

Nov/Dec, 2015

Affaire de Coeur

Bringing you 34 Years of Honest Reviews

Mystery Writers of America Celebrating 70 Years and Still Going Strong



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If not, look inside!

Reviews!
Reviews!
Reviews!



**A Christmas Interview with
Model/Actor John Antorino**





*Affaire de Coeur
would like to
wish you a
safe and*

*Happy
Holiday!*

November/December, 2015

Affaire de Coeur

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Mystery Writers of America

Seventy Years Old, and They're just Getting Started

New York Times best-selling author and member of MWA, Donna Andrews granted Louise Snead of *Affaire de Coeur* an all-telling, exclusive interview.

Your know who they are. They thrill us on dark and stormy nights with murder and mayhem. Their authors are some of the most recognized names in the world of books. Meet the Mystery Writers of America, an organization dedicated to scaring the life out of us!



Donna Andrews

L.S.: I know you were not a part of the beginning of this organization, but what do you think was the impetus for forming it? Do you think authors were just looking for camaraderie--authors who write the same thing? Strength in numbers--were there issues confronting mystery writers that were best confronted by a group rather than singularly?

DA: MWA was in some ways patterned after the Detection Club of London, and its original published aims included editing an anthology, awarding prizes--which became the

Edgar Awards--and hearing lectures on topics of interest to crime writers. I can't peek into their minds, but I'm sure that, as today, they were looking for a combination of professional development and camaraderie. After all, no one understands the joys and frustrations of being a writer better than other writers.

L.S.: What are your organizational goals today?

DA: Our motto is "Crime doesn't pay--enough!" Our goal is to help mystery writers develop their professional skills, succeed in the publishing marketplace, and receive fair pay for their work.

L.S.: Who were some of your founding members?



These are the "Edgars", statues coveted statues awarded to the winners of the best mysteries



Sara Paretsky, current President of Mystery Writers of America

DA: Our first president was Baynard Kendrick—though in those days the president’s title was “Mastermind.” The other original officers were Ken Crossen as Triggerman—that’s the job we now call Executive Vice President—Clayton Rawson, the editor of True Detective as Dip (Treasurer), and Marie F. Rodell as Moll (secretary). Sometimes I wish we’d kept those more colorful titles! The first board included Mignon G. Eberhart, Anthony Boucher and Ellery Queen.

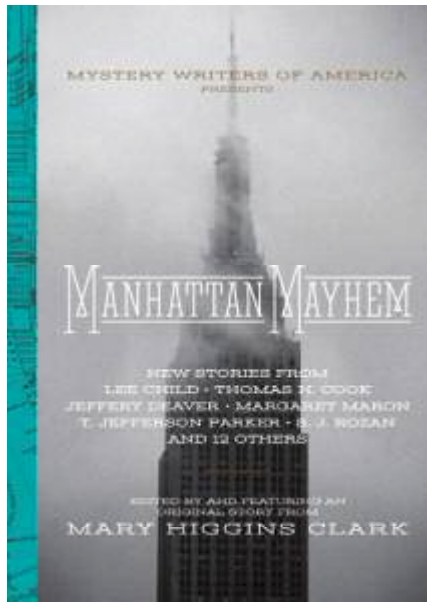
L.S.: What names would we recognize from your past and current rosters of members?

DA: We currently have around 3,000 members worldwide, and you’d recognize a lot of them! Some of our past presidents—and still members—include Brad Meltzer, Charlaine Harris, Sandra Brown, Lisa Scottoline, Laura Lippman, Lee Child, Harlan Coben, Nelson DeMille, Margaret Maron, Michael Connelly . . . the list goes on!

L.S.: Why do you think it took as long for your group to recognize and act upon the need and talents of women to the point they would elect a woman president? They’re sporadic, averaging one every four years or so with a noticeable gap between 1960 and 1975.

DA: We’ve had quite a few women presidents before:

- 1950 Helen McCloy
- 1953 Helen Reilly



- 1956 Dorothy Salisbury Davis
- 1957 Margaret Millar
- 1960 Frances & Richard Lockridge
- 1975 Phyllis A. Whitney
- 1977 Mignon G. Eberhart
- 1979 Lillian de la Torre
- 1984 Lucy Freeman
- 1987 Mary Higgins Clark
- 1990 Mary Shura Craig
- 1994 Sue Grafton
- 1997 Joan Lowery Nixon
- 1999 Barbara D’Amato
- 2001 Susan Isaacs
- 2005 Margaret Maron
- 2006 Janet Evanovich
- 2010 Laura Lippman
- 2011 Lisa Scottoline
- 2012 Sandra Brown
- 2013 Charlaine Harris

2015 Sara Paretsky

We’ve even had a few women EVPs (Executive Vice President)—Sharon Zukowski, Noreen Wald, and Frankie Y Bailey. But this is the first time in the organization’s history that both jobs have been filled by women at the same time—and for good measure we have a woman secretary this year, Elaine Viets.

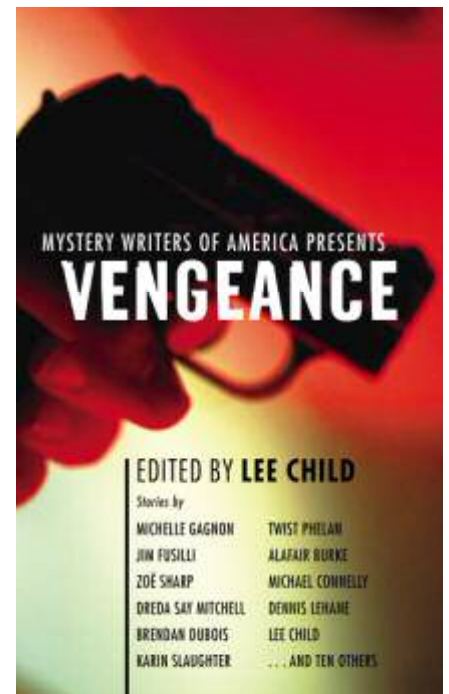
L.S.: Why did you want to become EVP?

DA: It’s not something I ever planned or expected to do, but when I was asked to consider doing it, I realized it would be a great way to give back to the organization.

L.S.: Okay, as a reader of mysteries, I have some questions that have always bugged me. So, if you will indulge me, I think we (readers) will all learn something.

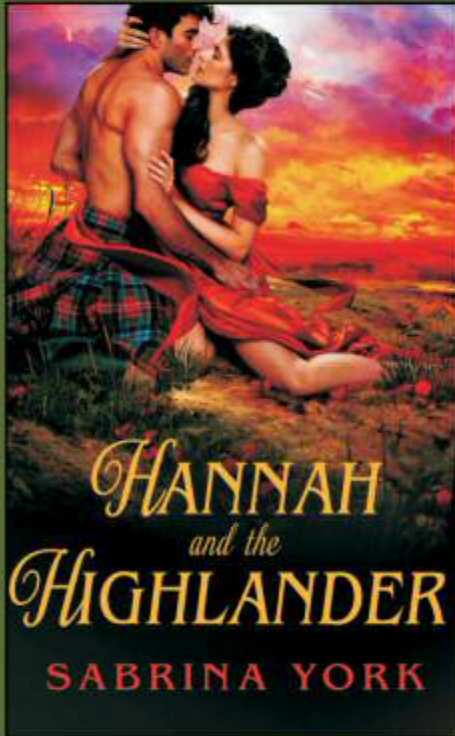
a. Is there a formula to a mystery?

Not in a good mystery! But there are components you expect to



Indulge in a Steamy Highland Romp!

The Untamed Highlanders Series from NYT Bestselling Author Sabrina York



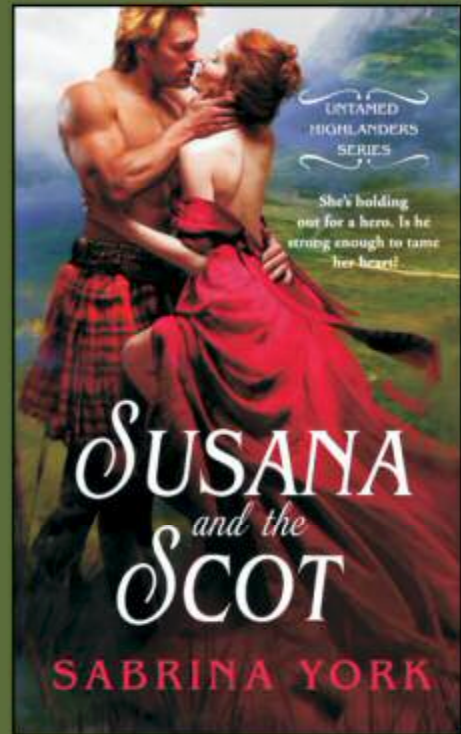
REVIEWS

Bold and steamy—
Publisher's Weekly

Top Pick—*Night Owl
Reviews*

4 1/2 Stars for this
"Passionate love
story"—*Affaire de
Coeur Magazine*

Coming Soon:
Lana and the Laird



find in a good mystery.

b. Okay, what are the necessary components for a good mystery?

There has to be a crime or mystery that's central to the book. And there has to be someone who solves it. And the ending has to satisfy the reader—usually by showing that the crime has been solved and justice has been done.

c. Tell me about clues. Isn't there some kind of *faux pas* where authors can't give false clues?

No, giving misleading clues is the name of the game! They're called "red herrings", and we use them to keep the reader—and the book's sleuth—from figuring out the solution on page 3! So, for example, if the police found a pair of eyeglasses by a dead body in a library, they know there's a good possibility that the owner of the glasses is the killer, or at least a witness. And then if the glasses turn out to be a pair the victim had picked up in the stacks and was intending to take to the library's lost and found—both police and reader have been led away

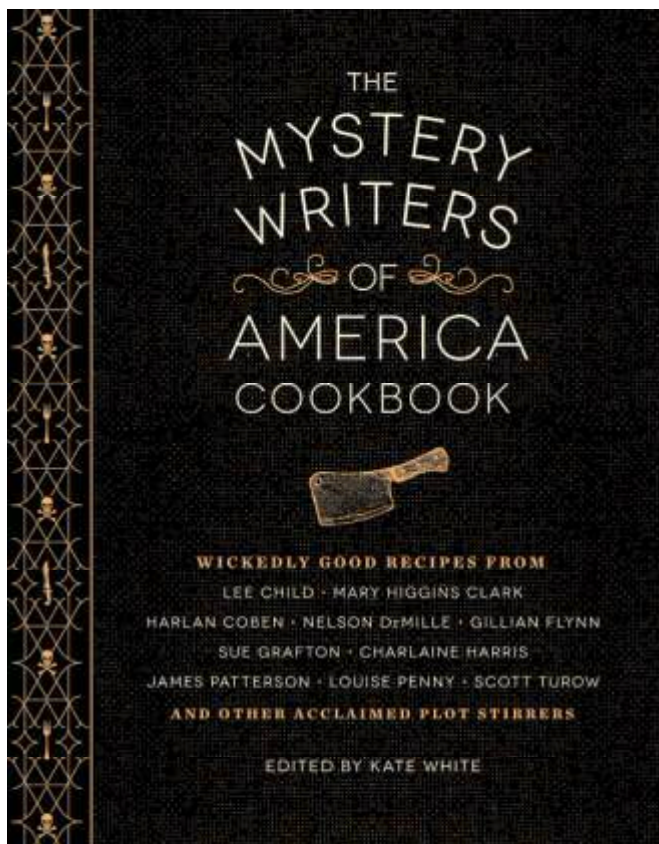
from the real killer.

d. What is a cozy mystery, and how does it differ from a regular mystery? Where does a "thriller" fit in?

