

September/October 2025

Affaire de Coeur

Bringing You the Best and Most Honest Reviews

**READ
THE
LEAVES**



The Queen of the Romantic Thriller
Kat Martin

Reviews!
Reviews!
Reviews!



Debra Parmley's cover
model:
**Charles Lemar
Brown**

**T.K. Lawyer and her
Hot Paranormal
for Halloween and
throughout the year**



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September/October 2025

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Kat Martin**



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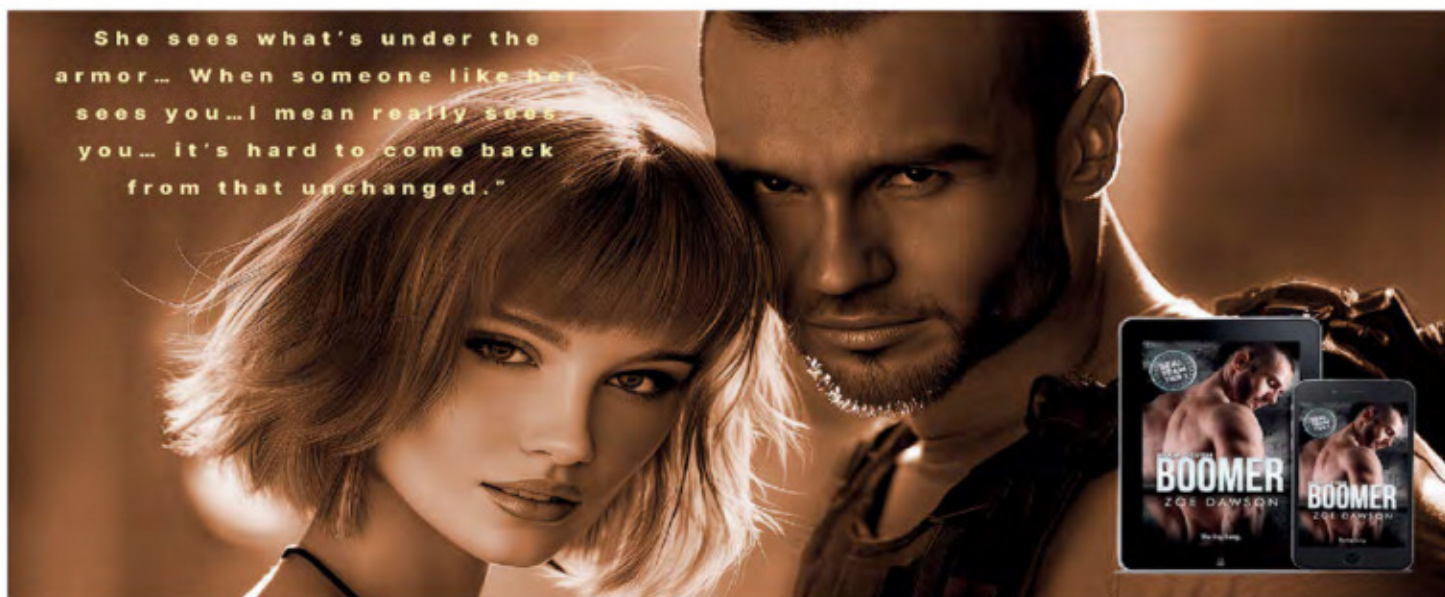


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**AdC loves conferences:
FAPA is new to us.**

It was so good...

**AdC returned to The Literary
Love Conference in Savannah,
Georgia**

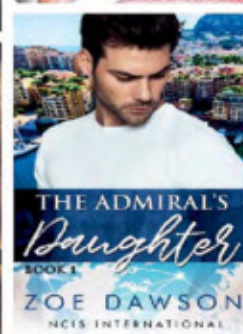
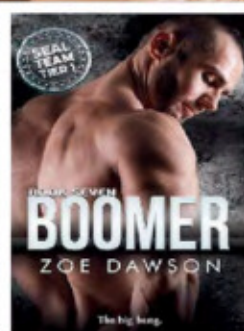


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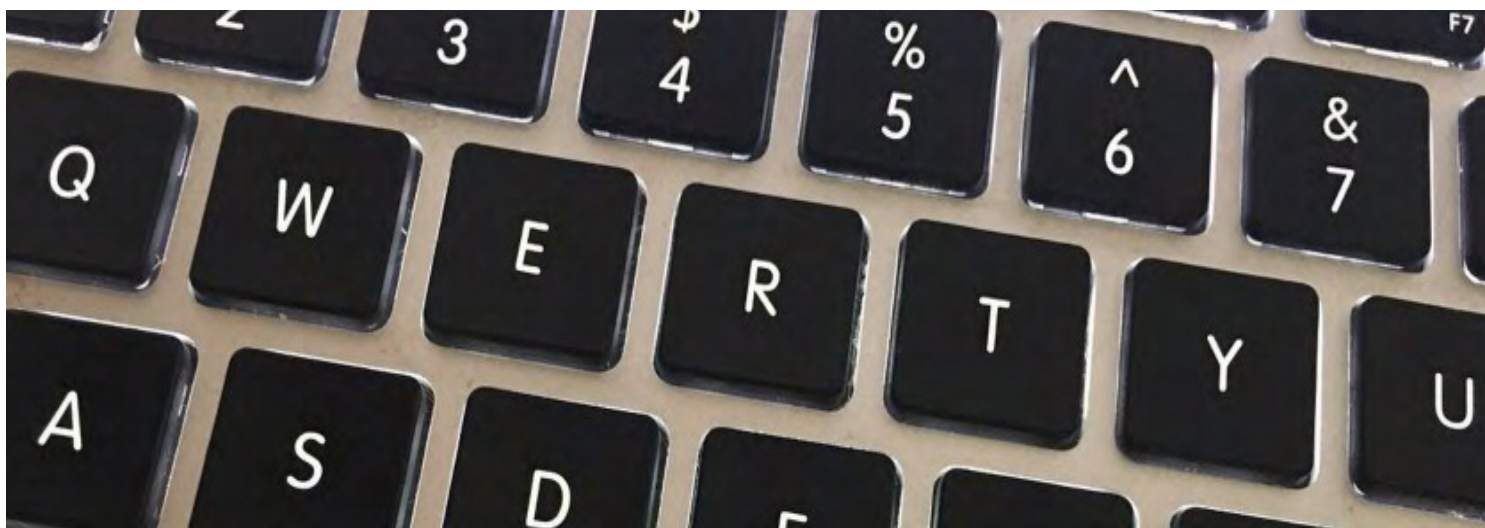


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Dear QWERTY

by Pamela Ackerson

Beware! The New Way to Scam!



Pamela Ackerson

I've come across so many "experts" in advertising that it has pretty much become a household joke. One of the warnings I tell authors is, if someone claims to be an expert in advertising---run, run away as fast as you can.

There's no such thing. What worked yesterday may not work today. What works with promoting books changes faster than the waves pounding on a beach during a hurricane.

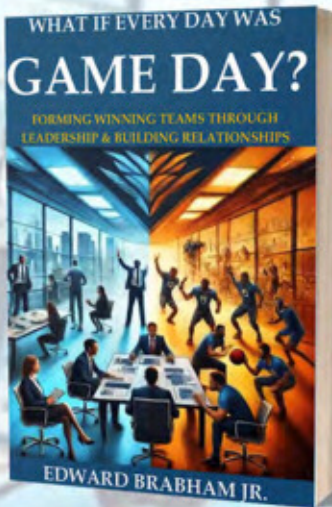
Don't get me wrong. I'm not completely against the use of AI. It can really help sometimes, give authors a little nudge, and help their brain go into second gear. It can kick in that creativity needed to move forward.

But not for doing all the work!

These scammers use AI to write their promotions. It's obvious to me but may not be for someone who isn't accustomed to the way things are written and promoted. They're extremely convincing. By using all those marketing keywords, it makes them sound like they know what they're talking about.

Readers only read the first few reviews on the Amazon or Goodreads page, if they read them at all. Don't let the scammers make you feel bad because you only have 3 or 5, or 10 reviews. Yes, reviews help with Amazon's algorithm. But, so does clicks to the page, interest by readers, consistent sales, and/or bookmarking an author's page, etc.

The most ironic/comical one for me is promising hundreds of reviews: Send



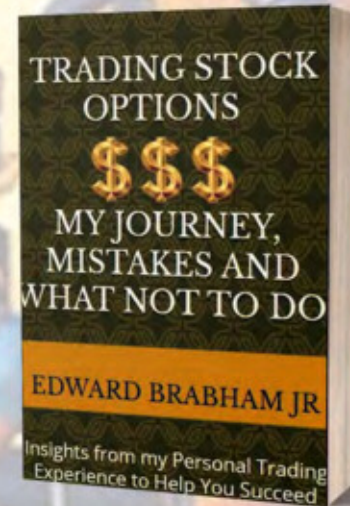
Be on the Winning Team

This high-energy guide draws on the fierce discipline and team spirit to empower managers and business leaders to build championship-worthy teams in any workplace.

EBJConsultantGroup.com/bookstore



Trading isn't just numbers and charts—it's a mental game of patience, discipline, and mastering risk. Avoid the costly mistakes that can quickly wipe out your account.



your doc, .docx, or pdf and for a small fee they'll send it to all the 2000 reviewers they have lined up to review your book.

Nooooooooooooo! No, no, no. Never send your .doc or .docx! This is how they steal your story, send it to pirate sites, or harvest your book to other authors who will plagiarize the book and put it in their name.

Only send your pdf, if you know 100% that they are a legitimate business.

Authors need to answer their emails and these scammers know it. We can't take the chance of ignoring a legitimate reader, thinking they might be a scammer. However, AI has created a way for scammers to pretend they've read your book, hook you into believing they're genuine about liking your book, and then hit you with a marketing promotion scheme. If you pay attention

to how it's written, it's practically word for word. They use AI which knows exactly what to say and how to say it to make you convinced the person sending you the email is legitimate.

Be careful answering the email. I swear they're like those irritating telemarketers. "We got a response!" And then, now you have twenty emails you have to answer because you can't ignore a potential reader.

If you choose to answer the email, ask questions. What's your website? What are your rates? How long have you been in business? How long have you been with the company?

Do a google search before you click on the link!

Make sure the link they give you and the website address match. Make sure it has that little lock up

near the web address. What does their website look like? Do they have an address and phone number listed?

The biggest warning is when they have no website and use a Gmail account, or some other random account that isn't associated with a business .com or .net. If they do have a website but there's no prices on the pages move on. Sorry, but if you can't put your rates on your page you're either too expensive for me or are a scammer just trying to take my money.

Oh, and the phone calls. What I want to know is how they got my number! I've never given them my phone number. And please don't give them your number, they're trained well to scam you.





TK Lawyer

Passionate * Playful * Paranormal

Award winning, international bestselling author, Tamara K. Lawyer, who writes under the pseudonym TK Lawyer, was born in Colon, Panama. She moved to the United States with her family to pursue her post-secondary education aspirations and found her love of writing sometime in 2013. Her first book, Nightfall was published shortly afterward, in December 2014.

