

September/October 2024

Affaire de Coeur

Bringing You the Best and Most Honest Reviews

Fall is here!

And so are some of our favorites!



Celia Breslin
Ms. September's Calendar Girl



Kat Martin with husband Larry



Debra Parmley's Cover
Model is Grigoris Drakakis

Reviews!

Reviews!

Reviews Check out our Paranormal Reviews

AdC Loves Conferences
See our Coverage in Florida and Georgia
It's almost like being there!



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September/October 2024

6

**Dear QWERTY
“The “Need to Know”
for New Writers**



14

**The Spotlight is on Ms. October,
Kat Martin**



8

**The Spotlight is on
Ms. September,
Celia Breslin**

11

**AdC loves conferences:
This time it's the Space Coast
Book Lovers and
Literary Love
Savannah Book Event**



12

**Debra Parmley brings us cover model
Grigoris Drakakis**



Love is just a link away.

One bad mistake sparks a chain reaction of terror for two innocent people.

Suspense, romance, and the struggle for survival, sets the stage for a thrilling adventure. Camille is blackmailed into helping two co-workers commit a crime. With her career on the line, the last thing Camille needs is romantic entanglement that will most likely lead to heartbreak if a secret from her past goes public. She just wants to end the nightmare and return to her job.

Helping a lady in distress, Trenton Shade, awakens hours later chained to an antique barber chair in the middle of nowhere. Plummets into a dangerous situation, he reaches out to Camille, the only possible helping hand escape the clutches of a crazed pair of women driven by greed. Both of victims of evil their intent.

Even the most powerful love cannot heal some wounds.



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

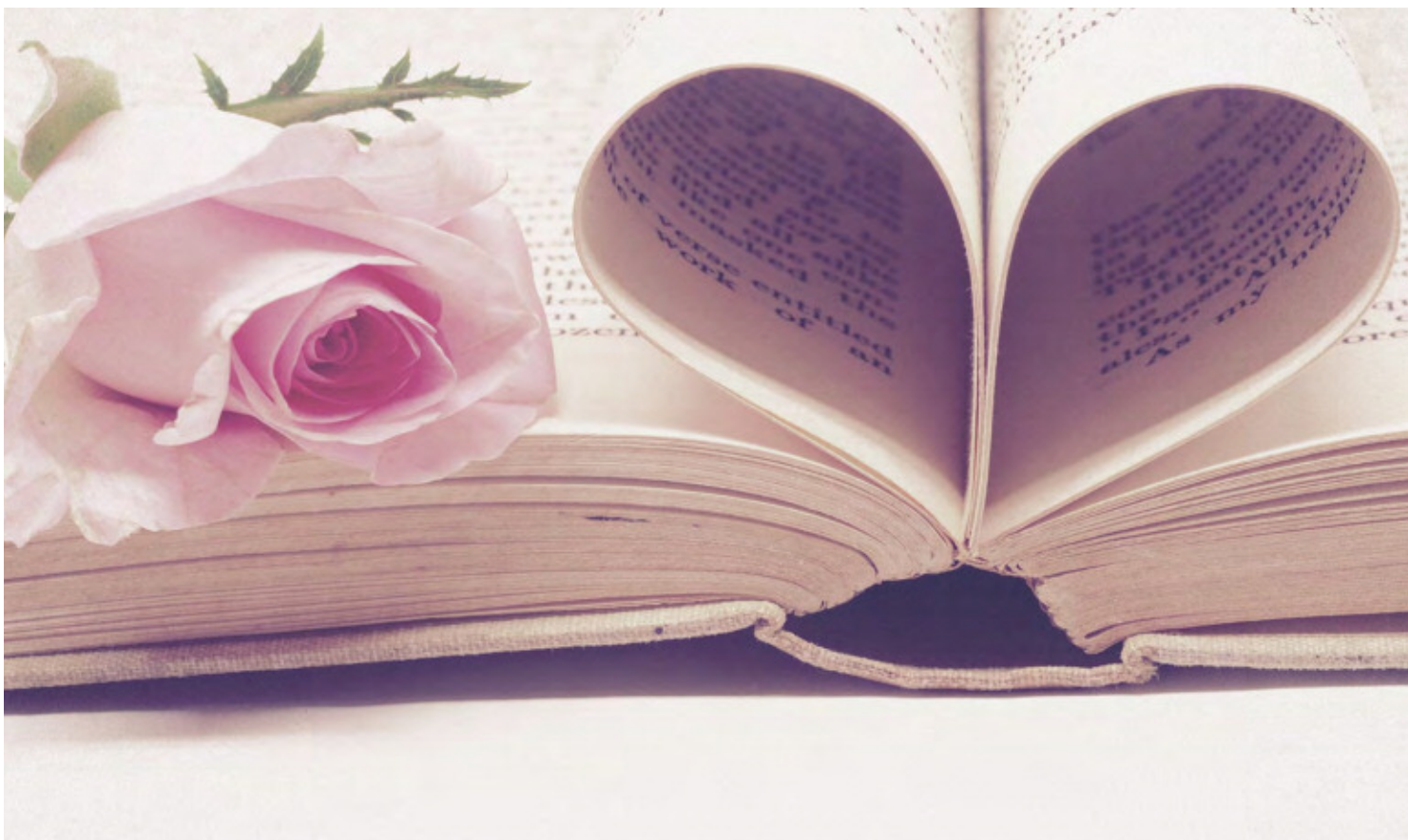


DCL

September/October 2024

CONTENTS

Puzzler	19
Contemporary Romance	20
Paranormal Romance	24
Erotica Romance	28
Audiobooks	29
Booty from the other Genre	31
Children	32
Late	33





Dear QWERTY

by Pamela Ackerson

The “Need to Know” for New Writers



Dear Qwerty,

I'm writing a book, and I'm getting so much conflicting advice. Who should I listen to?

All authors' experiences are different. The paths they went through to become published whether it's

through a traditional publishing house or self-published has many different ways. However, there are some things that really don't change.

Depending on what's best for you and how your brain works determines whether it's best to be a planner, pantsier, or in the middle.

However, it's not just for writing the story. While you're writing your story, you should be setting up a plan on what you're going to do after the story is finished. Also, you should be telling everyone you're writing a book. Get the information out there right away.

Are you planning on querying to a publisher? Using beta readers? Searching for eARC reviewers?

Not everyone is going to like your book. It may not be right for them, but it could be the perfect fit for someone else. Make sure that when you query, it's someone who's looking for your genre.

Know your genre and if applicable, the sub-genres. Don't confuse

them with categories. That's a whole different ball of wax.

Your story should have a theme, a strong plot. You remember when you were writing essays in school. The teacher insisted you have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Your fiction stories must also contain a good plot that's set up in the same manner.

What's your story about? You should be able to describe the theme in one paragraph.

So, if someone says what's your latest story about? My answer **would not** be it's a time travel. Even though it is a time travel, mob fighting, FBI story, my answer would be an FBI agent learns truth has some shifty gray areas and isn't all black and white. Traveling back in time, he learns that sometimes the bad guys aren't quite as bad as he thought.

How you go about telling your story depends on how much you've fine-tuned your craft. And it does take practice. Ask anyone who's been writing for ten+ years and most of them will



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Dark, Gritty, Emotionally-Packed Romance

A killer is closing in on the woman Marcus is supposed to protect. Protecting Chris is his job, but can he succeed without letting her steal his heart? No way in hell will he fall for her.



When Catherine disappears, Matt races to find her, fearing the murderer has found his next green-eyed doll. But the killer has a surprise coming; Catherine will fight to the death before she'll be a victim. Will her determination be enough?

Romance blooms between Erin and her old high school sweetheart. She could easily fall in love with FBI agent Rafe again, but he's only here to prove her innocence.



tell you, their first book may be their baby, but it sure could use some tweaking after all these years. It's not that the story is bad. It's because they've improved their writing skills.

Fan fiction is fun. However, it can hurt a writer who's trying to hone their skills. Why? Because they're already writing about existing characters, worlds, and/or settings. The writer is tapping in on someone else's success. Write fan fiction but also create a story that is yours. Create an original story, with original characters and themes.

Now that you've completed your story, published with a traditional publisher, or self-published, and have set up a marketing plan, your next step is to make every attempt to sell the book. Your first book with a publisher or as an Indie will be a challenge to sell. Especially if you haven't worked your way into name recognition. But, as long as you've created a marketing plan and produced a professional product, things will go a bit smoother for you. If you haven't, it's going to be a hard sell.

If you haven't created a well-written, edited, and interesting story, it's not going to go well for you. If you don't know what your genre is, or what categories it needs to slip into, you're not going to do well.

Your goal is to be the best you can be, give your readers the best story you can, and don't give up. Follow the marketing plan, and write the next story.

You've heard the advice, "write what you know." Here's a few things concerning that statement.

You don't need to be a serial killer to write about serial killers. You should read books about serial killers, fiction and nonfiction.

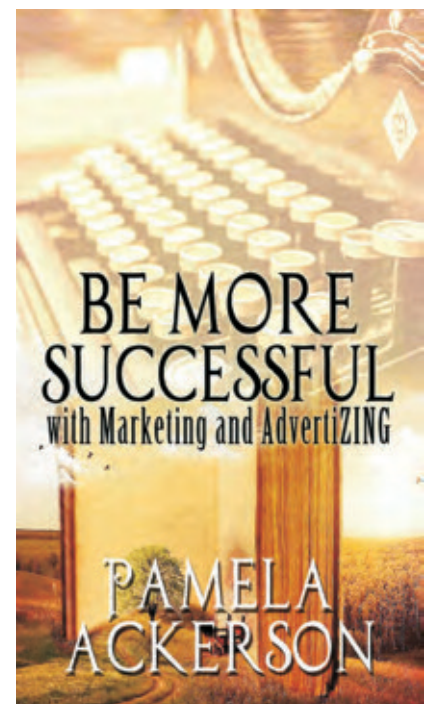
Use your emotions and your senses.

Take life experiences and use them. Either things you've experienced, someone you know has experienced, or things you've read about.

Reading is subjective. Don't be discouraged. Or, if you do, lick your wounds and then, move on. However, if the same 'complaint' keeps popping up, you should seriously consider what the readers are saying.

They'll like your books or they won't. You have to have thick skin. It's okay if they don't like your book. Move on. Someone else will come along and absolutely love your story and beg you to write more.

Good luck and keep on writing!



The Spotlight is Shining on...