I'd define a cozy mystery as one in which there is no graphic sex or violence. Usually cozies have an amateur sleuth and a more domestic setting—a small town, or a defined neighborhood within a city, rather than the mean streets. And from what I've seen, the biggest difference between mysteries and thrillers is that a mystery is a "whodunit," while a thriller is a "howdunit." In a mystery, a crime is committed and the sleuth figures out who did it. In a thriller, a crime is threatened, and the protagonist must find a way to stop it (and save humanity).

e. Sometimes, there seems to be a combo of mysteries and other genres, i.e., I am seeing more historical mysteries. When is it a mystery? When is it an historical?

I'd say if there's a crime, it's a mystery. But



the borders are fluid these days. You could also say that if mystery readers want to read it, it's a mystery; if historical readers want to read it, it's an historical; and if they both want to read it, it's an historical mystery. It's a popular subgenre these days—the Agatha Awards recently separated the Best Novel category into Best Contemporary and Best Historical.

f. There seem to be more ethnic solvers of mysteries. Walter Mosley had E.Z Rollins (who was a favorite of mine until he killed off all of my favorite characters); Tananarive Due with her husband Stephen Barnes and actor Blair Underwood have a series that pops. Is this a fluke or a goal?

I think it's a reflection of our more diverse society. Though one of the things Sara Paretsky has been seeking to highlight during her presidency is that it's still harder for minority writers to get published.

g. Last but not least, what is with the funny titles that seem to belong to the mystery genre, i.e. your *Lord of the Wings*?

Publishers—and presumably readers—seem to like them, so for mysteries at the lighter end of the genre,

they're a good choice.

L.S.: Who can join your organization? Authors of any genre or mystery writers only or only published mystery authors?

DA: Anyone can join, as long as he or she loves mysteries. Published mystery writers can join as active members; aspiring authors or readers can join as associate members; and members of allied professions—editors, agents, booksellers, librarians, etc.—can join as affiliate members. Though nearly all of the benefits of membership are available to everyone—the only things reserved for active members are voting in elections and serving in certain offices. And some of the benefits are excellent for authors who are pursuing publication—for example, we have a mentor program and a critique program, both staffed by seasoned, successful authors.

L.S: For those who might want to join your organization, how do they do it?

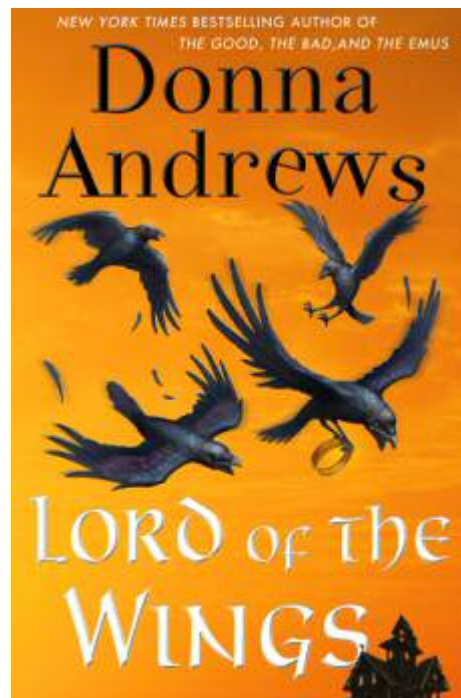
DA: You can sign up on our website—www.mysterywriters.org.

L.S. Thank you so much for your time, and for illuminating us lovers of mysteries. --

website: <http://donnaandrews.com/>

blog: <http://femmesfatales.typepad.com/>

<http://donnaandrews.com/maillinglist.shtml>



Debra Parmley's Cover Model Corner

A Christmas Interview with John Antorino

John Antorino is visiting here with Debra Parmley on Cover Model Corner and she's excited to share his interview with everyone. Debra first met John and his mother at a writers' event in East Tennessee in December two years ago, and the seed of a story idea grew as she saw the work he has been doing with children who are very sick. That story idea led to her newest project. Debra is excited to share Jenna's Christmas Wish, now available through Dark Castle Lords Publishing.



Debra Parmley

Debra: Now let's chat with John. *John, the first cover you appeared on, Dreams of a Raven Moon, was also with Dark Castle Lords. Is Jenna's Christmas Wish the second cover you've appeared on for Dark Castle Lords and have you been on other covers? And how did you get into cover modeling?*

John: Yes, and I've been on some other covers as well. I got into cover modeling basically by people telling me I'd be perfect for the covers. And photographers and authors contacting me to do them. So here I am!!

Debra: *Beyond modeling for book covers what other types of modeling have you done?*

John: I've done it all. I started out as a fashion model when I was very young. Then crossed over into fitness modeling and underwear modeling, then into acting. I have done it all and still do it all. I've been blessed with great genes, as well as a crazy work ethic.

Debra: *You've played a 1900s' Italian immigrant on HBO series called The Knick and a German Nazi Soldier in the movie Escaping the Holocaust. Can you tell us about your latest movie? I understand you have one releasing in the theaters in November.*

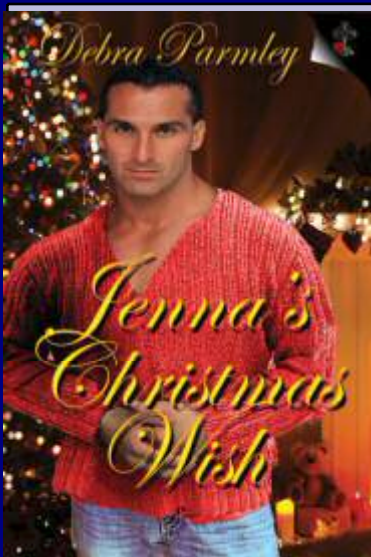
John: I had one released this year called *Beyond the Trophy*. We are now waiting for a release date for what was titled *Escaping the Holocaust* and now titled *There Is Many Like Us*. Stay tuned!!

Debra: *Do you have any new projects coming up that you would like to tell us about?*

John: Yes, first I am excited about the new book *Jenna's Christmas Wish* coming out and will be doing lots of press and pub for that. Attend some conventions and conferences representing DCL and the new book. I am still the face of and sponsored athlete for the company *B Muscle Wiz*. And we have lots going on with new products coming out. I will be doing new magazine ads for



John and Debra



them, as well as appearances and demos for them. Anyone looking for great protein powders, fat burners, and other great products check them out and feel free and contact me about: www.musclewiz.com I have some movies in the works that are still in pre-production. So keep an eye out for news on those.

Debra: *We have time for questions from the fans. Do you mind?*

Fan Questions

How did you get started, and how old were you?

I started when I was young and in college. I was always being approached by people in general, as well as agents, photographers, scouts, etc. And they would always say I had a great look and could be in magazines and on TV/movies. I didn't really think anything of it at first. I was just a kid in college having fun and playing sports. As time went on and it happened more and more. I

would go home and tell my mom. She said let's go see what it's all about. We took the bus to NYC one day and the rest is history as they say!!

Do you attend conferences?

Yes, I do. And hope to attend many more in 2016 and beyond!!

What did you do before modeling?

What do you see yourself doing twenty years from now?

I was in college and having fun. Being a kid. And before my career really took off I worked a few different jobs. While I was in college I worked in nightclubs. As a male



dancer and serving drinks. Fun job and fun times. I then worked with disabled adults in day programs

John and Logan hangin' out



teaching them life skills and taking them to the gym. And my last job I was a crisis counselor in a school for troubled youth. Both great and rewarding jobs that I'll never forget. 20 years I see myself relaxing a lot more. Most likely owning my own business. Probably restaurants. Possibly doing something in the health and fitness field. And always involved with much charity and helping as many sick kids as possible.

Do you have to shave your body before shoot?

Yes I do. Gotta stay smooth and clean. And showing all the details and hard work of my body for the camera. Makes a huge difference.

Debra: *One of the things I know about you which inspired me to write a romance hero based on you is how much you do for children who are very ill. I've watched this for several years now and you bless so many people with the things you do to help. This also found its way into the story as I find one of the most heroic things a man can do is to help others. Can you tell us a little bit about the work you do with the children?*

John: Yes, helping others and doing for others is and has always been my true passion and calling in life. I've been this way and have had this in my



Continued on page 12



Spotlight Interview



This month the Spotlight Shines on... *Margo Justes*

*Born in Poland, Margot Justes has lived in Israel, France and South Africa. Currently living on the East Coast, she has taken her love of art and travel and cultivated it into unique settings and stories for her writing. 2007 brought her a contract for her first novel **A Hotel in Paris**.*

1. When did you start writing and why?

I started about 10 years ago, had a tough day in the office and wanted a total escape from reality. I have no idea what possessed me to think I could do it, but I kept chugging along, and eventually *A Hotel in Paris* was born.

2. What have you learned about writing since you started?

That it is hard, emotional, a driving force with many highs and lows, but above all, delightful and satisfying.

3. Tell us about your new book or series.

A Hotel in Venice just came out in August, it is the third book in my hotel series, and dare I say it-my favorite-because of the fantastic setting. Venice has completely captured my heart and imagination.

4. What is your idea of a perfect day?

I have since retired, so you could say all days are perfect. Mornings are my favorite, an early riser, I start my day with coffee and a book.

5. Do you have any hobbies?

I used to garden, but now I live in a condo, there is no gardening. I love to read, travel, write about travel and walk.

6. What authors do you admire?



There are too many to list them all, I tend to give new authors a chance. The authors below came to mind quickly because their books are above my computer. They helped me in my writing. Anne Perry because of her research abilities, her Thomas Pitt series define the Victorian Era well. Dorothy Sayers, because of the elegance of her prose, and the delightful, and not quite proper Lord Peter Wimsey. The early Guido Brunetti series by Donna Leon; she makes Venice come to life. Christine Feehan because of her strong characters. Kat Richardson and her urban fantasy Greywalker series because of her descriptive prowess.

7. What is the worst thing about being an author?

That is easy-the marketing-I'm terrible at selling myself.



8. The best thing?

The creative process, having the characters come to life.

9. What do you expect to be doing 10 years from now?

Hopefully I'll still be writing happy endings. I love the romance genre, the satisfied endings, the escape to a place we know will have a happy resolution.

10. What can we expect from you next?

I'm working on the next hotel book, set in Barcelona, and a sequel to *Blood Art*, my paranormal story with a terrific

vampire.

11. Pass on some words of wisdom, please, to aspiring authors.

Don't give up writing, listen to your voices, don't take the rejections to heart, they're purely subjective.

Write what makes you happy.

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Parmley Christmas interview, cont.

heart as far back as I can remember. I typically like to help anyone in need, less-fortunate, sick, homeless. But I really have a soft spot for sick kids.

So, I help many sick kids with cancer and other terrible illnesses. I visit them at the hospitals and their homes as well. I buy them gifts and do things for them. Help out the families as much as I can. Spend time with them. Take them out. I even attend their Dr. appointments for support.

Debra: *What is your favorite way to spend the Christmas holidays?*

John: With family and good friends.

Relaxing and eating. Helping and giving to others, especially the sick and less fortunate. No greater feeling in the world for me than to give and make others happy.

Debra: *Do you have any special memories of past Christmases that you'd like to share?*

John: My mother, who raised us (my twin sister and me on her own) always makes Christmas special. She has an annual Christmas Eve party. And it's full of great foods and family and close friends. The last Christmas I got to spend with both my Grandparents was the most special one for me. I believe it was in 2010. I miss them like crazy and Christmas really isn't

the same anymore.

Debra: *Jenna's Christmas Wish comes true. John, what is your Christmas wish this year?*

John: My Christmas wish this year is probably the same most every year. It is for all the sick kids to be well and to be able to be home with their families and feeling good. Also, for the less fortunate to have food on their tables, a roof over their heads, and for no kid to wake up Christmas morning without presents.

Debra: *That's a beautiful wish, John and I will join you in that one and in wishing all our readers a Christmas full of blessings.*

Congratulations, John!! He just signed to play A. J. Ricardo in the fast-paced thriller movie "Power Play." He will be working with an awesome cast including Gary Busey, Eric Balfour, David Hasselhoff, and Rebecca Olejniczak. The movie, a story about two young hustlers, will release in 2016.