She writes steamy and heartwarming paranormal and contemporary romance with HOT alpha males and curvy women. Her books often toe the line, straying from traditional ideas and opening readers' minds and hearts to unlimited possibilities. She loves exploring new ideas and new ways of thinking.

When she isn't reading or writing, she is likely spending time with her husband/best friend or catering to their lovable American Foxhound misfit who steals all the attention in their house.

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

TKL: I am working on a new shape-shifter, truck driver series called "The Brigade". *Macon* is the first book of the series, and it is in the process of the second round of edits, as I write this. I am hoping to release *Macon* at the end of September 2025, and I am so excited

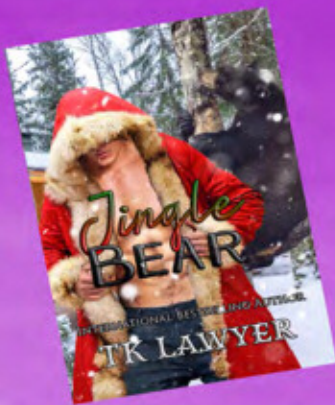
for his introduction into the world.

"Brigade Trucking Company" is a different concept from all other shapeshifter series out there and I am so proud of it. The shapeshifters will not be your usual, run-of-the-mill shifters either, as I like variety and I like writing new and interesting things. The second book in the series, *Lycrus*, will be my

start into writing monster romance and I am beyond thrilled!

Here's a little taste of what to expect in Book One of the "Brigade Trucking Company":

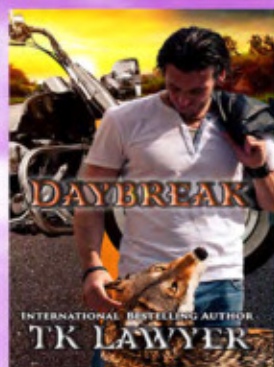




Dragons, Wolves, Bears, Oh My! Shape Shifters among Us.



TKLawyerAuthor.com



Macon:

Satisfaction is guaranteed at The Brigade. No matter what it takes~

Macon always left his customers supremely satisfied.

Till the day his eyes landed on Nina-the delectable female in the warehouse.

His sights are set on her.

The smart-mouthed, curvy woman that invades Macon's most delicious dreams.

He will have her.

No matter how long it takes~

As the first female hired by the all-male trucking company,

Nina can do anything a man can do and better.

Yet, staying out of the lusty-eyed Macon's view proves to be challenging.

Macon is a temptation that will surely end up bad news for her, in the end.

She knows his kind. She has dated men like him, before.

Yet, there remains a part of her that wants to bed him and bring him to his knees.

Still, Nina is not into anything permanent with anyone, anymore.

Will Macon and Nina realize that fated mates are better together than separate?

Or will Macon's desire for Nina remain unfulfilled?



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

TKL: I would be where I am, in Orlando, Florida. Lol. "My Brigade Trucking Company" series is based in Jacksonville, FL, but two of the drivers live in the Orlando area.

AdC: *How do you name your characters?*

TKL: Most of the time the names just come to me. Yes, I know, it's crazy like that. For the female characters in my first few books, I actually used the names my mom had considered naming me but didn't. I liked the names and thought it would be neat to have them in books. I prefer unusual, different names to the more common ones, so you may find some pretty unique names in my stories and/or unique spellings. Lately, I have been using search engines to find some unique names when I can't think of anything.

AdC: *What part of the book was the most fun to write?*

TKL: For my current work-in-progress, the most fun part of the book I wrote was probably the most controversial part. Besides the beginning of the

book where I introduced the characters, I did enjoy writing a part of the book that I am not sure if readers will like; however, it just goes with the nature of “The Brigade” and what is expected, so I had to leave it in there. I am known for playing with concepts and stretching the line, so I hope my readers will love what I did and still like me (heehee).

AdC: *Where and when would you travel to if you were given a time machine?*

TLK: Actually, I like living in modern times. Yet, if I had the opportunity to visit a time in the past or future, I might want to check out how it was living in Victorian England. I have always had a fascination with all things Victorian, including cameos, and even though I have no love for the way women were treated during that time or what they were made to wear (corsets), I would still love to visit and see the landscape and the elaborate carriages and balls they used to attend. Then I’d travel right on back to modern times where we have wonderful air conditioning.

AdC: *What do you do when you can’t quite get into writing mode?*

TLK: Actually, this has happened quite a lot lately as my day job has become increasingly stressful and there has been added pressure to perform. I have been slacking and taking time off, just because I need that extra time to rest and decompress. I like to go out and experience things. Going to some place new or visiting a new place with a friend always brings the joy back into my life, so I try to do this when I can. It also helps to engage an author with new and fresh ideas if they are lacking some/ have writer’s block.

AdC: *What traditions do you believe should be brought back?*

TLK: Not putting up holiday displays until the month before the holiday. Haha. Yeah, I think we are rushing

through the year too fast anymore and I would like to not see Christmas displays out in August... I just want to enjoy the month I am in because it won’t come around again.

AdC: *What do you like to do when it’s time to kick back?*

TLK: Spend time with my hubby. I truly married my best friend so many years ago. We love spending time together and you will likely see him at any of my events as my “forced PA.” Lol. I joke about this, but he actually likes helping me out. He believes in me and supports me, which I know is a blessing because not all authors get this backing from their significant others.

Spending quality time together is what we like doing best and that can be doing anything. It could be something as simple as watching TV together to going to an elaborate party together, all dressed up.

AdC: *Is there something you’ve always wanted to learn to do?*

TKL: I would love to be able to paint, but, sadly, I have no talent for it. I am in awe of those who can just whip up something from their imagination and it actually looks like what they intended it to be. I stare in fascination at gorgeous paintings, and I have always been thrilled with artwork, but, sadly, that artistic talent escaped me.

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

TKL: Always (wide smile). For the rest of the year, I am at Ocala Comic-Con, Orlando Reads Books and at White Rose Books for a book signing in December.

For 2026, I have several events lined up, such as:

The signed edition book fair,
Central Florida ComicCon,
Feel the Heat Book Bash,
Coastal Magic, Wild Deadwood Reads,

Romance Atlanta,
Authors after Midnight,
Flirty in Tampa and
Tanoshi Con. I will, likely,
be adding more to the list as the year progresses.

AdC: *You are a very busy lady. Thank you for taking the time for sharing your wisdom and doing his interview.*

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

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

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/tklawyerauthor>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/tklawyerauthor>



**ORLANDO READS
BOOKS**

October 9-11, 2025

**12th Annual Author/Reader Event
Altamonte Springs, FL**

**FREE Book Signing
FREE Parking
Saturday 3 - 6pm
Author Workshops, Networking,
Reader Activities**

**Embassy Suites by
Hilton Orlando North**

OrlandoReadsBooks.com

An Affaire de Coeur



Sneak Peek

Macon

by T. K. Lawyer

An Excerpt

Macon wasn't completely sure he understood what was happening; however, he was certain that one of two things was occurring. Either he was going batshit crazy or he had to get out of Dodge. Quick.

Musical, melodic laughter played upon his eardrums and irritated his insides. He glanced over at the girl making the sweet sounds he craved, only for himself, his lips drawn into a deep frown seconds before he looked up at the male standing next to her. Lycrus. His name filled Macon with half disgust. It should have been Macon giving her joy instead.

He deeply inhaled and stretched his arms to their full extent in front of him, a satisfied smile passing across his face as he felt subtle popping along his spine, indicating his back was releasing its built-up tension. Twisting his neck from side-to-side, he blissfully sighed.

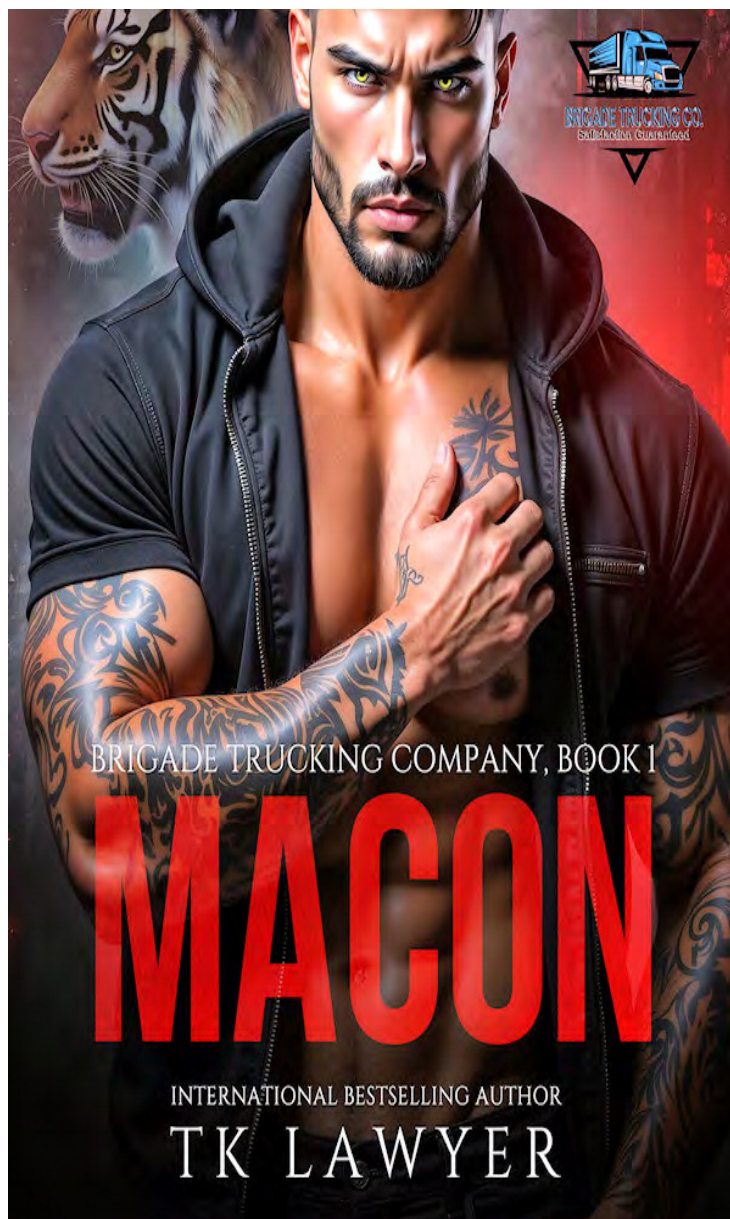
The day had only started, and it seemed to grow longer by the minute. Yet this time, it wasn't all his fault.

To date, his attempts to woo the gorgeous girl—newly hired by the Brigade, and strutting about in a shirt that did nothing to hide her sexy curves—failed miserably.

He had to come up with a new plan.

A different way to gain her attention. Nina was special, yet she didn't know it.