Celia Breslin *AdC's Ms. September* *Calendar Girl*

Celia lives in California with her husband, daughter, and three feisty cats. She writes urban fantasy and paranormal and sci-fi romance, and has a particular fondness for werewolves, vampires, cyborgs, and the Fae. When not writing, Celia likes to exercise (yes, really!), read a good book, hang with her family, or indulge her addiction to fantasy TV shows and movies.

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

C.B.: I write urban fantasy, paranormal and sci-fi romance. Characters tend to come to me before their story does. The ones who are the loudest in my head get their story written first. I love them all, but I do have favorites, particularly the feisty characters who are a little dark on the outside, and full of warm fuzzies on the inside. For example, Jonas the vampire in the “Tranquilli Bloodline” series. I also love my snarky characters, such as my Celtic god Luke in *An Angel's Obsession*.

AdC: Do you have a new book or series?

C.B.: Yes, two actually. I started a

new sci-fi romance series this year, “Cyborg Guardians of the Aurora”. The first story, *Claiming Kaden*, is currently up for pre-order in the “Beyond Earth” anthology. My series will feature several alpha cyborgs and the humans who love them. If you enjoy the “Fated Mates” trope, check it out. I’m also working on a paranormal romance series, “Forbidden Royals of Faerie”, and there’s a dark fairy tale short, *The Night Hag*, out now and set in that world (free to my newsletter subscribers!).

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

C.B.: Besides laundry? LOL... In my work, I tend to put off creating ads, submitting them, and tracking their results. I’d rather be writing!

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

C.B.: Two characters come to mind. Nicky in *Warrior's Kiss*, because she’s a teacher (and so was I), and also Melanie in *Melanie's Awakening* because she’s a writer and so am I.

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

C.B.: I’m currently working on a Halloween story, *The Lady of the Oak*, so I would be transported from San Francisco to the Sonoma wine country in Northern California, and specifically Sonoma Valley Regional Park, in Glen Ellen, CA. From there, depending on



where I walked in the park, I'd be transported to Faerie.

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

C.B.: Probably, especially if I could tell it was a portal to Faerie.

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

C.B.: Drawing and graphic design. I like to sketch and make graphics, but my skills are rudimentary at best.

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

C.B.: "Ohmigod, kitty, nooooooooooo!"

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

C.B.: Sing.

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

C.B.: Somewhere in the Northern California wine country.

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

C.B.: The ER.

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

C.B.: My vampires. They're feisty. Oh, did you mean in reality? My girlfriends. ;-)

AdC: *What are one of your quirks?*

C.B.: I used to twirl a piece of my long hair around my finger, but I cut my hair recently. It's short, so now I need a new quirk!

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

C.B.: Nothing on the calendar at the moment, but you can always say hello to me on social media. Also, I'll be participating in the 9th Annual Bewitching Book Tours' Haunted Halloween Spooktacular tour and book event online, so follow me on my blog, Insta, X, or Facebook for more info on how to join us for the bookish fun!

Please give us the following contact information:

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Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/CeliaBreslinAuthor>



Sneak Peek

The Night Hag

By

Celia Breslin

How could she tell him her nightmares weren't dreams but visitations from a demonic entity?

After losing her family in a tragic accident, Morgan O'Cuinn drowns in debilitating grief despite her loving partner. Unable to eat or sleep much, she struggles to get through each day without a panic, anxiety, or asthma attack.

To make matters worse, a recurring nightmare triggers horrible sleep paralysis and exacerbates her health issues. As Halloween approaches, Morgan's dreams intensify, and she begins to fear the monster in her head is very, very real.

Morgan wants nothing more than to crawl out of the well of sadness and reclaim her life. But first... she'll have to defeat the Night Hag.

EXCERPT...

Fog poured inside like creeping vines, and with it came a slender woman.

Her willowy frame melted and solidified as she stalked toward the bed, her moon-white dress dancing around slender limbs. Waist-length platinum hair snaked around her head, tendrils reaching forward as if tasting the air, as if seeking out Morgan. Glittering red eyes set in a pale gamine face focused on her. The woman reminded Morgan of an evil Audrey Hepburn, the actress in all those classic old films she used to watch ages ago with her long-deceased and sorely missed Nana Shannon.

Evil Audrey hovered at the foot of the bed by Morgan's feet, canting her head as if listening to Morgan's thoughts. A wicked grin flashed and disappeared on the entity's haunting, beautiful face. "Evil Audrey."



How could she tell him
her nightmares weren't dreams
but visitations from
a demonic entity?

Crap, the scary-as-snakes ghost thing could definitely read minds. The tightness in Morgan's throat increased, and she struggled to catch a full breath. Fight-or-flight flooded her system, yet she remained paralyzed, which was bad, bad, bad, what with a spook in the room and the fact a panic-induced asthma attack was on the way.

Thanks for nothing, hallucination. God, she hoped this was a figment of her messed up mind. Or a dream. Whatever the case, *not real*.



Who doesn't love Savannah and the Literary Love Conference?



Authors Rivka Spicer (l) and Hostess Stella Price (r)



Literary Loves Savannah Carnival



Literary Love Savannah Luncheon



Authors Pamela Ackerson (l) and Evelyn Lederman (r)

AdC LOVES

Space Coast

Space Coast Book Lovers

The best book event in Florida. A must do for authors and readers! From June 19th to the 23rd, our weekend was filled with a boatload of activities. Authors and readers enjoyed panels, contests, games, good food, parties, and so much more.

Saturday book signing was open to the public.

This is an event you don't want to miss. See you next year June 18 – 22, 2025

For more information: SpaceCoastBookLovers.com

The Hosts



Hostess Teri Edney



Charleen Cox (left) and Robbie Cox (r)



Author Panel left to right; Terri Wilson, Ashley Burton, Kathleen Lopez and Pam Ackerson



Newbie Nexus Meet and Greet

Conferences

Book Lovers

The Authors



Cassidy O'Connor



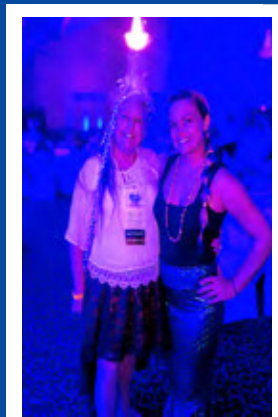
Teri Riggs (l) and sister Bev Kishpaugh (r)



Maria Long



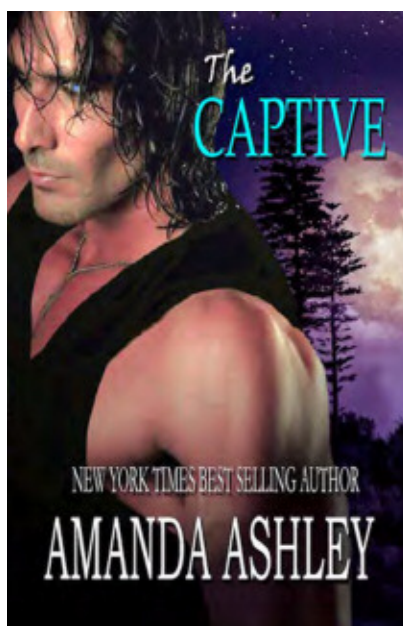
Pam Ackerson (l) and model Mary Elena



L to R. Patricia Redd, Pamela Ackerson and Linda Barham

Debra Parmley presents...

An Interview with Cover Model Grigoris Drakakis



Today I am excited to be chatting with Greek Cover model Grigoris Drakakis who has appeared on hundreds of covers in many genres.

D.P.: *Welcome, Grigoris! What was the first cover you appeared on and how did this come about?*

G.D.: My first cover was by Katie Macalister, *New York Times* bestselling author. I had sent my portfolio to some photographers and the photographer of this author chose me for her cover and that was the time where I made my first trip to America.

D.P.: *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?

G.D.: I would like to travel to an exotic place like Indonesia and do a photo-shoot on some of its beautiful beaches.

D.P.: *Beyond romance novel cover shots, what other projects or jobs keep you busy?*

G.D.: I have a small security company in Greece, where I make a living from it, but the anxiety and stress is really huge. So, I thought I should try to do what I really love and that is book covers. I have built a small studio and dressing room and now I shoot myself and shoot other younger models. If I can make a living out of my book authorship, then I will stop or at least cut back on the security firm business.

D.P.: *What's one question you wish an interviewer would ask you?*

G.D.: I would like to be asked about my religious beliefs because I have experienced miracles with Christ, the

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Holy Trinity and the Saints of Orthodoxy and I am now absolutely sure that there lies the truth and the peace of life. Even one person to influence and know Christ would be a success for me.

D.P.: *If you wrote a book, what would it be about?*

G.D.: I have never thought about this, because I believe that I have no talent in writing.

D.P.: *This question is almost always asked in interviews because your fitness level is beyond the average person's: What is your exercise routine and what sort of nutrition plan do you follow to achieve and maintain your level of fitness?*

G.D.: Here I will disappoint you a little because at the moment I am writing to you my level of physical condition is below average. I exercise with weights but not systematically, I walk in nature but not systematically, I start a diet and spoil it in the first week. The result of all the above is that I am 20 kilos



above my normal weight, and this is the reason why in my latest photo shoots I mainly do portraits. Fortunately, my face is good enough and my gaze, I believe, imposing and intense enough, to support, well, a portrait of a warrior for example.

But I can tell you the diet and exercise program I used to follow and which I decided to start properly this time. I used to work out about 5 times a week with weights, I used to walk at least 1 hour every day except Sunday, I used to do push-ups and kick boxing. My diet consisted mainly of lean protein and carbohydrates, such as rice and vegetables. I never used to eat after 9:00 at night.

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

G.D.: I believe that moderate intensity walking is the best exercise for fat loss as well as health and wellness. It is also necessary to exercise with resistances, such as rubber bands or weights, but

even with the weight of the body.

D.P.: *It's your birthday dinner and the calories don't count. What's on the menu and what are you drinking?*

G.D.: Absolutely burger and ice cream!

D.P.: *Describe the perfect romantic evening.*

G.D.: An evening on the beach in front of the sea waves.

D.P.: *Please share one unusual fact about you or your life.*

G.D.: I don't know, I have a simple life with my wife and two wonderful kids.

D.P.: *Eight Quickie questions: Watching the sunrise or watching the sunset and the stars?*

G.D.: Watching the sunset and the stars.

DP.: *The beach or the mountains?*

G.D.: The mountains.

D.P.: *Primitive camping or luxury hotel?*

G.D.: Primitive camping.

D.P.: *Snow skiing or water skiing?*

G.D.: Snow skiing.

D.P.: *Favorite movie.*

G.D.: I don't watch movies anymore, but *Avatar* was one of my favorite ones.

