

January/February, 2018

Affaire de Coeur

Bringing You 37 Years of Honest Reviews



**Kat Martin is back
with *Beyond Danger*
(See Excerpt inside)**

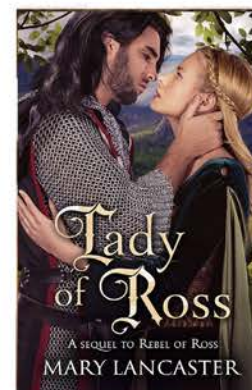
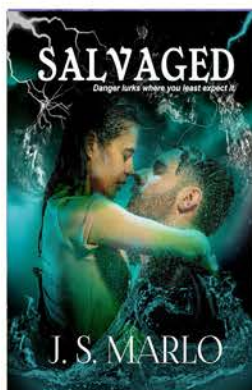
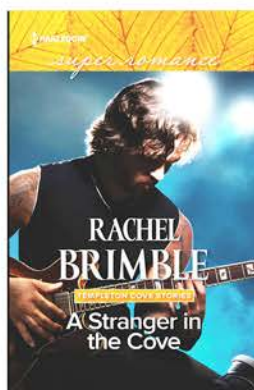
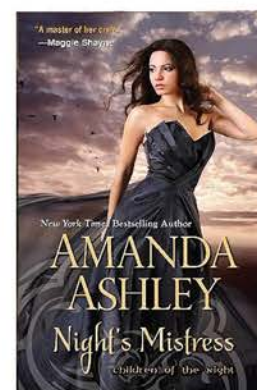
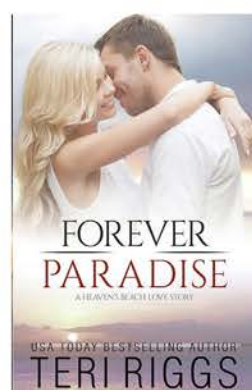
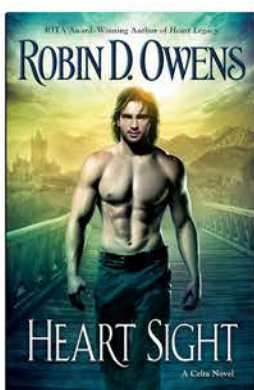
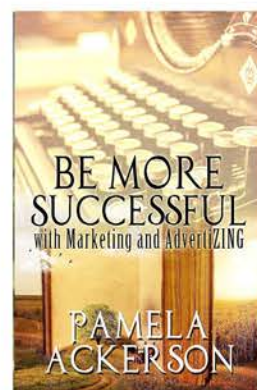
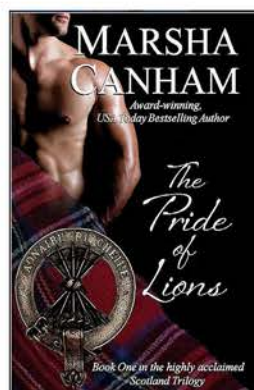
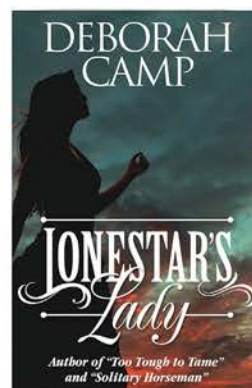
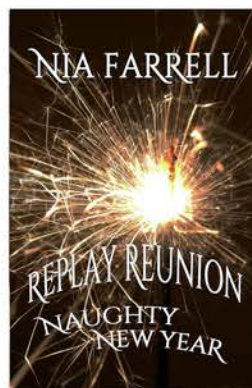
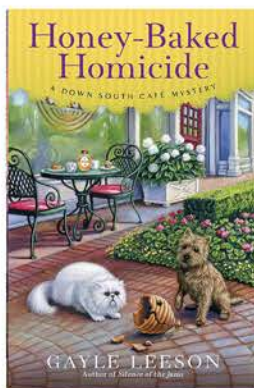
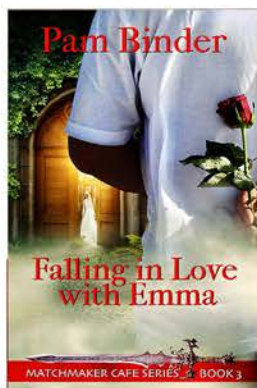
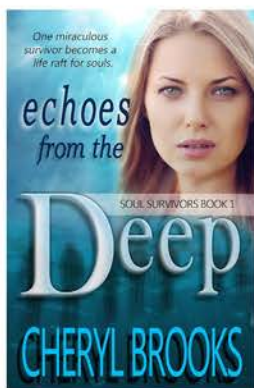
***AdC Celebrates Black
History Month and
Black Panther***

**Meet Pam Seres, CEO owner of
the Dark Castle Lords**

**Reviews!
Reviews!
Reviews!**



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Affaire de Coeur is published bi-monthly at 3976 Oak Hill
Road, Oakland, California 94605-4931 Telephone (510) 569-
5675 Fax (510) 632-8868:

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Subscription rates for the U.S.A. are \$38 for 12 issues First
Class. Third class subscriptions are \$24.00 for 12 months.
Canadian subscriptions are \$65.00 for one year. Other for-
eign countries rates are dependent upon the cost of mailing.
A single issue is \$5.95.

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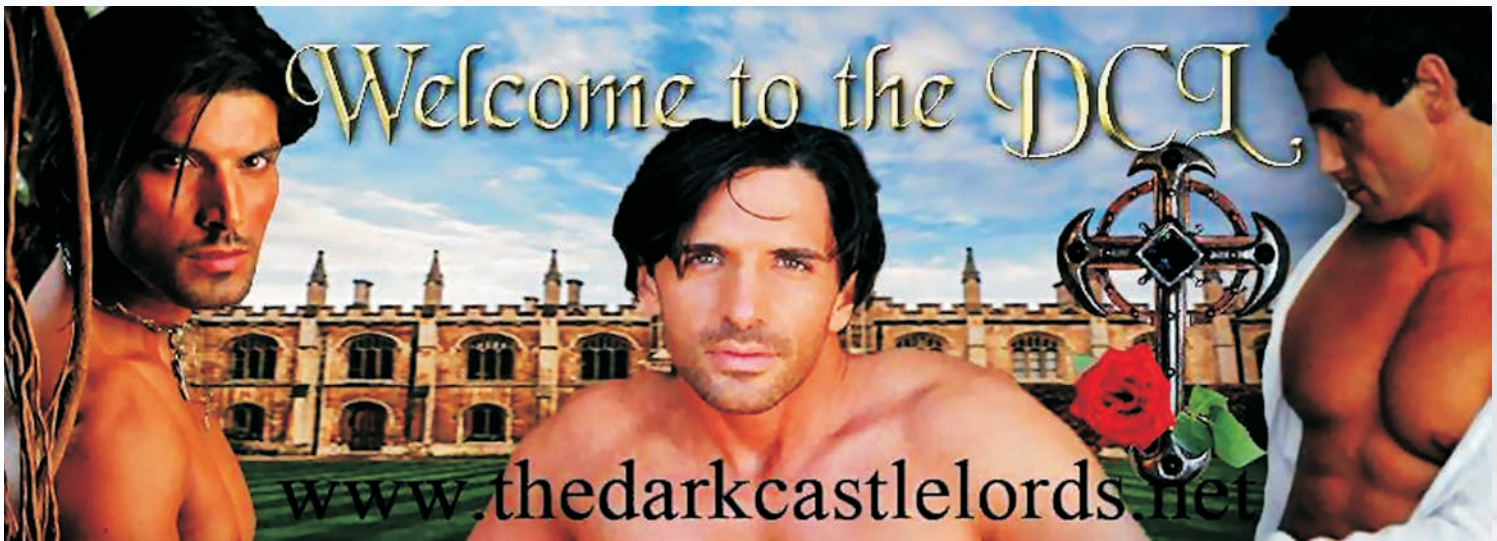
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The Dark Castle Lords

Where Dreams and Fantasies Begin

DCL (Dark Castle Lords) Publications, LLC was started by Pamela Seres & Stuart Bazga. Their love of castles, mysteries, and romance brought them together to create DCL. Readers can enjoy their own fantasies with a fascinating DCL novel by one of their many talented authors. DCL has been in the small publishing business for over ten years.

AdC: When did you know you wanted to help authors with their dreams of becoming a published author?

DCL: **For a very long time and, at DCL, we have such a great team of editors, authors, cover models, and promo designers.**

AdC: What type of books do you publish?

DCL: **Our submission guidelines and what we accept you can find here:**
<http://thedarkcastlelords.net/submissions/>

AdC: What do you look for and expect from an author?

DCL: **Clean, crisp, and to the point.**

AdC: How do you market your authors' books? Where do you distribute them?

DCL: **We do e-book and print on Amazon and on Barnes and Noble in e-book.**

AdC: What do you recommend to your authors on how to promote their books?

DCL: **Biggest thing is use your social media! DCL will buy blog tours, ads on FB, and anything else we can think of.**

AdC: What type of royalties do they receive and do you offer advances to established authors?

DCL: **It all depends on the author, what is submitted, and how long you are with DCL. Miriam Newman, for example, has had her royalties go to an animal shelter in NJ. Fantastic woman and writer!!**



AdC: Are there any author fees that need to be paid upfront? Or future fees? For example, do you give author discounts for books ordered for book signings, etc. or do they have to pay full price for the books?

DCL: **No. If you are in print, DCL will buy 5 wholesale novels to send. We usually do promo items at least one time for our authors and models if they are attending an event.**

AdC: Are you taking author submissions and/or are you hiring?

DCL: **Yes! <http://thedarkcastlelords.net/submissions/>
At the moment DCL isn't hiring, but we do keep a list of people that submit in case a position opens up.**

Social media contact information:

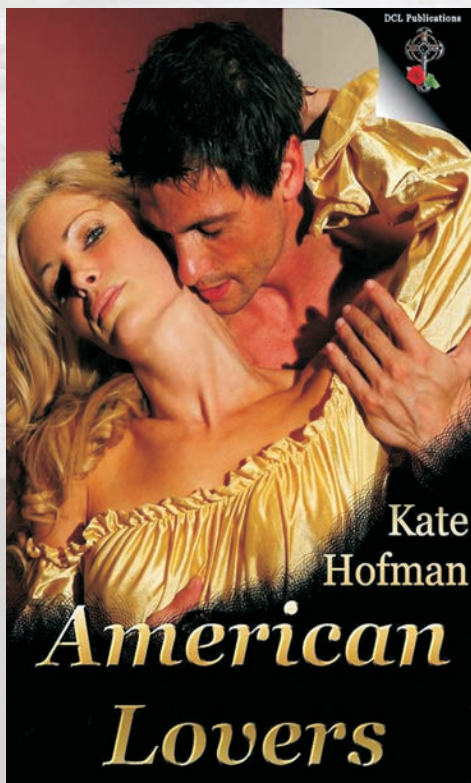
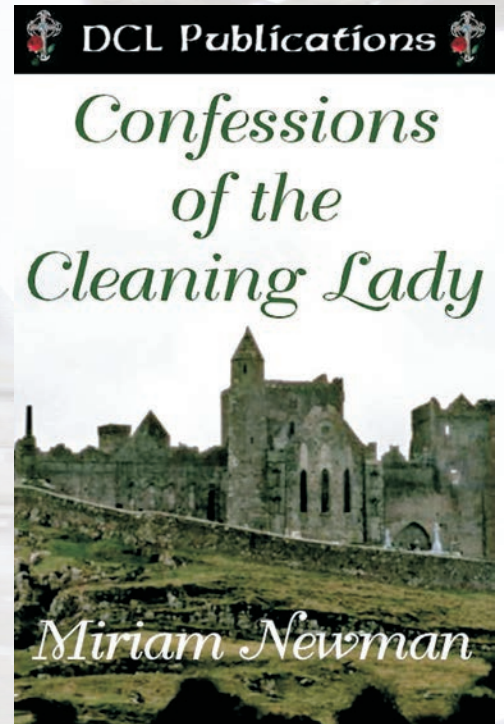
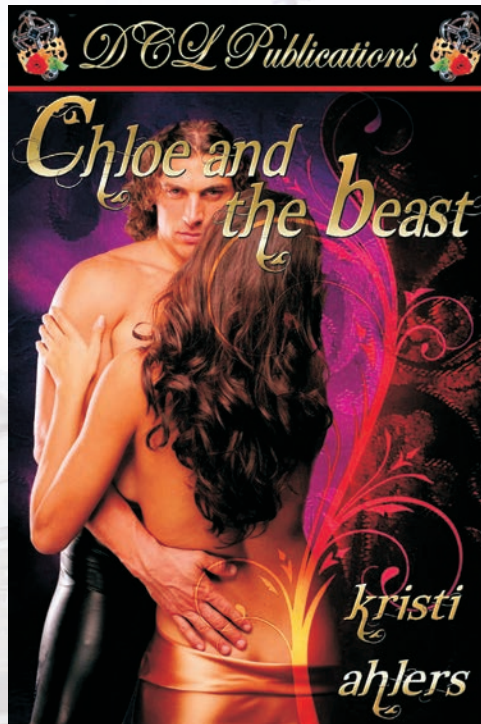
Check out the DCL website and it has all our social network links.