In Remembrance of Harriet Klausner

Yes, Virginia, Harriet Klausner was, indeed, real!

When Eric Klausner sent me an email apprising me of the death of his mom Harriet on October 15, 2015, I was both shocked and saddened. Though Harriet and I went our separate ways in 2007, she had been a reviewer for *Affaire de Coeur* for a long time, and I wanted to pay homage to her and her contributions to the world of publishing.

I discovered I didn't have a picture of her; she and I are both camera shy. So, I decided to go online to see if I could find one. Lo and behold! There were numerous comments claiming Harriet Klausner did not exist and/or someone else was writing reviews for Amazon using that name.

There cannot be a worse commentary on someone's life than to say they didn't exist. For those of you sitting in front of your computer, criticizing what you say is a non-existent person, I dedicate this editorial!

It was in my early days of being involved in *Affaire de Coeur*, circa 1993 or 1994. Barbara Keenan was the proprietor and I had moved up from being a reviewer to becoming Barbara's partner. I had recently lost my son so my mind was a little foggy, but there were two people who claimed they had worked for *Romantic Times* who wanted to come to *Affaire de Coeur*. One was Bennet Pomerantz, an audio reviewer. The other was Harriet Klausner, who said she would review anything.

I mention my deceased son because had I not been foggy of mind, I would have done a thorough investigation of both of them. Two people coming from arch rival *Romantic Times* at the same time? Were they RT plants? Could I trust either of them? I ended up throwing the dice and fell back on my usual trusting characteristics that sometimes get me into trouble. If you are a follower of *Affaire de Coeur*, you know Bennet is still with us. His column "Movies of your Mind" runs in every issue. He is truly *aprima donna* whom I love dearly, who will not allow anyone else's (not even mine) audio review to share the page with his. He has expanded services to his own practice called Audioworld.com.

Harriet Klausner....I didn't know what I was getting with her, but it didn't take long to learn because above all, Harriet was a talker.

Here's what I found out about Harriet Klausner before I ever met her. You see, she called me every single day, week-ends included, year-in and year-out, and it was really difficult to get her off the phone.

Harriet lived in Morrow, Georgia, with her husband Stan (another thing we found we have in common – my husband is also a Stan) who worked for the government. She had one child, a son Eric, who was born during the Three Mile Island crisis. She was from the Bronx, a statement she never had to tell me because her accent was so very thick. My daughter and I still



chuckle about the way she stretched the word "coffee" into a three syllable word, "Quaaafffeeeee." She said people looked at her funny when she spoke. I wonder why.

Like me, she was an animal lover. We both had dogs (only she had dwaaggs) and cats. She was Jewish and her in-laws held her to practicing her religion, though she did it reluctantly.

Most of all, however, I learned of her love of books. She used to be a librarian in New York, and she read all the time, but when she moved to Georgia, she found herself a reluctant housewife and started reviewing. She read all the authors of all genres, but her favorites were romance, specifically sci-fi and fantasy romance. When she came aboard

Continued on page 29



Spotlight Interview



Loree Lough *Bestselling Romance Author*

Bestselling author Loree Lough's award-winning novels have earned seven book-to-movie options. Her most published book, *Sweet Mountain Rancher* (#2, Harlequin Heartwarming's *Those Marshall Boys*) released in August with *Guardians of the Heart* (#2 Whitaker's *Secrets on Sterling Street* (Coming soon: #3 in both series!))

Loree believes in giving back, and dedicates a portion of her income to charity. (See "Giving Back" @ <http://www.loreelough.com> to see the list.) She loves hearing from her readers, & answers every letter, personally.

When did you start writing and why?

When a job transfer took the family to Richmond, VA, I answered the "Community Correspondent" ad in the local paper, thinking...what better way to get to know the new neighbors and neighborhood! It didn't take long to realize I loved everything about the job, from interviewing people to researching the area, and within weeks, my editor was making regular (for pay!) assignments. Before long, editors from other regional publications started calling, and by the time we transferred back to Baltimore, I had nearly 300 articles in my 'clip book.' After our return to Maryland, I continued freelancing for city, county, state, and national periodicals. When I hung up my 'stringer' hat to don an author's cap, the number had grown to more than 2,000.

What have you learned about writing since you started?

I've learned to keep very careful records! Authors' checks aren't taxed, meaning it's important to track every penny earned and every dollar spent on the craft. I've also learned that it's just as important to continue learning, honing my skills, sharpening my craft. Because the publishing industry is a quickly-changing, wild and woolly competitive world, and the sages were spot-on when they said "You're only as good as your last work!"

Tell us about your new book or series.

Actually, there are two series:

The first is a contemporary for Harlequin Heartwarming (my second series for them) which features three cowboy

cousins whose boyhood shenanigans inspired all who knew them to preface their entrance with "Here come THOSE MARSHALL BOYS again!" The mischievous blond boys became hard-working, handsome men who chose different career paths that took them far from the Double M Ranch. Despite their differences, two things remained the same: THOSE MARSHALL BOYS held tight to family ties...and yearned for the love of a good woman.

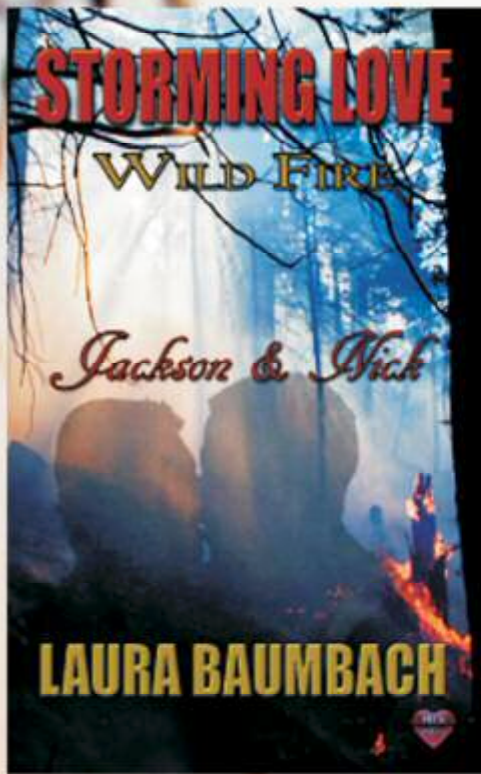
The second, a historical series for Whitaker House, centers on the lonely (and sometimes dangerous) roads people travel when protecting dark secrets. The main characters in the SECRETS ON STERLING STREET series have lived in the shadows for so long that secrecy has become a way of life. Their grit and strength is put to the ultimate test when they meet the one person who *might* tempt them to confess all...if only they can open their hearts to the possibility of love and acceptance...

What is your idea of a perfect day?

Fall has long been my favorite season, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is one of my all-time favorite poets. He describes the season better than just about anyone, ever:

There is a beautiful spirit breathing now
Its mellowed richness on the clustered trees,
And, from a beaker full of richest dyes,
Pouring new glory on the autumn woods,
And dipping in warm light the pillared clouds.
Morn on the mountain, like a summer bird,
Lifts up her purple wing, and in the vales
The gentle wind, a sweet and passionate wooer,
Kisses the blushing leaf, and stirs up life
Within the solemn woods of ash deep-crimsoned,
And silver beech, and maple yellow-leaved,
Where Autumn, like a faint old man, sits down
By the wayside a-weary.

Give me a quiet autumn day, and I'm a happy gal!



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Do you have any hobbies?

I love cooking and baking, gardening, making things from and with wood, painting and sketching. In short...if a thing can get me dirty, make me sweaty, or break my fingernails, I'll probably love it!

What authors do you admire?

I'll read anything by London, Steinbeck, and Hemingway. In fact, I've read just about everything they've published...several times! I think my appreciation for the music of their words is why I enjoy writing historical fiction. And I have a sneaking suspicion that's why I prefer Westerns to 'regular' novels...

What is the worst thing about being an author?

Distractions! Writing is a solitary profession, and there's a good reason for that: When an author is 'on a

roll,' when the words are flying and the ideas are churning, LIFE will inevitably rear its annoying, intrusive head: You 'spike' a fever; the water heater springs a leak; a storm takes out the electricity and your Internet connection; a family member needs attention or affection... The list goes on and on *and on*. But the deadline is immovable. And since you've already cashed and spent your advance check... "shrug"

The best thing?

The best thing, by far, is hearing from readers, either by regular mail, email, or social networking messages. Over the years, I've tucked nearly 80,000 notes and letters into my "READER LETTERS" file (which now takes up two entire drawers). The best way to get back on track after one of LIFE's distractions is to sit on the floor in my office and pick a few random letters and read the positive, upbeat things readers have said about a character, a book, a story's theme...or all three! And let's face it: Readers are the only reason I'm writing, and the only

reason any publisher issues contracts. We authors owe them *everything!*

What do you expect to be doing 10 years from now?

God willing, I'll continue doing exactly what I've been doing since 1994, when my first novel (*Pocketful of Love*) was released.

What can we expect from you next?

Books one and two for each of the series described above are already available. In the next few months, the third book in each series will hit bookstore shelves. There are a few proposals out there, awaiting publisher approval, and God willing, contracts will soon follow!

Pass on some words of wisdom, please, to aspiring authors.

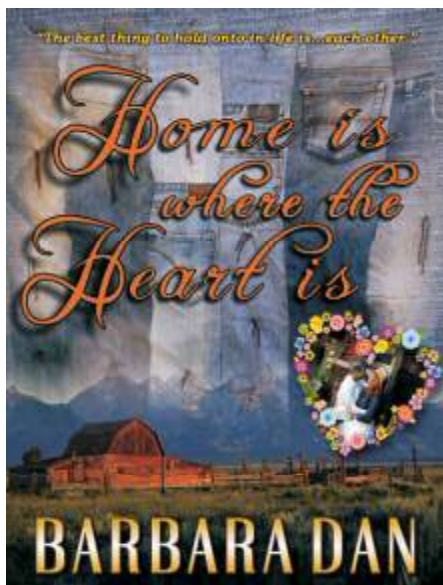
I'd have to say...listen to the 'tried and true': Read, read, read and write, write,

continued on page 32

Just Released from Award Winning Author, Barbara Dan

Home is Where the Heart Is

Here's an excerpt



HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS
by Barbara Dan

June 5, 1873.

Dear Aunt Gladys,

Surprise! I am only minutes away from Cheyenne and the new life that awaits me there. As I write this, my journey is nearly over. But alas! Even though I have placed nearly thirty orphans with farmers and town folk over the past few weeks, I have little hope of finding a loving home for the sweet little girl who is still in my charge, as we approach our final stop: Cheyenne.

I never realized how much work it would be to supervise thirty orphans en route to prospective parents scattered all across this great land. Besides feeding and comforting these poor lost lambs, wiping running noses, and keeping the peace whenever squabbles break out, I must also make certain the children look presentable so that good-hearted folk along our route will find it in their hearts to provide homes for these unfortunate orphans.

Many of these poor homeless children lost their parents during the War between the States. With families broken up and the nation's economy in ruins, they had fallen on hard times. Abandoned to a life of poverty and starvation on the streets of New York, they faced a bleak future, indeed, before being rescued by the Children's Aid Society.

In addition, I am soon to meet my prospective employer, a rancher with whom I have tentatively accepted the position of housekeeper. Yes, I must apologize, Aunt Gladys, for keeping you in the dark about this latest revelation. At least you will be relieved to know that I am not a mail order bride!

However, having been reduced to dire financial straits since Mama's passing, I not only agreed to escort these unruly, insecure children on this perilous journey, in exchange for train fare and food, but I made so bold as to answer an ad in the Times from a Mr. Samuel Gallagher, who was seeking a housekeeper.

Now, Auntie, I hope you won't be too shocked upon learning this. You and Uncle Henry have enough troubles without worrying about me. However, a person must eat, and since I have good health and all my faculties, I might as well take my chances out here in the "Wild West."