D.P.: *Best book you ever read?*

G.D.: I'm ashamed to say it but I've never liked reading books, except some exercise books or dog training books.

D.P.: *Fav. Sport to play?*

G.D.: Boxing.

D.P.: *Fav. Sport to watch?*

G.D.: UFC

D.P.: *Grigoris, thank you for visiting with me. It's been fun getting to know you. Before we say goodbye, how can fans stay up-to-date on your latest*

continued on page 31

Our Other Spotlight is on Kat Martin (with guest—husband Larry) AdC's Ms. October



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

K.M.: I am currently writing Romantic Thrillers. I love the challenge of coming up with an intriguing plot while also penning a sexy romance. I write strong heroines and even stronger alpha males, the kind of men and women who can work together to survive the difficult circumstances they find themselves facing.

AdC: Do you have a new book or series?

K.M.: “The Ghost Trilogy” is my latest series. I like to write in threes: *The Ghost Illusion*, *Haunted*, and *The Unseen*. I’ve always been interested in the paranormal. Over the years, I’ve had a number of unexplainable experiences. These three stories gave me a chance to write about a subject I find infinitely intriguing. Though the books are fiction, I prefer to write ghost stories based on actual incidents, which was the case with *The Ghost Illusion*, which is set around a tragic event that happened in Sunderland, England.

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

K.M.: Book promo is very difficult for me. I would rather be writing than talking about myself. I tend to put it off as long as possible.

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

K.M.: I’m sure there are more than one, as happens to most authors. Jenny Spencer, the heroine in my new book, *Haunted*, is a country girl who owns a modern-day saloon. She’s tough, smart, and hard-working. I’d like to think I have those qualities, plus I live in rural Montana, and in a wild west town in Arizona.

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

K.M.: Jerome, Arizona. Once known as the “Wickedest Town in the West”, today it is a famous ghost town, one of

Arizona’s most haunted places.

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

K.M.: Hell no! I am adventurous but in a far different way.

AdC: What do you wish you were better at?

K.M.: Just about everything. I love snow skiing and camping. I love target shooting. I’m a writer. I would like to improve at just about anything I do.

AdC: What is something you say a lot?

K.M.: I swear more than I should, that is for sure.

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

K.M.: I love to read. I never have enough time because I’m always working.

One woman's daring search for the truth tests the dividing line between life and death...

If you need help, we are here for you.

Eve St. Clair desperately needs help sorting reality from her fearful imaginings when ghostly voices seem to haunt the Victorian house in Sunderland, England, that she inherited from her uncle.

Since the deaths of his wife and daughter, Ransom King has devoted himself to researching parapsychology and debunking the frauds who prey upon the bereaved. But Eve is a psychologist herself, clearly sane, and her sincerity is palpable. King senses a very real danger stalking the beautiful divorcée.

He will move heaven and earth to uncover the truth—no matter how shocking, and save the woman he loves.

KatMartin.com @KatMartinAuthor



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

K.M.: I love expensive hotels. It's a rare treat. I particularly love the mountains. If I'm home, I like to sit out on our deck. It's up off the second story, surrounded by trees. Great for relaxing.

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

K.M.: In the traffic on a freeway in a major city. Scary.

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

K.M.: My husband. He is a major troublemaker. (But in a fun way.)

AdC: *What are one of your quirks?*

K.M.: I have to have my coffee first thing in the morning.

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

K.M.: I was just at the Western Writers of America conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I'll be at the Will Rogers Medallion Awards at the Aloft Hotel in Fort Worth, Texas, on October 18-19, where my husband will be receiving the poetry award for his Lewis and Clark poem.

Please give us the following contact information:

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Twitter. @katmartinauthor

Facebook. Katmartin/author.



An Affaire de Coeur Sneak Peek



An Excerpt from
Kat Martin's

HAUNTED

As Cain pushed through the swinging doors, country music filled the air. The saloon was packed, tourists mostly, hoping to see one of the town's infamous ghost, a couple of guys in cowboy hats. Cain's glance went to a group of men in biker leathers, laughing and drinking, two of them with their chairs tilted back, their heavy motorcycle boots propped on the tables. STEEL COBRAS was printed on the back of their black leather jackets.

Cain's gaze immediately went in search of Jenny, half of him uneasy as he spotted her heading for the bikers, the other half fascinated.

"Gentlemen," Jenny said, her hands propped on her very appealing hips. She looked good in a pair of stretch jeans, and the bikers definitely noticed.

"Hey, babe, you come over here to get a little?" He was big and bald, with earrings in both ears. He grabbed his crotch and squeezed it suggestively. "Good ol' Ryder'll be happy to give you some."

Jenny grabbed his booted feet and dragged them off the table. They hit the wooden floor with a heavy thud, jerking the biker's neck



as his chair dropped back down on four legs.

The other bikers howled with laughter, but Ryder didn't seem amused.

"The bartender says you're way over your limit," Jenny said. "I think it's time for all of you to leave."

Cain could feel his eyes widening in disbelief. Was little Jenny Spencer taking on half a dozen rowdy bikers?

Ryder's chair scraped back as he rose to his feet. The music kept playing but the conversation in the bar had stopped.

"You know what I think?" Ryder said. "I think you and me are going for a little stroll outside." He gripped Jenny's arm, but she jerked it free.

"I'm not going anywhere with you." Jenny pointed to the door. "Now get out."

Cain rested lightly on his feet, ready to step in if things went south, and he figured they would. He knew guys like these. They'd been among his lowlife friends back when he'd been a rebellious teen.

"The choice is yours," Jenny said, not giving an inch.

In two long strides, Ryder reached Jenny, bent and hauled her over a beefy shoulder. Cain hadn't been in a barroom brawl in years, but he hadn't forgotten how to fight. He stepped in front of the big ugly biker and flattened a hand on the man's massive chest.

"Put her down."

Jenny was struggling, calling the guy a few choice names.

"I said put her down."

"Stay out of this, mister." Ryder's arm tightened around Jenny's knees. She was pounding on his back, but Ryder was too big and dumb to feel it.

Cain's hand balled into a fist. "A smart man would let the lady go."

"She your woman?"

Cain looked at Jenny, whose fury under different circumstances might have amused him.

"I'm thinking about it. Put her down."

PUZZLER

Festivals, Events and Dates in September and October

Across

4. The type of message that Edison sent from Virginia to Paris.
8. This sport winds down in the fall.
12. His day marks the first person to set foot in North America.
15. Contest where this gourd is weighed.
18. He lit a light bulb the first time, and it lasted 13 hours.
20. This state celebrates Festival of the Dead in October.
22. Australia's largest art fair takes place here.
25. This festival is held when the night light in the sky is at its brightest.
26. Granny Smiths, Delicious, Galas, et.al. are made into cider, pies, etc. at the festival in Bligerville, PA. Jonny would be proud.
29. _____ (Al Capone's nickname)
32. Whether you're on a Schwinn, Mon-goose, Mountain or something else, you can ride in D.C.'s _____ ride.
33. Pepperoni is featured in this Run in Brooklyn.
34. Named after a movie _____ *Dancing*, this festival supports the Swayze Foundation.
35. Unions' favorite holiday.
36. Celebrate cockateils, parrots, macaws, parakeets, ravens, etc. on September 17th--National _____ Day.
37. Serena, please come back to this sport. *Please!!*

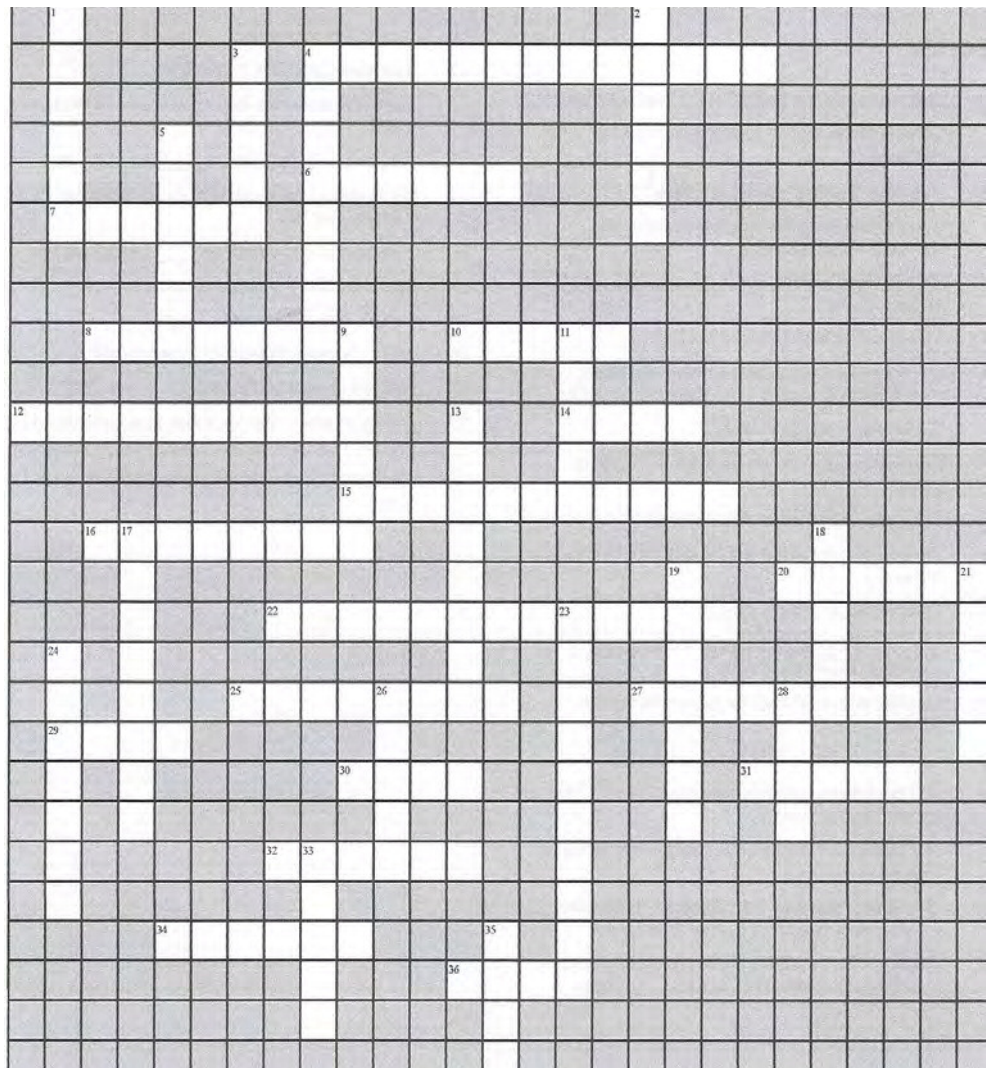
Down

1. Grandpa may have bought his first Model T _____ in 1908.
2. This Marie lost her head on October 16th, 1793.
3. This former first lady's second marriage drew as much attention as her first.
5. The culmination of this sport's season. The _____ Series.
6. New Zealand hosts this design competition that showcases unusual clothing.