She was a rare find for his kind. She was some-

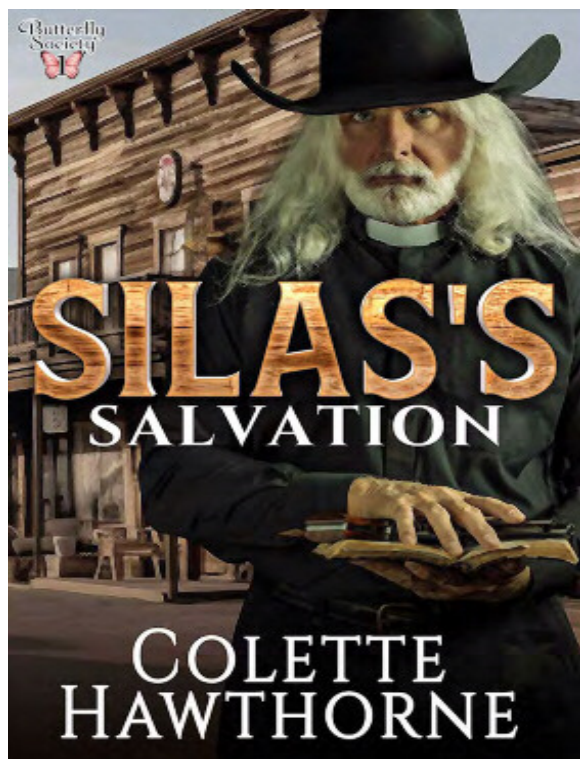


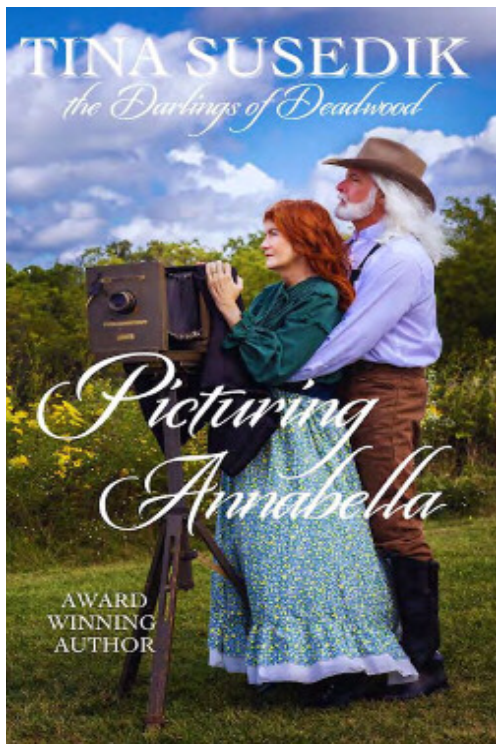
one he thought he would never find in his lifetime. Yet here she was, tempting and teasing him and frustrating him with her lack of awareness.

"Be sure you put your
feet in the right place.
Then stand firm."
- Abraham Lincoln

A Debra Parmley Exclusive...

An Interview with Cover Model **Charles LeMar Brown**





.P.: Today I'm pleased to be interviewing Charles Lemar Brown in Cover Model Corner.

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

CLB: The first cover I appeared on was a novel by Tina Susedik – *Picturing Annabella* (from her "The Darlings of Deadwood" series).

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?

CLB: I would love to do a photo shoot in Monument Valley, Arizona. It would be a wonderful place to do both historical and contemporary western/cowboy images.

D.P.: Yes, it would. Beyond romance novel cover shots, what other projects keep you busy?

CLB: Before I became a cover model, I was already a part of the book world. Both my mother and father were published authors, and I had dabbled in both prose and poetry for years. After some rather persistent pushing from my mother, I finished my first novel in 2022. In 2023, I published *The Road to Nowhere* and have since completed six additional works. When not modeling, I am either writing or traveling to a book conference with my family.

D.P.: I'm glad your mother pushed you to publish. Now readers can look for your books. *Wild Deadwood Reads in South Dakota* is where I first met you. Now, what's one question you wish an interviewer would ask?

CLB: Do you believe in love at first sight? In true love? Did you always believe this way or did some event in your life change the way you felt about love?

D.P.: Those are good questions! If you wrote a book, what would it be about?

CLB: When you are blessed with ADHD, as I am, often what you write depends a lot on the squirrels (that is how I choose to refer to the ever changing, ever random, thoughts that run through my brain). I mostly write poetry but have published three novels in the Family Life Fiction Genre and two collections of rural humor short stories. I am currently working on a small-town thriller/murder mystery.

D.P.: I'll be watching for that, as I love a good murder mystery. 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?

CLB: To stay fit, I spend thirty minutes every morning on a stationary bicycle and about an hour Monday through Saturday lifting free weights. I don't have a set nutritional plan, but most of the time I maintain a high protein, low carbohydrate, and low sugar lifestyle.

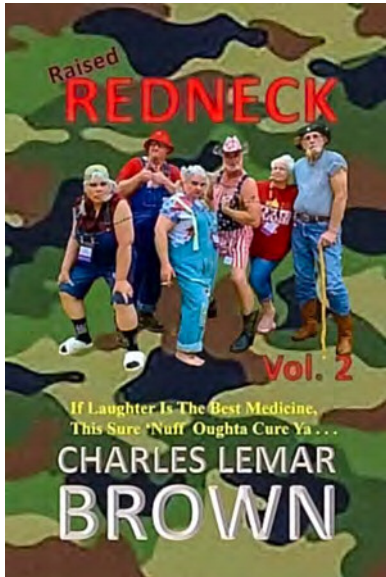
D.P.: If you could share three simple fitness tips the average romance reader could do every day to stay healthy, what would they be?

CLB:

1. Mind, Body, & Spirit: It's important to remember that there is more to fitness than just the body. It is just as important to keep the mind and spirit healthy.
2. Stay active: Inactivity is the new smoking. A slow walk around the house is better than sitting around all day.
3. Limit your sugar intake: Sugar is very addictive, and it feeds so many of the diseases that plague our bodies.

D.P.: Excellent advice. Now it's your birthday dinner and calories don't count. What's on the menu and what are you drinking?

CLB: A twelve-ounce K.C. Strip steak cooked medium-rare, a loaded baked potato, a side of mac-and-cheese, hot rolls (several), and a half gallon of southern



sweet tea (which means it has at least two cups of sugar per gallon). And for dessert, a chocolate tuxedo cheesecake.

D.P. Delicious. Describe the perfect romantic evening.

CLB: Whether it's a single red rose or a bouquet of daisies, the perfect romantic evening should start with flowers, followed by a candlelit dinner with soft music playing in the background. After which, a stroll on the beach that leads to a slow dance to the music of the ocean waves.

D.P.: That sounds lovely. Please share one unusual fact about you or your life.

CLB: I have seven children and twenty-one grandchildren with another grandchild due soon.

D.P.: How blessed you are to have so many children and grandchildren! Now, eight Quickie questions.

D.P.: Watching the sunrise, or the sunset and the stars?

CLB: Sunset and the Stars.

D.P.: The beach, or the mountains?

CLB: The Beach.

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

CLB: Luxury hotel.

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

CLB: Water skiing.

D.P.: Favorite movie:

CLB: *The Notebook*

D.P.: Best book you ever read?

CLB: *Roots* by Alex Haley

D.P.: Favorite Sport to play?

CLB: Softball.

D.P.: Favorite Sport to watch?

CLB: Football.

D.P.: Thank you for chatting with me, Charles. It's been fun getting to know you. Before we say goodbye, how can fans stay up to date on your latest news?

Facebook: **Charles Lemar Brown**

Instagram: **Charles Lemar Brown**

TikTok: **Charles Lemar Brown**

Debra Parmley writes romantic suspense, historical romance, and urban fantasy romance. She lives in a motorhome fulltime with her husband as they travel the U.S. Since 2011 she has interviewed cover models on Cover Model Corner and enjoys sharing

her interviews with readers of Affaire de Coeur Magazine. Contact debra@debraparmley.com



Sometimes
your worst
enemy is your
own memory.

Not every dish should be served.



Karmen Artos, a sous chef at Feline Fine Retirement Home, is horrified when two of the residents hijack her kitchen. Worse yet, they've created an Internet cooking show that has gone viral. The recipes are revolting, but viewers are wild for 'Grandma's Witchin' Kitchen!'

Devon Winger, a down-on-his-luck showrunner, arrives in Cat's Paw Cove to convince the eccentric elderly Internet stars to take the show to the next level -- a ShowFlix series. The magical stars are tickled at the idea, but Karmen is dead set against revealing the sanctuary for supernaturals to the world.

Can Karmen convince the sexy Devon that the show will be a dud? Or will Devon realize there's more to the quirky retirement home than meets the camera's eye?

SharonBuchbinder.com



AdC LOVES

Literary Love

The multi-day event in historical, downtown Savannah, Georgia, began on July 9th and ended July 13th with a fantastic basket drawing on Sunday morning. Filled with panels, meet and greets, and a multitude of games, crafts, parties, contests, and fun for readers and authors. Book signing event was held on Saturday.



Author Evelyn Lederman



Hostess Stella Price



Author Godiva Glenn



Literary Love Savannah luncheon

CONFERENCES

Savannah, 2025



Author Killian Wolf



Donna Antonio



Author Pamela Ackerson (l) and Mystipul Rakkastaja



Lynn Kidman Flake

*Our Other Spotlight is on
Kat Martin,
Queen of the Romantic Thriller
AdC's Ms. October*



Kat Martin is a *New York Times* bestselling author known for her gripping romantic suspense and historical romance novels. With over eighty books to her name and more than seventeen million copies in print, she has captivated readers worldwide with stories that blend passion, danger, and unforgettable characters. Her stories feature strong heroines, rugged heroes, and high-stakes intrigue, set against evocative backdrops from the American West to contemporary thrillers.

Kat's background has shaped her storytelling, infusing her novels with authenticity, emotional depth, and vivid settings. Born in California's Central Valley, she grew up surrounded by ranches and farmland. Before becoming a novelist, she worked in journalism, marketing, and real estate, honing her ability to write compelling, emotionally resonant prose and understand her audience. Those skills helped her create stories that are gripping and successful.

Her connection to nature and the rugged American West echoes throughout her books, especially in her historical romances and Western-themed suspense novels. Her degree in anthropology and studies in history gives her a strong grasp of cultural nuances and historical details. These elements enrich her period pieces and give credibility to the settings and character motivations in her historical fiction. Her love of traveling and fascination with different cultures adds richness to her settings—from exotic locales to small-town America, making her books immersive and cinematic.

Her journey into writing began when she helped her

husband, author L.J. Martin, edit his Western novel. That experience sparked her own creative path, leading to her debut novel *Magnificent Passage*. Their shared love of storytelling continues to influence her work, especially in themes of partnership and resilience. Whether penning heart-pounding mysteries or sweeping love stories, she crafts narratives that resonate with readers who crave both romance and adventure.

When she's not writing, Kat enjoys traveling, researching her next novel, and spending time with her husband, author L.J. Martin.

We asked Grok (An AI tool from Chatbot) to roast Kat Martin:

You romance-novel machine, churning out more steamy sagas than a soap opera on a bender! With over 80 books, you've got enough bodice-rippers to wallpaper the Titanic—twice. Your historical romances are basically "Pride and Prejudice, but make it spicy and give Darcy a private jet and a six-pack." Every plot's like, "Oh no, a rogue duke! Oh wait, he's hot and misunderstood—let's bang in a barn!"