www.thedarkcastlelords.net

<https://twitter.com/DCLPublications>

<https://www.facebook.com/DarkCastleLords>

Thanks for the interview! It's been fun!



How Much is that Adverti\$ement in the Window?

by Pamela Ackerson

All authors and business owners need to get their name out there and can't be found without it. Having a web page, a Facebook or a Twitter page isn't enough anymore.

You need all of it and you need to do marketing and advertising.

Not all of us are good with money. But we do know we don't like to waste money. How do you decide what's best for you on a no-budget to a nice-budget wallet?

In the last chapter, we discussed asking questions and looking for the answer to those questions.

Start slow and work your budgeting dollars up at a steady pace.

There's a very important timeline that you need to use.

You must promote and advertise before the book comes out.

Send eARCs (Electronic advanced reader copies) at least four months prior to release. Not sure when? Send them out after your first edit. Don't wait for the last *fourth and final*. It'll be too late for many reviewers to get the review to you by the release date.

Let me stress something very important. Don't send an eARC out unless there's a call for ARCs, or the person you're sending it to has agreed to do a review. Sending eARCs out blindly to anyone and everyone isn't to your advantage.

Send out a press release to your local libraries, all the local book stores, tell all your friends and family, and announce it on your favorite networking sites.

You should e-mail people who have blogs, requesting to either be a guest blogger or ask them to announce your book. Join reader and writer groups. Make sure they allow you to promote your books in their groups. Otherwise, you'll be banned and that will backfire.

Don't forget to get snail mail addresses of local libraries, bookstores, etc. Keep in mind that using print promotion is still very important. As long as you have a printer, it's pretty much free except for the postage costs. Nice, huh?

Take advantage of these addresses and start a snail mail newsletter.

Set a budget. Give or take a few dollars, but don't wobble too far away from your budget.

For the no-budget author. What can you cut back on and squeeze to get an extra \$10 or \$20 a month? Then find someone who will let you advertise with them for that amount. There're a couple of places on the Internet that have rates like that. Hopefully, they'll be around for a long, long time. *Affaire de Coeur*, AskDavid.com, AllAuthors, AuthorsDB, E-book



Planet, to name a few. There are many, many more. Some will come, some will go. That's the way media technology is going right now.

You have to keep up.

For the absolutely no-budget, moths in the wallet authors? (Been there.) Find as many websites that will post your book for free. There are some. Not a lot, but there are some.

Do a search for online bookstores. See if your book is listed with them on their website. If it's not, email them with all the book information and kindly ask them to add the book. Most of them will.

The budgeting needs to be where you are comfortable. I've heard of authors with budgeting dollars going from \$10 a month to \$5000 for the release month and then \$1000 a month after that.

Bottom line: If you want to sell books, you need to advertise

Booking In Biloxi

JP Casino, Resort and Spa

March 24, 2018

Attending Models

Delonn Donovan



Affaire de Coeur 's
Pam Ackerson
will be there!

Multi Genre Author Event

VIPs receive a swag bag filled with author goodies you won't be getting at the tables as well as an official event t-shirt.

Option to add on lunch with the authors for VIP only.

www.facebook.com/bookinginbiloxi

and promote your books. You do have to spend money to make money. You don't have to break the bank to do it.

A recommendation would be to use a percentage of your sales to promote.

Let's start real small:

Your book is coming out in September. It's May and you've just sent your first edit back to the editor.

What do you do? Send eARCs, letters, etc. Everything I mentioned before. This will take a few hours, so set aside a morning, afternoon, or evening to compile all the addresses, emails, and then to either snail mail them or email them.

Brag to everyone on your social media sites about how awesome it was to finish your set of edits and return them to your magnificent editor.

Set aside \$5 or \$10 for advertising in a jar.

Your editor sends back the manuscript for another run. Follow up on all the emails you sent out, asking if they'd like an eARC. Do they have a blog date open near your release date? Announce on your favorite social media sites.

Set aside \$5 or \$10 for advertising and add it to your book jar.

Rinse and repeat the following month.

You are now, budget-wise, three months ahead of yourself for promoting and advertising.

Adjust the dollar amount according to your budget.

As your sales come in, use that money to advertise some more, until you've reached an income level and budget that you are comfortable with.

Let's discuss, advances. You know, the check they send you to bind your contract for the book you've written.

Let's say they've sent you \$2,000. Here's where some authors get confused. I've heard them complain because they received their advance but yet, not received another dime from the publisher.

I'm not referring to publishers who aren't paying the authors because of financial issues. That is a different topic all together.

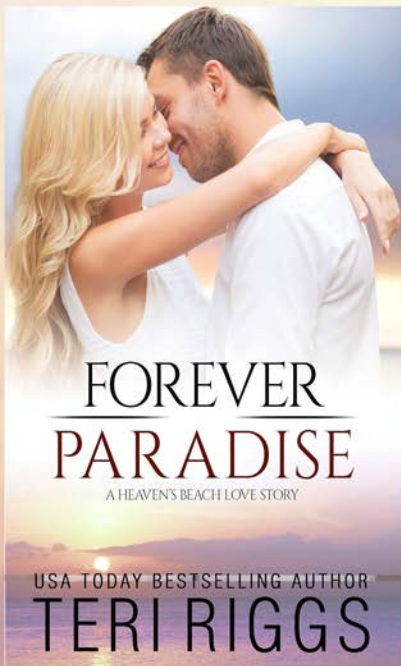
Why didn't you get a royalty check? According to your sellers rank, you sold books. So, what happened?

Did you sell \$2,000 worth of books? Many contracts give you the advance as a portion of your pay for anticipated sales. If you didn't reach those anticipated sales, they're not going to be sending you any more money.

Read your contract carefully, please. If you're not

continued on next page

She came to Heaven's Beach
looking for protection.
Instead she found a love
she couldn't resist.



Teri-Riggs.com
twitter.com/TeriLRiggs

In the peaceful seaside town of Heaven's Beach

Lindsey James has just graduated from grad school and is ready to begin her life. A stalker has other plans for her. She swears off men and runs to Heaven's Beach to hide, the place she feels safe and loved. The place her stalker knows nothing about—or so she thought.

Zack Simmons has promised Lindsey and her friends that he would keep her safe while she is living and working in Heaven's Beach. Immediately Zack finds himself drawn to her, but after a recent and disastrous breakup with an ex-girlfriend, he plans to pursue the bachelor life. Zack soon learns that keeping things professional in order to protect Lindsey isn't quite as easy as he thought. Lindsey finds giving up on men to be a much bigger challenge when it comes to Heaven's Beach's sexy sheriff.

comfortable with understanding the contract, get a business lawyer to review it and explain it to you.

About the advance: Take a portion—let's say 20% of that, and buy yourself a treat. Pat yourself on the back for accomplishing what many people dream about.

That leaves you \$1,600 to use for advertising, marketing, and promotion. If you receive the money in May, divide the money to promote your book for one year.

Include marketing with your promotion. (Notepads, pens, flashlights, key rings, bookmarks, giveaways, contests)

You can do this a couple of ways. Put \$300 aside for the release month and then \$100 a month thereafter.

Or you can do \$300 for the release month and then \$300 every three months. However you want to do it. Just don't stop promoting and advertising.

Yes, I know the bulk of your sales will come in the first three months.

However, you do have another book coming out, right?

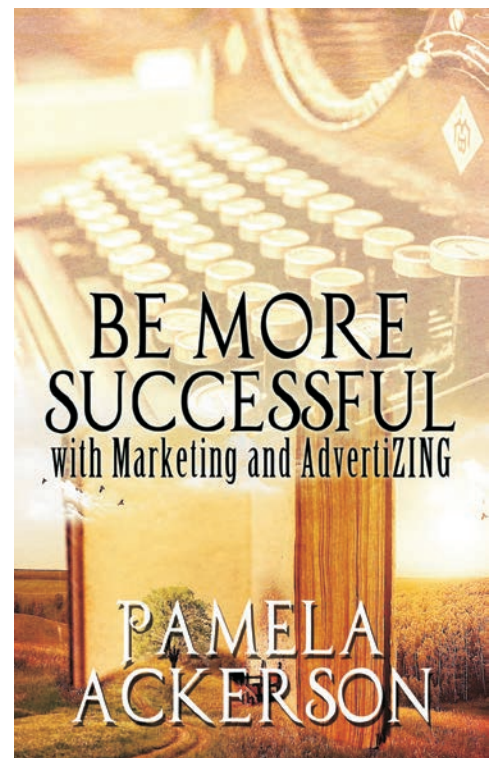
So, how do you keep your name out there? How do you continuously find new readers? Don't stop promoting yourself or your books.

Especially if it's a series or saga.

Pamela Ackerson works for *Affaire de Coeur* in the marketing and advertising department. She's an international best-selling author of historical fiction, non-fiction, and time-travel books. Look for her latest non-fiction release, *Be More Successful with Marketing and AdvertIZING* available in print and ebook.

Website: PamelaAckerson.com

Twitter: @PamAckerson



“Lonestar’s Lady”

By DEBORAH CAMP

Lonestar.

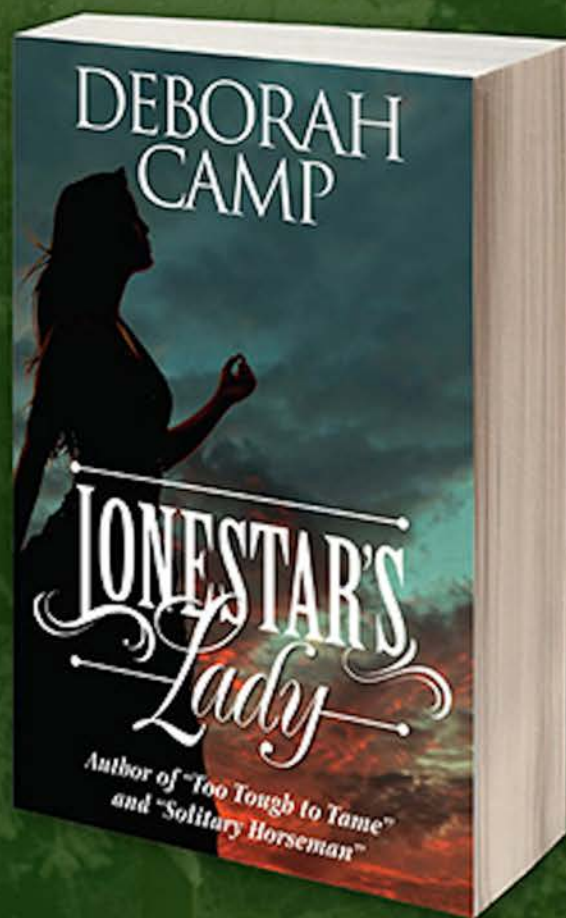
His name fit him perfectly. It fed every fantasy that Gussie Horton had conjured about Indians and forbidden love.