Oh, did I mention how impressed I was by Mr. Gallagher's kind response to my letter? (His reply caught up with me in St. Louis during my two-day layover with Cousin Albert.) Anyway, I was pleased to see that Mr. Gallagher writes with a bold hand, quite literate really, and businesslike, indicating that the job was mine if I still wanted it. Since he has business in Cheyenne anyway, he plans to meet

my train. He assured me that living on a cattle ranch with a bunch of hungry "cowpokes" should suit me perfectly. (I blush to admit that I described myself as an "adventurous young woman in my twenties." Oh, I hope he doesn't take me in dislike or misinterpret what I meant by "adventurous.")

Anyway, I am about to embark on my grandest adventure yet. So why, I keep asking myself, am I quaking in my shoes, as the train chugs relentlessly down the track toward the station? Hopefully, my fears are all for naught. Until I write again, I remain

Your affectionate niece,

Margaret

P.S. I should add that Mr. Gallagher sent me travel money. However not wishing to place myself under obligation until I have actually set eyes on the man, his money is safely hidden away amongst my unmentionables. If we do not suit, I am fully prepared to refund his money and to seek gainful unemployment elsewhere.

"Now dry your eyes, Susie." Margaret Wolverton used her handkerchief to gently dry the grubby, tear-streaked face of the youngest orphan in her charge. "Everything will turn out all right; you'll see."

"B-but nobody w-wants me," the little girl sobbed, her chest heaving with distress. "Th-they took my b-brother Chester 'cuz he' s big and strong, but wh-what can I do? I am only little."

"You are just the right size for you," Meg said, giving her a reassuring hug. The distraught three-year-old in her lap had just awakened in a panic, because all the other children on the Orphan Train were gone and she and Meg were the only two passengers left in their railway car.

"But what w-will happen to me?" Susie's big brown eyes looked up at her so trustingly that Meg's heart fairly turned over. "I need a Mommy! And a Papa, too. Why can't I be more like other children?" Frustrated, she kicked her feet, connecting with Meg's shin.

Ouch. Meg winced. "Why don't we wait till we get off the train in Cheyenne and see? Maybe someone will—"

"I know!" A dancing light of inspiration flashed in the tiny child's eyes. "I will adopt you as my new mother!"

"Well, if nobody else comes along, that sounds like an excellent idea," Meg replied, tidying the child's pigtails and retying her shoelaces.

"Yes. You can be my new Mama," Susie declared triumphantly. She folded her arms across her chest, as if the matter had been settled to her full satisfaction.

Meg sighed and looked out the soot-streaked window to watch their approach.

Just then, the locomotive surged forward, overshot the depot, then came to a screeching, grinding half a hundred yards past the baggage handlers' cart. A shudder went through the entire train in a series of jerks that nearly flung Meg and Susie out of their seats. Righting herself, Meg straightened her hat, took a firm grip on Susie's tiny hand, and picking up their meager belongings, walked to the end of the coach.

No sooner had she reached the exit door to disembark when two ragged boys—both orphans placed the day before with a South Dakota farmer—came scrambling out of the forward railway car "Miss Wolfe! Miss Wolfe!" they yelled, beaming. Sure enough, they were headed straight for her.

Her heart sank. David Hale and Jimmy Baxter were two of the most incorrigible children she had ever met—constantly fighting, shirttails flying, blackened eyes, bloodied noses. It was beyond imagination how these two hooligans could find trouble at the blink of an eye. Indeed, Jimmy was sporting a black eye right now!

"Hello again," Meg said, opening her arms to the two boys. Some might describe these two as damaged goods, the result of a lifetime of neglect, but she only saw them as being more needy than most. The right family would surely overlook the mischief this noisy pair constantly stirred up. Unfortunately that left Meg with the task of finding suitable homes for these two ragamuffins, as well as for Susie.

"Miss Wolfe! Miss Wolfe!" Jimmy shouted, again taking liberties with her last name.

"Saints preserve us," Meg said under her breath. Does trouble always come in threes? She asked herself. "Where did you two come from?"

"We ducked out on that mean ole farmer and hid in the baggage car," Jimmy explained with a crooked, but endearing grin.

Davey, his expression blank as a stone wall, rocked back and forth agitatedly, whimpering almost like an injured animal.

Jimmy, a product of New York City's worst slum, Hell's Kitchen, clapped a filthy hand over Davey's mouth so that he could talk. "Quiet!" He gave the younger boy a shake. "Miss Wolfe, you gotta help us. That ole man was gonna beat us for sure!"

"We ain't slave labor," Davey mumbled.

"Of course, you're not," Meg sympathized. "Come along, children."

Ready to disembark, she inched forward, the children clinging tenaciously to her skirts, frightened of being abandoned. Murmuring words of encouragement, she glanced around, hoping to catch a glimpse of her new employer—a daunting task since she had not the slightest idea what he looked like. All she knew was that he was delivering a herd of cattle to Cheyenne and



planned to meet the train. So where was the man?

Meg narrowed her eyes, impatient to catch sight of anyone remotely matching the self-described "middle-aged rancher" who had outlined her duties as housekeeper and cook. From his letter she gathered Mr. Gallagher was absent from home a good deal of the time, riding the range and tending to business. That suited Meg just fine. She was looking forward to the peace and quiet of country living. It would certainly be a welcome change after dealing with noisy children for weeks.

As she handed her belongings down to the conductor, eight-year-old Davey clutched her skirts fearfully and balked at getting off the train. Making soothing sounds, Meg shooed him along in front of her and made it down the steps with a little assist from the conductor. Not making life any easier, Susie still hung around her neck. Meg gave Davey a gentle nudge with her knee through the heavy serge of her traveling skirt to keep him moving. Suddenly the train whistle let out a shrill blast. Startled, Davey clapped his hands over his ears and took off running like a scared jackrabbit. Jimmy lit out right behind him. Leading Susie, fiercely sucking her thumb, Meg limped after the two boys, her tight

Movies of Your Mind

Audio Biographies

By Bennet Pomerantz

“How often do we tell our own life story? How often do we adjust, embellish, make sly cuts? And the longer life goes on, the fewer are those around to challenge our account, to remind us that our life is not our life, merely the story we have told about our life. Told to others, but mainly to ourselves.”-Julian Barnes, *The Sense of an Ending*

“Every life is inexplicable, I kept telling myself. No matter how many facts are told, no matter how many details are given, the essential thing resists telling. To say that so and so was born here and went there, that he did this and did that, that he married this woman and had these children, that he lived, that he died, that he left behind these books or this battle or that bridge--none of that tells us very much.”--Paul Auster, *The New York Trilogy*

GAWD, I know how hard it is to write a biography. I know that as a fact because I just finished writing a biography about my mother and what happened to her in January 2015 in the book *Seven Weeks*. I am right now passing the book around to publishers. I am hoping someone buys it.

It is a fine line I am walking discussing personal family concerns in a book. It is also a major task to get the facts straight and be entertaining as well. The questions of what do you say; what do you not say; then there is an issue of how much is emotions and how much do they cloud the facts.

I asked my mother to read a few chapters of the book. Her comment was interesting. She remarked that “I don’t sound like how you wrote me.” Whereas my writer and editor friends who know my mother and my family said that I captured my mother down pat.

So, in reviewing these biographies on audio, I have a new understanding of writing a biography. It also makes me harder on those writing them.

Neil Patrick Harris: Choose your Own Autobiography

Written and read by Neil Patrick Harris

Random House Audio

Adapted Audiobook; 7.5 hours

9780385367943

The Best Time Ever TV host Neil Patrick Harris tried to do a pickapath adventure in his original hardcover... it works in a regular book. However, the problem is pickapath adventures don’t work in audio book format. The gags wear thin as you listen. Mr. Harris is charming narrating his life, but it makes you feel wanting in your listening.

In his audiobook, he has comments from others intermixed with Harris narration. This is mostly read by a man with a heavy British accent. (Note the packaging does not state who he is.) With this outside narration, it makes you feel more outta place in your listening pleasure. I wished the publisher had gotten the real Penn n Julette (from Penn & Teller fame) to narrate his short part of this audio bio.

Patrick is a good storyteller; one only wishes this audiobook was less parody and more heart form. It is



seven hours of cuteness, but, like sweet candy, too much will make you sick. This audio is great in short listens, but don't try to listen to this in one long session.



A Full Life: Reflections at Ninety
Written and narrated by President Jimmy Carter
Simon & Schuster Audio
Unabridged; 7 hrs. 45 minutes
9781442391055

Remembering what in your life made you proud, and stringing it together coherently is not easy. *Reflection at Ninety* is amazing when you listen. Carter does not sound angry at life. He discusses his marriage, his career as a statesman, and even as a fisherman. He is reflective on life and doesn't just dwell on his term as President of the United States.

This organized biography has a direction, but also has a stream of thought ideal. In listening to Carter's voice, his slow delivery shows thought behind each word he speaks. However, it also feels like a ninety-year-old man trying to come to grips with an amazing life. He discusses his cancer treatments and his emotional state as a cancer patient. He inspires without being full of himself. This is amazing listening from a man who was the President and still humbles himself.

Not My Father's Son
Written and read by Alan Cumming
Harper Collins Audio
Unabridged; 6 hrs.
9781483028750

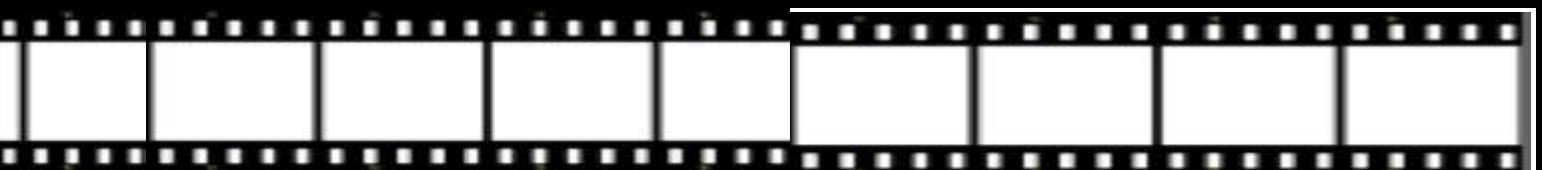
Noted actor, director, and producer, Alan Cumming opened a window to his past when he signed onto the TV show *Who Do You Think You Are?* The world he had put in boxes in the attic now faces him.

He renews a relationship with his father Alex Cumming, whom he had not spoken to in a year. This is a deep cutting introspection that borders on the uncomfortable. In this audio book, he takes the listener with him on this journey.

Cumming is an amazing actor, but this isn't Shakespeare. The text explores deeply into what the man has become from what he has experienced in his life. His crisp narration is mind blowing. If you have seen him perform on stage, (I saw him in Cabaret as the MC), or the TV show *The Good Wife*, this real life story narration will show you, the listener, a new facet of Cumming's diamond acting style. In his narration, he does not seem to try to narrate, he does it with ease and I am amazed.

The audio is an emotional piece. You may find yourself upset at a crossroads, since the author mixes witty asides with his painful admissions. He does not hide anything once he pulled the emotional cords. This is what a great biography is all about. It's open and raw...worth your time and effort to listen to.

Until next time, I'll be under the headsets!