7. This branch of the military was born in 1775.
9. This is an Oktoberfest festival in Ohio.
10. He was the youngest to receive the Nobel Prize for Peace.
11. This zoo features pumpkin holiday lights with 5000 animal items on display.
13. This Minnesota festival features the Corn Maze Challenge.
14. The best one is held in Munich.
16. He was the first African American sworn on the Supreme Court.
17. This Native American chief declared: "From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever."

19. One of the most famous festivals is held in _____ Italy.
21. Their Thanksgiving is on October 9th.
23. This sport kicks off in September.
24. _____ Monday, biggest stock market crash.
27. "Arrrrhhhh!" This is the time to mimic this buccaneer.
28. "September," performed by _____, Wind and Fire.
30. The tallest trees ever, they were recognized by creating a park.
31. He designated the fourth Thursday in November as Thanksgiving Day.

Answers on page 30



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



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Contemporary Romance

Delayed Penalty (Seattle Serpents #3)

Teagan Hunter
Teagan Hunter

Trade Paperback
979-9339352151

★★★★★



Hockey player Hayes becomes temporary guardian for his seven-year-old niece Flora in Teagan Hunter's *Delayed Penalty*. With the hockey season about to start, he's desperate to find help caring for her.

Quinn Benson is trying to get her life on track. She is the daughter of the owner of Hayes and Flora's favorite bakery. Hayes and Quinn don't get off to the best start, but Quinn does the impossible. She befriends Flora and makes her happy. So, he hires Quinn to be Flora's nanny.

Hayes has two goals this season: 1. Prove to his team he's not a screwup, and (2) Stay away from Flo-

ra's nanny. Quinn drives Hayes crazy. Yet, all he wants is to break goal #2.

Hunter drew this reviewer in from the first scene. Readers will love Hayes, Quinn, and Flora, and Hunter's multi-layered story. Her lively, down-to-earth style doesn't waste words. Hunter's writing and fascinating characterization makes you fall in love with them and their lives.

Readers' hearts will melt as they watch relationships develop as the novel progresses. This trio becomes a family, helps each other heal, and learn what it's like to be safe, loved, and respected. They haven't had it easy. Hayes and Flora—who share similar family backgrounds—have similar baggage. Hunter explores how Hayes needs Quinn in his life, possibly as much as Flora, and how he and Flora help each other heal. Regardless of his fears of inadequacy/being unprepared, etc., at no point does Hayes consider not caring for her. He gets his act together for her.

Contemporary Romance

Flora's interactions with Quinn, Quinn's mother, and Hayes are too cute. Quinn's complicated family life contributes to who she is—a twenty-something with a flighty, chaotic personality, fear of failure, and crippling self-doubt—that keeps her going from one job/career to another. Flora and Hayes help Quinn discover purpose, roots, confidence, something she loves and is good at, and hope.

Hunter captures Quinn and Hayes' developing relationship through banter of all types with love scenes that reveal their characters and furthers the novel's plot. The group chat and the interactions between the team are hilarious, balancing the book's heavier moments with humor. Steamy, sweet, funny, emotional, sexy, and slightly angsty, *Delayed Penalty* is a beautifully written, romantic, fast-paced read.

Lacy Hill

Going Toe to Toe (Six Gems #5)

Yahrah St. John

Afterglow Books by Harlequin

Trade Paperback

978-1335574800

★★★★

Former ballerina Lyric Taylor and single dad Devon Masters have a seven-day-no-strings fling in Aruba in Yahrah St. John's *Going Toe to Toe*, never expecting to see each other again. However, when he realizes Lyric is his daughter Kiana's new dance teacher, they get a second chance to pursue the intense chemistry, connection, and passion they shared, but it must remain secret.

Yahrah drew this reviewer in with her down-to-earth writing style, vivid and detailed descriptions to place them inside each moment. Her colorful and natural-sounding dialogue fits her characters and story. She develops her characters with emotional interactions

Meant for Gabriel (Meant for #4)

Natasha Madison

Self-Published

E-Book

B0CSQ5FKYC

★★★★



In Natasha Madison's *Meant for Gabriel*, Zara has a one-night stand that turns to more with small-town bartender Gabriel, resulting in a surprise pregnancy. They meet while she's vacationing in the country after finding her fiancé is cheating on her the day she tries on wedding dresses.

Madison transitions their one-night stand to two weeks, to full-blown love, even though Zara and Gabriel don't realize it until they're too deep in it to walk away. Although, they try to go back to their normal lives as agreed. Madison integrates the intensity of their connection and depth of their need for one another into all their dialogue and scenes—in and out of bed. She excellently portrays how they match and balance each other. Gabriel sees Zara as the sweet, passionate, beautiful, generous, and caring woman she is, and he makes her feel seen and desired as she's never experienced in a way that is empowering for her after her experience with her selfish jerk of an ex.

Because Zara and Gabriel simultaneously have amazing chemistry and are completely adorable, and their families are so chaotic and hilarious, *Meant for Gabriel* is the best in the series. Madison's down-to-earth, lively writing and storytelling style features vibrant descriptions and world-building to make readers feel present in each scene. Her colorful, hilarious, natural-sounding dialogue suits her storytelling, themes, and characters, drawing readers into the characters' lives from the opening scene, especially when city girl Zara and cowboy Gabriel meet, because from that moment on you know their lives will never be the same.

Their chemistry and intense attraction is mutual and fiery. Zara is sweet, funny, kind, generous, and gorgeous, but not much of a risk taker—until she lays eyes on Gabriel. He's the most handsome man she's ever seen, and she cannot resist him. Single dad and bar owner, Gabriel is cocky, patient, sexy, and kind. He's protective of Zara, respects her, and treats her amazingly. They will have readers giggling at how adorably cute and sweet they are together—and swooning too because they are sexy and romantic AF. Madison wrote the perfect combination of steamy AF, sweet, sexy, emotional, banter, snark, and humor-filled interactions and intimate/love scenes for them.

Meant for Gabriel is a fast-paced read perfect for fans of one-night stand to more, small-town, single dad, surprise baby, opposites attract, city girl/cowboy romances.

Lacy Hill

and love scenes that reveal them and further the plot. Her career-ending injury ruined Lyric's hopes and dreams; so she's embarking on a life-changing fresh start as a ballet teacher, open-

ing a dance studio. She's always only wanted to belong. Devon makes Lyric feel safe, helps her to work through her issues, and feel comfortable exploring/expressing her sexuality. Devon was

Contemporary Romance

hiding from living in the past, and she brought him back to life. However, he doesn't allow her or their relationship to help him fully heal. Devon let his fears control his actions and still holds onto his past. Lyric stands up for what she wants and is honest with Devon about it. She deserves to have the things that she needs too. If that's commitment and marriage, then so be it.

While enjoyable, this is a frustrating read because Devon is so infuriating. Though Devon can be kind, gentle, thoughtful, and compassionate, he's also unlikable sometimes. Devon takes those issues, anger, and pain out on the most important people in his life—his daughter and Lyric. He needs to get therapy and grow up!

Lyric has issues of her own. She's so hung up on chasing a relationship with her birth mother that she pursues it without thought for what she has or the pain that she might experience. And she has trouble letting go of past hurts associated with her adoption, being raised by white parents, its lasting effects on her adulthood, and racial issues associated with being a ballerina.

The scenes when Devon and Lyric were in Aruba talking and getting to know each other were entertaining. Lyric's scenes with his daughter are sweet and adorable and the connection that develops seems genuine. Yahrah explores the Gems' relationship and how supportive, encouraging, and loving they are of each other and helpful with Lyric's evolution and relationship with Devon and his daughter.

Sweet, steamy, emotional, sexy, and fast-paced, *Going Toe to Toe* is a perfect read for fans of one-night stand to more, vacation fling, Black love, and single-parent romances. It explores second chances, new starts, taking chances, living new dreams, forgiveness, belonging and letting the past go, and racism and colorism in the ballet industry.

Lacy Hill

Hard to Take (Denver Kodiaks #2)

Piper Lawson

Self-Published

E-Book

B0D675Y3LS

☆☆☆☆



Piper Lawson's *Hard to Take* continues Miles and Brooke's story that began in *Hard to Fake*. They had become roommates shortly after returning home from Brooke's sorority's reunion weekend where Miles pretended to be her fake boyfriend. Brooke, a Black social media influencer, needed a roommate to help with her finances since her mom cut her off. Miles, her brother's pro basketball teammate and best friend, decided that she should move in with him instead. However, being roommates with Miles is a big problem because they can't keep their hands off each other. They haven't told her brother about the change in their relationship, which may affect the team, especially since playoffs start soon.

Brooke hopes moving in with Miles will help desensitize her to his appeal so she can get over her crush. Spending time with him one-on-one gives her time to get to know him better, but instead of getting Miles out of her system, being roommates only increases the closeness of their friendship and the temptation of their fiery attraction. She's left to face the reality that the college crush she had on Miles never went away and has only gotten stronger. Her attraction to him is no longer just physical—if it ever was. Once they become lovers, it's too late for her.

Readers learn more about Brooke and Miles which makes them love their characters more as individuals and a couple. They're genuine, likable people who care about others and stand up for them, protect the vulnerable and speak out for those who don't have voices. They do this even when it's not easy, or it puts them or their goals at risk.

The sexual attraction between Brooke and Miles continues to deepen into an intense connection and feelings that draw them together, despite their attempts to resist. Eventually, they take this time to explore their attraction and the fiery desire that burns between them freely. Lawson continues transitioning Brooke and Miles's relationship from friends to lovers and as their feelings for one another and their connection deepen, their love scenes become more emotionally intense and intimate.

Lawson's lively, down-to-earth writing and storytelling styles make readers feel they are present with the characters in each moment. She knows the worst or best time to drop cliffhangers on readers. Miles and Brooke's story continues in *Hard to Break*. *Hard to Take* is a sweet, steamy, emotional, and fast-paced read perfect for fake dating, friends-to-lovers, close quarters, college crush, only one bed, brother's best friend, teammate's little sister, a hero who'd do anything for her, and interracial romance fans.