His neighbors whispered that he was a murdering half-breed, which was true. But Gussie believed in second chances, and more importantly, her heart told her to believe in Max Lonestar.

Was she a fool to hitch her wagon to his star? Would he be her one, true love or her final downfall?

Look for it on Amazon!

https://www.amazon.com/Deborah-Camp/e/B001HOGDMW/ref=sr_tc_2_0?qid=1504893649&sr=1-2-ent



www.deborah-camp.com



<https://www.facebook.com/officialdeborahcamp>



<https://twitter.com/AuthorDebCamp>

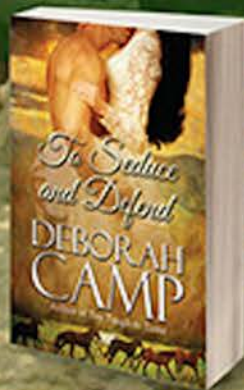


<https://www.pinterest.com/debbycamp44/>



https://www.goodreads.com/author/list/198990.Deborah_Camp

“The author does a beautiful job of capturing the readers’ interest, building full characters, while telling an intriguing story.” – Romance Authors That Rock



Former teacher, now an author/blogger and flight attendant, Judith Hill continues her odyssey of perils and pleasures of online dating for women 60 and over with “It’s in His Kiss,” For a complete recount of single women’s journey in search of love, get her book I Still Want Fireworks—available now as an Amazon Kindle book. Visit her blog at: singleat60sucks.com. I can personally tell you it is entertaining and educational

It’s In His Kiss

Why Online Dating Doesn’t Work for Some of Us



The Cliff’s Notes version is that I met him in a bar the evening of my 60th birthday. He walked in. We talked. We clicked a little. We kissed. We clicked a lot. He spent the night. I saved his number. He’s 51, and we “dated” for nearly 9 months. But neither detail is germane to my cause here, which is to explain the inexplicable attraction of sexual attraction as it pertains to online vs. offline dating.

That abstract, indefinable phe-

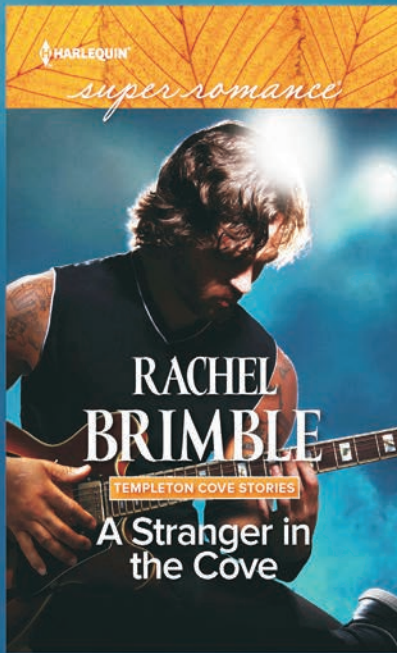
nomenon of instant visual attraction and emotional appeal is often called THE SPARK by some and CHEMISTRY by others. Romance writers and readers thrive on its creation on paper. In life and in person, it happens—or not—within seconds of meeting someone in the flesh. The feeling varies with the individual. It can be a very real sensation of actual heat, a pleasant flickering in the belly (the proverbial “butterflies”) or it can be a mere realization, conscious or not. To bastardize a famous quote about pornography by US Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart . . . I can’t define it. But I know when I feel it.

Melanie Schilling, an Australian psychologist and dating coach, claims there are actually two types of sparks: the Wow and the Ahhh. The Wow tends to burn hard and fast, is short-lived, and blows out rather quickly. The Ahhh is a slower burning, less intense, more comfortable and sustaining spark—the type that makes for a long term relationship. Ms. Schilling contends that even if initially absent, the Ahhh “can develop over time.”

I think I’ll pass. The only

degrees I’ve got hanging on my wall are in Life and German. But trial and error have taught me when I don’t feel it initially, it’s “square peg in a round hole” time. It doesn’t work, and trying is a waste of time. Of course, I’m single at sixty, so what do I know?

But here’s the fundamental problem of online dating, as I see it. We humans possess five senses, in addition to our brain, with its powers of thought, analysis, deductive reasoning, etc. While the online dating method is able to beautifully tap into our brains and all their technical and analytical abilities, our senses are pretty much left out of the selection for mate/date process—except for the sense of sight (semi-satisfied, at best, by a one-dimensional photograph). Even eventually adding in the sound of someone’s voice via a real phone call does not provide the full panoply. Moreover, only a small percentage of the human brain processes verbal communication. We are wired for more and function thusly: sending and receiving wordless clues in a conscious and unconscious encoding and decoding process that cannot be recreated in



**He Won't Stop
until he's found her...**

**RachelBrimble.com
@RachelBrimble**

He came for answers...

He never expected to find her.

Mac Orman is on a mission. When he discovers his recently deceased father had been searching for his birth mother, Mac aims to finish the job by finding the grandmother he never knew. His quest leads him to Templeton Cove—and a firecracker of a woman who instantly jump-starts his tortured heart.

For Mac, Kate Harrington is the most tempting kind of distraction. But their sizzling connection comes with a side of suspicion for Kate, who doesn't trust this brooding stranger in her town. Mac arrived with no plans to stay, but as he falls for Kate, he wonders how he could ever possibly leave.

virtual reality. “In living color” is more than an expression or a 90s TV show!

Think body language: facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture, distance proximity . . . According to experts (and Wikipedia), these nonverbal behaviors comprise 75-85% of all human communication. Factor in tone of voice (hearing is 11%), touch (2%), taste (1%) and smell (3%), and now you have the full picture of human interaction and communication. The look in his eye, the crook of his smile, the tilt of his head . . . sure. These can all be relayed on a computer screen. But what about the smell of his skin, the taste of his kiss, the touch of his caress . . . how do you get those from a dating site profile or photo?

Oh, you could—in person, of course! But chances are either or both of you will eliminate the other long before that final stage of online dating can be reached. For here's the curse of

online: The numbers, the sheer volume of choices, create a “what if there's something better out there?” mentality that is a constant plug-puller on countless flickering interests. Before true current can flow, the off switch has been flipped. It is the exact opposite in organic (traditional) dating. The face-to-face meet is offline's first step—not its last!

The dating sites have sold us a bill of goods, convincing us we are “communicating” online. No. We are not. At least, not very much. We are typing on a keyboard, texting and emailing. There's a reason we had to invent emojis, people! Absent tone, inflection and accompanying visual clues, the written word is ineffectual and ambiguous, subject to false interpretation without means of connecting to an emotional end. Certainly anyone who has ever had a text message “taken the wrong way” can attest to my point here.

In a nutshell, a keyboard is a means of contact. It is not a means of connection. And as for that person you might find online—as opposed to stumbling across in life—I offer a final comparison thought . . . Online you know a lot—and feel nothing. Offline you know nothing—and feel everything.



**AdC congratulates all of American
Olympians
We are so proud of you!**



SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW



This month the first Spotlight shines on...

Deborah Camp

Deborah Camp lives in Tulsa, OK. She volunteers with the Animal Rescue Foundation and is the proud “mama” to four dogs. She named two of them after her favorite romance heroes – Mr. Darcy and Mr. Grey.

When she’s not slaving away at the keyboard and writing about sexy men who can last longer than ten minutes, she enjoys time with friends, visits to New York City where her very own romantic hero resides, and weekend getaways.



AdC: Tell us about your new book.

D.C.: I confess that when I first saw the film “Cold Mountain,” I wasn’t blown away. However, the film stayed with me, especially the character of Ruby as portrayed by Renee Zellweger. When I watched the film again, it became a favorite of mine (just like the novel from which it sprang). Sometimes it takes another crack at something to really appreciate it.

The scenes with Ruby kept visiting me. I loved her spunk, her no-nonsense ways, and the humanity running through her. I loved the way she talked

and the way she scowled and tried to exude toughness. So, when I began pondering my next historical romance, I thought of Ruby/Renee again. Then I found a photo of a gal who really nailed it for me. She looked like I pictured my heroine – Gussie Horton. (I have that picture on my blog, if you’d like to see it. (<http://deborahcampwriters-desk.blogspot.com/>)) Writing about a heroine who we meet as a frowning, dusty, grouchy ball of attitude is tricky. I didn’t want readers to dislike her, so I had to show that she had a reason to act as she was acting and that she wasn’t as tough and quarrelsome as she initially appeared.

I truly enjoyed writing about Gussie. I loved her grit and her romantic fascination with American Indians. And I admire a gal who can make chicken salad out of chicken poop.

Naturally, I loved Max Lonestar! Who would turn her nose up at a tall, handsome, kind hunka-burnin’ manhood? So what if he’s been in prison and was a mama’s boy? Hey, we all have our hiccups! Seriously, Max is a hero with a capital H. He is also smitten with Gussie, much to his chagrin. Fickle fate throws them together and it’s sink or swim time. But fate sure doesn’t make it easy for them. It’s choppy seas and no life rafts.

I’m happy to report that readers

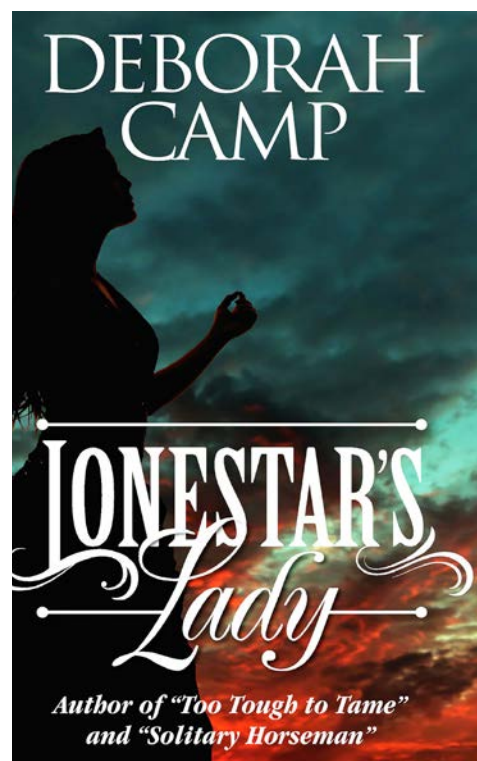
have seconded my affinity for Gussie. Several have mentioned that she is one of their favorite heroines and that “Lonestar’s Lady” is going onto their “favorites” shelf to be re-read and enjoyed. That makes all my angst worth it.

Contact information:

Personal web page: <http://www.deborah-camp.com>.

Twitter: www.twitter.com/AuthorDebCamp.

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





Excerpt from Deborah Camp's **Lonestar's Lady**

Chapter 1

Not much happened in Pear Orchard, Arkansas. So, when the little gal wearing a tattered, straw hat and dusty clothes scooted off the back of farmer Zeb Watson's livestock wagon that overcast day in August 1881, folks noticed, and tongues wagged.