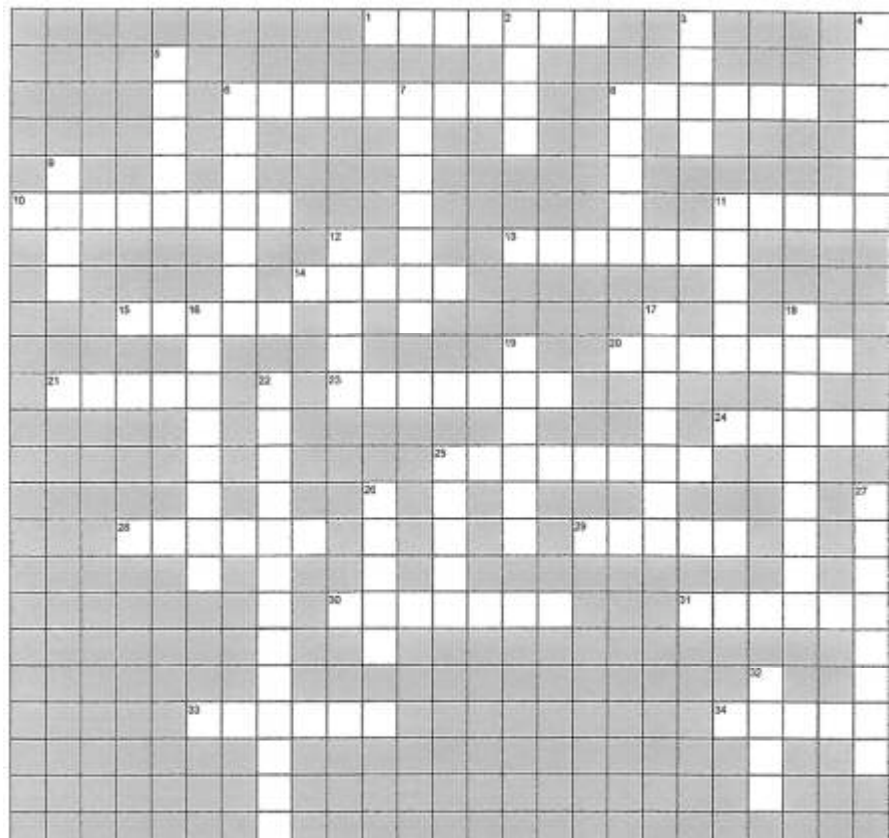


Characters of the Season

by Louise B. Snead

Across

1. Character who says, "God bless us, _____."
6. These fairies have their own dance in the Nutcracker.
8. This clergyman needed the help of a ghost to save his marriage.
10. This time the Griswolds had a Christmas _____.
11. There are three of them and they brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.
13. Kris _____.
14. The chipmunk who has his own Christmas carol.
15. Santa's helpers.
20. Wounded reindeer found by Jessica in the woods.
21. The train to the North Pole, _____ Express.
23. Frost is one of these.
24. Little _____ Girl who has unhappy ending.
25. The first non-native-American settlers.
28. This George found out that his life was worthwhile.
29. The king when Jesus was born.
30. His nose is red.
31. He stole Christmas.
33. Jesus' father.
34. The stout, main dude of the season.



12. Santa's wife, Mrs. _____.
16. Yes, _____, there is a Santa Claus.
17. He's small and beats upon a musical instrument. Little-_____ Boy.
18. This St. Bernard has his very own adventure.
19. Saw ghost of past, present and future.
22. This mayor is a villain in *Santa Klaus is Comin' to Town*.
25. Disney dog who has his own tale.
26. The baby born of a virgin.
27. Another name for #13, St. _____.
32. This little character depicts the beginning of a new year.

Down

2. This father is depicted by an old man with a sickle.
3. There are three of them, and they know a lot. Three _____ Men.
4. Specters seen in A Christmas Carol.
5. This Jack wants to become human so he can live with January Junction forever.
6. The Christmas miser.
7. This king creates a nightmare for kids everywhere.
8. "It's Christmastime Again" is done in his movie-- *Charlie _____*.
9. Mother of Jesus.
11. This McCallister was left behind in *Home Alone*.

Answers on page 29

shoes pinching.

Some distance away on a side rail, a handful of trail-weary cowmen, twirling ropes over their horses' heads and whistling shrilly, herded cattle from a holding pen toward the last in a long line of open-slatted cattle cars. During the grueling process, the men had been eating dust for hours. Their mouths were dry as sand, their bodies covered with a thick layer of alkaline silt.

As always, a few stubborn strays balked, as if sensing they were headed for the stockyards. But for the most part, the men's work was about finished for the day. And high time, too. Their muscles were aching, their bellies empty, and tempers just a touch edgy. After a trip to the nearest saloon to wash the dust out of their throats, they planned to head back to the hotel and let off steam.

Only one man out there, riding herd on a mean steer, had other plans. That was Sam Gallagher, a man who wasn't usually averse to a few drinks and a hand or two of poker when he rode into town. But not tonight. He had other plans, and they didn't include whiskey, saloon girls, or cards.

Hunching his shoulders, he clenched his teeth around the loop in his lasso, and steered his horse through the swirling dust toward the long-horned steer that was holding them up from calling it a day. . .

Even though the sun set late in these parts in the summer, the sky already glowed softly, a painted canvas of pinks and purples and a touch of orange. Sam thumbed back his wide-brimmed hat from his forehead and, rocking back on his boot heels, watched the train from back East pull out of the station, heading west to California.

That could only mean one thing: He was already in the doghouse with Miss Wolverton. Right now, she was probably cooling her

heels inside the train depot and none too happy that he hadn't shown up yet. I am sure in for it now! he grinned.

Aware of his disreputable appearance, he plunged his calloused hands into the horse trough next to the train station hitching post, then ran blunt fingers through his hair. Not much he could do to improve his looks, short of a full body bath, he reckoned. But he supposed any woman willing to take him up on his job offer, sight unseen, and traipse halfway across the continent, wasn't likely to kick up a fuss over a little dirt. Well! He'd soon find out, wouldn't he?

Patting his horse's neck, Sam raised his head, inviting the breeze flowing down off the mountains to cool his sun-burned face. Then, with a resolute stride, he set out to meet Miss Margaret Wolverton. He sure hoped things worked out between the two of them.

Barbara Dan's lively imagination as a writer was fueled early by a wide variety of life experiences: Starting out as a professional actress, singer-dancer, comedy writer, and Hollywood producer, eventually she was swept off her feet by a handsome actor, who... Suffice to say, they had five children and lived happily ever after!

During the next few years she changed over 46,000 diapers, taught Sunday school, sold real estate, taught Couples' Communications workshops with her husband (who left show biz and became a pastor and family therapist in Las Vegas) and became an adjunct college professor, teaching writing for media in Oregon, where she now lives.

A member of Women Writing the West, Western Writers of America, and RWA, she won Colorado RWA's Heart of the Rockies 1992 Award for Best Historical Romance for her Western, *Silent Angel*. She earned degrees in Theatre Arts, Accounting,

and an M.A. in Humanities (History and Literature) from Cal State University-Dominguez Hills.

She believes a writer's most valuable tool is a good sense of humor!

Barbara Dan's twelfth historical romance, *HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS*, celebrates the important role women played in settling the West.

An adventurous young lady, Meg Wolverton boards an Orphan Train with thirty homeless kids from the New York slums. Arriving in Cheyenne, "Miss Wolfie" (as the orphans call her) still needs homes for three orphans. At her wit's end, she appeals to rancher Sam Gallagher, who decides that getting saddled with some of Hell's Kitchen's rejects suits him just fine—as long as "Miss Wolfie" is part of the deal! Available in trade paperback and e-book.

Petticoat Warrior, a Civil War historical romance novel, is available as an E-Book and Trade Paperback. This lively novel takes the reader onto the battlefields of Virginia, where young suffragette Dr. Sarah spars with surgeon Dr. Gabe McKissack. Visit Barbara's website: www.barbaradan.com Facebook: www.facebook.com/Barbara-Dan-253251221423288 LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/pub/barbara-dan/40/560/9

Pub. Sept. 2015, 309 pages. ISBN 978151473004, Trade Paperback \$14.95 and eBook, \$3.99.



Contemporary Romance Reviews

Dirty Talk

Megan Erickson

Avon Impulse

E-book

978-0062407757



Brent Payton is known as the easygoing Payton brother, the one who is not serious. His brother gave him a dog with the embarrassing name of Honeybear, but that dog leads him to a friendship with his neighbor. And his job as a mechanic at the family shop leads him to Ivy Dawn.

Ivy's sister Alex works at the shop. Ivy visits the shop and is immediately attracted to Brent. But she can't get involved with him. Her priority is her daughter Violet, who is frightened of men because of Alex's abusive ex. They've made a "no men" pact... but then Brent rescues Violet from a bus crash. Ivy's gratitude knows no bounds, but all Brent asks for in return is a date. Then the powder keg of their passion explodes, even though she knows this should be the only date they ever have.

Megan Erickson is a spectacularly talented author whose work is truly addictive. This tale is part of a series, but even new readers will devour this book. The characters

are endearing, especially Violet, and the plot is gripping. Don't miss this!

Heather Nordahl Files

Facing Fire

HelenKay Dimon

Avon

Mass Market

978-0062330093

Sutton Dahl is working on getting information on Ryan Bane, the man she blames for her mother's death. She steals files from Bane and tries to learn something from the names listed there. She doesn't realize that she's accidentally gotten the attention of a secret agency who is seeking the same man until they arrive at her Paris office just in time to save her life.

To Josiah King, "Ryan Bane" is Benton, and Josiah wants to take him out. Benton murdered Josiah's uncle and broadcast it to make sure he would see it. He thinks Sutton is working with Benton, and his entire team does not trust her. Even as the team starts to change their attitude, he can't let up, even though he's attracted to her.

HelenKay Dimon's latest in her "Bad Boys Under-

Contemporary

cover” series has a large cast, so while new readers need not read earlier titles, there are several characters to keep track of. Some readers may take issue with Josiah’s harsh treatment of Sutton, but this tale is packed with thrills, and readers won’t want to miss a single twist or turn of the plot!

Heather Nordahl Files

First Touch

Laurelin Paige

St. Martin’s Griffin

Trade Paperback

978-1250075192

1/2

Emily Wayborn is an actress on a hit TV show. She hasn’t been home and decides to take a break and visit her mom for awhile. While there, her old bestie Amber leaves a message that spells danger. Amber is missing, and a local billionaire, Reeve Sallis, is the one with information.

Reeve is not talking, though, so Emily must seduce him to find her friend. The only problem is that she is starting to fall for him and will have to betray Reeve to save Amber. Will she be able to?

This was a very good read. The plot with the missing friend added a great deal of intrigue that I liked and kept me reading until the book was done. The sex scenes, as well, were well written and spicy, which I like. For me, the only real drawback was the sort of overused misunderstood billionaire thing that *Fifty Shades* brought into more popular light. Other than that one element, I am very pleased with this book.

Lenore Lovecraft

Forever This Time

Maggie McGinnis

St. Martin’s

Mass Market

978-1250069078

****1/2

Ten years ago, Josie Kendrew fled her town of Echo Lake to make a life in Boston. Then her father had a stroke. Now she must come back to the town centered around

the Kendrew family’s holiday theme park, Snowflake Village...and its CFO, Ethan Miller. Once they were promised to marry, but she left.

Ethan never got over Josie, and he’s not about to accept her return with open arms. At first, he will not let her help out at the park, something she isn’t keen on doing anyway. But it is clear that Ethan needs help, though he will not admit it. Once he is forced to accede, he makes sure that she is given her least favorite tasks.

The above description barely scratches the surface of the plot of this Vermont-set series starter. The vivid setting frames an emotional tale that tackles such serious subjects as alcoholism and childhood cancer. Fans of small-town romances will find great joy here.

Heather Nordahl Files

I’ll Be Home for Christmas

Lori Wilde

Avon

Mass Market

978-0062311412

1/2

Gabi Preston needs to escape her life. She has always been a people-pleaser, but that need has reached its limit. Becoming a lawyer was never something Gabi wanted—she went to law school to please her parents. Now that she knows she’s not meant to be a lawyer, she drops out of school to do something daring and drastic. She trades lives with a friend she met on the Internet, which brings her from California to Twilight, Texas.