Comfort food? Nah, your books are the literary equivalent of a chocolate fountain at a wedding—delicious, indulgent, and a little messy. From real estate



The past and present
will collide with deadly
consequences —
or is it all in her head?

1898: Robbery, prostitution, and violence are commonplace in the fabulously rich copper mining city of Jerome, Arizona. But a brutal murder sets the stage for a series of strange events that will echo far into the future.

2024: Jenny Spencer's Copper Star Saloon and Hotel is one of the best-loved attractions in the popular tourist destination, but eerie occurrences in the newly renovated wing are souring business.

A captivating and twisting tale where a murder in 1898 and one in 2024 dovetail and connect in unexpected ways ...

KatMartin.com

@KatMartinAuthor



broker to queen of the quivering loins, you ditched open houses for open hearts (and other anatomy). You fell for a cowboy manuscript like it was a shirtless rancher in a rain-storm, then married another writer, L. J. Martin.

What is this, a romance novel or a rom-com where two typewriters get hitched? Those Alaska road trips in a pickup camper? Kat, two months of moose and Spam to “inspire” the Brodies? I’d write a slasher flick about losing my mind in a sleeping bag, not a family saga about rugged dudes with feelings deeper than a fjord.

And those pseudonyms—Kathy Lawrence for the hubby co-writes (marriage counseling via Microsoft Word?) and Kasey Mars for your “contemporary” phase, which I’m guessing is just historical hunks in skinny jeans.

Fifteen million books sold? That’s a fire hazard in paperback form. You’re out here saving damsels, handing them yachts, and probably a coupon for couples therapy. In a world of AI fanfic and TikTok thirst traps, you’re the fairy godmother of escapism, waving a pen instead of a wand.

But please, Kat, next book, can the villain stay evil? My bookshelf’s begging for a plot twist that doesn’t end in a redemption arc and a sunset make-out. Keep slaying, you absolute legend—just don’t make me read about another “tortured earl” with a heart of gold.



An Affaire de Coeur Sneak Peek



An Excerpt from
Kat Martin's

The Unseen

Book 3 of the "Ghost Trilogy"
Series

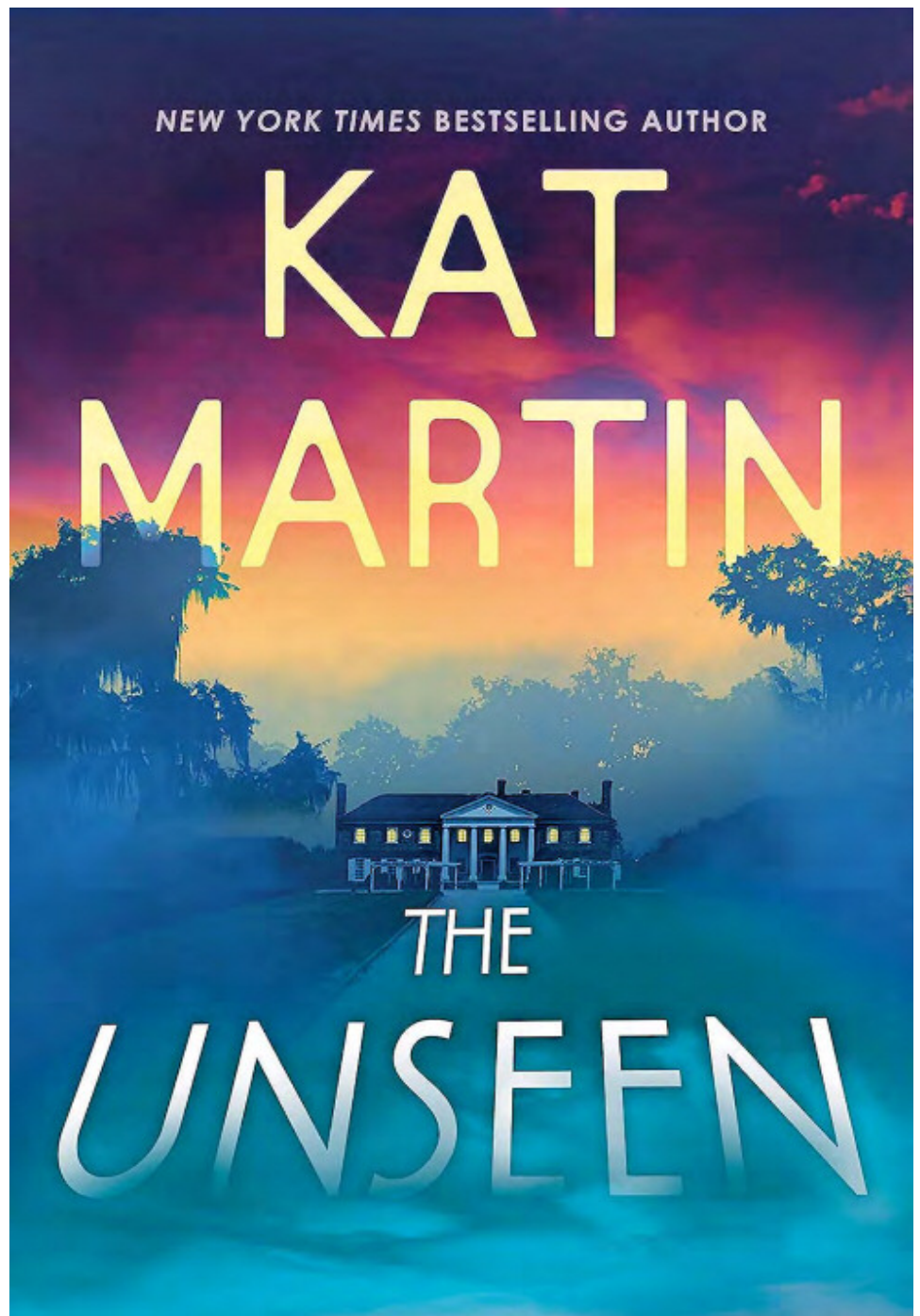
"For fans of Darcy Coates's paranormal thrills and Jeneva Rose's romantic suspense, the supernatural and physical worlds collide in this mesmerizing tale of a gruesome murder set against the Southern Gothic backdrop of a historic Louisiana mansion."

It begins when two young boys discover the 100-year-old skeleton of a murdered man buried near the grounds of Belle Reve, a Greek revival style mansion built in the 1870s. As police investigate, strange occurrences and eerie sounds overtake the mansion—footsteps in empty hallways, slamming doors in empty rooms.

Rachel Belmond, owner of Belle Reve, is petrified. Beautiful, and still young at 47, Rachel is also in failing health, her deteriorating condition baffling doctors. It's her niece, Nicole, who begins to suspect that something deadly has invaded the house. And it is Nicole who meets someone who might be able to find answers . . .

As the incidents grow more intense, Rachel's niece, Nicole Belmond, begins to suspect that something otherworldly may have invaded the house.

Lucas Devereaux is the owner of the Baton Rouge Youth Center



where Nicole's teenage half-brother is serving a sentence for a juvenile crime. The attraction between Lucas and Nicole is instant. Hearing rumors that Lucas, a former priest, has the ability to deal with supernatural events, Nicole shares her worries about Belle Reve. But Lucas can't begin until he has more information.

Fearing for Rachel's fragile health, trying to ignore their growing attraction, Nicole and Lucas work to find the link between the mysterious old bones and the terrifying events in the house that grow more ominous every day. Can Nicole and Lucas protect Rachel and stop the demonic forces that threaten the very existence of Belle Reve? Or is more happening than anyone can imagine?

Introducing...the FAPA Conference

FAPA - Florida Authors and Publishers Association

FAPA 2025 was held on August 1-2, 2025, at the Hilton Orlando Buena Vista Palace.

Friday evening was the meet and greet.

Saturday had informative seminars with Ray Brehm, Rick Bettencourt, Alexandra Silva Labarr, and Liz Coursen as speakers. The award ceremony and dinner was held on Saturday evening honoring Florida authors.

FAPA is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing information and resources with writers interested in writing and publishing.



Author Keith Newhouse



Author Fred Gray



Seminar on how to be a speaker



BACK TO SCHOOL\

Across

2. Where the food fights happen.
5. The big dance for high school juniors and seniors.
7. List of classes a student takes.
10. This person advises students about classes,
11. The goal of going to school.
13. College students may sleep here at the school.
15. Where the reference books and materials are.
16. Class to study plants and animals.
17. Place where teaching and learning occurs.
18. Limey substance one writes on #12 Down with.
20. The one who stands before the younger group and imparts knowledge.
21. Outline of a course in college.
22. A #2 Ticonderoga is one of these.
26. A group of classes done to familiarize the student.
29. Place where the entire school sits.
31. Class that teaches government structure and function.
32. Bulldogs, Pirates, Raiders, Titans are all _____.
33. The first sport of the school year.
34. Common meeting place for students and teachers.
35. Carry your books in these.

Down

1. These shows highlight the students' abilities to perform.
3. The staple noodles of the college student.

4. This HBCU is in Washington, D.C.
6. The class before first grade.
8. After high school, there is junior _____ or _____.
9. First class above math. X is the answer.
12. You write on this with # 22 Across or sharpie Expo.
14. The school that encompasses 9-12.
19. Publicly funded schools that are more flexible than public schools.
22. No longer called 'teacher', it's

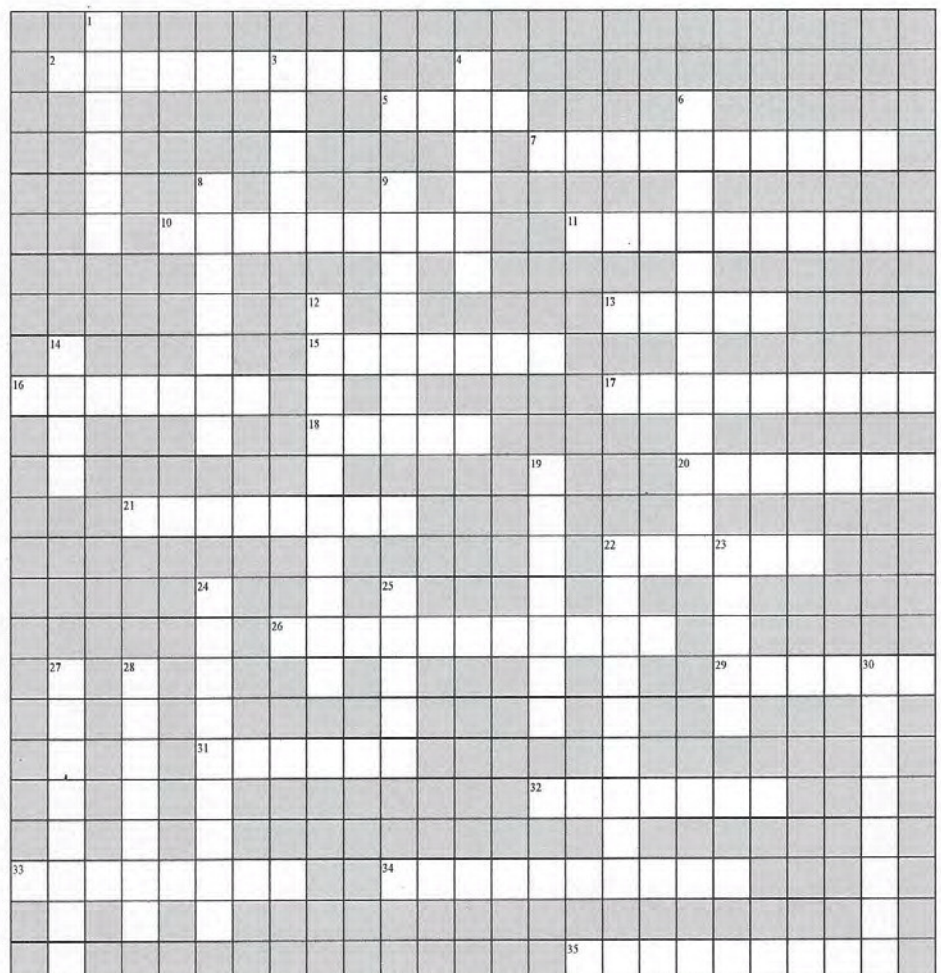
this title now.

