8224573370

☆☆☆ 1/2

Sorine was the daughter of King Traban. He warned her about taking the horse out at night but she explained that she wanted to investigate the strange sightings the villagers were fearing.

When Sorine met Dadrine, King Ostarine, king of the Great-Lands, she was mesmerized. The people were from a different tribe than she'd ever been accustomed to, giving her a whole different perspective than she'd ever had.

Dadrine's quest was to find the Southern-People of Legend, which he believed possessed the sacred scroll. The scroll holds the key to the origin of the world. Those who read the sacred scroll gain wisdom and conquer their enemies. Dadrine asked Sorine for help in finding the Scroll.

This is an interesting take on a fantasy quest. If this is the type of story you love, this is a must read for you.

Kitty Lane

What Feasts at Night

T. Kingfisher

Tor Nightfire

E-book

978-1803369693

☆☆☆☆



Sworn Soldier Alex Easton is back to face the terrors of the night, this time in their homeland of Gallacia. Alex and their friend and companion Angus go back to Alex's hunting cabin to prepare for a visit from their friend, mycologist, Ms. Potter, to find it abandoned, their caretaker dead from a lung ailment that he seemed to catch in the cabin. Rumors abound regarding a legendary creature that steals the breath of their sleeping victims. Can Alex and their friends stop the creature before it's too late?

T. Kingfisher's remarkable prose makes for a wonderful reading experience. Descriptive in a smooth and flowing way that makes time fly by with each page, this book is lush with dark imagery. The readers will feel like they are there in the forest on cold days and nights facing an unknown threat along with its characters. Yet, the humor of Alex's unique viewpoint keeps things just light enough to give this folk horror novel feel cozy and

Booty

warm. For its short length, *What Feasts at Night* is an all-immersive experience that treats the reader to a journey where supposedly mythical creatures live and have the power to steal lives. The worldbuilding was excellent, and sure to captivate readers who love folklore and reading about the legends of particular countries, real or created in the mind of the writer. Kingfisher has such a way with creating quirky and imminently lovable characters that will stay on the mind and in the heart long after the story ends. There needs to be more stories. This reader is not ready to say goodbye to Alex and friends.
Danielle Hill

Words Left Unspoken

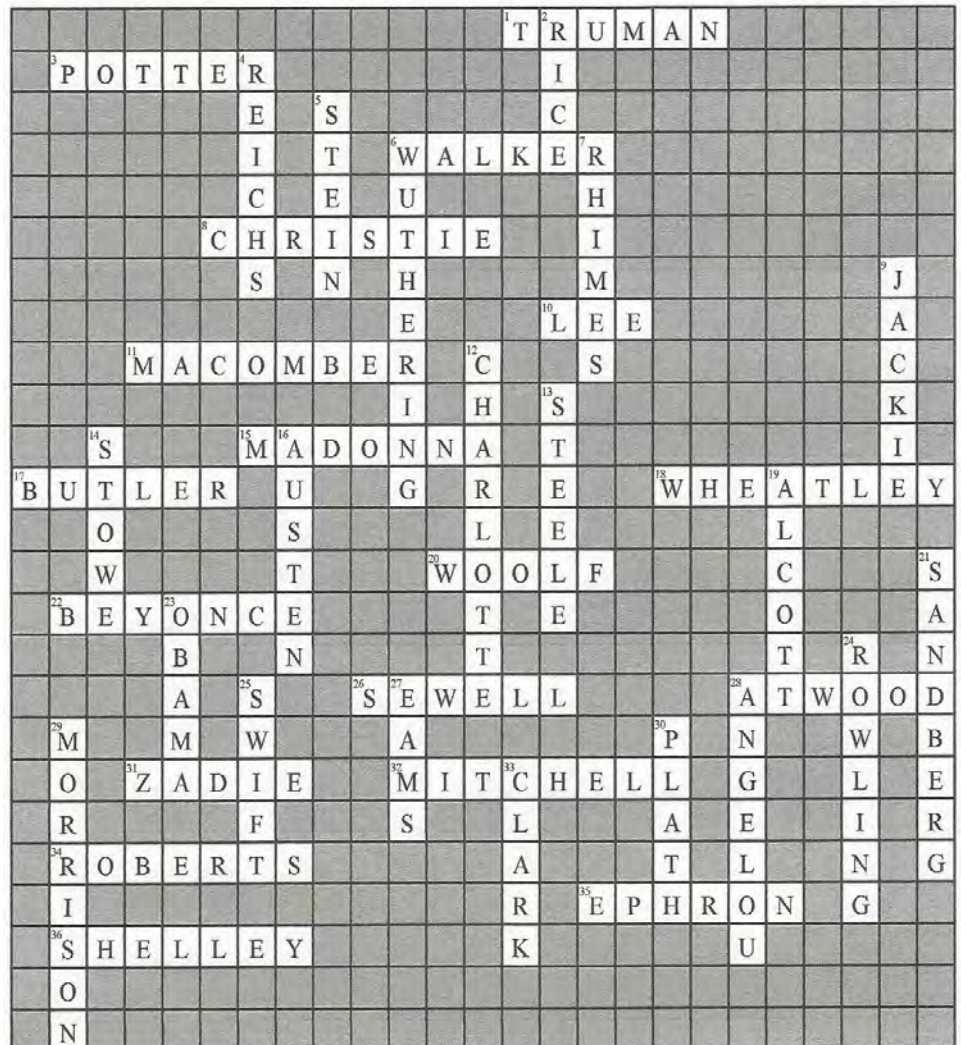
J. A. McGovern
Anamcara Press
Trade Paperback
978-1960462381
☆☆☆

This book of poetry brings several emotions to the heart and soul. It's not the type of poetry book a reader would want to sit and read all at once. It's one of those precious collections where each poem needs to be absorbed, considered, and cherished.