Dropping a faded carpetbag at her feet, Gussie Horton glanced around, taking stock of the town – which wasn't much. Eight buildings on one side of the main thoroughfare and five on the other. Only three of them had a second story. All were nondescript, either made of weathered or white painted clapboard. When she spotted the Sundown Saloon, she issued a snort of contempt. No matter how small and insignificant, every town had a whiskey tavern. Towns could do without doctors, teachers, sheriffs, and even pastors, but God forbid that hairy legged, no-count men would have to travel more'n a few miles for some rotgut.

She brushed hay and trail dirt off her dark brown skirt and light brown and pink flowered blouse, then leaned over and rubbed a spot off the toe of one of her buttoned shoes. She knew she looked a sight, but could do little about it. That's what became of a girl who rode in the back of hay and livestock wagons. No doubt, she smelled like chickens

continued on page 19

Affaire de Coeur celebrates

Black History Month with my personal take on...

Black Panther

I am so excited I can hardly stand it! *Black Panther*, the long-anticipated Marvel Comics movie featuring their first Black super hero is coming out on February 16th, smack in the middle of Black History month (which I am certain was no coincidence). Described



Chad Bozeman

as “revolutionary,” *Black Panther* has so many things to be excited about:

(1) A super-hero, T'Challa (played by Chadwick Bozeman), from the fictitious African country of Wakanda, steps into the role of King of the country upon the death of his father. (This was introduced in one of the Captain America movies.) The advanced technology in his country allows him to transition from ordinary king into the Black Panther. This is one of the reasons this film is so important. because,

for the first time ever, children of African descent have not just a hero, but a super hero, they can look up to. Black Panther joins the ranks of Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman and more, except he is a man of color (ok, I will give credit to the Incredible Hulk who is green). The difference is that African American children can look at Black Panther and say, “there’s someone who looks like me.”

Moreover, Wakanda is a rich country, both in culture and in natural resources, not the sh-

Affaire de Coeur



Lupito Nyong'o

-- country as described of African countries a few weeks ago. And it is



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a technologically advanced country, upending the usual presumptions about African countries being backward. Hence, the ability to morph into the Black Panther character.



Actors Idris Elba and Michael B. Jordan

(2) There are three generations of African-American actors in the movie! Yes!! If you are not tuned into the industry, you may not know how very hard it has been for African American actors to get the paucity of roles designed for people of color. I, personally, abhor the fact that we import British actors and directors of color to tell **our** story. For example, *Twelve Years a Slave*, directed by British man of color, Steve McQueen, starred British actor Chiwetel Ejiofor as the slave who was a free man in pre-Civil War times and sold into slavery. In *Selma*, Martin Luther King was played by David Oyelowo, a Brit, and Coretta Scott King was played by British actress Carmen Ejogo. Don't get me wrong, I love these actors and acknowledge they are great, but the two aforementioned movies are **our** stories and should be depicted by

our actors. I even take issue with Daniel Day Lewis playing Abraham Lincoln in *Lincoln*.

It's as if Hollywood is saying that our actors are not as good. One needs only to look at the film *Detroit*, which, in my humble opinion, was an awful movie. (I lived in Detroit at the time depicted in that movie and the depiction of that city during the riot was way off!) However, adding insult to injury, the lead role of the security guard was played by British actor John Boyega of *Star Wars* fame. I give him a pass in *Star Wars* because the characters are interplanetary species, but in *Detroit*, his performance was lackluster and boring. I really didn't know why that character shouldered the movie.

I think we should have a policy similar to, but not as restrictive as the

continued on page 20



Spotlight Interview



This month the second Spotlight shines on...

Kat Martin

New York Times bestselling author Kat Martin is a graduate of the University of California at Santa Barbara where she majored in anthropology, and also studied history. Currently residing in Missoula, Montana, with her Western-author husband, L. J. Martin, Kat has written sixty-five historical and contemporary Romantic Suspense novels. With more than sixteen million copies of her books in print, she's been published in twenty foreign countries. Kat's currently working on her next Romantic Suspense.



AdC: When did you start writing?

K.M.: I began in 1985. Took me a year and a half of very long hours to finish that novel, *Magnificent Passage*, a western romance.

AdC: What have you learned about writing since you started?

K.M.: That writing is a very difficult profession. That it never gets easier. That there are lots of advantages but also, it's a lonely existence.

AdC: Tell us about your new book or series.

K.M.: *Beyond Danger* is book two of my Texas Trilogy. It's Beau Reese's story. Mega-rich, black-

haired and blue-eyed, Beau was a highly successful race car driver before he left the circuit, sort of a Texas Paul Newman. Beau loves fast cars and fast women.

He is also wanted for murder. Private Detective, Cassidy Jones, is his nemesis. She's smart and sexy and she's no pushover. Lucky for Beau, she's also determined to prove his innocence.

AdC: What is your idea of a perfect writing day?

K.M.: Get up around seven, coffee and watch the news. Then I go into my office and do a little social media. It's not my favorite thing, so I get down to actual writing as soon as possible.

AdC: How/where do you get your plot ideas?

K.M.: I read a lot. I watch movies, TV shows, I watch a lot of news. So much is happening. Lot of fodder for a plot.

AdC: What is the most difficult thing about creating and developing characters?

K.M.: Making them unique. I want each one to be different but possess the same qualities as any great hero or heroine. Sub characters are easier. No worry about disappointing readers.

AdC: What is your favorite thing about being an author?

K.M.: Being the boss of my own time and energy, doing what I love.

Traveling for conferences, which gives me a chance to meet interesting people and visit places I've never been.

AdC: How many books do you currently have out on the market and what genres do they fall into?

K.M.: I've written around seventy books. Historical Romance, a couple of straight Contemporaries, Paranormal and Romantic Suspense.

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

K.M.: I'll be in Billings, Montana, for Western Writers and in Denver for RWA. I am hoping to go to NYC for Book Expo this year.

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

K.M.: My best advice is to never give up. Write what you love and keep at it no matter what. If you can make it long enough, you will probably succeed.

Please give us the following contact information:

Personal web page: www.KatMartin.com

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/@katmartinauthor>

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

[facebook.com/KatMartinAuthor/](https://www.facebook.com/KatMartinAuthor/)

New York Times Bestselling Author

KAT MARTIN

BEYOND DANGER

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Kat Martin

The Texas Trilogy

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KAT MARTIN AGAINST THE WILD KAT MARTIN AGAINST THE SKY KAT MARTIN AGAINST THE TIDE

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Beyond Danger--excerpt

Pleasant Hill, Texas

Beau could hardly believe it. His father was sixty years old! The girl sitting across from him in a booth at the Pleasant Hill Café looked like a teenager. A very pregnant teenager.

"Everything's going to be okay, Missy," Beau Reese said. "You don't have to worry about anything from now on. I'll make sure everything is taken care of from here on out."

"He bought me presents," the girl said, dabbing a Kleenex against the tears in her eyes. "He told me how pretty I was, how much he liked being with me. I thought he loved me."

Fat chance of that, Beau thought. His dad had never loved anyone but himself.

Shoving a hand through his wavy black hair, Beau took a steadying breath. He had always wanted a baby brother or sister. Now at the age of thirty-five, he was finally going to have one.

Beau felt a surge of protectiveness toward the young woman carrying his father's child.

He looked over to where she sat hunched over next to her mother on the opposite side of the pink vinyl booth. "Everybody makes mistakes, Missy. You picked the wrong guy, that's all. Doesn't mean you won't have a great kid."

For the first time since his arrival, Missy managed a tentative smile. "Thank you for saying that."

Beau returned the smile. "I'm going to have a baby sister. I promise she won't have to worry about a thing from the day she's born into this world." Hell, he was worth more than half a billion dollars. He would see the child had everything she ever wanted.

When Missy's lips trembled, her mother scooted out of the booth. "I think she's had enough for today. This is all very hard on her and I don't want her getting overly tired." Josie reached for her daughter's hand. "Let's go home, honey. You'll feel better after a nap."

Beau got up, too, leaned over and brushed a kiss on Missy's cheek. "You both have my number. If you need

continued on next page

anything, call me. Okay?"

Missy swallowed. "Okay."

"I should have called you sooner."

Josie's eyes teared up. "I didn't know how I was going to manage the bills all by myself. Thank you, Beau."

"Everything's going to be okay."

He watched the women head for the door, the bell ringing as Josie shoved it open and she and Missy walked out of the café.

Leaving money on the table for his coffee, he followed the women out the door, his temper climbing toward the boiling point. His father should be the one handling Missy's pregnancy. He'd had months to step up and do the right thing. Beau figured he never would.

As he crossed the sidewalk and opened the door of his dark blue Ferrari, his temper cranked up another notch. By the time the car was roaring along the road to his father's house, his fury was bubbling just below the surface.

Unconsciously his foot pressed harder on the gas, urging the car down the two-lane road at well over eighty miles an hour. With too many tickets in Howler County already, he forced himself to slow down.

Making the turn into Country Club Estates, he jammed on the brakes and the car slid to a stop in front of the house. The white, two-story home he'd been raised in oozed Southern charm, the row of columns out front mimicking an old-style plantation.

Climbing out of the Ferrari, one of his favorite vehicles, he pounded up the front steps and crossed the porch. The housekeeper had Mondays and Tuesdays off so he used his key to let himself into the entry.

On this chilly, end-of-January day, the ceiling fans hadn't been turned on, leaving the interior strangely silent. The ticking of the ornate grandfather clock in the living room seemed louder than it usually did.

"Dad! It's Beau! Where are you?"

When he didn't get an answer, he strode down the hall toward the study. He had phoned his father on his way here from Dallas. Though he'd done his best to keep the anger out of his voice, he wasn't sure he had succeeded. Maybe his father had left to avoid him.

"Dad!" Still no answer. Beau continued down the hall, his footsteps echoing in the quiet. As he reached the study, he noticed the door standing slightly ajar. Steeling himself for the confrontation ahead, he clamped down on his temper and shoved open the door.

His father wasn't sitting at the big rosewood desk or in his favorite overstuffed chair next to the fireplace. Beau started to turn away when an odd gurgling sound sent the hairs up on the back of his neck.

"Dad!" At the opposite end of the desk, Beau spotted a prone figure lying on the floor in a spreading pool of blood. "Dad!" The handle of a letter opener protruded from the middle of his chest.

Beau raced to his father's side. "Dad!" Blood oozed from the wound in his chest and streamed onto the hardwood floor. He had to stop the bleeding and he had to do it now!

He hesitated, praying he wouldn't make it worse, then with no other option, grabbed the handle of the letter opener, jerked it out, gripped the front of his dad's white shirt and ripped it open.

"Oh, my God! What are you--"

Beau glanced up to see the woman, Cassidy Jones, standing in the doorway. "Call 9-1-1! Hurry, he's been stabbed! Hurry!"

The shapely brunette, his father's newly hired personal assistant, didn't pause, just pulled out her cell and dialed the emergency number.

Beau's hand shook as he checked for a pulse, found none. The wound was catastrophic, a stab wound straight to the heart. No way could his father survive it.

Cassidy ran over and knelt on the

floor beside him. "Here, use this to seal the hole." She seemed amazingly in control as she handed him a credit card then ran to the wet bar and grabbed a towel, rushed back and handed it over.

Beau pressed the towel over the credit card on top of the hole, all the while knowing his father was already dead or within moments of dying. Whoever had stabbed him knew exactly where to bury the blade.

Cassidy reached down to check for herself, pressing her fingers in exactly the right spot on the side of his father's neck. She had to know it was hopeless, just as he did, must have known Stewart Reese was dead.

"I'm sorry," she said.

Sorrow slid through him, making his chest clamp down. Or maybe it was sadness for the kind of man his father was, the kind who had wound up the victim of a killer.