She’s in for a few surprises in Twilight. For one, her new dwelling is a yurt. This somewhat spoiled, rich city girl will need to care for chickens and other animals. And her neighbor, Joe Cheek, is incredibly hot. Joe doesn’t want to get involved with his sister’s house guest. But he can’t stop thinking about her, even while he deals with his erratic, unreliable ex-wife.

Lori Wilde’s latest “Twilight, Texas” tale bears all the charm of its predecessors. This strong standalone features charming, well-crafted characters and a believable conflict. Readers will root for Gabi to find her way, and for Joe to find happiness with her.

Heather Nordahl Files

Jenna's Christmas Wish

Debra Parmley

DCL Publications

Trade Paperback

978-0996495967

1/2

Jenna Heart was finding it very difficult to get into the Christmas spirit. She attended an author's workshop where she would be meeting a lot of authors and the handsome actor/model Nicolo Maldini would be signing autographs. Time zoomed by as classes moved forward, and the authors hustled to the next event. Even though Jenna felt she was just a regular gal and Nicolo was only interested in Hollywood beauties, she looked forward to meeting him.

Down-to-earth, hot cutie, Nicolo Maldini brought his mother with him to the workshop. It was the holidays, and if he were going to be on the East Coast, he was going to spend as much time with family as possible. He wasn't planning on meeting Jenna, but knew he needed to pursue the shy, beautiful woman.

Sparks fly in this story where the reader, from the very beginning, cheers Jenna on, hoping she'll jump in and take a chance with Nicolo. Ms. Parmley pens realistic happily-ever-afters that satisfy readers like a warm glass of tea on a cold, wintry day.

Lauren Calder

Lone Star Baby

Cathy Gillen Thacker

Harlequin American #1561

Mass Market

978-0373755820

Violet McCabe has decided to leave her job at Laramie County Hospital. She needs a change...but she also needs to get away from her unsettling feelings for her colleague, Gavin Monroe. Then life throws them both a curve ball. Tammy, a patient whom they both know, has died after having a baby, and she wants Gavin and Violet to adopt little Ava and raise her together.

Now Violet's hopes of avoiding Gavin are impossible. As they are not married, they plan to foster Ava until she is healthy enough to be adopted by a loving family. But much as they try, resisting sweet Ava is impossible, as is resisting each other. Gavin is as attracted as Violet, but old issues keep him from thinking about commitment.

An endearing baby is the centerpiece of this tale where the dynamics inside of the family get special

24

Contemporary

attention. Violet and Gavin are compelling and likeable characters, each working through his and her own issues in convincing fashion.

Heather Nordahl Files

One More Touch

Mandy Baxter

Kensington Publishing Corp

Trade Paperback

978-1420134834



Tabatha Martin is doing her best to stay out of trouble and away from her drug dealing ex. She is a hotel manager and is rebuilding her life for the better. Damien Evans has a chance to arrest her to catch her ex, but cannot. There is something going on between them that is too strong to ignore. Will he risk everything to protect her and still be able to take down the drug ring?

This was a fun, suspenseful number with plot twists that keep the reader intrigued. In addition to that, the characters are realistically damaged people that I like. Tabatha is my favorite character, and the way Mandy Baxter wrote her to be tough and keep men away from her was refreshing. It is far more interesting that the cookie cutter damsel in distress thing.

Lenore Lovecraft

Rescued by the Ranger

Dixie Lee Brown

Avon Impulse

E-book

978-0062328403

Garrett Harding's mother has been gone from his life since he was a child. Now he has discovered through a letter that his father hid from him that she recently died. He wants to know why his mother deserted him and his brother, so he drives to Idaho to get answers. There, he learns that he may be wrong about his mother, but before he meets his mother's sister, he has to rescue Rachel Maguire from some local lowlifes.

Rachel loved Garrett's mother, Amanda, and she has nothing but contempt for a man who would ignore years

Affaire de Coeur

Contemporary

of her letters to him. She does not realize that he never received those letters.

This is not the only barrier to a relationship, however. Rachel has a stalker. She fled Texas to escape him, but he always finds her cell phone number, no matter how many times she gets a new one. He's a dangerous man, and she will run away before she puts another man at risk.

Dixie Lee Brown pens a thrilling romance with suspense and plot twists. Readers will love her hero, and will be on the edge of their seats by the final chapters.

Heather Nordahl Files

Revealed to Him

Jen Frederick

Montlake Romance

Trade Paperback

9781503947559

1/2

Natalie Beck is a successful video game writer. She is so successful that she has stalkers, so many of them, in fact, that she fears leaving her home or trusting the people around her. Despite this, she decides to hire Jake Tanner who is to be her security detail.

Jake makes her feel safe---that is for sure. With him there no one will be able to attack her as easily. However, his devotion may be more than professional.

This was an overall good read. The character Natalie had an interesting kind of crazy that I liked. It made her very endearing to me very quickly in the book. I had initially thought the switch between character perspectives would annoy me, as well, but I ended up finding it refreshing. The different style made it all the more charming as I felt the book had that general feel.

Lenore Lovecraft

Shattered

Cynthia Eden

Avon

Mass Market

978-0062349668

1/2

Sarah Jacobs bears the scars of her upbringing. Her father is a serial killer, and she discovered the truth when

she was sixteen. Now he is in prison. Sarah has taken the lessons he taught her to become a profiler, but her fears of being a monster like her father constantly haunt her. And now her past is really impacting her present. The son of one of her father's victims attacks and tries to kill her. She is rescued by Jax Fontaine.

Jax is thought to be a criminal by many, and no one knows much about him. But he wants Sarah, regardless of her past. And the thought of her in danger arouses both anger and protectiveness. The attack on her is just the beginning in a cat and-mouse game with a killer who knows Sarah's father's methods.

Cynthia Eden's latest is part of a series, and while it stands alone, readers will want to read them all after sinking their teeth into this one. Every shocking revelation will make readers turn the pages as fast as they can to get to the stunning ending.

Heather Nordahl Files

Take Me All the Way

Toni Blake

Avon

Mass Market

978-0062392589

Tamra Day tends to keep to herself, not letting her casual friends see her garden and hiding her body under long skirts. She doesn't want anything to change in her life, but her friends want her to get out of her rut and find a man. There's no one new in their small town of Coral Cove, Florida, or so she thinks. But the rude, bearded homeless man who just got arrested hardly seems to be a likely prospect.

War veteran Jeremy Sheridan didn't realize how close to the edge he was. But then he beats up a young punk who threw a cat off a boat and gets arrested. He moved from his hometown because he needed to get away. He realizes he's lost, but doesn't know how to fix it. Tamra and Jeremy dislike each other at first, but soon an attraction blooms that neither of them expects.

Toni Blake's latest Coral Cove novel is enjoyably well written. Fans of the series (and her earlier Destiny, Ohio, series) will love catching up with familiar characters, but new readers won't be lost. Both characters have depth, and Jeremy's demons are particularly well done.

Heather Nordahl Files



Historical Romance Reviews

Always

Lynsay Sands

Avon

Mass Market

978-0062019561

Rosamunde expected to take the veil and is about to become a nun when she learns she is to be married. Her future husband arrives along with King Henry, her father, who makes it clear that he is ordering the marriage. She is not prepared to run a household, and a nun is the one who explains how to please her husband in the marriage bed, so she has no idea what sex is really like.

Aric of Burkhart was betrothed before, but the betrothal was broken after she was found with another man in the stables. As a result, he is very controlling of his new wife, not letting her out of his sight and partic-

ularly restricting her from the stables. She has a gift for healing animals' illnesses and pains, horses most of all, so her restriction makes her very upset. The marriage bed is unpleasant as well. How can they get past such a rocky start?

This Lynsay Sands title was originally released in 2000. Her hero's jealousy and prior issues with women can make him hard to like, but her heroine is lovely, and a second-half mystery will keep reader interest.

Heather Nordahl Files

Historical

An Heiress for All Seasons

Sophie Jordan

Avon Impulse

E-book

978-0062363633

Violet Howard has no interest in marrying a man with a title, as the man she loves comes from more humble origins. But her parents deemed him unsuitable, so her mother dragged her from America to England, where Violet's dowry will be in demand. Will, the Earl of Merlton, is her mama's target. Violet is the first heiress put before Will that he truly desires, but he must somehow find a way past her reluctance.

Sophie Jordan's latest is a novella in her "Debutante Files" series, but readers need not follow the series to enjoy this short tale. The simple plotline works in this short format, and there are enough twists and turns to keep reader interest high.

Heather Nordahl Files

Bella and the Beast

Olivia Drake

St. Martin's Paperback

Mass Market

978-1250060297

1/2

Olivia Drake continues the "Cinderella Sisterhood" series with her take on *Beauty and the Beast*.

Isabella "Bella" Jones returns to England with her twin younger siblings, determined to fulfill a deathbed promise to her Egyptologist father—to find his half of the treasure in the long-lost tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamen. In order to do so, she infiltrates the household of the current Duke of Aylwin to catalogue his artifacts collection.

Aylwin, Miles Grayson, is a gruff, imperious man who cares for nothing except his Egyptian antiquities. After two weeks living with the Beast, will Bella find a better treasure--true love?

Re-tellings of *Beauty and the Beast* never get old. Miles is definitely beastlike and hard to like; yet he's very attractive. Bella is feisty and loyal to her family like

her namesake from the fairy tale. The Egyptian motif is a distinctive touch and a firm foundation for this novel, as Bella's and Miles' past and present intertwine. While there is plenty of sensual chemistry, their falling in love is less convincing. A more gradual change in Miles' demeanor would have made the love story more convincing, although the ending is very sweet. Historical romance fans will enjoy this novel.

Danielle Hill

Falling Into Bed with a Duke

Lorraine Heath

Avon

Mass Market

978-0062391018

1/2

The Duke of Ashebury lost his parents at a very young age. Then he was raised by a madman whose anguished grief left its mark on Ashe. He will never love any woman for fear of suffering madness at her loss. His life has been full of exotic travel and decadence, as he enjoys his hobby of photography. He has a collection of photographs of young ladies' legs—he finds his subjects at the Nightingale Club. One night at the club, he meets a masked lady who turns his head.

Minerva Dodger is sick of being the prey of fortune hunters. No man wants her for herself, as she is too outspoken and opinionated for Society. She knows the only way she can enjoy the pleasures of the bedroom is at the Nightingale Club, where her identity is shielded by a mask. She knows who Ashe is and knows he'd never look at her twice outside of this place. She'll take what pleasure she can, but she will not remove her mask.

Lorraine Heath brings intensity and powerful storytelling to this compulsively readable tale. Her complex hero and nonpareil heroine will keep readers enthralled until the very last page.

Heather Nordahl Files

Forever Your Earl

Eva Leigh

Avon

Mass Market

978-0062358622

1/2

Daniel Balfour, the Earl of Ashford, is seeking Jonathan, his best friend. Jonathan has not been the same since he went to war, and he has now disappeared after descending into ever more seedy locations. Ashford has failed his friend, and he must make amends by locating

Historical

him for Jonathan's desperate sister. He formulates a plan to find his friend. He will co-write a series of articles designed to lure him out into the open, and goes to the owner/editor of *The Hawk's Eye* to put this plan into motion.

Ashford is shocked to discover that E. Hawke is Eleanor, as he never considered a woman to be in this position. They are surprised by their reaction to each other. Eleanor finds Ashford to be a man of unexpected depth. But as the series of articles does not result in finding Jonathan, they realize their passion can go nowhere because of the difference in their stations.

Eva Leigh's writing is glorious, and her characters captivating. Readers will look forward to more of "The Wicked Quills of London" series.

Heather Nordahl Files

Home is Where the Heart Is

Barbara Dan

Smashwords

E-book

B014CGPBUG

1/2

Meg Wolverton is a young Easterner who takes a job as a housekeeper for a rancher in rural Wyoming in 1873. Along the way, she's responsible for seeing orphaned children to their new parents. Three kids, Susie, Davey, and Jimmy, don't get adopted, so when she arrives, her new boss, widower Sam Gallagher, realizes he has a ready-made family and suggests they get married. Meg gets a crash course in being a housewife and mother on the frontier. Can this marriage of convenience, complete with adopted children, turn into a love match?