23. The one who teaches about sports.
24. Head honcho in public schools.
25. Where the students sit.
27. Assignments away from school.
28. What students do when they try to make the squad.
30. Some schools require their students to wear these.

Answers on page 30

Back to School

Louise B. Snead



REVIEWS

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

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

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



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

Authors,

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

Contemporary Romance

Afterglow (Ottawa Regents #3)

Ruby Rana

Ruby Rana

Kindle

B0F4Q1Q2H2

★★★★

Behraz Irani and NHL hockey center Fletcher Donovan become roommates after she runs into him with her bike, giving him a severe concussion. Fletcher daydreams about Bea from afar but gets heart palpitations thinking about talking to her. He's the sexy man of her dreams who's out of her league. Despite their close, shared friends circle, this will be their first time spending one-on-one time together. Can their mutual crushes survive living together once they get to know one another, possibly becoming more?

Fletcher's NHL career isn't a success. He likes hockey but doesn't love it. It's his brother's dream, not his. A shy, nerdy introvert with social anxiety, he prefers spending his time reading. To help his large family, Fletcher provides financially for his younger

siblings and parents.

Parsi/Persian social butterfly Bea is having a rough time since her family's move abroad. Because of an undiagnosed learning disability and ADHD, she has spent her savings taking and failing the bar three times to achieve her dream of becoming a lawyer. Then, Bea gets evicted from her sublease, leaving her homeless. Resilient and intelligent, with an excellent memory, she's determined to achieve her dream, regardless of the obstacles.

Perfect for one another, Bea and Fletcher balance each other's lives by supporting, encouraging, and helping one another follow their dreams and find belonging. Bea helps calm Fletcher's social anxiety, makes him feel seen, and no longer alone. Fletcher accepts Bea without judgment as no one else in her life does. He quiets the chaos in Bea's brain, helping her focus. On the same wavelength—Bea and Fletcher's thirst, desire, longing, and love for each other are genuine.

Rana's down-to-earth descriptive writing is rich with details and vivid world building. She uses her versatile character's senses and dialogue to

Contemporary Romance

develop and strengthen their connection and attraction. She develops, evolves, and transitions their relationship from crushes to roommates, to friends to lovers, through humorous and adorable banter, and sweet, sensual, emotional, steamy, and intimate interactions and love scenes. Their practice dates, and time spent talking and getting to know each other better are adorably cute. Fletcher and Bea become friends before they're intimate. *Afterglow's* funny, sweet love scenes show how into each other they are.

Afterglow is a fast-paced romance recommended for friends-to-lovers, forced proximity, roommate-to-lovers, dating/sex lessons, South Asian heroines, interracial romance, pining, and mutual crush fans.
Lacy Hill

Claiming Ours (Anchor Bay #2)

Kennedy L. Mitchell

KLM Books

E-Book

B0F6411D64

★★★★

After her fiancé's death, veterinarian Baylee Smith comes to Anchor Bay, Alaska, to escape her grief. She opens a vet clinic, becoming part of the Uplift community, never expecting to fall in love again.

Liam is a bossy, sexy, older cowboy she befriends in town. Then, her best friend Memphis unexpectedly walks into her clinic with his dog, Elvis, wanting to renew their friendship. Their connection and unexplored

electric attraction from high school are still strong. Both men want her. Will she have to choose between them, or can she have both? Bailey's attempts to move on are obstructed by disturbing texts, phone calls, and unsolved murders and disappearances of women hikers.

Baylee is still emotionally broken and healing from her grief and loss over her fiancé's death. A virgin, she's verging on moving from the friend zone with Liam. Brilliant, independent, and kind-hearted, Baylee desperately wants to live and love freely like her Uplift poly community friends, but she's burdened by guilt and shame and having trouble letting go.

A stoic, intense, overly protective MMA fighter and retired army ranger in his 40s, Liam has anger management and trust issues. Baylee's complete opposite with a need for control, Liam supports Baylee, protects her, and helps her to heal. Despite their potent attraction, he doesn't push for more. He lost his wife in an accident and understands the difficulty of living with grief and loss.

Shy, sweet, cocky, and sexy with a dominant streak, EMT Memphis is a bad boy with a traumatic past. Initially her fiancé's best friend Memphis has always treated Baylee with respect, and taken care of, listened to and watched out for her. Memphis makes her feel safe. He'd been drawn to and fallen for Baylee in high school. Though she was forbidden/off-limits.

Memphis, Baylee, and Liam's steamy, sexy, intimate, and humorous love scenes help evolve their connections, characters, relationships, and the plot. *Claiming Ours* focuses on the mystery/suspense with balanced romance and more action throughout the novel. Mitchell dives deeper into the mystery of the disappearances and murders, including one of their own. Mitchell's down-to-earth, detailed writing, and world-building create vivid images in reader's minds, and well-constructed action and suspense scenes draw readers in from the opening scene.

Claiming Ours is a suspenseful, steamy, funny, sexy, emotional, and fast-paced romance recommended for

As a Last Resort

Kristin Wollett

Forever Publishing

E-Book

B0DS55TV7C

★★★★

Opposites attract when a real estate developer's quest for a promotion returns her to the coastal hometown she loathes—where she's reunited with her teenage crush turned town golden boy.

'There's no place like home'...and that's exactly how real estate developer Samantha Leigh plans to keep it. When she ditched Rock Island, Florida, for New York City, she left everything behind—her alcoholic mother, the high school bullies, her ex-best friend, and her first crush, Austin Marcs. She's never looked back—until her boss ambushes her with an extended assignment on Rock Island, where a promotion will be on the line. Sam has no choice but to book a flight home. Nothing has changed. Her mom still drinks; the mean girls became mean-girl mommies, and Austin? The town's golden boy is now its favorite ferryboat captain—still smoking hot, inexplicably devoted to the island, and Sam's total opposite in every way. He insists Rock Island is perfect as is, without her big corporate ideas, and he's determined to prove it. Before long, Austin's personal tours of sandy beaches and swoony sunsets almost make Sam forget her hometown hate. But is falling for the guy and the town she left behind worth the risk?

As a Last Resort is a delightful rom-com by an exciting new author. Our leading lady is struggling against the good old boys' club at work and trying to get by. When a job assignment has her going back to Florida and the small town she grew up in, Sam is less than thrilled.

Austin is Sam's former BFF's older brother and the boy she had a crush on throughout her teens. Austin is a thoroughly nice guy and unlike the guys Sam knows in New York.

I truly enjoyed getting to know Sam and Austin and watching them discover what was really important in life.

D. Antonio



Contemporary Romance

Give Me a Reason

Jayci Lee

St. Martin's Griffin

Trade Paperback

978-1250907780

★★★★★



Lee's modern Jane Austen's *Persuasion* retelling explores K-Drama actress Anne Lee's second chance romance with her first love Frederick Nam. Ten years ago, Anne dropped out of college and moved to Korea for a K-Drama role to save her family from financial ruin. Anne broke up with Frederick to prevent him from giving up his future by following her.

After years of loving, missing, and hating Anne, Frederick moves on with his life. Frederick doesn't need romance, love, or Anne. Anne returns, a famous, exhausted actor, to take some time to decide for herself what she wants from life. They're forced into sudden close contact because bridesmaid Anne helps plan her cousin's wedding and events, and Frederick is the husband's friend and groomsman. Will Anne risk her heart for a chance at forever with Frederick?

Anne returns home at 31-years-old feeling tired, lost, and complacent. She is a caring woman who puts everyone before herself. Anne is smart, talented and kind-hearted. However, she lacks the character of knowing her own mind. Frederick and Anne's love was a real, deep, once-in-a-lifetime kind of love she sacrificed to keep a promise to her mom. Anne allows her selfish and critical family prey on her insecurities and doubts. Spending time with Frederick, Anne can't avoid reminders of their time together, their love. She's still in love with him and would give anything for a second chance.

At 29-years-old Frederick is a protective, devoted, loyal, and honest fire captain and friend. Frederick's angry, hurt and, understandably, cold to Anne initially. He's dreamed and dreaded seeing her again. Despite telling himself Anne means nothing to him anymore, Frederick can't stop looking at her, noticing her appearance, and worrying about signs of stress, fatigue, etc. He's protective of Anne, wants to be near her, and can't seem to stop taking care of her, even if he's not ready to forgive her.

Lee's vibrant, emotionally intense writing with vivid descriptions and world building jumps off the pages, grabbing hold of your heart and mind. She retells *Persuasion* without changing the core essentials, adding memories and details about Frederick and Anne's relationship, showing why they fell for, loved, and still love each other.

Frederick and Ann's interactions are filled with banter, emotion, and electrifying chemistry. Their love scenes are steamy, passionate, intimate, sexy, and emotional. Beautifully written, sweet, funny, and fast-paced, *Give Me A Reason* is highly recommended for fans of forced proximity, *Persuasion* retellings, and second-chance romance fans.

Lacy Hill

friends-to-lovers, why choose, poly-amory, age gap, found family, small-town romance, romantic suspense, and mystery/thriller fans.

Lacy Hill

Justified Fear (TFH Team Bravo Book 2)

Melissa Schroeder

Harmless Publishing

E-Book

B0DR9S7SMD

★★★★★



Fearing the bad dudes after her seems normal, but her real fear is trust-

ing a man with her heart.

Keely Templeton has rotten luck. At least lately, everything seems to be going wrong. First, she finds her now ex screwing his secretary--in their bed. Then, she loses her job on the mainland. Now, she's running for her life in the jungles of Hawaii. It was supposed to be the night that her private chef business took off. Instead, some bad dudes showed up and killed everyone in the house, except her. Climbing up a tree and hiding from bad dudes seems like a good plan, until it starts raining. But in one instant, everything changes when a hot guy shows up to rescue her.