Lacy Hill

Contemporary Romance

Private: The Extended Edition

Xavier Neal
Self-Published
B01N8XL0VR

Trade Paperback and Kindle
☆☆☆ 1/2

Private: The Extended Edition explores the volatile relationship between reclusive billionaire Weston Wilcox and Brynley Winters, his house attendant's daughter. Wes reluctantly invites Bryn to stay at his estate while his concierge doctor tries to heal her mom. He discovers the source of the mysterious illness that appears to be killing his employee who's like a mother to him.

Wes is fascinated with Bryn from the first moment he sees her. Everything about her gets to him. They're a good match that brings balance to each other's lives. Bryn helps him to let go of the past and learn to live again by loving and accepting him as is and being genuine and keeping it real. He supports and encourages her to go after her dreams. Readers will love the scenes with them talking and getting to know each other, where we learn more about their personalities, past, and dreams. The strip trivia scene is fun because it showcases Bryn's brilliance wonderfully. Throughout the novel, Neal tells you she's smart, but sometimes Bryn is so prickly, in your face, and rude that it overshadows that. But as a beautiful, shapely Black woman, especially working her job, she has to present a certain façade.

Neal's engaging storytelling and descriptive writing draws readers in from the opening scenes and keeps them turning the pages until the end. Neal writes strong independent heroines who don't back down from Wes or any other man. She goes after what she

wants from life, even if it means going against what society thinks is acceptable or expects her—especially as a Black woman—to be.

Neal skillfully resolves the novel's mini mystery/suspense plot. It's hard to believe no one put any of the pieces together, though. Sweet, steamy, hilarious, and fast-paced, *Private* is a captivating read with a bit of mystery and suspense, perfect for forced proximity, contemporary *Beauty & Beast* retellings, scarred hero, interracial romance, billionaire, angsty, and steamy romance fans.

Lacy Hill

That Prince is Mine

Jayci Lee
St. Martin's Griffin
Trade Paperback
978-1250907769
☆☆☆☆



Emma Yoon absolutely loved what she did for a living. She was a culinary instructor in L.A. who taught Korean royal court cuisine to young ladies striving to marry into exclusive upper crust Korean families. Arranged marriages had been part of Korean culture for centuries, and even though they were now Americans, many still abide by the old ways. Emma's godmother was a renowned matchmaker, and Emma had every intention of allowing her to find her perfect mate, but not before she had fulfilled her dream of owning her own culinary school. So, at the moment, her life was complete...she had her father whom she was able to take care of and make his life serene and beautiful, her teachings of the beautiful, complicated royal Korean cuisine and time in her life to sit in her favorite coffee shop every morning to enjoy the world around her. She didn't need and wasn't ready for love yet, and that was just fine.

Prince Michel Aubert loved

to sit in the coffee shop downstairs in his hotel every morning before going to USC. He was here as a visiting professor of international relations, not as the crown prince of Rouleme, and had been granted three months by his father to find his love match. His country also believed in arranged marriages, and Michel's bride-to-be was a childhood friend that neither wanted to marry each other. Michel wanted to find his soulmate, someone who would help him through his days as monarch with its responsibilities and protocols that he would have to live under forever. Oh, he didn't mind, after all he had been taught since childhood that that was his duty, and he loved his country and its open-minded peoples and was glad to do it. He just wanted the love of his life beside him while he did, whomever she might be, like his father had his mother for a short time. So, here he was in the States, incognito, seeking that special someone.

Jayci Lee has a gift of taking her readers into a world that's rich with unique cultures, diverse peoples, exotic foods and heart-stopping romance while weaving a story of love so strong it conquers two worlds. The minute Emma looked into the eyes of the gorgeous man staring at her across the café, her world changed the same moment that Michel's world tilted on its axis. Somehow, he knew she was the one. Now all he had to do was convince Emma while she was in the midst of picking out her future husband from her multitude of pre-arranged dates.

This Prince is Mine is definitely a happy ending romance. And coupled with a plethora of descriptive, colorful Korean dishes, and the origins behind them, a smoldering secondary romance and all the angst and uncertainty of the dating world, this is one romance that will keep you reading well into the night, then want to get up in the morning and start cooking!

Lani Roberts

Paranormal Romance Reviews

Fantasy

Vampires

Shape Shifters

Time Travel

Werewolves...

Dragon Ascending Zodiac Dragon Brotherhood #1

Genevieve Jack

Carpe Luna, Ltd.

E-Book

978-1962757064

★★★★

A brotherhood of warrior dragons defends dragons against a secret society that uses dark magic to kill them in *Dragon Ascending* by Genevieve Jack. A civilian's murder and mutilated body left in front of the Fontaine Saint-Michel suggests the Saint's Order might have killed her. In response, Connor, Aries Dragon of the Zodiac Dragon Brotherhood, kidnaps the Order grandmaster's fiancée Fiona, a novelist struggling through writer's block. Connor hopes the move will force the secret society back to the negotiating table, thereby avoiding war and protecting his people. At the worst possible time, his dragon finds its mate in Fiona.

Jack draws the reader into the novel with her fascinating story, creative mythology, descriptive world-building, and complex characters. Readers expecting it to be filled with action, adventure, and suspense may be disappointed. Although *Dragon Ascending* is primarily romance and



relationship-focused, Jack deftly lays the groundwork for the series' mythology, character connections, and the next book. When the action and suspense pick up, Jack's scenes for these are well-constructed, suspenseful, and fun. Hopefully, future books will have more interactions between the warrior brothers, action, and suspense, because those scenes were humorous, intriguing, fun, and entertaining.

The scenes with Conner and Fiona interacting and getting to know each other have excellent description, emotion, and character development. Jack develops their connection to draw them closer together to express and display it through the intimacy of their lovemaking. Their closeness and connection as mates is beautifully realized through their love scenes. They came into each other's lives at the exact right time to provide balance, emotional support, healing, and maybe some things that neither could admit they needed in their lives. Fibro is something you don't read about often. Fiona's struggles with it are an interesting addition to the story and character's background.

Dragon Ascending is a steamy, funny, sexy and emotional romance that's perfect for fans of fated mates, warrior brotherhood, dragon shifters, heroine with autoimmune illness, trauma healing/bonding, author heroine, secret societies, dark magic, and paranormal romance.

Lacy Hill

Hot Wolf in the City

Honey Phillips

Self-Published

E-Book

B0CP8PQ9H8

★★★★



Working 9-to-5 has never been this wild!

Desperate for a fresh start, Julie jumps at a chance to work for the boss of TalkToMe, the country's fastest growing social network. The job's location, the enigmatic Monster Island, only adds to its appeal - she won't be tempted to make another foolish mistake.

She didn't expect her new boss to be the hottest, most tantalizing man she's ever met - even if he does growl his orders and has an oddly arousing habit of sniffing her.

Derek might be a werewolf residing in the heart of Monster Island, but he sees himself as a businessman rather than a monster. Until his new assistant arrives, awakening all of his most primitive instincts. He knows she's human. He knows she'll never stay. But the need to claim her is growing stronger every day...

Can Julie resist the primal allure of her werewolf boss, or can a beauty really love a beast?

"Monster Mate Mayhem" is a series of seven standalone monster romances, each featuring a different monster and their journey to find love

Her Alien Mercenaries

Susan Hayes

Black Scroll Publication

E-Book

B0CWFP34JT

★★★★★



She thought that moving to a new world would be the challenge of a lifetime. Then the universe upped the ante.

Jenna never expected to escape from Earth. Now she's a colonist in a beautiful and inviting new world, surrounded by beings she wants to trust...if only she could.

Not everyone in Haven wants it to succeed, and Jenna is now a pawn in a dangerous game of secrets and subterfuge. To protect her new home, she'll have to risk everything, including her chance at love.

They thought they could leave their bloodstained past behind them. They were wrong.

Zanyr and Torren may have kept their names, but they left the rest of their former lives behind. Most of their species despise mercenaries, which means they must hide their past to protect their future with the colony. Their lives bound by blood-oaths and battle, these former soldiers of fortune want nothing more than to live in peace with their mate... once they find her, that is.

These three beings will have the chance to get everything they've ever wanted...but to keep it, they may have to go to war. They each came to Haven for a new start—will the secrets they hold destroy the future they fought for? This is a fun addition to the series. I really enjoyed it.

D. Antonio

amidst the chaos of their lives. I bought this because of the title and enjoyed every page thereafter. Derek and Julie were a hoot. I love the idea of Monster Island. A sweet and fun romp.

D. Antonio

If I Stopped Haunting You

Colby Wilkins

St. Martin's Press

978-1250292902 Mass Market

078-1250292919 E-Book

★★★★★

Native American horror author Penelope Skinner has no respect for her rival, Neil Storm, also a Native American horror author. She believes he's exploiting and perpetuating the "savage" image in order to sell books. And he has indeed made a huge success out of it, while Penelope is barely squeaking by. When they both end up at a book signing in Seattle, Penelope grows so out-

raged by his needling that she hurls a book at Neil, hitting him squarely in the head and drawing blood. This show of temper doesn't help her reputation at all.

When friends arrange a writer's retreat in a haunted Scottish castle, Penelope is dismayed to discover they've also invited her nemesis. But there's no way out, and they must endure a week in this isolated part of the country.

Introductions from a very odd housekeeper who promptly disappears do little to quell the uneasiness they feel in the castle, but eventually they encounter enough other-worldly phenomena to start believing in the tales of a haunting.

Spirits seem to want to throw Penelope and Neil together while simultaneously putting them in danger. Their alliance against the supernatural might gradually wear away their hostility until their relationship explodes

in a delightfully sensual way.

If I Stopped Haunting You not only provides a nail-biting experience but also tempers it with humor and lots of steam.

Hannah Rowan



The Nightmare Before Kiss-mas

Sarah Raasch

Bramble

ISBN: 978-1250333193 Paperback

ISBN: 978-1250333209 E-Book

★★★★★

In the fantasy world, each major holiday has a dynasty of somewhat magical people, unseen by mere mortals, who are charged with making the holiday special for humans.

Nicholas Claus believes his father, Santa, has lost the spirit of Christmas since his wife left him. Rather than focus on bringing joy to the world, he has become more interested in expanding his dynasty, and in gaining power.

In an effort to form an alliance with Easter, Nicholas Claus is betrothed to his friend, Easter Princess Iris, against his will as part of his father's machinations, even though Nicholas'

Long Live Evil

Sarah Rees

Brennan Orbit Books

E-Book

978-0316568722

★★★★★



Rae has found solace in the dark fantasy books about a world ruled by The Once and Forever Emperor, a character she has fallen deeply in love with. She is slowly dying from an incurable disease when she receives a “chance at life” if she agrees to enter that fictional world.