He felt Cassidy's eyes on him, assessing him with speculation--or was it suspicion?

Beau looked down at his father, his eyes closed, his face slack in death. Stuart Reese was dead and Beau wanted answers. He vowed whatever it took, for as long as it took, he wouldn't stop until he found the man who had murdered his dad.



and goats. But that was the least of her concerns. She'd been wronged – left in Ft. Smith on her own – and she meant to give a certain gentleman a piece of her mind and insist that he honor his agreement with her or she would . . . she would . . . think of something hellacious to do to him. Straightening with resolve, her features gathered into a scowl of discontent, she examined the buildings' façades. Her blue-eyed gaze latched onto a sign attached to one directly across the street. Black lettering on a white background, grim and stately.

Undertaker, Frank Albert

She picked up her satchel with a grunt and marched straight for the narrow building. Her shoes thumped dramatically on the two steps and boardwalk. A trio of men standing off to the right ogled her and made her pause. One of them captured her attention and her heart beat a little faster. The bold rawness of his dark gaze and the way his black hair feathered from under his hat like raven's wings stymied her progress for a step or two.

She quirked an eyebrow and pulled her lips into a disapproving moue, which usually caused people to avert their gazes, but not him. He chuckled! Laughed at her! Puffing out a breath of irritation, she glared at him. She wanted to look down her nose at him, but it was impossible because he was too dang tall.

She opened the door and escaped into the undertaker's office. It smelled so strongly of rubbing alcohol and almonds that her stomach clenched. She left the door open to allow in the outside air. A desk and chairs occupied a corner near the front window and wooden caskets of several sizes leaned against the walls. Crosses and photographs of tombstones were nailed here and there. About what one would expect in an undertaker's establishment. A white cat strutted in from the back, greeting her by rubbing

against her ankles and purring loudly. It was followed by a rail-thin man, who emerged from the shadows and appeared ghostly in his white shirt and long, white bibbed apron. His smile was practiced and oddly impersonal.

"Hello, madam. Frank Albert at your service."

Hitching herself up to her full five feet four inches, Gussie held out her free hand, only then noticing that her calfskin glove was torn along the seam at the base of her thumb. Ah, well. Such was her life and her luck! "Pleased to meet you. I'm Miss Gussie Horton and I'm looking for Mr. Bob Babbitt."

He held her hand briefly, but didn't shake it. "He's not here, but I'm sure that I can assist you."

"I don't think so. When do you expect him?"

"That's difficult to say." Suddenly, he couldn't meet her eyes and preferred to study the uneven floorboards. "He . . . uh . . . that is." He shifted from foot to foot. "Did you lose someone, Miss Horton?"

"No. I'm not here for that." She didn't like the peculiar way he was acting. Or maybe it was her. Could be that her curtness distressed him. Three days and nights of walking and riding in wagons and sleeping on the hard ground had worn her down to a nub. She could hardly even think straight, much less remember her manners. "I want to speak to Mr. Babbitt, please."

"Are you a relative of his?"

"No . . . not yet." She rubbed her torn glove against her skirt and wished she could rub the embarrassment off her face. "He sent for me. I'm his intended."

"P-pardon?" His gaze bounced up to her face as her meaning registered. "Oh, dear. Is that so?" He coughed, covering his mouth with his loose fist for a moment. "He mentioned nothing about this to me. I thought he was courting one of the flower sisters . . ." He waved one of his pale hands and a chemical smell emanated from him.

"That's neither here nor there. Not my business." His attempt at a laugh fell flat. "As I said, Mr. Babbitt isn't here, Miss . . . Horton, is it?"

"That's right. Where is he?"

He motioned toward the desk and chairs. "Would you like to sit down?"

"No, thank you. Mr. Babbitt was supposed to meet me at the train station in Ft. Smith three days ago and bring me here, but he didn't show." Something behind her drew the undertaker's attention and she turned to find the tall man who had laughed at her filling the doorway. The dark-eyed stranger made no attempt to hide the fact that he was listening in on their conversation. His gaze swept over her in an assessing way that made Gussie glance down at her grass-smudged blouse and skirt. She figured he thought she looked a sight. And she did. She delivered a haughty "Hurruph!" before turning her back on him again. "Anyway, as you can see, I managed to get here on my own and it was no joy ride."

"How did you make his acquaintance, if I may ask?" Mr. Albert probed.

Dagnabit! She didn't want to answer that, but she reckoned she couldn't slip out of the noose she'd placed around her own fool neck. "Through correspondence. I'm a letter bride, so we haven't formally met, but we do have an agreement, which he's already reneged on by not meeting me at the depot. From his letters, I believed him to be an honorable, respected member of this community."

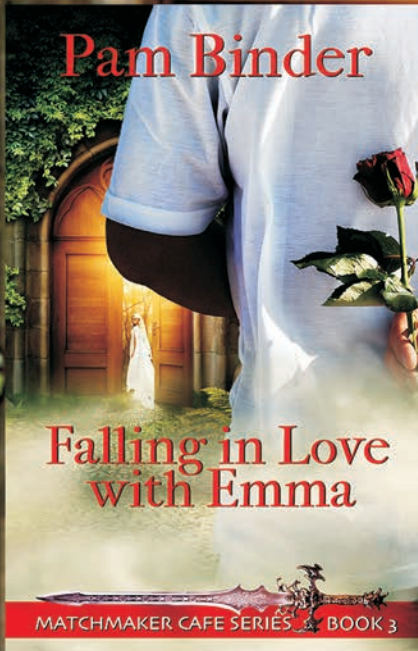
"Oh, dear," the undertaker said again, which didn't enlighten her or relieve her unease. He stroked his chin, obviously at a loss for words. His gaze skittered past her to the doorway again.

"Babbitt didn't collect you because he's in the Van Buren jail."

Those words, spoken in a deep, soft

continued on page 31

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and a love
that lasts forever*



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Will they be able to find true love ?

Ever since the sudden death of her mother left Emma in charge of caring for her grandmother and the family's French bakery, she has survived by rejecting change. The last thing she wants is an ex-boyfriend with commitment issues. But while making a delivery to the matchmaker sisters' café, Emma opens a door and is transported to eighteenth-century Paris, on the eve of the French revolution.

Björn has made a mess of things. He returned from fishing in Alaska believing his relationship with Emma would go back to the way things were, only to have Emma smash a pie in his face. But when Björn learns she is in danger, he leaps at the chance to save the woman he loves, even if she wants nothing to do with him.

James Bond franchise. No one plays James Bond except someone from Great Britain. Which brings to mind, since we are talking about people of color in dynamic roles, why won't they let that gorgeous man Idris Elba play James Bond? Be careful, Brits, that could be construed as bigotry.

I have truly digressed.

The star-studded cast of *Black Panther* reminds me of the cast of *Roots*. Black Panther is played by Chadwick Bozeman, the actor I call the African-American biographical actor (he has played Jackie Robinson in *42*, James Brown in *Get On Up* and Thurgood Marshall in *Marshall*). Michael B. Jordan whom I have followed since his pre-teen years on *The Wire* is known for *Fruitvale Station* and *Creed*. Academy Award winners Lupito Nyong'o (*Twelve Years a Slave*) and Forrest

voice that made her think of a marten's

fur, spun her around. She stared pointedly at



*Talented,
beautiful,
smart
Angela
Bassett*

Whitaker (*Last King of Scotland*) and beautiful at 60, Academy award nominee for playing Tina Turner (*What's Love Got to Do With it?*) Angela Bassett. Sterling K Brown of *The People vs O.J. Simpson* and *This is Us* is also in the film.

British critic Jeremy Vine criti-
Affaire de Coeur

cized *Black Panther* on the BBC for its cast being "overwhelming black." What does that even mean? Would he have said that if the preponderance of actors were British? And what would he expect the citizens of an uncolonized African country to look like? White people in Black

face? C'mon, Jeremy, isn't it about time? Watch it, Mr. Vine, your criticism reeks of hateration, at best.

Speaking of about time, the women of Wakanda are bad asses. They don't wait until their men have resolved their problems. With love and wisdom, they push their men and them join them in the fray just like so many women I know. I love it!!! And just to be clear, a few of my favorite non-black actors are in the movie as well. New Zealander Andy Serkis doesn't know how to give a bad performance. (Did you believe Caesar, the brilliant ape in *Planet of the Apes*? And all three of the *Lord of the Rings* movies where he was obsessed by the ring, his "precious?") And before he had the "precious," Martin Freeman as Bilbo Baggins, a hobbit, was possessed by it in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy. (He is cast as a CIA operative in *Black Panther*).



Director, 31-year-old Oakland, California native Ryan Coogler

(3) The reason dearest to my heart that I am so excited by the release of *Black Panther* is because the director of this movie is Ryan Coogler, an Oakland, California, native. Oakland is a tough city, particularly for African Americans. So, when someone rises above this tumultuous city and succeeds, I am proud and thrilled for them.

African-American directors are not non-existent. You have heard of Spike Lee, Tyler Perry, Anna DuVernay, John Singleton, Gordon Parks, Lee Daniels and others, including some actors who have taken over the director roles. But the common complaint among them is lack of financing for their

movies. No one wants to put mega-bucks in the hands of a director of color for a movie about people of color. The highly financed movies that flopped are well known--*Cleopatra*, *Cotton Club* (directed by Francis Ford Coppola.) Disney decided to take the leap and fund *Black Panther* as it was supposed to be funded, giving Director Ryan Coogler a budget that is almost unheard of for a young director with limited experience. Coogler, in case you are politically uninvolved, directed *Fruitvale Station*, a film based on a true incident that chronicles the last 24 hours of Oscar Grant. Grant was a 21-year old, unarmed African American, who was shot on New Year's at a BART station--Fruitvale Station by a white BART policeman who claimed he was reaching for his Taser. (BART --Bay Area Rapid Transit--is our subway system.)

As with other cases with similar scenarios, the officer was found not guilty. *Fruitvale Station* premiered in Oakland and I cried from the middle of the movie to its end. As good as it was, *Fruitvale Station* was not promoted or recognized as it should have been. *Creed* got a little more publicity as part of the "Rocky" franchise. In my humble (perhaps a little biased) opinion, *Creed* was great! The scenes between veteran Sylvester Stallone, the aged and sick Rocky and Michael B. Jordan, Apollo Creed's illegitimate son, are poignant and moving, making it not just another boxing movie but a movie with heart and soul. (I am happy to say *Creed 2* is in the works.)

Black Panther is already sold out in many places across the nation, and poised to break all records for opening weekends. The critics' (except for the aforementioned Vine) praise for it is off the charts. Doesn't this prove that African American directors can put a film together successfully and make it a box office draw? Because Coogler is from Oakland, one of the premieres of the movie will occur at the historic and beautiful Grand Lake Theater. At the private premiere of the film, Coogler's parents, his younger siblings and a score of his high school buddies showed up, making it the party of the year. And, at other early showings, at least three organizations are taking underprivileged children of Oakland to see the movie. Many, many people are going in costume. I don't know which movies I will be going to, but I will be going and taking some kids with me in costume. I cannot wait!!!!



P U Z Z L E R

What's New?

Lots with the New Year. See if you can guess! Some answers contain the word "new."