If you love poetry, this is a great book.
Lauren Calder

When She Took Pen to Paper....

Louise B. Snead



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Saturday Book Signing
11:30 am to 4:00 pm**

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Sept. 13 - 14, 2024**



Arbie and Fizzie
Johnny B Clausen
White Monkey Publishing
 E-book
 B0CSFX7VVM
 ★★☆☆

Arbie is an armadillo. He noticed a fox sitting on top of his house. Arbie didn't like visitors and liked being by himself. The fox introduced himself, letting Arbie know his name was Fizzie. Fizzie was the opposite of Arbie. He was very energetic and talked really fast.

The two started talking. Fizzie told Arbie he left the den because the other foxes didn't like the fact that he was so energetic that it was hard for him to keep still. Arbie explained that he left his home because he liked to do things slowly and methodically.

Fizzie wanted to stay with Arbie. Arbie wanted to be alone.

This is an interesting way of teaching a child about understanding and accepting the differences in personalities. Definitely a recommended read.

Kitty Lane

The Doomsday Archives: The Wandering Hour
Zack Loran Clark,
Nick Eliopulos
Zando Young Readers
 E-book
 978-1638930310
 ★★★★★



Emrys Houtman, a relatively new inhabitant of New Rotterdam, senses something is not right in the town, especially with a rash of youths disappearing under mysterious circumstances. Emrys and his friend Hazel contribute to a Wiki that chronicles the urban legends and strange events in the town called the Doomsday Archives. Their other friend Serena is far from enthusiastic about the weirdness being off screen, despite being a horror movie fan, but she won't be able to stay uninvolved for long. Can the trio prevail over the evil shadow looming over their town?

The Doomsday Archive: The Wandering Hour is a gem. It is delightfully creepy and atmospheric with a very contemporary concept built around an online wiki for supernatural/weird

phenomena and urban legends. It also integrates concepts of cursed objects and arcane elements that herald back to HP Lovecraft and other classic horror story writers like MR James, Algernon Blackwood, Arthur Machen, and Manly Wade Wellman, who were excellent at crafting so much lore into their stories. Equally, horror movie enthusiasts will enjoy the self-aware tone and the metafictional approach in which the chapters begin with Doomsday Archive wiki entries. The illustrations are beautiful and very scary, rendered in black in white.

This book is for the weird kids who love anything strange. *The Doomsday Archive; The Wandering Hour* is scary and disturbing, but can be fun for who like to be scared. Due to some of the content, it wouldn't be ideal for younger readers below 12.

The Doomsday Archive: The Wandering Hour is an auspicious start to what is sure to be an excellent series of books. The next installment will be eagerly awaited by this reader.
Danielle Hill

Late!

Didn't quite make in the last issue



Includes all genre and all time periods

The Boyfriend Wish

Swati Teerdhala

Katherine Tegen Books

Hardcover

978-0063279155

☆☆☆

In Swati Teerdhala's *The Boyfriend Wish*, Deepa, a South Indian American teenager, wishes on a jasmine flower for the perfect boyfriend and believes her wish comes true when a new boy, Rohit, moves into her cul-de-sac. A hopeless romantic, Deepa focuses on finding the perfect boyfriend. Deepa is a control freak who likes rules and order. She has a checklist of requirements for the ideal boyfriend, believing planning can protect her from failure and pain. When she receives the traditional jasmine flower from her grandmother with a promise of fulfilling her heart's greatest desire, she can't believe her luck. But she gets so caught up in sealing her wish with a kiss that she never stops to wonder whether Rohit is the right boy-

friend for HER or if she's missing better choices.

An intelligent, quick thinker who's like family, Vik is the bane of Deepa's existence—especially in the prank war. While he drives her crazy and gives her grief for her particularness, he balances her out nicely. He helps her get out of her head, stop overthinking, have fun, do what she needs to, and focus on the now. Best of all, he pushes her to be her best self, challenges her, doesn't let her get away with anything, and knows her well. Though Vik's perspective might have enriched the development and evolution of his friendship with Deepa, the author effectively develops his character enough for us to see his feelings and motivations to understand their adversarial relationship. But also that there is more to it than that. It's no mystery why he's there every time Deepa turns around.