Ryan Morrison joined TFH Team Bravo after years with the LAPD. He'd left there with scars—both physical and mental. But there is one thing he is certain about: his partner Maya. They have been together for years. When they find Keely hanging from a tree, his whole world changes. Coaxing the gorgeous woman out of the tree takes a little work. Once he does, he is utterly and completely enchanted with her. Still, there's suspicion that she might have been in on the killing.

Once there are more attempts on her life, the team realizes that she had nothing to do with the attack and she might be the intended victim. Ryan takes on the job of protecting her, and their attraction goes from simmering to full on heat wave in the blink of an eye.

We're back with TFH, and they are up to their usual antics. There's snarky banter, bets flying around the office, and wedding plans in the making. There is also a lot of food talk (Keely IS a chef), and an adorable rescue dog who might be the love of Keely's life.

Justified Fear is an exciting romantic suspense that will have you flipping pages and holding your breath. Ryan and Keely are made for each other and Maya is just adorable. A fantastic addition to the TFH family.

D. Antonio

Contemporary Romance

Last Chance Seduction (Montgomery Ink Legacy #9)

Carrie Ann Ryan

Self-published

E-Book

B0DGGSLRWX

★★★★★



The last time I saw Lexington Montgomery, he held my sister in his arms as my fiancé left me at the altar.

Neither one of us knew it would be two years until we saw each other again. Or that it would be the last time my sister was part of our core group.

Only fate had other plans because Lexington Montgomery is my new neighbor.

I want to stay away from him, but there's no chance of that now. Especially when his ex shows up to rub her new husband—and the chance at his dream job—in his face.

I didn't mean to do it, but now I'm Lex's fake girlfriend over the holidays and there's nothing fake about the attraction between us.

Except once we finally give in, it turns out the past I ran from wasn't so far away after all. And the dangers we never saw coming might end what we have—fake or not—before we even have a chance.

Sweet, heartwarming and sexy, *Last Chance Seduction* features Lex and Mercy and all the fun that comes with fake dating that turns into so much more. Lex is suffering from last man standing syndrome and wants to join the rest of the happily in loves. He's the guy that girls date just before their happily-ever-after, but they don't seem to find it with him. Then there's Mercy, the girl he crushed on before his buddy called dibs. But they're both free now and just maybe they can fake their way to a happy ever after of their own.

Another fun Montgomery romance.

D. Antonio

The Dating Prohibition

Taj McCoy

MIRA

Trade Paperback

978-0778368580

★★★★★



Chef Kendra returns home with plans to open a speakeasy supper club and reconnects with childhood crush, BJ Stephens. It's hard for Kendra being stuck in her brother's shadow again, while getting her speakeasy started and meeting with non-stop setbacks and disappointments. But having BJ around makes things easier. Unlike Kendra's parents, he takes her dreams seriously, helping her bring them to fruition. BJ and Kendra's mutual attraction is scorching, but before they can take things to the next level, he puts the brakes on, saying they can't be together

because she's off limits. Meanwhile, Kendra's investors fall through, making her feel that leaving home again may be her only way to fulfill her dreams and make a fresh start. Will BJ be ready for love, sweeping Kendra off her feet when she least expects it or moves on?

Of multi-ethnic heritage—Filipino, Thai, and Black—Kendra is the black sheep. She is a talented chef who's always dreamed of incorporating recipes from her family's different cultures into her own restaurant's food. Her parents judge everything she does, making her feel like a failure compared to her brother.

BJ is a tenured professor on sabbatical working on his book. Although he's grumpy, BJ is an easygoing guy who puts others before himself. Spending time with BJ makes Kendra laugh, because he is easy to talk to,

and can be playful. Her brother's best friend, BJ, mediates between them.

McCoy's down-to-earth, detailed, descriptive writing and colorful, dialogue perfectly suits her characters, setting, and theme making the pages fly by. With deep friendship at the core of their relationship and explosive, fiery chemistry, BJ and Kendra make a good couple. McCoy develops them, giving readers a chance to know them. But then it's on with many humorous, snarky, steamy, love scenes. BJ and Kendra laugh, act silly and playful, along with secondary characters.

McCoy captures Kendra's family dynamics through humorous interactions, food, cooking, dinners, and family meals. Her big brother and cousin Lani, however, are incredibly supportive and encouraging. Sweet, hilarious, steamy, sexy, and emotional, *The Dating Prohibition* is a fast-paced, entertaining, light-hearted romance with a bit of angst.

Lacy Hill

Montana Delta Rodeo

Cowboy

Debra Parmley

Belo Dia Publishing

E-Book

B0FGTMJTZ8

★★★★★

Emma Smith's boss sent her out west to Montana as a birthday gift. Though she thought it extremely odd and out of character, Emma accepted the gift. Then, she found herself fighting and hiding from the Mexican cartel. Cartel members, D.E.A., and Destry Walsh, a Delta Force Cowboy—Oh my!

She knew she needed protection and hired Destry Walsh. The flames of passion moved faster than the bullets they were dodging.

Montana Delta Rodeo Cowboy is a great romantic suspense. How can anyone go wrong with bodyguard cowboys?

Lauren Calder

PARANORMAL ROMANCE REVIEWS

FANTASY

VAMPIRES

SHAPE SHIFTERS

TIME TRAVEL

WEREWOLVES...

The Austen Affair

Madeline Bell

St. Martin's Press/Griffin

Trade Paperback; 978-1250373519

E-Book: B0DAV2QXV2978

☆☆☆ ½

Tess Bright is a struggling actress in Southern California. She's had some success in a teen drama based on a cartoon, but rumor has it she's about to lose that job. Now she has landed a dream job in a film adaptation of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* being filmed in the English countryside. The part is special for her because she and her recently deceased mother, who she still mourns, were huge fans of Austen's work.

Tess's co-star, Hugh Balfour, is an Englishman with a very snooty attitude. He resists her requests to run lines with him and immerses himself in his roles through method acting. He has nothing but disdain for Tess because she's impulsive, clumsy, and messy, and his attitude does nothing for her already deep insecurity.

During one of their skirmishes, they trip into a puddle where an electric heater falls into the water, and with a zap of electricity, they find themselves transported 200 years into the past—to Jane Austen's time. As luck would have it, they've landed close to Hugh's ancestral home, and he is mistaken for his ancestor Hugh Balfour, who was killed while fighting Napoleon.

Fortunately for Hugh and Tess, they're still wearing their period costumes, and explain away their



lack of possessions or transportation by claiming to have been robbed by highwaymen. What is more difficult to explain is Tess's inadvertent breaking of rigid Regency rules, and she continues to barely avoid scandal. Hugh has spent so much time researching both his family history and the Regency period that he can fit more easily into the customs of the times. The big question facing the couple is how they will be able to return to their own time. Sparks fly between them as they maneuver life in this unfamiliar territory, but it's possible the sparks of animosity might turn into a different type of relationship.

Hannah Rowan

Shift of Morals (Shifter Lords Book 2)

S.E. Babin

City Owl Press

Paperback

978-1648984884

☆☆☆☆



What do you get when you mix one hot shifter, one angry god, and an absolutely zero chance of keeping things low-key?

A whole bunch of trouble, that's what.

Life was so much simpler when Evie's problems consisted of picking the perfect peony. Now she's got the

gods on her tail and shifters trying to sniff out her secrets.

Then there's the smoking hot Shifter Lord who has never once thrown a party, hiring her for all kinds of pack events and doing his best to convince her to trust him. But he has an agenda of his own, and Evie is far too smart to let her guard down.

On top of that, there's a new god in town, one who's way too good at identifying bloodlines and scenting out lies. She'll have to dig deep and muster up some of her rusty acting skills to escape his notice, while trying to keep her identity hidden from the rest of the world so intent on finding her.

And if that wasn't enough, someone is trying to kill her, and they're getting close to succeeding. Surviving will require placing her trust in the unlikely of allies and deciding just how long she can keep pretending she's only a demure little florist who has an unfortunate black thumb for drama.

Evie is still a florist, still a fraud, and still trying to pretend she's not falling in love.

If you haven't read *Shift of Heart* (Shifter Lords Book 1), go read that then come and read this EPIC second installment. Poor Evie has her hands full in this fast-paced tale. As many answers as we get, there are two more questions to take their place. I can't wait for the next book.

D. Antonio



Gloves Off (Vancouver Storm #4)

Stephanie Archer

Narrated by J.F. Harding and Stella Hunter

Silver Springs Press

Audiobook

B0F9LLWY5G

★★★★ 1/2

NHL defense man Alexi Volkov and Georgia Green, team doctor and athlete researcher, marry for his family's citizenship and Georgia's inheritance. They can't stand each other and quarrel nonstop. Now they'll be pretending to be besotted newlyweds in love. Alexi vows never to fall in love with her. Georgia promises to hate him forever. But as they learn more about each other, they draw closer, learning unexpected truths about one another. With feelings becoming not so fake after all, can their pretend marriage become genuine?

Harding and Hunter's vibrant, emotional narration brings Archer's multilayered romance and characters to life. Harding's Russian accent is fantastic. The opening scenes draw the

readers in, and they cannot stop listening. The audiobook flies by as they bring Archer's humor, snarky banter, fiery chemistry, and stirring romance from the text and readers' imaginations to life. Hunter and Harding portray Alexi and Georgia's emotional highs and lows, chemistry, and fears. Their narration complement each other and Archer's writing and storytelling.

Alexi's an arrogant, surly jerk in Georgia's eyes, glaring at her high heel shoes, judging her, and making faulty assumptions while denying his attraction to her. Brutally handsome, serious, and grumpy, Alexi is cold and doesn't smile. But underneath there's a fun, thoughtful, generous man who cares about his family and Georgia and her safety. At 36-years-old, he's an enforcer who's suffered countless injuries for his team and the game he loves. Alexi plays through injuries and pain, fearing retirement. Hockey is Alexi's life—he's not ready to let go.

Curvy, beautiful, and intelligent, Georgia doesn't appreciate being told what to do, especially by men. Georgia fears being trapped in a marriage where she's expected to give up on her dreams. She loves her expensive high heels because they make her

feel powerful and sexy and lets Alexi believe whatever he wants about her. Georgia loves fighting with Alexi but acts unaffected by his appeal.

Archer explores Alexi and Georgia's relationship and transitions it from enemies to lovers through banter-filled interactions and love scenes. Once they're married and living together in forced proximity 24/7, their barriers lower, and they finally see each other as they truly are. Perfect for each other, they're evenly matched, bring balance to each other's lives, fit well together, encourage and support one another's dreams, make one another happy.

Archer's down-to-earth, descriptive writing and world-building uses her characters' to develop their connections/relationships. Funny, emotional, steamy, sexy, and romantic, *Gloves Off* is intense, fast-paced and angsty.

Lacy Hill

One Dark Kiss (Grimm Bargains #2)

Rebecca Zanett

Narrated by Lance Greenfield and Erin Mallon

Recorded Books

Audiobook

B0DZKCK548

★★★★★



Civil litigation attorney Rosalie takes Alexei Sokolov's case to get his seven-year conviction overturned and retry his case for murdering his ex-lover's husband. Rosalie secures his release but gets caught in the cross hairs of his ruthless enemies. Alexei's set on recovering control of the family corporation and regaining power. He'll burn the world down to keep Rosalie safe.