She wakes up as the beautiful, sexy, and despised villainess of the piece. If this is her chance to live and get back home to her beloved sister, she’ll take it, using the advantages she possesses to form an alliance with other villains in this story to achieve her goals. But will the tale unfold as it’s written on the pages, and at what cost?

Long Live Evil will suck readers in from the first page. Rae is an unforgettable character. Her sense of determination, her vulnerability, her struggles, and her inner, infinite capacity for love make her the character to root for, even if she’s playing the villain. Anyone who finds themselves wanting to see the villainess’ side of the story will absolutely love Rae’s point of view. The co-conspirators will also win readers over to their side. Each has a compelling story, and a reason why readers would want them to prevail. In fact, no character is exactly what their archetype would suggest, which makes this story so much more fun.

Sarah Ree’s writing is so beautiful and lyrical. She has taken portal fantasy and recreated something incredibly special. The world-building is great, with a setting where darkness is intrinsic; and death, blood, and fire is written into the very fabric of the environment. The mythos is unique but also feels reminiscent of existing origin stories, lore, and legends. The imagery is so vivid and iconic with scenes that feel highly cinematic. Readers won’t be able to decide whether they are horrified at this often eerie world, or if they want to find a portal they can walk through just to hang out at one of the gatherings (or just be a fly on the wall). There’s some court intrigue, sword and sorcery, dark romance, enviable fashion/style, heartbreaking betrayals and reveals, and even humor that pokes fun at pop culture as it deals with a fish out of water character. The climax is spectacular and won’t leave readers unmoved. *Long Live Evil* is a great name for this book, because that’s exactly how readers will feel when they read the last page.

Danielle Hill

brother, Kristopher, clearly has eyes for her.

In a meeting with the Halloween dynasty, Nicholas meets Prince Hex and is instantly attracted. He doesn’t dare let his father know his true feelings but tries to find a way to cancel his upcoming wedding to Iris without losing face.

Hex and Nicholas are from two rival dynasties and view many things

differently, but they certainly agree on their attraction to one another. Will Nicholas find the courage to stand up to his father? Will he manage to bring the joy back to Christmas? And will Hex and Nicholas, Iris and Kristopher, be able to act on their feelings for one another?

The Nightmare Before Kissmas is a delightful way to imagine what lies

behind the scenes of holiday spirit, even if it is a fantasy, and the conflicts contained in family dynamics, along with the characters’ attempts to solve their dilemmas and some steamy love scenes make for a gripping tale.

Hannah Rowan

A Sorceress Comes to Call

T. Kingfisher

Tor Self-Published G

E-Book

978-1250244055

★★★★★



Young Cordelia lives under her mother’s thumb. Her mother literally forces her to be obedient to her every command, essentially a living doll. She learns at an early age the dark deeds her mother is capable of, and to fear her, because her mother is a selfish, amoral sorceress. When her mother sets her sights on becoming a local squire’s bride in her path to wealth and power, Cordelia knows very well just how much jeopardy he is in, for her mother only leaves destruction in her wake. Hester, his spinster sister, becomes a potential ally, if only Cordelia can keep herself from becoming a tool in her mother’s scheme and the perpetrator of violence to others around her. Can Cordelia, Hester and her circle of friends find a way to prevail against a powerful and wicked sorceress’ power?

T. Kingfisher has written a flawless, compelling dark fantasy with a Regency historical fiction feel. The sense of the uncanny is so vivid, and this novel is rich in atmosphere. The magic is captivatingly described, and this story has some legitimately scary moments juxtaposed against delightful humor and Regency mannered wit.

Cordelia is a fascinating character who draws the reader into this story with her authenticity. She has been so traumatized, bullied, and emotionally damaged by mother that she doesn’t know who she is and how to interact in society. Her relationship with Hester shows her what it’s like to experience



this new offering by the incredible T. Kingfisher.
Danielle Hill

Vampire's Choice

Joey W. Hill

Story Witch Press

E-Book

B0CZPMKZ4R

★★★★★



genuine caring, love and acceptance, and brings her to understand her own strengths. Hester is another amazing character. She is approaching middle age and looking back at regrets, including a relationship with a good friend (once more than a friend) whose help she needs to deal with the sorceress in her home. Even the secondary characters are fantastic, from Lord Everwood to Lady Strauss to the maid and butler who make up the group working to take down Cordelia's mother. Found family is a profound theme of this novel, as Cordelia realizes she doesn't ever have to be alone, and her value is more treasured than becomes very important to the characters' fight against the evil sorceress. The words flow and the story enthralls until the very last word. Readers who love dark historical fantasy with a Gothic feel and a poignant message about love and acceptance will enjoy

"I'd rather fight than run. I'd rather fight than submit..."

Because Ruth was born weaker than most vampires, she has to find a place on the fringes of the vampire world where she can call the shots on her own life. Doing bodyguard work at the mysterious Circus fits the bill, but it's there her biggest secret is revealed. Unlike most vampires, she's not a Dominant.

She wants a Master she can fight, until he makes her submit. He must prove he's stronger on every level that matters, and win her trust, loyalty and love. Merc, part incubus, part angel, catches her attention, but his dangerous reputation makes him a bad risk. Working alongside him to protect a fortune teller who has seen things that can endanger the vampire world, she gets a different view. Plus, out of all his mesmerizing qualities, there's one she finds irresistible.

He relishes a good fight.
The only constant is change.
The Vampire world is as effected as much if not more than humans. With their longevity they tend to resist change. This book is all about the circle of life and the changes that each stage brings. This story also deals with privilege and how despite it some things effect us all,

Vampire's Choice touched this reader deeply.
D. Antonio



**Sunshine State
Book Festival
2025**

Jan. 31 - Feb. 1

**Gainesville, FL
Best Western
Gateway Grand**

**Book Signing
10 AM to 4 PM**

**200 Authors!
All Genres**



Erotica

Some Like It Hot!!!

Same Sex Couples

SM

Multi Couples

Barron

Victoria Saccenti

Self-Published

E-Book

B0D4VW27BX

★★★★★



"He pushed her away for her own safety. Instead, he made her a target."

With another joint investigation with the Garden City police department under way, the Devils' Spawn MC has finally left its outlaw past behind and gone legit. Yet Barron Priestly would bet his Devils' Spawn cut that the danger isn't over—which makes his regret for pushing Yoanni Sanz away sting that much harder.

If he hadn't made the monumental mistake of assuming his Daddy Dom proclivities would scare her off, she'd be in his playroom, in his bed, and under his protection. Not dealing with the stress of her father's illness all alone. And not a tempting target for revenge.

Yoanni hoped a long leave of absence would cure her ache for Barron.

Instead, the memory of the passion they shared is just as vivid as the pain of its ending. A series of escalating threats sharpens her loneliness to fear—until Barron steps in to reclaim his place at her side. And Yoanni's inner Little weeps for joy. But with danger hiding in plain sight, the next attack could come from anywhere—and no bubble of protection is without its weaknesses...

Barron tells the exciting story of Barron and Yoanni. They met in the earlier book *Cutter* and were together until Barron pushed her away. This book starts about six or seven months after they broke up. They've both been miserable. Can they give it another chance? Can Barron keep her safe from whoever is trying to scare her? Can she accept Barron's love, flaws and all? I very much enjoyed finding out.

Note: *Barron* is book two in the "Devil's Spawn Daddies" series. It features a different couple from book one, *Cutter*, but for maximum enjoyment, read *Cutter* first.

D. Antonio

Realms of Deception

Pamela Ackerson

Self-Published

Paperback

979-8325410840

★★★★★

Lizette Hill had worked for the FBI for over 10 years, starting as a volunteer and working up to a permanent employee, but only behind a desk, never field work. Now, she was leaving her home and job and moving to a new state to work undercover as a paralegal for a mafia family who used their shipping company to bring in guns and drugs. She was totally on her own for the first time in her life.

Keoni Nani was a talented carpenter, who restored Victorian mansions and museums. He was currently working on the hotel where Lizette was staying until she found a more permanent home. When they met, it was explosive, their chemistry off the charts. Lizette had always been very open about sex, and she wanted Keoni in a way she had never felt before and was going to do something about it as soon as she could. But then there was this really cute, surfer-type, blonde bartender at the local hangout where the staff of the shipping company hung out. Lizette never considered herself exclusive, so she figured Keoni wouldn't mind. In fact, he was open-minded, so maybe he'd be open to a threesome?

Realms of Deception follows Lizette in her first undercover job for the FBI and her love life along the way. Things don't always go as planned and she ends up with her life in danger, but with the help of Chase, the bartender, and Keoni, her carpenter, she manages to fulfill her mission and get her men. Ms. Ackerson has penned an exciting undercover story with some erotica thrown in. Sometimes her dialogue comes across as choppy, but the sex scenes are very descriptive and sensual. A good read before bed to guarantee very pleasant dreams!

Lani Roberts



The Boyfriend Goal (Love and Hockey #1)

Lauren Blakely

Narrated by Erin Mallon and Connor Crais

Audible Audio

B0DCCBR74Y

★★★★^{1/2}

Josie's cross-country move to San Francisco to start her new job as a librarian starts roughly when she gets locked out of her college friend Maeve's apartment—barely clothed. Miles is reluctantly attending an art gallery event where she comes to get the code to get back into the apartment and he saves her. Sharing an immediate mutual attraction with Miles, Josie steps outside her comfort zone and spends the night with him.

They don't discover until the next day that he's her brother's hockey teammate. Miles becomes her roommate after her place falls through at the last moment. Neither expects their one night together to be anything more, initially. More is impossible now because it's forbidden for a hockey player to become involved with a teammate's sister. As they live together, get to know

one another, become friends, it becomes more difficult for them to resist the powerful attraction between them. Ultimately, they give into their desire, growing even closer, and falling deeper.

A good girl, nerdy librarian, Josie has lived most of her life in her brother's shadow. But her move to San Francisco is a chance to start fresh, take risks, and finally live her life, doing what makes her happy. Talented, sexy Miles is a genuinely good guy. His life is hockey-centered because his father, also his manager, tries to control every aspect of his life.

Josie and Miles—a perfect match—balance each other. She brings fun into Miles' life, something besides hockey. He saves Josie more than once, and with him, she can safely explore her sexuality. They encourage and support one another, enabling them to take risks and do things that scare them. You can't help but love Miles and Josie's snarky interactions, and love scenes. They're simultaneously intensely sensual and emotional and never feel like filler. Instead, they draw the characters closer together, deepen their emotional connection, and further the evolution of their characters and the story.