Across

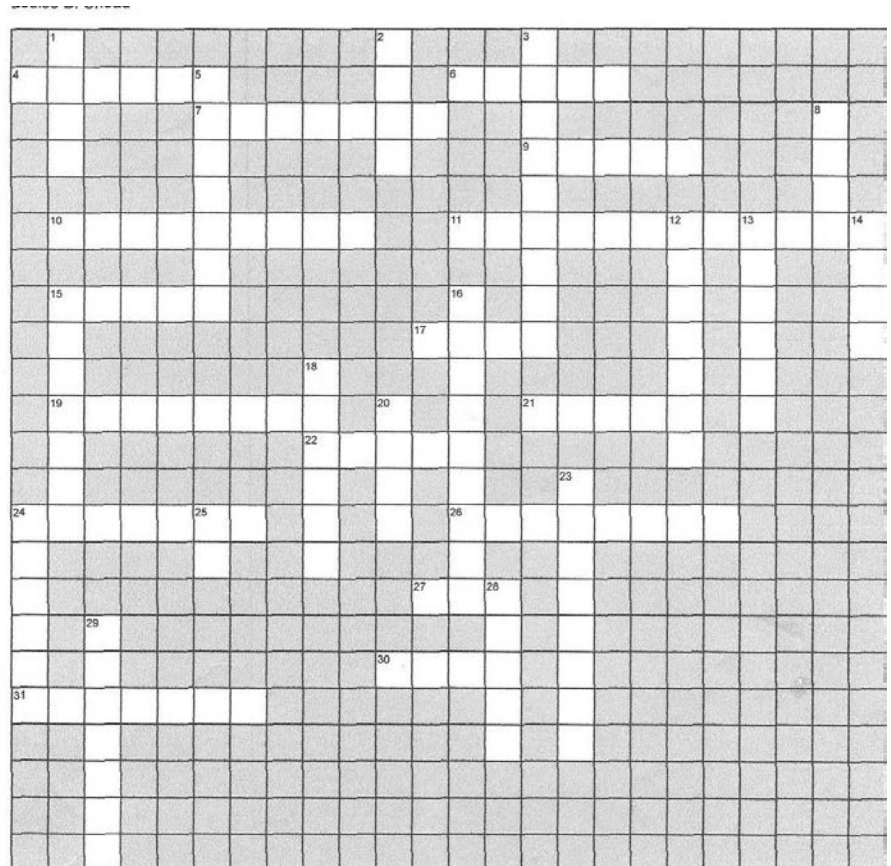
4. One taking on task or project for the first time.
6. Discoverers came to the New _____.
7. Comedian, Bob _____.
9. Post at the bottom of the stairs.
10. The Bible is divided into two parts, the Old and New _____.
11. Province in Canada.
15. What industries are constantly looking for to infuse staff, new _____.
17. New _____ City.
19. Patti LaBelle sings of her "New _____."
21. The *New York Times* is a news _____.
22. A segment in the Bill Maher show, "New _____."
24. Aussie tennis great, John _____.
26. A favorite ad slogan, "New and _____."
27. Just married – Newly _____.
30. News _____, a short film.
31. Shrimp or lobster _____, Yum!

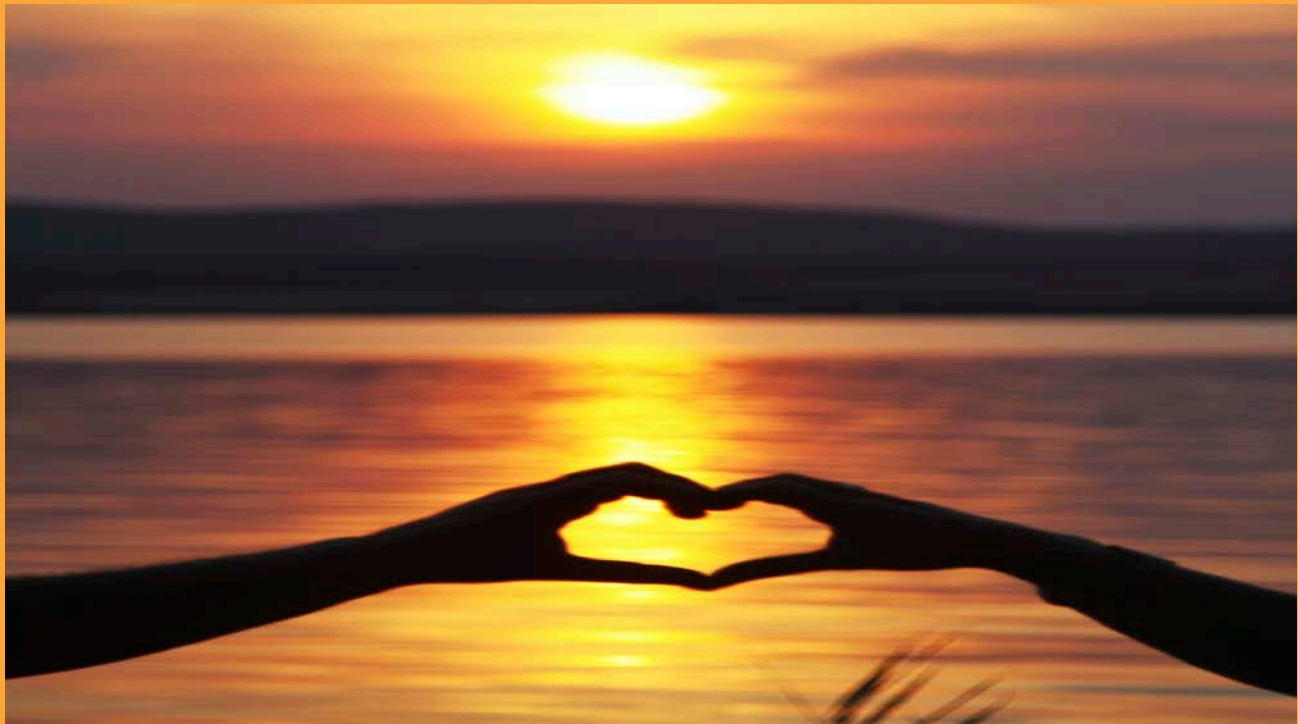
Down

1. A small salamander.
2. Biggest city in the U.S., New _____.
3. City in Connecticut, New _____.
5. New _____ Patriots.
8. New _____, when this celestial body appears as a slender crescent.
12. As innocent as a _____ babe.
13. Many businesses send out a monthly news _____.
14. FDR's New _____.
15. New _____ running shoes.

16. New _____, state next to Vermont.
18. State named after the home of the English cow.
20. "Something old, something new, something borrowed, something _____."
23. Overused phrase on TV "_____ News."
24. Sir Isaac or NFL quarterback Cam _____.
25. One of Dusty Springfield's hit songs, "Brand New _____."
28. New _____, India.
29. A brand of cigarette or a Virginia city, _____.

Answers on page 33





Contemporary Romance Reviews



Say hello to our guest reviewer, author, Veronica Westfall. *Affaire de Coeur* welcomes guest reviewers. If you would like to give us your opinion on any genre, please let us know.

Final Siege

Scarlett Cole

St. Martin's Paperback

Mass Market

978-1250128461

★★★★1/2

Malachai “Mac” MacCarrick had loved Delaney Shapiro since he was a teenager. He and her brother Brock had been inseparable and had done everything together. Brock had even okayed Mac dating his little sister. And Mac and Delaney had been good together...a forever kind of good. Then had come that fateful day on the cliff and Brock’s subsequent death and Mac had lost Delaney forever. Now, fourteen years later and a lifetime of experiences, ex-Navy Seal Mac had been thrust back into her life. Delaney had been hurt and had asked for him. Maybe he could finally make amends!

After her brother’s death, Delaney Shapiro knew she had to do

something to honor her brother, so she became an investigative journalist. She was presently following a story about international arms dealers and had been abducted and beaten. Now in a hospital in Germany, barely conscious, she kept asking for the one person who she knew could keep her safe...Mac. But conscious, she knew she didn’t want anything to do with him anymore. He was the cause of her brother’s death and she could never forgive him. So why was he by her bedside and doing everything he could to help her heal and keep her safe? Didn’t he know she hated him?

Final Siege, the second of Ms. Cole’s “Love Over Duty” series, is chock full of non-stop thrills, danger and serious love. Mac and Delaney have been separated by a misunderstanding for over fourteen years, but still harbor feelings for each other. In true hero style, Mac is a fierce, loyal warrior while being tender and understanding of Delaney’s understanding of the situation. Plus, Ms.

Contemporaries

Cole's understanding of the intricacies of international arms trafficking makes this a love story with a punch.

Lani Roberts

The Schemer

Avery Flynn

Entangled Amara

E-book

B076ZQSF87

★★★★

Having read and loved the two previous books in the "Harbor City" series (*The Negotiator & The Charmer*), author Avery Flynn had her work cut out for her in redeeming douche canoe Tyler Jacobson. Ok, maybe that's just my opinion, but I did not care for him in the other stories (I may have fantasized about running him over with my car) and was a wee bit hesitant in reading *The Schemer* when I saw he was going to be the hero. But as much as I despised him, Miss Flynn proved that perception is not always reality. Everyone deserves a second chance.

Tyler's and Everly's story is one of two sides of the same coin, and when that coin is flipped, anything goes! And, book peeps, I mean ANYTHING! This series is one to put on your must-read list! Highly recommend!

Sharing what I love,
Veronica

A Wedding at Two Love Lane

Kieran Kramer

St. Martin's Press

Mass Market

978-1250111067

★★★★

Greer Jones finally had her life

Rocco

Sarah Castille

St. Martin's Press

Mass Market

978-1250104076

★★★★



Grace Mantini has spent her whole life running from the mob. She was the daughter of the head boss's righthand man and, as such, a mob princess to be coveted and protected at all costs. When she found out what her father really did for a living, she was determined to not have anything to do with it. She sought out comfort and love in the arms of the man who was always there for her, her bodyguard and driver, Rocco.

Rocco was ten years older than she and always treated her with kindness and understanding, until she turned sixteen and declared her love for him. Rocco was hard, cold, utterly ruthless and feared by almost everybody who had the misfortune of running into him. He was an enforcer for the mob and did whatever job he was assigned, no matter who he had to hurt. But when he was around Grace, he changed. He never wanted her to see who he really was, but when his hand was forced and she saw him "doing his job," she ran, and ran, and ran. Now, six years later, she had come back into his life, and he had a contract to kill her family.

I have to be honest with you, this was a very hard book to read. Rocco is not a nice person, no matter what was done to him to make him the way he is. Grace tries to only see the good in people, despite (or maybe because) of how she grew up. Ms. Castille has written about the inner workings of the crime families of the Costa Nostra, or Mafia, and it is not a pretty picture. Violence and ugly things occur, but, this is a romance, and a well-written one at that. Grace is just as determined to see the good in *Rocco* as he is in finding the good in himself. Their love and determination to have a better way of life is inspiring and an excellent read, once you get past the violence.

Lani Roberts

together and was in a good place. After breaking up with her longtime fiancé and moving away from her hometown of Waterloo, Wisconsin, to the lovely, romantic town of Charleston, South Carolina, MIT graduate Greer started her own elegant matchmaking business called Two Love Lane. In her spare time, she planned her own Perfect Wedding. So, when the perfect wedding dress, Royal Bliss, came up for auction, Greer knew she had to have it. The only problem was that she was being outbid by a vengeful, ex-client who owned a women's dress shop. As she was desperately trying to outbid Pierre (and losing), she falls into the lap of a handsome British stranger!

Ford Smith, as he called himself, was actually Stanford Elliott

Affaire de Coeur

Wentworth Smythe, the Eighth Baron of Wickshire. He had been abruptly left at the altar in England, so came to the United States to lick his wounds, start over and visit with his good friend Wesley who had come to Charlotte to get married. When Greer fell into his lap, he wasn't sure what to do but was determined not to let this golden opportunity get away from him. Little did Ford realize that his "good friend" Wesley was Greer's ex!