Highly intelligent, Rosalie is her law firm's best litigator. She takes Alexei's case hoping for a promotion. Stubborn and fiercely independent, Rosalie is resistant to Alexei's attempts to control her.

Rosalie's best friends, Alana

The Live-In Temptation (Steele Brothers of Starlight Cove #2)

Brighton Walsh

Narrators: Connor Crais and Vanessa Edwin

Bright Publishing LLC

Audiobook

B0FMKN26QZ

★★★★★



Fire chief Xander Steele unexpectedly becomes the single parent of a four-year-old daughter. He reluctantly hires Chloe Bradshaw, whom he pulls from a shed fire, as her live-in nanny. Xander can't stop thinking about crossing the line with Chloe—knowing she's off limits. What's between them feels real. But time is running out because Chloe never stays in one place long. Will Chloe stay with Xander and Emma, where she belongs?

A grumpy, 38-year-old Type-A personality, Xander loves schedules, control, and calm, and hates messes. He is having difficulty adapting to single fatherhood. Guilt and shame burden him for missing Emma's first years. Despite believing Chloe is unhinged, he's deeply drawn to her and can't stop dreaming about her. Chloe is a 28-year-old massage therapist driven by wanderlust. Their initial meetings are hilarious, filled with an electrically charged attraction and sexual tension. Chloe's so thirsty for Xander but has no patience for his grumpiness. Readers know she's going to complicate and change his life.

Walsh's down-to-earth, vibrant, detailed writing features descriptions with Xander and Chloe's characters' senses that build their romantic/sexual chemistry. She develops and evolves her complex characters' relationships through snarky, humorous banter and deeply sexy, intimate, steamy, and emotional banter, interactions, and love scenes. Walsh tailors her colorful, hilarious, natural-sounding dialogue to her characters.

Poignant and fast-paced *The Live-in Temptation* is highly recommended for grumpy x sunshine, single-dad, forced proximity, live-in nanny, found family, small town, forbidden romance, and age gap and slow burn romance fans.

Lacy Hill

and Ella, are like her sisters. She owns a Victorian house with elderly boarders. Controlled, intense, bossy, dominating, and dangerous, Alexei Sokolov is consumed with the need for revenge. He insists he's innocent. As Sokolov's eldest son and heir, Alexei inherited Sokolov Media Corp., ran the corporation, and was worth a fortune until his family disowned him and froze his trust fund. While Alexei doesn't believe love exists, somehow Rosalie has taken hold of his heart.

Greenfield and Mallon's expressive, lively narration

complements Zanetti's dark and intense, multi-layered, descriptive storytelling and world-building. They capture Alexei and Rosalie's characters—and secondary characters—with their excellent Russian and Southern accents. They reveal Rosalie and Alexei's personalities and their rage through their narration to bring Zanetti's story and characters to life yet giving them distinct voices. *One Dark Kiss* draws readers in from the intensity of Alexei and Rosalie's first scene to the last.

Zanetti's well-constructed suspense scenes are thrilling, the

reader on the edge of their seats. Her characters are complex, fascinating, messy, relatable, and scary. Rosalie and Alexei's interactions and emotional, sexy, and steamy love scenes develop and evolve their connection, relationship, and the plot. They balance each other. Dangerous to Rosalie, Alexei turns her orderly world upside down but makes her feel as safe as she's ever felt. Although she doesn't appreciate being controlled or bossed around, she finds his domination and control thrilling in the bedroom. Their scenes with her friends, BFFs, boarders, and his family are insightful and entertaining.

One Dark Kiss is filled with action, danger, and the perfect balance of humor, dark romance, and suspense. It is a well-written, captivating, pulse-pounding, romantic crime drama, thriller movie, or TV show. With surprising twists and turns, it's a sweet, steamy, funny, sexy, emotional, suspenseful, riveting, romantic, and fast-paced listen recommended for heroes who fall fast and hard for the heroine, dark romance, romantasy, fairy-tale/romance re-tellings, crime drama fans.

Lacy Hill



Framed in Death

J. D. Robb

St. Martin's Press

Hardcover: 978-1250370822

E-Book: BODPV19JSL

★★★★

On a personal level Eve Dallas is mellowing a bit more with each book in the “Death” series by J.D. Rob. The hard-boiled detective is happily married to Roark and has made friends with a number of her co-workers.

But Eve Dallas has not softened her approach to the criminals she brings to justice. The serial killer she is investigating fancies himself an artist. His bizarre approach to art involves approaching “licensed companions” who work on the street and luring them to his loft, where he first flatters them about being the perfect model for his paintings, and then drugs them, kills them, and uses them as carefully posed props for his work.

His paintings are duplicates of a collection of old masters’ work,

including “Vermeer’s Girl With a Pearl Earring” and Gainsborough’s “The Blue Boy.” He meticulously recreates the poses and costumes depicted in the paintings. Once he’s done, he leaves the bodies, still carefully posed, at the doorsteps of several art dealers who rejected his work.

Dallas, Roark, and the crew race against time, certain he intends to continue his killing spree to feed his artistic aspirations. Though they warn the streetwalkers of the danger, the lure of a quick \$2,000 with more to come proves too good to pass up for some, who don’t realize their mistake until it is too late.

Framed in Death contains a bit more social interaction than some of the other Dallas novels, with parties and housewarmings and the like. Eve still relies on Roark to give wardrobe advice and to remind her to eat. His computer skills and connections also prove invaluable in speeding up solving the case.

The unique delusions of the serial killer become apparent to Dallas fairly quickly, but the hunt for him

before he captures his next victim provides some nail-biting suspense.

Hannah Rowan

Play Nice

Rachel Harrison

Berkley Publishing Group

E-Book

B0DPYGZJ6Y

★★★★

Clio Louise Barnes has an enviable life. She is a successful social media influencer and stylist, living a glamorous life in New York City, and she has a close family made up of two sisters and her father. But her past soon catches up with her when her estranged mother passes away and she goes back to the house where they lived, a haunted house. Clio wants answers about the past she doesn’t remember, including who her mom really was. Clio decides to flip and sell the house, but the presence within has darker plans. It’s happy she’s back.

Play Nice is genuinely creepy, and in parts very scary. This is the kind

of book a reader is wise to only read during the daytime. The presence in the house is very unnerving, both in the present and in the flashbacks through the narrative of Clio's mom's book she wrote about the haunting. This is as much a psychological thriller and a family drama book as the reader is drawn back into the past along with Clio as she has to assess the past and integrate it with what she knows about her family. Clio has to face hard truths that go far beyond just growing up in a haunted house. She has to come to the realization that her happy family life and her carefree personality is built on a tenuous foundation of half-truths, deflections and manipulations that have masked deep and long-lasting family-wide emotional trauma and dysfunction. This aspect of the book adds significantly to the disturbing nature of the narrative.

Play Nice hides an intensity beneath a bright surface that will leave readers feeling shaken and emotionally unbalanced when reality comes to life. Clio is a complex person, at times, unlikeable person, sometimes coming off as a bit of an unreliable narrator. But readers will feel invested in her experiences and well-being. This is an engrossing narrative that keeps the reader captivated until the end. While the pacing issues do make the ending a little less impactful, overall, *Play Nice* is a book with quite a visceral emotional punch. Readers who go into this for haunted house fun will find it demands a lot more from the experience.

Danielle Hill

Unseen Scars (Workbook)

Stephanie Roese

Self-published

E-Book

B0FD76RPYT

☆☆☆☆

Unseen Scars begins with a

quote, a quote that's a direct hit, a hard reality check to anyone who's been betrayed and emotionally hurt.

"Before healing begins, we must name the harm."

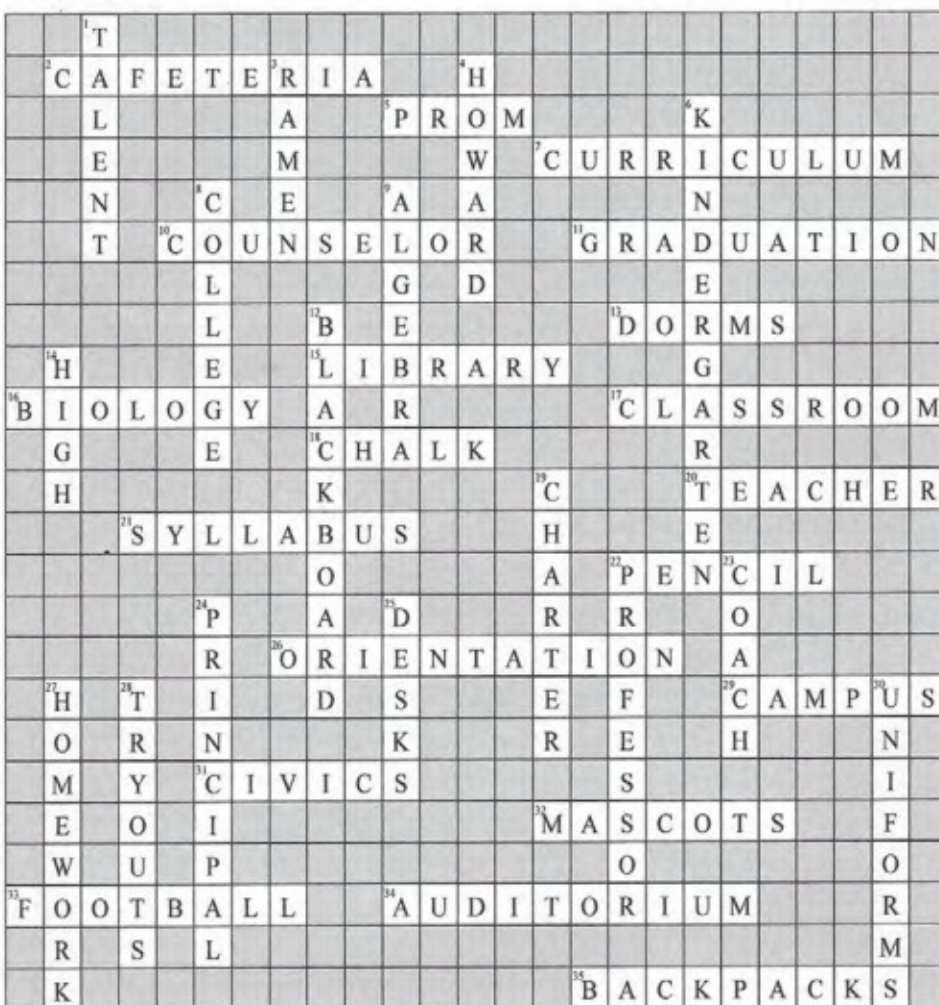
It isn't always physical abuse that can hurt a person. It's the cold, silence, the rejection, the half-compliments lined with negativity. Ms. Roese helps the reader identify where these issues come from and how to deal with them.

The reflections continue with dealing with abuse, dysfunctional families, friends, etc. The workbook is a personal, interactive, self-help book and will help anyone reach the goal of acceptance and inner peace.