Mallon's and Crais' narration

for Josie and Miles enhances Blakely's charming and romantic love story. Their dynamic and expressive narration/voices fit each character, bringing them wonderfully to life. They capture their fiery chemistry, snarky and flirty banter, and Blakely's multilayered romance's humor and emotion. The narrators portray Miles's and Josie's desire, passion, intimacy, chemistry, sensations, and moods during the novel's intimate and love scenes.

Blakely's captivating storytelling and writing is vibrant. She skillfully develops her characters to make you love and root for them to fall in love, and for their dreams to come true. Josie and Miles are likable, fascinating, relatable, genuine, complex, flawed, and conflicted. Blakely deftly develops them through their mesmerizing interactions. Her colorful, flirty, funny dialogue fits her characters, story, setting, and themes.

Sweet, funny, and fast-paced, *The Boyfriend Goal* is a perfect audio listen for one-night stand to more, roommates-to-lovers, forbidden relationship, hockey, all-the-feels, forced proximity, bucket list, and book-love romances fans.

Lacy Hill

Curvy Girl Summer (Curve)

Danielle Allen

Narrated by

Wesleigh Siobhan

Macmillan Audio

Digital audiobooks and MP3

978-1250343222

★★★★★



Aaliyah seeks a boyfriend over the summer to help her celebrate her thirtieth birthday. The bartender Ahmad at the local bar suggests she try a dating app. Aliyah does and discovers she's out of her depth with online dating. Luckily, Aaliyah's friends have her back, and so does Ahmad with whom she develops a surprising friendship. Aaliyah focuses on achieving her goal, never expecting what she might find.

Audiobooks

Ahmad and Aliyah are genuine characters who you can't help becoming invested in, along with their lives. Allen transitions their relationship from friends to more using a variety of techniques. The friendship and connection that develops between them are warm and genuine with an undercurrent of intense sexual attraction and chemistry that exists from their first minute. Readers will love their humorous, chemistry-filled interactions. Siobhan's husky voice and lyrical narration brilliantly draws the listener into the story with her first spoken words of Allen's beautifully written multi-layered story. Her intriguing characters soar from the pages into the listeners' hearts. Siobhan brings them to life, making them three-dimensional. She depicts each character so thoroughly you can't always be certain there's only one narrator.

Siobhan's voices for Aaliyah and Ahmad perfectly match their characters' descriptions and personalities. Siobhan gives the characters distinct voices, revealing their personalities, feelings, quirks, and states of mind. Her narration for other characters are just as distinctive, and her narration during the love scenes is so good listeners must practice their straight faces when you're not alone/in public.

Siobhan's narration and Allen's writing complement each other wonderfully. She's a magnificent choice to narrate *Curvy Girl Summer*. Allen's writing, storytelling style, and language use are rich with description and details that use the characters' senses and emotions to contribute to fantastic world-building and character development. Her writing has authenticity, realism, honesty, and depth that touches your heart and mind.

Aaliyah's friends, their interactions, and their relationships are the best. It's wonderful that she has friends who are supportive and love her unconditionally because we all need that. We

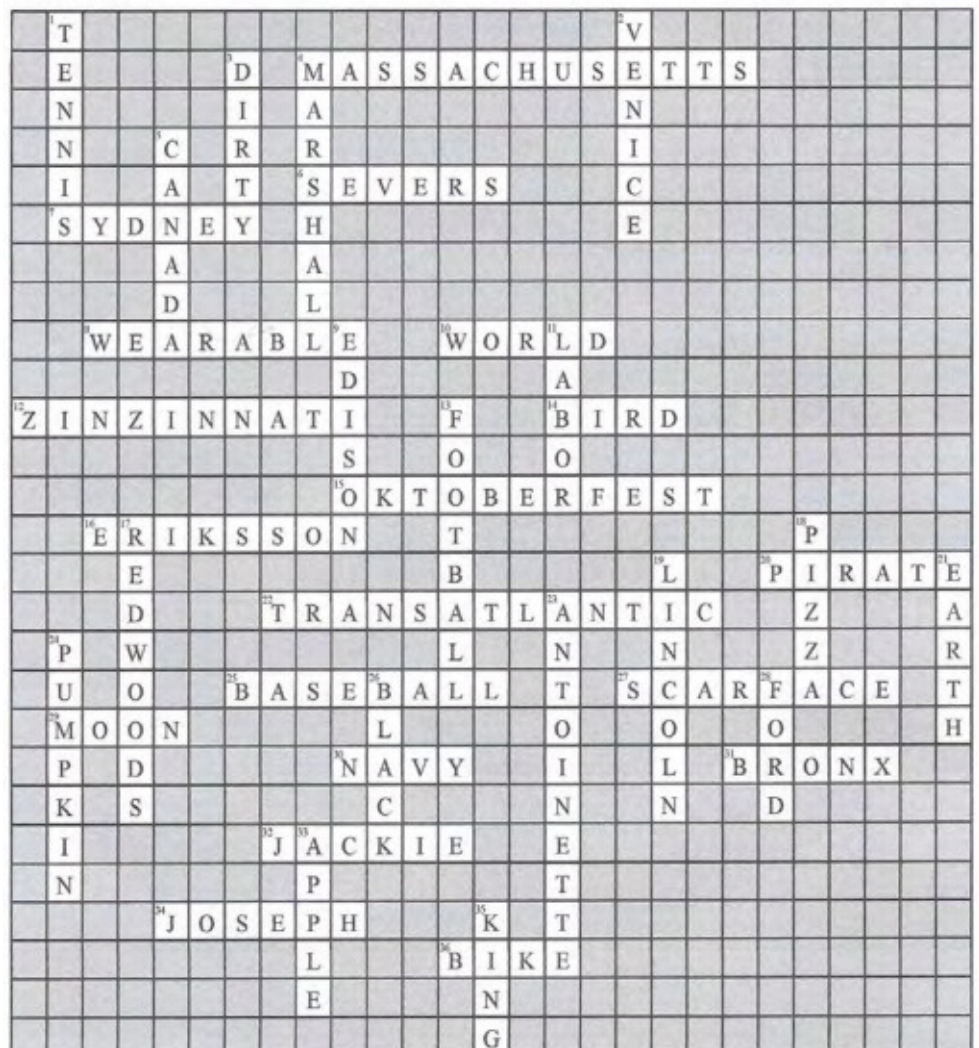
all need someone who is there for us and, no matter what, who will give us positive affirmation and unconditional love. Her friends do that for her but also push her when she needs it and help her face what she's afraid to or deal with—especially concerning the summer date goal and her feelings for Ahmad. She needs them because her family are awful to her concerning her career choices, single status, and weight, especially her uncle.

Funny, steamy, emotional, and sexy, *Curvy Girl Summer* is a romantic, and captivating audio listen. It's one of the best romances this year, probably in a long while.

Lacy Hill

Festivals, events, and dates in September and October

Louise B. Stood



Can you cook?

It's time to share your favorite recipes for the holidays.

Send them to Adc Reviews @ att.net





Booty

Reviews from other genre

Passions in Death

J.D. Robb

St. Martin's Press

978-1250289568 Hardcover

☆☆☆

Detective Eve Dallas returns to the scene of an earlier trauma in this 59th book in J.D. Robb's "Death" series, when she is called to investigate a murder at the Down and Dirty Club, the very place where she once survived a brutal assault.

Erin Albright wasn't so lucky. On the eve of her wedding at a bachelorette party, Erin planned to surprise her fiancé Shauna Hunnicut with their dream trip to Hawaii for their honeymoon. She financed the trip because she had sold one of her paintings. She left her friends drinking and dancing in the club and slipped into a private room where she planned to dress in a grass skirt to present the surprise tickets to Shauna. Instead, she was brutally attacked from behind and left for dead while her friends partied on, oblivious to her plight.

Eve Dallas had her work cut out for her, since no one noticed any-

one suspicious in the club and because of the nature of the establishment, the owner shunned security cameras. The killer could have been one of the guests, another patron of the club, or even someone who slipped through the unmonitored back door. All Eve knew for sure was that the killer had come prepared to kill.

By all accounts Erin was well liked, and no one could think of a reason anyone would want her dead. Eve is left with the task of combing through Erin's life, looking for someone with a motive. Or possibly someone who intended to hurt Shauna by taking Erin away.

Eve attacks the case with her usual hard-nosed attitude even as she tries to ignore echoes of her own attack. The attention of her hunky husband, Roark, and her trusty sidekick Peabody soften her edges a bit, but nothing shakes her determination to apprehend the killer who ruined the lives of these young brides.

J.D. Robb delivers her usual gripping, breathless dive into a case where the reader is carried along with Eve every step of the way.

Hannah Rowan

Grigoris interview cont.

news?

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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.

Debra loves to hear from you! Readers (and Models who wish to schedule an interview) may contact debra@debraparmley.com

CHILDREN'S



Read at Your Own Risk

Remy Lai

MacMillan Children's Publishing
Group/Henry Holt & Co.

E-Book

978-1250323354

☆☆☆☆

Hannah has a journal where she records her terrifying encounter with a vengeful spirit that she invoked by playing a silly game with three of her friends. Hannah tells a harrowing story of a seemingly inescapable curse taking over her life. Can she find a way to break the curse before it's too late?

The reader is along for the journey as Hannah details the events of the curse and the scary happenings as it unfolds with malevolent consequences. This book is formatted like a ruled notebook with sketchy illustrations and handwritten entries detailing Hannah's daily events, conveying an escalating sense of dread to readers. Younger

readers will enjoy the creepy-crawly, completely relatable type of horror with some humor thrown in. Remy Lai makes some interesting choices that keeps this story from being predictable, and it only adds to the fun. Though short, the pacing is good, leading to an ending that is surprising, but satisfying. Hannah is spunky and likable without being unrealistically perfect as she tries to figure out how to save herself without putting loved ones and those around her at risk. Looking for a short and gratifying middle grade horror book that makes great use of its unique format? Check out *Read at Your Own Risk*.

Danielle Hill



Tampa, Florida

October 5, 2024

50+ Authors

Saturday Book Signing

Hyatt House Tampa
Airport /Westshore

Facebook.com/
Flirty in Tampa

AnytimeAuthorPromotionsEvents.com

Late!

Didn't quite make in the last issue



Includes all genre and all time periods

Always Been Write

Jami Rogers

Self-Published

Trade Paperback

979-8990095410

☆☆☆☆

Best friends Tobias Banks, bestselling romance author, and Natalie Miller, PR/media specialist, struggle with fighting the desire between them and wanting to cross the line between friends and lovers while writing a steamy romance novel together.