A Wedding at Two Love Lane is a thoroughly enjoyable contemporary romance that will warm your heart from the first page. Both Greer and Ford have similar histories and heartaches but are able to overcome their painful pasts to embrace their future together. They adroitly maneuver through a landmine of pitfalls, revelations and spitefulness

Wayward Son (Camden Ranch #6)

Jillian Neal

Amazon Digital

Trade Paperback

978-1940174440

☆☆☆☆☆



Just a little disclosure about this reviewer, I'm not a country music fan and really don't read too many cowboy stories. Just not my genre, but there are a few every now and then that catch this cover whore's eye, and I just had to take a chance on Jillian Neal's *Wayward Son*.

Dear Reader, I am sure glad I did. Colt is an alpha male cowboy who could naughty talk your knickers off in less than 8 seconds! Trust me! You will be ready to saddle up and ride this cowboy! Colt and Avery go together like peas and carrots.

I loved this story! This book has been pimped to all my reader friends, and now I'm recommending it to you! This is a standalone story, so don't worry about it being part of a series. Now, go one click!

Favorite quotes:

"She would dance in his arms, only for him. He would set her free and make her fly."

"I promise that I will always be the man you need me to be."

*"Sometimes the most f**ked-up shit in this world can still get us where we're supposed to be."*

Sharing what I love,
Veronica

with humor, understanding and compassion. Ms. Kramer has done an excellent job of giving them their HEA ending and you will definitely cheer when it happens.

Lani Roberts

When the Stars Come Out: A Cottonbloom Novel Book 5

Laura Trentham

St. Martin's Press

Mass Market

978-1250131287

☆☆☆☆☆

Willa has been on the run from her past for five years now. She has moved from town to town never staying long enough to get attached. Willa has grown used to always being afraid. Then two years ago she moved to Cottonbloom and fell in love with the town, her job and her boss.

Jackson never saw Willa as anything more than a topnotch mechanic. But lately, he has begun to notice that under those greasy coveralls is a woman. Not just any woman either, but one who is very sexy. As Jackson begins to spend time with Willa outside of work, he realizes that she is always on edge, always looking over her shoulder. Jackson wants to reassure Willa that he'll keep her safe. But how is Jackson supposed to protect her if Willa won't tell him what she's afraid of? But how can Willa tell Jackson why she's running? Because once she does, he'll never look at her in the same way.

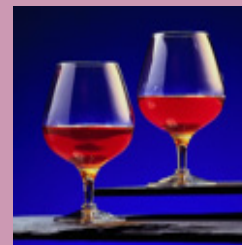
This is a continuation of a series. It can be read alone. There is a sprinkling of vulgar language and a couple of really sexy scenes. The secrets in the heroine's past make this a slightly more interesting version of the typical boy-meets-girl story.

Sheila Griffin

Affaire de Coeur

wishes you

Happy
New Year



Martin
Luther
King Day

Black History Month

Groundhog Day



Valentine's
Day

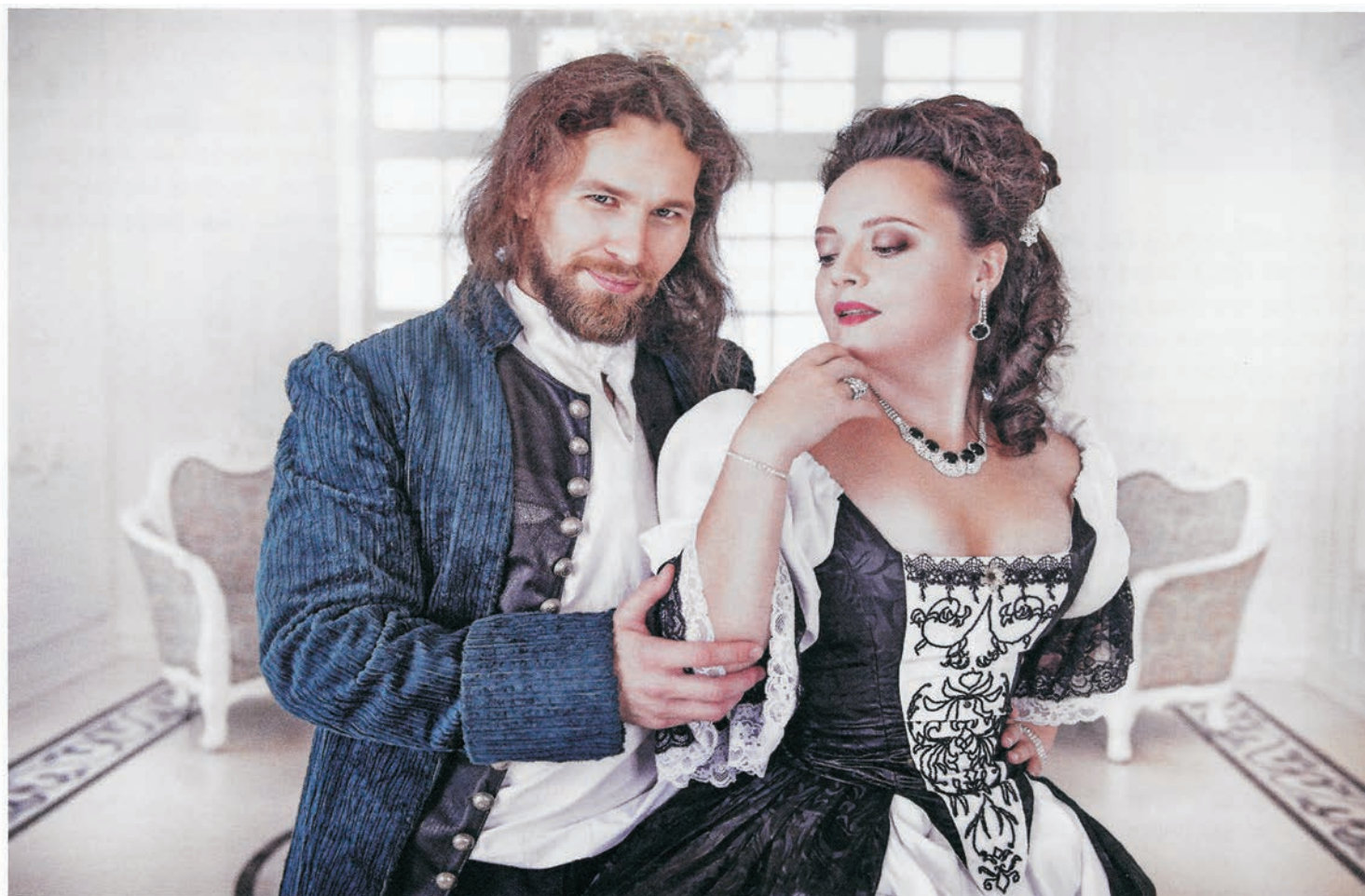
Chinese
New Year



President's
Day

The best Winter Olympics
ever!





Historical Romance Reviews

A Devil in Scotland

Suzanne Enoch

St. Martin's Press

Mass Market

978-1250095459

★★★★★



Callum McCreath had always had a temper as well as followed his own rules. It was easy to do, as he is the younger brother to Ian McCreath, the Earl of Geiry. Not really having any responsibilities, he spends his time drinking and romancing the local ladies. When coming home from a week-long binge, he discovers his brother has entered into an agreement with the unscrupulous laird of their clan AND that he plans to marry their childhood playmate!

Of course, Callum has never told her how he felt for those ten years that they had their adventures together, but she still didn't need to marry Ian, did she? So Callum did what Callum always did--he left--for ten years.

Rebecca Sanderson had loved Callum since she

was eight years old ten years ago. They had the greatest adventures together, along with Ian, and the three of them had been inseparable. Now she is a young lady and needs to live and behave like a lady. Callum is still wild and always drunk, so when Ian asked her to marry him, she said yes. Now, ten years later, Ian is dead, killed in a carriage accident, Becca was a very wealthy widow with a small child, and Callum has reentered her life. But why? Was he seeking revenge for the death of his brother and blamed her? Or was he just after her money?

A Devil in Scotland is one of those Highland romances that has a little bit of everything for everybody. Well-written and character driven, this book includes lots of steamy romance, a mystery to solve, bad guys to thwart, an adorable, precocious tyke to melt your heart and steamy sex scenes all wrapped around two people coming to terms with the fact that they've grown up and become better persons who still love each other. Throw in the hilarious secondary romance between Callum's wolf Waya and Rebecca's little mop dog and you have a perfect recipe for the happy ever after ending Scottish style. If you love men in kilts and the ladies who love them, *A Devil in Scotland* is definitely a

keeper!

Lani Roberts



Wallflower Most Wanted

Manda Collins

St. Martin's Press

Mass Market

978-1250109903

☆☆☆ 1/2

Manda Collins' third installment in the "Studies in A Scandal" Regency" historical series spotlights the beautiful, highly talented artist Sophia Hastings and the handsome young vicar Lord Benedick Lisle.

Sophia falls off a cliff, practically into Benedick's arms after hearing two men plotting someone else's death as they talk about art forgeries. One of Lady Celeste's four intellectual heiresses, Sophia undertakes the mystery of who is making and selling art forgeries, drawing the attention of a killer in the process, and falling in love with Benedick. Sophia never thought of herself as the wife of a vicar, but Benedick has an unexpected allure.

Wallflower Most Wanted features a likeable lead couple with an innovative plotline involving a local art community, including forgers. Sophia and Benedick are both kind and socially conscious with a desire to use their natural gifts to help others. A prominent secondary character feels very timely and referential to current events in a clever way. While the mystery is well plotted and the chemistry between Sophia and Benedick is believable, this book lacks the spark of other books by this author. That said, it's a pleasant read that Regency fans will want to pick up for hours of enjoyment.

Danielle Hill

Historicals

The Rogue Is Back in Town (The Wayward Wallflowers #3)

Anna Bennett

St. Martin's Press

Mass Market

978-1250100948

☆☆☆☆☆



After one too many scandalous escapades, Lord Samuel Travis is cut off by his brother. He is sent to remove the tenants of a newly discovered house among his inherited estate, take possession of the house, and give his brother an accounting of the property's condition.