Lauren Calder

Back to School

Louise B. Snead





Bunny and Fawn: The Midnight Creature Mystery

Michael Lingo

Self-published

E-Book

B0D3BHJ613

★★★★★



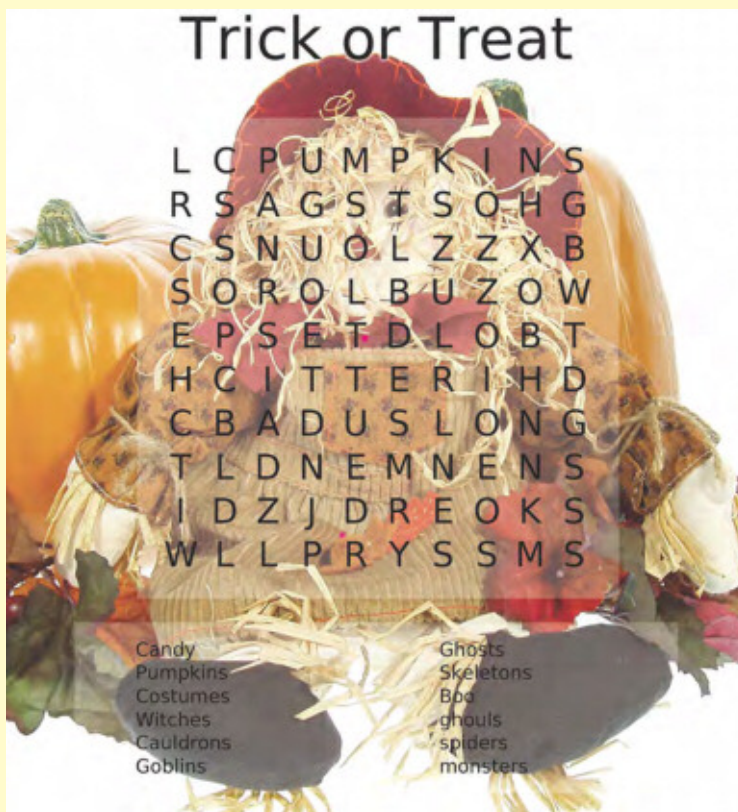
Bunny and Fawn live in the forest and have been friends for a long time. They're about to go on a new adventure!

After a long day, Bunny was awakened by a strange, unfamiliar sound. The two friends went off to see what it was. Neither one of them had seen a creature like that. They went to their friend, Bear, for help.

He didn't know either! The three friends went on a quest to learn more about this mysterious creature.

This is fantastic. A must have for your child's, or grandchild's book-case!

Lauren Calder



We can't help it
We LOVE Halloween

Late!

Didn't quite make in the last issue



Includes all genre and all time periods

Hemlock and Silver

T. Kingfisher

Tor Publishing Books

E-book

B0DDJB7JA

★★★★

Hemlock and Silver is a retelling of the fairy tale *Snow White* that goes an unusual and intriguing direction with a unique point of view. Anja has a lifetime fixation on poisons. She's the one they call when a patient has a life-threatening encounter with toxins. The King comes for her help to save his daughter Snow, who is slowly dying from a poison, and no one can figure out why. Anja travels to his home in the desert where she is isolated, but the poisoner has found her. Can Anja save Snow before it's too late?

T. Kingfisher has written another story that takes what feels familiar and makes it entirely new. In this case, she expands on the concept of mirrors and apples in the fairy tale and re-imagines Snow White's character. This book

did suffer from a bit of a slow start as characters and settings were established. It will take some patience from a reader, but it pays off. The strength of this novel is Anja, a great character. Her encyclopedic knowledge of poisons and her world-view shaped from those experiences is captivating. She is down-to-earth and refreshing in her imperfections and admitted insecurities and flaws. Another successful aspect of this book is its tone. It gets very weird and there are some moments that are downright creepy, but there's also a wonderful sense of wry humor through Anja's point of view, and Javier, her bodyguard. There's also a cat, who plays a pivotal role in the story. While some readers may not completely connect to this as a *Snow White* retelling, Kingfisher makes this fairy tale feel like an entirely new story with *Hemlock and Silver*.

Danielle Hill

I Could Be Yours

Helena Hunting

Ink & Cupcakes, Inc.

Trade Paperback

978-1998657167

★★★★

Bridesmaid Essie Lovelock, a reformed love-obsessed fairytale fanatic, is stuck planning wedding events for her best friend's wedding with the best man and groom's brother, Nate Stiles, who kissed her six years ago then ghosted her. Nate and Essie are total opposites with sizzling chemistry despite their dislike of each other. They snark at one another anytime their friends group gets together. She's going to be the best maid of honor her friend deserves without falling for the best man—even though that kiss is still the best of her life.

Smart, sassy, and creative, Essie works as a makeup artist on a TV show. Essie is highly organized and determined, with a great mind and skill for numbers. Essie has had her heart broken over and over by men undeserving of her. Because of a recent breakup, she's taking a break from dating. Beautiful and curvy, she's always been a distraction and not taken seriously because of her appearance, though she doesn't ask for attention. Essie is haunted by her kiss with Nate and his ghosting her after. But she finds it hard to resist their intense chemistry and connection.

A serious, nerdy, driven, competitive engineer, Nate is Essie's former high school classmate. He designs sports equipment. Grumpy and broody with a rain cloud personality, Nate doesn't believe in love. Spending time with Essie planning wedding events helps Nate realize his misconceptions and underestimations of her. Nate still remembers their kiss vividly and regrets how he ghosted her afterwards. He's into everything about her, especially her competence in all things. Nate feels out of control around her but likes it. He's struggling with fear from childhood trauma affecting his ability to trust.

Late!

Hunting uses snarky dialogue to build up her characters' chemistry. Their deep, electric mutual attraction and chemistry feed into an even deeper emotional connection. This attraction is as emotional as sexual, with steamy love scenes. Perfect for each other, Nate and Essie encourage and support each other's dreams and help each other heal and allow themselves to love, be loved, and find happiness.

Hunting's writing is down-to-earth, witty, vibrant, and detailed with colorful and hilarious dialogue. She shifts tones from silly to intense and serious subject matters without notice or affecting the story's pacing or flow. Funny, steamy, sexy, emotional, melancholy, angsty, nostalgic, sweet, and fast-paced, *I Could Be Yours* is a romantic read recommended for second-chance romance, brother teammates'/best friend, found family and destination weddings.

Lacy Hill

Lessons in Heartbreak

Karla Sorensen

Montlake

Trade Paperback

978-1662526628

☆☆☆☆

Pro football player Griffin King's agent grounds and exiles him to a small town after he makes negative statements about his brother in an interview. Shy, small-town librarian Ruby hires an escort to help her conquer her intimacy fears without risking heartbreak. Instead of the dating coach she expects, Griffin, her childhood friend/next-door neighbor, shows up. Ruby mistakes him for the escort. Although Ruby tries to avoid him afterwards, she runs into him everywhere. Since he flirts with her every chance he gets, she asks him to be her dating coach and give her dating lessons. Neither Griffin nor the lessons turn out to be anything

she expects.

Funny, smart, petite, and beautiful, Ruby is a 30-year-old control freak, who hasn't let herself live, though she's wanted to. She values safety and fears letting someone in. So, she's kept her barriers up, but she's lonely. A serious, organized, high achiever, only child with no social life, she doesn't even have an emotional connection to her parents. Ruby's lone sexual experience didn't go well, and her confidence took a hit. She wants to discover what love and desire mean.

Griffin lives down to everyone's expectations. However, he's a smart, kind, and funny flirt. When he gives a negative interview about his twin brother, Barrett, who coaches a divisional rival, the rift that has existed between them since their teens, worsens. Barrett breaks ties with Griffin.

Sorensen's transition of Ruby and Griffin from childhood neighbors to coach-mentor, then friends-to-lovers is engaging. Readers will love their banter and romance that Sorensen develops. Griffin and Ruby's dating lessons are captivating, with seductive, tension-filled, heated hand-holding scenes/moments. Their love scenes are deeply sexy, steamy, and intimate. They balance one another. Griffin helps Ruby discover new sides of herself.

Sorensen balances the novel's romance, humor, steam, and angst with interesting twists and revelations. *Lessons in Heartbreak* is a funny and fast-paced romance.

Lacy Hill

Prince of Darkness (Dark Protectors #17)

Rebecca Zanetti

Kensington

Trade Paperback

978-151611834

☆☆☆☆^{1/2}

The Kurjan nation and Dark Protectors coalition have formed an alliance and fragile peace after centuries of war. Kurjan scientist Vero Phoenix has lived apart from his fellow Kurjans, lacking lineage until discovering he has a brother, the Kurjan Nation's new King. He becomes their enforcer to protect Paxton, the King. A former Kurjan captive, empath Lyrica Graves guides enhanced women to independence and modern life. She works with Vero to bring the Kurjans into the current century. Vero and Lyrica are deeply attracted to each other but don't like each other. They push each other's buttons while fighting, denying their deepening connection, fiery chemistry, and dark attraction. Meanwhile, unknown enemies target Paxton and Vero while they're preparing to unite the Kurjans, Cysts, and Dark protectors, and someone is killing human women.

Zanetti's vibrant, detailed, and descriptive storytelling and writing don't waste words. Her world-building uses Lyrica and Vero's senses, making readers feel present in each scene and develops their connection, relationship, and characters. The novel's opening draws readers in, and you can't stop reading as the pages fly by. Zanetti's tautly written action and suspense scenes are well-constructed and thrilling. She excellently develops her fascinating, complex, likable, relatable, and fallible characters.

Prince of Darkness is a sweet, steamy, captivating, sexy, emotional, and fast-paced romance.

Lacy Hill



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Eyes Die Last (Kennedy O'Brien Mystery)

The Las Vegas Mayoral Race is heating up and the front runners are on the suspect list for a string of murders...



Resolutions (Resolutions Inc)

On a mission to gather evidence against a Colombian drug-lord, Eve discovers the drug-lord is helping terrorists. Mac and Eve must learn to trust each other again in order to stay alive.

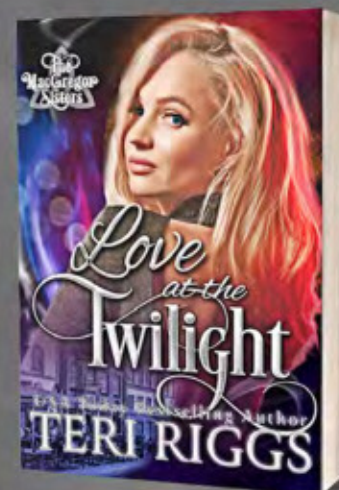


The MIA Groom (CPD Bureau of Organized Crime)

Tucker's going deep undercover. Only there's one slight problem. He's supposed to be at the church, marrying the love of his life. Their wedding day has arrived, and her groom has not.

Love at the Twilight (MacGregor Sisters)

Jay's ready to make his move. Unfortunately, the serial killer he's after is murdering women who look like Sadie and has his eyes on her.



Teri-Riggs.com
@TeriLRiggs



Sunsets and New Beginnings (Heaven's Beach)
She's the kind of woman Josh could love--until he discovers Mandi is the prey his mother means to trap in her tangled web of deception.