Since they met 10 years ago, best friends Natalie and Tobias have been constants in each other's lives. She knew she could always depend on him for whatever she needed, just as he could do the same. And when her personal life fell apart, he helped her to pick up the pieces, offering her a place to stay.

Tobias is brilliant, supportive, and kind-hearted. His friends are always

on his case about his lack of a dating life. But he's focused on his writing career while waiting for the right woman. He's not too concerned about dating right now. His college friends, who are also romance writers, all believe that he and Natalie should be together. So does his grandmother.

Natalie is engaged to be married to her boyfriend of several years. She fears losing her friendship with Tobias or that he will disappear from her life. Being with Tobias and hanging out at his house gives her peace. She suggests co-writing a book together when Tobias has issues with his writing and to help her marriage, but it might change their friendship.

Rogers' writing is vivid with detailed descriptions. Her characters are relatable, likable people you want to work through their issues and be happy. The novel's best moments are when it focuses on the relationships between Tobias and his best guy friends, Tobias and his grandmother, and Tobias and Natalie's relationship apart from her fi-

ancé. Those scenes are funny, nostalgic, emotional, sweet, and entertaining.

Tobias and Natalie's dynamic and interactions are sweet, funny, sexy, and full of snark and sarcasm. Rogers' love scenes take advantage of their forced proximity, repressed chemistry, and intense attraction they've spent years denying that writing steamy scenes brings to the surface. Readers will love scenes of Natalie and Tobias writing the novel—especially steamy scenes. Along with exploring the writing process as co-writers, these scenes are chemistry-filled, flirty, and fun. They contribute to the transition of Tobias' and Natalie's relationship from friends to lovers and the evolution of their characters and story. Natalie gets into writing steamy scenes. Having the chance to spend all her time with her BFF Tobias and write a romance novel with him allows her to live her best life. Tobias is patient and supportive and loving toward Natalie, genuinely showing his love for her. Funny, sweet, steamy, sexy, emotional, and fast-paced *Always Been Write* is perfect for fans of friends to lovers, first love, romance/novel writing, and forced proximity.

Lacy Hill

Book Boyfriendish (Naked Runway)

Lisa Wells

Up All Night Publishing

E-Book

978-1958119407

☆☆☆☆

Sophie E. Clark searches for subjects to interview for real-life book boyfriends for her column at her new job. She needs a bodyguard because she'll be going into potentially unsafe situations across New York.

Stone co-owns a security firm with his brothers but can't work cases because of an injury. As a favor for a family friend, he agrees to be Sophie's undercover bodyguard, pretending to be her cinnamon roll boyfriend.

The assignment is more excit-

ing than either Stone or Sophie expects. Sophie's innocent romantic quest somehow lands her on the wrong side of the mafia, motorcycle gangs, a stalker, and other unknown threats.

Despite being total opposites, Stone and Sophie make a good match with fiery chemistry that Wells transitions into friendship and a deeper emotional connection. Sophie, the Manhattan Romance Book Club President, is a funny daydreamer with a sunny, caring personality who loves romance books and dreams of finding her own book boyfriend. Grumpy, strong, silent, and gorgeous, Stone grew up in foster care before being adopted.

Wells' writing draws readers in from the first scene. She develops her likable, fascinating, and relatable characters with snarky banter, funny, sweet, sexy, steamy, intimate interactions, and love scenes that reveal and evolve the characters and further the novel's plot. Wells explores romantic archetypes through her multi-layered story and Sophie's quest. Featuring reader favorites—cinnamon roll boyfriends, dirty-talking boyfriends, and bad-boy heroes, Stone becomes involved in her book-boyfriend search as a sounding board and learns about romance novels and book-boyfriend types. Readers will love scenes discussing romance novels, tropes, characters, and book-boyfriend archetypes. While the novel gives the appearance of a lighthearted romcom, at its heart, it's also an emotional love story about being accepted and loved for who you are and being able to share all that you are, including the baggage you come with.

Book Boyfriendish is a sweet, steamy, funny, sexy, emotional, and fast-paced romance in a glamour magazine setting.

Lacy Hill

Just One More Dare (The Sterling Family #2)

Carly Phillips

CP Publishing

Trade Paperback

978-1685593070

☆☆☆☆

Samantha Dare becomes a runaway bride on her wedding day when she discovers her fiancé is lying and cheating on her. (The Sterling Family #2). She runs right into her brother's best friend, newly retired football player Dex Sterling, who is establishing himself as a sports broadcaster. They shared a flirtation and a passionate kiss the night they met. But unfortunately, it didn't go any further. Dex helps Samantha get away from her fiancé, and the two end up spending quality time together in forced proximity. It may also give them a chance to see if they might have another chance at exploring the connection and sparks that flared between them when they first met.

Phillips drew me in with her active writing and storytelling style. She develops her complex, likable, relatable characters through vibrant and detailed descriptions to make readers feel like they are right there with them in each moment.

This reviewer enjoyed Samantha and Dex's interactions as they took this chance to get to know each other again in close quarters. Their chemistry is intense, with an emotional connection that is difficult for Dex and Samantha to deny. While Samantha worries that rebounding with her brother's friend isn't a good idea, she's deeply attracted to him and thinks they might have been on the verge of something special. Dex believes in getting involved with Samantha, whose chaotic life might complicate his life, but he can't seem to stop thinking about her or keep his hands off of her. He wants to be with her, but he

doesn't want to be a rebound for her.

Both have complicated childhoods that have left them with baggage that has impacted their lives, especially their romantic relationships. Adopted by his neighbors, the Sterlings, as a child, he was a former player on Samantha's older brother Ian's football team. Samantha and Dex met at a team party. Baggage and trauma from his childhood have kept him from being ready for a serious relationship because it affected his outlook on love and marriage. However, his feelings for Samantha are incredibly strong.

Once Samantha and Dex give into the explosive chemistry between them, it's on—they cannot resist the desire they have for each other so there is a lot of steam in *Just One More Dare*. Dex's and Samantha's love scenes deepen their emotional connection and evolve their relationship, characters, and the plot without slowing the novel's pacing.

Sweet, steamy, hilarious, sexy, emotional, and fast-paced with surprising twists, *Just One More Dare* is a contemporary romance that's perfect for fans of best friend's little sister, runaway bride, forbidden love, sports romance, billionaire romance, and second chance romance.

Lacy Hill

Knot Really Engaged (Happily Ever Mishaps #2)

Kendall Hale

Self-Published

E-Book

B0D4BDB83C

☆☆☆☆

Knot Really Engaged focuses on childhood friends Audrey and Liam who pretend to be engaged when return-

Late!

ing home for her parent's anniversary after she learns her boyfriend is married. They agree to shield one another from their mothers' matchmaking.

Audrey is gorgeous, compassionate, sweet, and loyal but still sees herself as the same awkward introverted bookworm she was as a child. Audrey thought she'd outgrown her childhood crush on Liam, but it comes rushing back when she sees him at the airport. She knows it's not a good idea to get involved with Liam, especially since he's always seen her as just his best friend's little sister. He's grown into a handsome and sexy man, and she's having trouble resisting his sexiness and appeal.

Liam has always looked out for Audrey even when they were children. When he sees her upset at the airport, he can't help but check in on her. He is blown away by what a beautiful woman she's become and surprised to find all-grown-up Audrey so appealing, Liam cannot resist his attraction for her, but he should because she's 100 percent off-limits. Audrey is sexy and irresistible. Known for being smooth, Liam's not used to being so drawn to a woman and feeling out of control. He's used to controlling his emotions and keeping things strictly physical, which is safe and better for all involved.

Audrey and Liam are likable, complex, relatable, and conflicted characters readers can't help but root for. Their conversations, and intimate moments—sexual and non-sexual—are sweet, funny, and captivating. They share an intense attraction that simmers from when they meet again. But as they spend time alone together, the attraction, familiarity, and affection from their childhood relationship merge, change, and strengthen their connection into a deeper, mature emotional bond, and flirtatious touches. Their proximity ignite their chemistry into an undeniable full-blown irresistible desire. Audrey

and Liam find in each other a person who sees them after years of not having someone who genuinely knows and sees them.

Hale's writing and storytelling draw readers in from the first scene. She incorporates the characters' senses for world-building and development, making readers feel present with the characters. Her colorful, funny, and natural-sounding dialogue fits her characters and setting.

Knot Really Engaged is a sexy, family-centered, and fast-paced read perfect for friends-to-lovers, fake engagements, childhood crushes, girl-next-door, and billionaire romance fans.
Lacy Hill

The Lightning Bottles

Marissa Stapley

Simon and Schuster

978-1668015766 Hardcover

978-1668015780 E-Book

☆☆☆

In 1990's Seattle, Jane Pyre and Elijah Hart are the darlings of the grunge scene. Together since they were teens, from online chat rooms to actual snail mail, they bonded over their love of music and gradually opened up to each other about their ambitions and collaborated writing songs.

At first nobody took Jane seriously as a musician. Instead they resented her relationship with Elijah, who played in a band called the Marvel Boys. Jane stayed in the background, contributing songs but not part of the band, until a huge flare-up split the band leaving Jane and Elijah on their own to form a band called the Lightning Bottles.

Jane normally wrote the lyrics while Elijah played and sang the songs in an incredible voice, but one song Elijah wrote after the pain of his parents'

death in a car accident became a big hit.

As their fame grew, their relationship grew rocky, and like many rock stars, Elijah got caught up in drinking and heroin. Their off-stage life was full of stress, until one day on a trip to Iceland, Elijah took a rowboat out to sea and never came back. Eventually, when his jacket and the damaged boat floated to shore, he was presumed dead, and people hated Jane all the more, blaming her for his loss, and not satisfied that she chose to keep her grief private.

When Jane retreats to a cabin in the country, it happens that her only neighbor is a teenage girl with a reclusive mother. Hen Vogel is an avid *Lightning Bottles* fan with a secret. Years before, she happened to witness an argument between Jane and Elijah. When Jane crumpled a paper with Elijah's artwork, Hen retrieved it from the trash. By coincidence she happened upon some graffiti in Berlin that matched the drawing style of Elijah's cartoon which convinced her he was still alive and leaving clues to help someone find him.

At first Jane wanted nothing to do with her young neighbor, but Hen finally convinced her to at least try to investigate the messages, which led the two unlikely friends on a quest for answers.

The Lightning Bottles gives us a glimpse into the inner workings of very famous musicians and the struggles they face in trying to keep their personal lives private. It shows the pressure of fame, but also the devotion and perseverance of an idealistic young fan who ignites hope in the heart of a woman who thought herself broken.

Hannah Rowana

Happy Halloween