Featuring excellent pacing and character development, *The Boyfriend Wish* is balanced between dialogue and character introspection through Dee-

pa's first-person POV. Vik's POV may have given more balance to this because Deepa feels like an unreliable narrator. She can be frustrating and unlikable sometimes, though her heroine worship of her mom and aunt makes her poor choices more understandable. The pacing slows a bit just before the midpoint but resumes its quick pacing thereafter. Overall, *The Boyfriend Wish* is a teen romance recommended for fans of love triangles, friends-to-foes, friends-to-lovers, prank wars, friendship, sibling bonding, and family-centered stories.

Lacy Hill

Not Your Crush's Cauldron (Supernatural Singles #3)

April Asher

St. Martin's Griffin

E-Book

978-1250808035

☆☆☆☆

April Asher's *Not Your Crush's Cauldron* follows Olive Maxwell after she moves in with Bax Donovan, her long-time crush and friend, and challenges herself to step outside her comfort zone. A by-the-book, sweet and predictable planner, Olive prefers teaching her college students about the supernatural world to actively being part of it like her twin sisters. Olive is comfortable using her magic but avoids getting involved in magical shenanigans or politics and likes keeping a low profile. She assigns her students a project to encourage them to get outside their comfort zones. Realizing she never takes any chances outside her own, she decides to do the project.

Bax is a gifted artist and motorcycle-riding guardian angel. Unfortunately, he has a bad habit of breaking the rules. He gets one last opportunity to keep his Guardian wings intact when given a high-profile assignment and his most challenging and personal one yet—to keep Olive safe and out of trouble. However, his feelings for her and their attraction might cause him to break the one remaining Guardian Angel Rule he has managed to avoid by falling in love with her.

Late!

Asher focuses on Olive's and Bax's friendship and flirtation as they settle in as roommates, grow closer, and learn more about each other as she works through her list. Olive experiences life to the fullest by doing things she's never thought of trying or might have been too afraid to try. The shared adventures accelerate the intimacies Olive and Bax share. Asher transitions them from friends concealing their feelings to becoming lovers and falling in love through snarky banter and intimate interactions that reveal and evolve their relationships with each other and the other characters and the novel's plot. Considering how intense and fiery their attraction and feelings for each other are, it's a little surprising they have managed to keep them under wraps for so long. The tension is palpable every time they're near each other. They match perfectly, balancing each other and encouraging and supporting one another's dreams.

Asher skillfully develops her conflicted, relatable, and likable characters. Her colorful dialogue perfectly suits her magical characters, setting, and theme. Although light on action and suspense, *Not Your Crush's Cauldron* is a sweet, sexy, funny, fast-paced, and entertaining paranormal romance recommended for fans of friends-to-lovers, forced proximity/close-quarters, light paranormal/fantasy, curvy heroine, and magical heroine and hero romances.

Lacy Hill

The Single Dad Project (Rose Bend #5)

Naima Simone

Canary Street Press/Harlequin Trade Publishing

Mass Market

978-1335448026

☆☆☆

Florence Dennison returns to Rose Bend, longing for distraction from

an upsetting work trip. When she sees the sexy stranger at the bar, he's the one. They share an intense, scorching fling. Flo is surprised when an adorable, sweet little girl befriends her, declaring she's her BFF to Flo's one-night stand, Adam—the architect in charge of the restoration project she's photographing. When her nanny becomes unavailable, Flo steps in. Despite dealing with trust issues and complicated family ties, Flo must choose whether she wants more.

Adam makes her work for it but gives her the escape she wants and a passion that touches her profoundly. Simone develops their relationship through steamy, emotional, sexy, and intimate conversations and interactions that draw them closer and reveal their hidden desires and flaws.

Flo, overwhelmed with feelings of anger, bitterness, and grief that run deeper than she's comfortable acknowledging, hates feeling weak and avoids deep emotional entanglements. After a lifetime of feeling overlooked, it scares her how easily Adam makes her feel and how he sees her. An architect and single parent, Adam is a devoted father whose focus is ensuring his daughter is safe and protected with a stable life. With his share of trust issues stemming from his childhood and marriage, he's genuine, honest, supportive, kind, encouraging, caring, and treats Flo like a Queen. Both have traumatic pasts, but being in each other's lives, sharing with and listening to one another helps them face and make peace with it and learn to move forward.

Simone's beautiful, poignant, intimate, and sexy story thoughtfully delves into the relationships people form/share, the emotions driving their choices and lives, family dynamics and relationships, and how they shape the characters, continue to affect their lives, and formation of emotional attachments. Her writing style, fantastic use of language, turn of phrase, and vivid description using the characters'

senses to enrich the details draw readers in from the opening scenes, investing them in their lives and journeys. She excels at her characterization of resilient, complex, steadfast, but emotionally stuck, messy, frustrating, and all too human protagonists. The interactions between Flo, Adam, and the secondary characters in emotional, funny, tense, unfamiliar, unexpected, and uncomfortable situations develop and evolve their characters and relationships and advance the plot.

Simone effortlessly rips out your heart and makes you laugh, always balancing romance, humor, and angst to keep the story moving. *The Single Dad Project* is an intensely emotional, sexy, funny, steamy, and angsty read highly recommended for fans of single-parent and family-centered romance.

Lacy Hill



**Rockets Above Us
Beaches Beside Us
and a Book in our Hand**

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*Wishes you happy reading
and a beautiful spring*