Home is Where the Heart Is is a heartwarming historical romance with a Christian message. Meg is readily reliant and has a strong relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, but after her new employer's wife and young daughter died, Sam closed his heart to the Lord. However, Meg's warmth and love for the children and their developing relationship causes him to reconsider his anger towards God.

The spiritual message is well done and not preachy. Faith in God is a part of the characters' lives, not an editorial. Humorous and populated with interesting characters, along with a passionate relationship between the leads,

this is a good Western historical romance novel.

Danielle Hill

The Irresistible Rogue

Valerie Bowman

St. Martin's

Mass Market

978-1250072573

Valerie Bowman continues her "Playful Brides" Regency historical romance series with the long-awaited revelation on Lady Daphne Swift's true relationship with Captain Rafe Cavendish.

Lady Daphne is about to accept Lord Fitzwell's proposal of marriage when Rafe shows up. She can't get married to another man because she's still married to Rafe. Rafe blackmails Daphne by refusing to grant her an annulment if she doesn't help him catch a cabal of spies. Daphne thought she'd moved on from Captain Wrong, but her heart doesn't seem to agree. Can Daphne help Rafe succeed on his mission without losing her heart, again?

While *The Irresistible Rogue* lacks the sheer hilarity and energy of previous books, it is still an entertaining read. Daphne and Rafe have undeniable chemistry—they seem made for each other. Daphne is spunky and likable. Rafe is a delicious hero, and he makes the reader root for him to gain Daphne's love, despite the obstacles between them. Previous couples from this series show up and add to the fun, along with Daphne's adorable young cousin Delilah. Readers who enjoy a lighthearted Regency historical romance should definitely check out Valerie Bowman, and this is a satisfying follow-up in a very good series.

Danielle Hill

The Match of the Century

Cathy Maxwell

Avon

Mass Market

978-0062388612

1/2

Elin has always been promised to Gavin Whitridge, the Duke of Baynton, and she intends to keep her promise. However, she has a shameful secret that her mother will not allow her to tell: Gavin's brother, Ben, once held her heart and took her innocence. He went into the military without saying goodbye, which broke her heart. Now Ben is back, and she can't contain her fury. But he is not back for long. Her mother's death postpones her wedding, and Ben disappears.

Two years later, Elin is on her way to London with an

Affaire de Coeur

Historical

annoying woman who might be her father's mistress. Elin leaves the carriage to get away from her, and because of this escapes death, as the entire party is killed. She flees for her life and ends up at a tavern where she finds Ben. His friends are rough folk, but they work together to keep Elin safe. She's still angry with Ben, but their feelings for each other have not died.

Cathy Maxwell's latest is a charming tale with a sweet, simple romance at its heart. That heart is surrounded by a thorny conflict, and readers will delight in its well-crafted resolution.

Heather Nordahl Files

Scandal Takes the Stage

Eva Leigh

Avon

Mass Market

978-0062358646

1/2

Cam Chalton, Viscount of Marwood, finds the temptations of Society life to be growing stale, except for the attractions of the theater. Most members of the ton attend performances merely to see and be seen, but Cam's love of the theater causes him to hang on every word and react with irritation when his friends talk over the dialogue. He loves Mrs. Delamere's burlettas best of all, and he finds her as fascinating as her work.

Maggie has fought from humble beginnings to get where she is, but now she lives in fear because of writer's block. How will she support herself if the Muse never returns? She has no time for the distraction of Cam, especially because he is of the nobility. She knows not to trust any of them.

Eva Leigh follows up last month's *Forever Your Earl* with this delightful, vibrant tale. Cam is a wonderful hero, but it's Maggie who truly captivated this reader, and her reasons for resisting the relationship resonate with truth.

Heather Nordahl Files

The Spinster's Guide to Scandalous Behavior

Jennifer McQuiston

Avon

Mass Market

978-0062335128

1/2

Having a Season is the last thing Lucy Westmore wants. She dreads its coming. When she inherits a surprise cottage in Lizard Bay, Cornwall, she is determined to see her new home, far away from London society. Then she learns her father sold her inheritance to Thomas, Lord Branston. Furious, she returns the money to him, intent on inspecting her property before she makes any decision on the sale of the property.

Thomas has his reasons for wanting Heathmore Cottage and for avoiding London. His lost sister, and his past abuse of drink haunts him. He believed Lucy to be a spoiled debutante, but is proven wrong. At their first meeting, she has scandalously short hair and trousers. He's intrigued by her, but she refuses to trust him. Can he convince her to sell, or if not, convince her to care about Lizard Bay?

Jennifer McQuiston's latest is a pure delight. Readers will love the characters and their unique rapport. Don't miss this!

Heather Nordahl Files

The Wrong Bride

Gayle Callen

Avon

Mass Market

978-0062267986

1/2

Riona Duff wakes up to find a man in her room. Hugh McCallum kidnaps her, claiming that she was promised in marriage to him in order to end a clan feud. Riona knows nothing of this, and there's a good reason why—he is actually betrothed to her cousin Cat. Hugh has abducted the wrong bride!

As they travel from England into Scotland, Riona tries to get away, but Hugh keeps close enough that she fails. Hugh refuses to believe that there are two cousins named Catriona Duff, so he refuses to set her free. But if he breaks the contract, his clan will lose a precious resource. Can Riona convince him of her identity before it's too late?

Gayle Callen's latest launches her new "Highland Weddings" series, and readers will love coming along

Historical

for the ride. Her characters are well crafted and convincing, and their dilemmas ring true. Readers will also enjoy the fresh time period.

Heather Nordahl Files

Harriet Klausner, cont.

of the Harlequins. Sometimes it took us too long to get a book for her to review, and she would buy it online from England so she could review it. I soon learned she knew everything about the world of publishing anyone could possibly know, and she had “juice” with an endless number of publishers and editors. She knew them, and she could get galley proofs I couldn’t. She never quantified her reads--she just turned in the reviews. And, one time when we were talking, I was tacky enough to ask her how she could read so many books. Very reluctantly, she admitted she was a member of Mensa (that genius group of people with IQ’s on the ceiling.)

But, you say, all of this can be done over the phone, on the Internet. It could have been anyone calling themselves Harriet Klausner. Well, here’s how I know:

In addition to the things I said above, *Affaire de Coeur* (which she affectionately dubbed *AdC*) paid her for her reviews, her phone bill for business phone calls, and when she became the Review Coordinator for us, we paid her postage for sending out galley proofs. And then we gave a conference. She flew to San Francisco, where her plane was fogged in for an hour, and spent the following week at my home. At the conference, she was so excited to

meet the authors in person, she nearly talked them to death! A couple of years later, my husband’s family had a reunion in Georgia. I couldn’t go, but my husband and sons went. Guess who picked them up from the airport? Stan, Harriet and Eric. (Did I mention Harriet didn’t drive?)

Harsh criticism abounded on the website I saw; “She never met a book she didn’t like;” “She never gave lower than a 4;” (Untrue--she actually gave a 2-star rating.) “She didn’t read the books.” The latter I dismiss because sometimes, out of curiosity, I would ask her opinion about a character or book. (I like to read, too.) She could always tell me. It is true I did knock heads with her constantly about over-rating the books. I even went so far as to tell her she would lose credibility and no one would want to read her reviews. Some authors took advantage of that, sending her their galley proofs directly because they knew they would get a good rating. I honestly can’t blame them for that. Who doesn’t want a good rating? I believe that in her own way, she launched many a career. Though Harriet never said it to me, I think it was her philosophy that if someone went through the trouble of writing a book and getting it published, they deserved at least four stars. Then there’s such a thing as being kind and not wanting to find fault with others. I think that fits, too.

Whether you Doubting Thomases believe it or not, Harriet Klausner made an impact on the publishing world and deserves, not your scorn, but a thank you. How many of you are the lead reviewer (or even close) on Amazon? Do you have your own Wikipedia page? I’m here to say that, not only did Harriet Klausner exist, she lived, and we’re better for it.

RIP, Harriet. You will be missed

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Paranormal Romance Reviews



Even Vampires Get the Blues

Sandra Hill

Avon

Mass Market

978-0062356529

Harek Sigurdsson is a vangel (Viking vampire angel), spending the centuries paying the price for the sin of greed, which led to his becoming a slave trader in the ninth century. Now he fights for the celestial good guys, saving sinners from becoming Lucipires and destroying those past the point of redemption.

Camille Dumaine is a WEALS, a fierce fighter proud to be on a mission combating Boko Haram. Harek is on the mission as well. At first, she does not know that he is anything other than human, just that she smells chocolate whenever she's around him, and that he's a little strange. They are deeply attracted to each other. As they get ready

for their missions, fighting it becomes impossible, even though having sex will get Harek in trouble.

Sandra Hill's latest in her "Deadly Angels" series mixes her usual humor with the dark threat of terrorism. Fans of the series will enjoy seeing Harek meet his match and will enjoy the inclusion of other continuing characters from various series.

Heather Nordahl Files

Need You for Always

Marina Adair

Montlake Romance

Trade Paperback

978-1503948259



Emi is a very responsible person. Since her mother died she's had to be. Emi's father can barely take care of himself, let alone her six-year-old sister. He's incapable

Paranormal

of picking up Violet after school. So when the principal calls, Emi drops everything to go pick up her sister. Violet, wearing her wings and insisting that she's a fairy, has thrown glittery fairy dust... again. Emi doesn't have time for romance, let alone sex. Except for a one night stand in San Francisco.

Dax was that one night stand. Although he and Emi are from the same town, they didn't think that they'd see each other very often. Dax is an Army Ranger. He's constantly being sent from one hot spot to another. They might see each other every few years when Dax visits his family. Then he's injured and moves home to recuperate.

Now Dax and Emi see each other every day, and he is loving it! She's enjoying it, too, but Emi doesn't have time for a relationship. Finally Emi decides that she will make time for a short-term, no strings attached affair. But the casual sex soon becomes something more. How will Emi survive when Dax deploys again?

This is the second in a series. It can be read alone. It's a very enjoyable book.

Sheila Griffin

Passion Ignites

Donna Grant

St. Martin's

Trade Paperback

978-1250071941

Lexi knew her time in Edinburgh was coming to an end, but she was determined to find the red-eyed bastard who had killed her friend Christina. She owed it to Christina's parents. They had come to Scotland on vacation with two other friends and had gone out for some innocent pub hopping when Christina met the most gorgeous man any of them had ever seen. But there was something about him (besides his red eyes) that Lexi didn't like and tried to talk Christina out of going with him. To her horror, Christina didn't heed her warning, didn't believe Lexi about his eyes, since they looked normal to her, and left with the stranger. When she didn't return, Lexi went looking for her and found her body in an alley. Now she was obsessed with finding her friend's killer and suddenly realized that they were a lot more red-eyed men and women in Edinburgh than she had first thought. When Lexi found herself

surrounded in a dark alley by four red-eyed monsters, she knew her life was over. Then a very large muscular figure showed up out of nowhere and saved her life.

Thorn, one of the Dragon Kings assigned to rid Edinburgh of the Dark Fae that were killing humans at an alarming rate, was totally amazed at the small human female who had been hunting them. He couldn't figure out how she was immune to their glamour and the sexual pull that they used to lure females to their deaths. But, the one thing he did know, was that he was not immune to her. He was determined not to follow in the path of some of his fellow Dragon Kings and mate with a human, even if the pull was mate strong. He would resist, he just would not let anything happen to her...ever.

Donna Grant has crafted a world of Light and Dark Fae, Dragon Kings, and otherworldly beings with her usual skill, intrigue and sexual intensity. The heat between Lexi and Thorn could set the pages of the book on fire. Between fighting Dark Fae, making sure the human populace doesn't learn of their existence and protecting Lexi, mostly from herself, Ms. Grant has penned a story that is hard to put down. Keeping track of all the various characters can be a little daunting, but it does not detract from the wonderful storyline.

Lani Roberts

Spotlight on Lough cont.

by seasoned pros; attend conferences; enter contests judged by seasoned pros; read every how-to book you can get your hands on. And by all means, submit your work. You'll experience rejection—we all do!—but you'll learn from every “Thanks, but no thanks” you receive. Change your viewpoint so that you start seeing rejections as stepping stones, not stumbling blocks. Because that's exactly what they are!

Erotica Romance Reviews



Body Shots

Anne Rainey

Aphrodisia

Trade Paperback

978-1617733512

Crystal Shaw is finally free from her abusive husband Richard. She moves in with a friend to heal her spirit. Over the next few months, she loses weight and gains confidence. Her friend brings her to a local bondage club, and there she meets the owners, Mac Anderson and Trent Dailey.

Mac and Trent are blown away by Crystal, and they make their move together. She is surprised to find pleasure when she sleeps with both men at the same time. She dates each of them separately, and she's happy, though she can't quite get past the unorthodox nature of being in a relationship with two men at once. And then there's the problem of Richard, who just won't go away.

Anne Rainey's latest can be a problematic read. The brutal opening, though helpful in understanding Crystal, gets in the way of reader enjoyment. Also, the characters

lack depth, making it hard to get to know them. But this is an enjoyable tale.

Heather Nordahl Files

Stepbrother, Mine

Opal Carew

St. Martin's Griffin

Trade Paperback

978-1250052858

1/2

For years Dana Reynolds had had a crush on her stepbrother Mason. Her mother had married his father whom she met on a cruise when Dana was 16 and, without coming home to her daughter, simply had her shipped off to her new home--a sprawling lonely mansion with only the servants as company.

Then one day, this gorgeous older man appeared at the mansion and introduced himself as Mason, her stepbrother. He was ten years older than Dana and understood her loneliness and feelings of rejection, so he became her family, older brother and best friend. He moved into the mansion, set appropriate teenage boundaries for her and

made it his goal to have dinner with her every night. He was the family she never had. And she loved him with all her heart. As she got older, her feelings deepened, but Mason made sure that things never crossed the line. Then, on the night of her senior prom, Mason simply disappeared from her life and she never heard from him again. Now Dana was an adult and needed money to finish her education and get her Master's degree. Her mother had long since divorced Mason's father and had abruptly cut Dana off, so she decided to take her roommate's suggestion and sell her virginity online to the highest bidder.

When Mason saw Dana's picture on the website advertising virgins for sale, he couldn't believe his eyes. He would never believe that Dana, his sweet, innocent Dana, would do such a thing. His son of a bitch father, who had lusted after Dana ever since he married her mother, had returned with plans for Dana, and the only way Mason could ensure he would leave her alone was to leave. Now, years later, Mason was an incredibly wealthy and powerful Dom who was willing to do whatever it took to prevent Dana from making such a stupid mistake. So he bought her contract.

Stepbrother, Mine is one of those novels that grabs you right from the start. Ms. Carew explores the complications of feelings between siblings that aren't actually related and then throws in a Dom/sub relationship to really make things interesting. This is a marvelous character study driven erotica that will hold the reader's interest to the very end. My only problem was that the ending petered out after Mason confesses his sexual preferences and the ending, though predictable, was rather abrupt.

Lani Roberts

Tryst

S.L. Jennings

William Morrow

Trade Paperback

978-0062389732

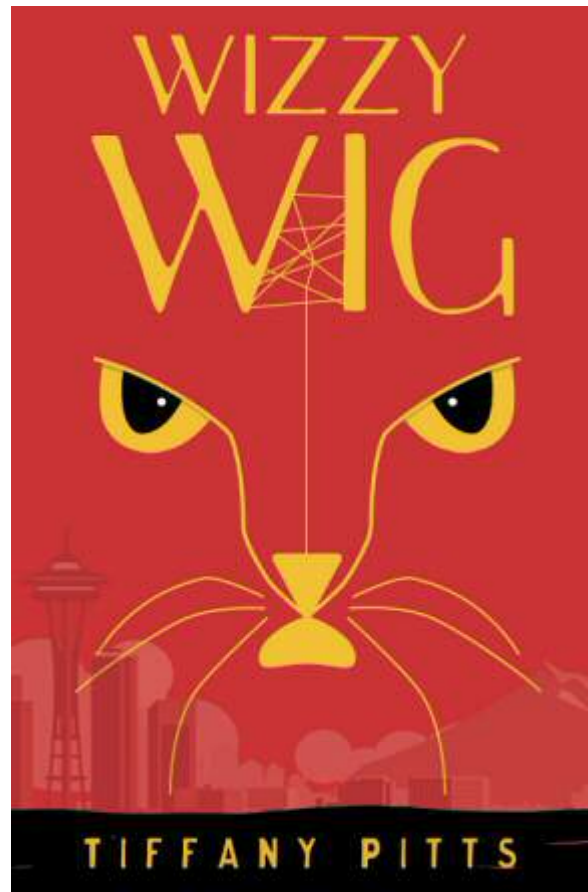
1/2

High-powered publicist Heidi DuCane knows she needs more in her marriage. Her husband Tucker is wonderful, but she needs someone who will be rough with her on occasion. A violent rape in college changed her forever, but now, many years later, her needs are boiling over.

Her newest client is Ransom Reed, scorching-hot lead singer of Ransom. He is young, damaged... and very interested in Heidi. One strange night, she, Tucker and Ransom share a sizzling tryst, and after that, none of them will be the same again.

S.L. Jennings pens a complex and thought-provoking novel in this second installment of her "Sexual Education" series. This serves as a "be careful what you wish for"

tale with some unexpected twists and turns.
Heather Nordahl Files



Wizzy Wig

by Tiffany Pitts

**Has Toesy finally met
his match?**



Mission to Kill (A Garcia Girls Mystery)

Lizbeth Lipperman

The Story Vault

E-book

B015AOY4XY

Dr. Kate Garcia has a secret no one outside of her family knows: Her dead sister appears when one of the living Garcia sisters will be in trouble. When Tessa appears to her, Kate can't think of anything that could cause her trouble...until Emily Ruiz, a homeless woman who died a while ago, has apparently died again.

It's a puzzle that must be solved, as this woman has bequeathed a surprising fortune to Kate and her friend Benny. When another homeless person dies and Benny inherits his money, the police become suspicious. This is just the beginning, and Kate will need a lot of help getting to the bottom of this. She gets aid from her sisters, both living and dead, and from Officer Danny Landers, who is suddenly very attractive to her, though she has known him forever.

Lizbeth Lipperman continues her "Garcia Girls"

mystery series with this very appealing tale. The Garcia family is very likeable, and the mystery has enough surprises to hold reader interest until the very end.

Heather Nordahl Files





Better Late Than Never

(Galleys sent to us too late to go in the past issue)

Beauty and the Brit

Lizbeth Selvig

Avon Impulse

E-book

978-0062370174

****1/2

Rio Montoya endures a bleak existence on the mean streets of Minneapolis, fighting to keep her sister Bonnie away from gangs and worse, and fearing that her brother Paul is a lost cause. One night she pulls Bonnie out of a car where a pimp awaits. She takes her into Crossroads Youth and Community Center with her brother in hot pursuit. There, she finds a man with a duke's accent and a protector's instincts.

David Pitts-Matherson is immediately taken with tough, street-smart Rio. Soon, he is presented with an opportunity to get to know her better, albeit under difficult circumstances. Rio's home is burned to the ground, and a gangbanger's pursuit of her and Bonnie puts them in danger. He takes her to his home in Kennison Falls. Rio loves the stables but knows this is a temporary place for her to heal, not to fall in love.

Lizbeth Selvig presents her best book yet with this delightful tale. Her characters are flawed and don't always make the right decisions, making for a rich, believable tale. This book is part of a series, but stands alone.

Heather Nordahl Files

Caught in the Act

Sara Jane Stone

Avon Impulse

E-book

978-0062337597

Years ago, Katie Summers and Liam Trulane had sex. But he could not deal with her obvious feelings for him and the fact that she was a virgin before that day. So he walked away, leaving her bitter and her brothers furious.

One day when Katie has a flat tire, a flat spare, and a vehicle full of goats, Liam comes to her rescue, walking her and her goats home. Her feelings of both lust and resentment flare up. Liam's company wants to buy the Summers family business. She hopes to get revenge for her long ago heartbreak--she will seduce him then make sure the sale will not go through.

This is the second short novel in Sara Jane Stone's "Independence Falls" series. While this standalone tale is not as compelling as the first novel, readers will still be drawn to devour this in one gulp.

Heather Nordahl Files

Better Late...

The Miser's Dream

John Gaspard

Henry Press

Trade Paperback

978-1943390137

1/2

St. Paul, Minnesota-based Magician Eli Marks is back for book three, solving another set of murders using his magical training and observational skills.

Eli sees the dead body of the projectionist from the nearby theater from his apartment window, in a locked projection booth. Eli sorts through the suspects, all bidders on a rumored lost movie print, realizing that the victim's semi-legal dealing in rare goods led to his murder. With a visiting master magician in town, Eli has to juggle his sense of insecurity about his own magical skills and his relationship with his girlfriend Megan, along with finding the murder suspect.

Eli's background in magic makes an intriguing foundation for this novel, along with film and popular culture. The mystery is well developed and plotted. It's fun to unwind all the clues to arrive at the whodunit. Eli's point of view is somewhat bland, but the unfolding mystery and the magical tidbits help to keep the reader's interest. A great asset to this novel is its quirky cast of characters, each having various levels of involvement in the present murder mystery. *The Miser's Dream* is an enjoyable book for fans of modern mysteries with stage magic thrown in. *Danielle Hill*

Nobody's Fool (A Willow Park Romance Book 2)

Sarah Hegger

Zebra

Mass Market

978-1420137415

1/2

Holly is frantic! Her sister is bipolar and has been

missing for three days! Portia has been spotted in their old hometown with Holly's high school nemesis/secret crush.

Holly isn't surprised to find Josh in a bar flirting with three young women. She realizes that he's still the player he was in high school. As much as it galls Holly to ask Josh for help, he's her only lead. Josh tells Holly that he saw Portia a few days ago but doesn't know where she is now. She accuses him of sleeping with Portia. Josh heatedly denies it.

While she's questioning Josh, someone steals Holly's car and her money. Portia "borrowed" Holly's credit card and now the account is frozen. With no transportation and no money, Holly's at a loss. Guess who comes to her rescue!

Josh and Holly spend the following days looking for Portia with no luck. As they search, Holly realizes that Josh isn't the "love 'em and leave 'em" guy she knew growing up. In fact, Holly's quickly falling in love with him.

Her sister is found and Holly breathes a sigh of relief. Then Portia makes a startling announcement, one that makes Holly question the fledgling relationship she and Josh have begun to develop.

This is a continuation of a series. It can be read alone. It's an interesting book.

Sheila Griffin

Primal Force

D.D. Ayres

St. Martin's Press

Trade Paperback

978-1250042194

Lauray Batisse lost his K9 companion in Afghanistan when he was wounded. As close as that bond with his furry friend was he wants nothing to do with another dog. It is Jori Garrison's job to convince him to take on a dog named Sam who could be the healing K9 friend he needs.

During this process with its many struggles, a one night stand happens. This leaves them with a lot of sexual tension and some wounds on both sides to heal. Can they heal each other?

This was an overall good read. The plot had enough drama and activity in it to keep me reading. As far as characters--they were very distinct and made the romance seem like a realistic struggle. It was also refreshing to see that some real life events inspired a romantic novel. For me, the only drawback was a personal one. My brother's return was not the "wounded vet" story of romance novels.

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