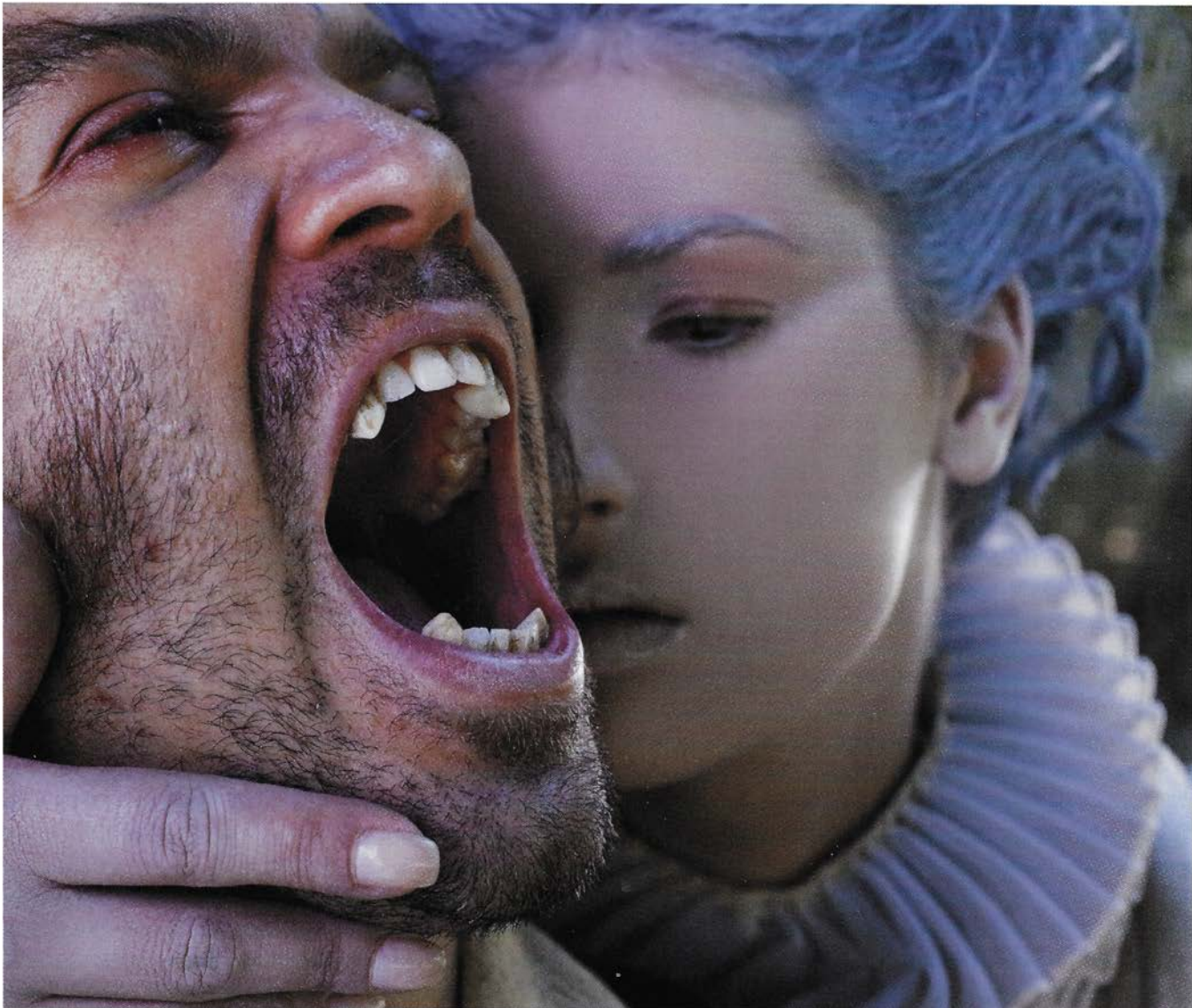
Miss Juliette Lacey is living in the home with her eccentric uncle and refuses to be cast from their home. Samuel and Juliette agree for him to stay with them and assist her uncle's research until the ownership is established.

Captivated by Juliette's fiery spirit, her love for her uncle, her intelligence, courage, and beauty, Sam cannot resist pursuing her. Juliette is drawn to Sam's wit, charm, daring, kindness, handsomeness/sensuality, and how he rejuvenates her uncle, drawing him from his melancholy. Growing closer, Juliette and Sam discover there is more to Sam than his amiable, carefree, and roguish reputation suggests. Simultaneously, Sam's brother pursues a relationship with Juliette that makes her question herself, her beliefs, assumptions about people, and what she desires most in life.

Featuring topnotch/superb/terrific description, pacing, plot, and character development, Bennett's historical is a delightful, romantic, humorous, steamy, and slightly angsty and suspenseful page turner that grabs the reader's attention from start to finish.

Lacy Hill

Paranormal Romance Reviews



Heat: Dark Kings (Book 12)

Donna Grant

St. Martin's Press

Mass Market

978-1250109576

★★★★1/2

Nikolai is a Dragon King. These immortal, shapeshifting dragons are guardians of humankind. Generally speaking, humans do not know these dragons exist. Esther is an exception.

Esther is an MI5 agent, drawn into the world of magic when she was

brainwashed by an evil Druid. The control has been broken, but Esther has large gaps in her memory. Esther fears she may have done something unthinkable during the missing time. The only way Esther can regain those memories is for the Druid to return them. She and Nikolai set out to find the woman.

Nikolai is magically able to draw things his acquaintances have experienced. So, he and Esther go to the last place she remembers being. Retracing her steps, they find someone who gives them a clue to the Druid's identity.

As Nikolai and Esther search for the Druid, their attraction grows. Soon they are lovers. Nikolai wants to take her for his mate. But how can Esther ever feel comfortable in a world filled with magic when she doesn't have any magic? Or does she?

Heat: Dark Kings is a continuation of a series. It is imperative that one read the previous stories before beginning this one. There are many subplots that the reader needs to be familiar with. There's a lot of vulgar language and some graphic sex. It's a very good book.

Sheila Griffin

The Red Fury

Kathryn Le Veque

Dragonblade Publishing

E-Book

B07627B9VK

★★★★★



Josephine de Carron is a powerful Countess who has inherited the title and Castle Torridon after the passing of her brother and father. Determined never to be considered weak, Josephine learns the skills of fighting and is known as "The Little Soldier." But regardless of her courage and fighting skills, her beloved home has been under siege from a rival Clan, and she is left with no choice but to hire out assistance.

Andrew d'Vant is a ruthless mercenary with a liege of 1,000 men fighting under the banner of The Red Fury, a name that strikes fear in all. Andrew and Josephine are soulmates, drawn to each other from the first day they meet. "*I think I have always loved you. I cannot remember when I have not.*" There is nothing they won't do for each other. But there are dark forces working against the lovers, and even the powerful King of Scotland is no match for the evil that dares to try to take the beloved Josephine from The Red Fury.

The Red Fury is absolutely one of the best books I have read in the genre! I cannot recommend it enough!

Sharing what I love,

Veronica

Sheltered (The Cities Below #4)

Jen Colly

Lyrice Press

Trade Paperback

978-1516106363

★★★

Self-imprisoned in her own home, Bette Dautry lives in fear of failing to resist the sun's call to her death or being bitten and mated against her will. She escapes her home city to find her true mate to bond with and have a child to help her fight the sun's call.

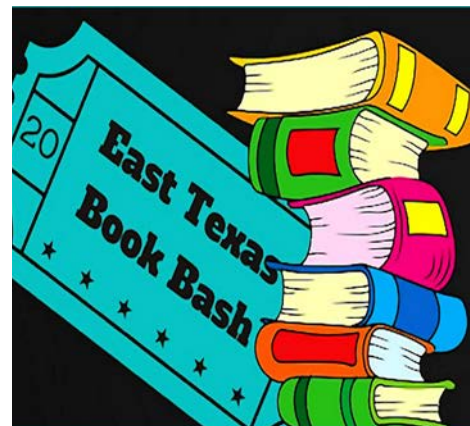
Rollin Casteel is a Guardian of Balinese and a member of the royal family. Rescuing Bette and taking her into his home makes him doubt whether being a Guardian is really his heart's desire. Despite his uncertainty about her true motives, he finds himself opening

more than just his home to her.

Sheltered has an intriguing world, mythology, and characters, but they aren't explored deeply enough within the novel to invest fully in them or to draw readers into the story. The pacing is slow, and the story is a bit confusing, jumping around and bouncing between numerous different characters without giving readers a chance to really get to know them well. As it is the fourth in the series, it likely builds on previous books and may not be effective as a standalone read. The unfulfilled promise offered by *Sheltered's* action, romance, suspense, and humor may ultimately leave readers unsatisfied.

Lacy Hill

Paranormals



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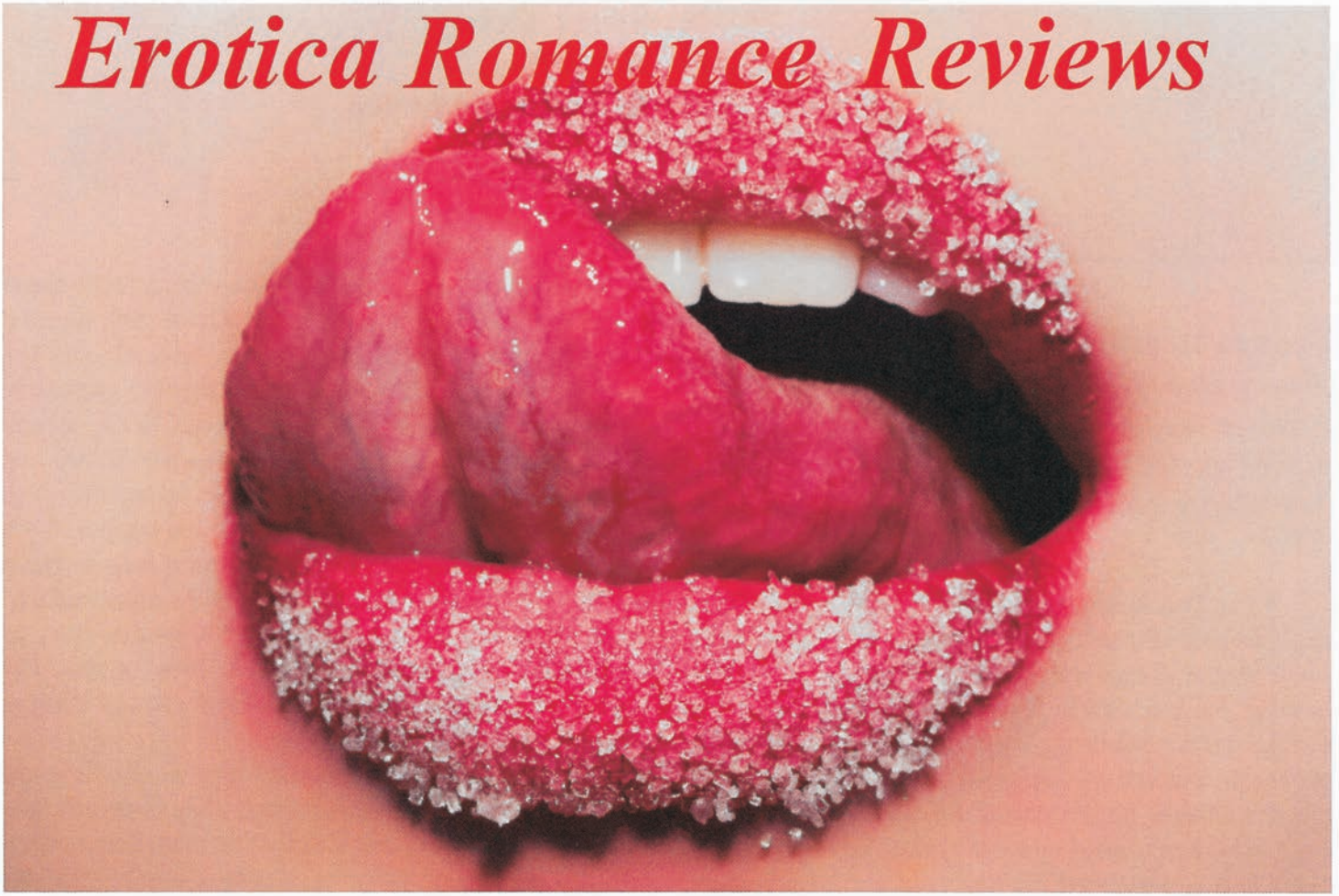
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Erotica Romance Reviews



Bang

Charity Parkerson

Punk & Sissy Publications

E-book

B0787MMBX Y

★★★★★

Marshall and Maksim are both powerful, strong, and determined men working in the sports industry: one as a talent scout, the other as a professional football player. But where Maksim has embraced his openly gay lifestyle, Marshall continues to hide his feelings for fear of losing the career he has worked so hard to achieve. When these two meet, it's a power struggle from day one. Will Maksim continue to be Marshall's secret, or will their love break the boundaries that Marshall has set for himself?

Marshall's and Maksim's (or as I like to refer to as my M&M's) love affair is a panty dropper! Never did two men deserve a HEA more! I loved *Bang* and did not want it to end!! Highly recommend this series!

Sharing what I love,

Veronica

Unlovable (Hooked #7)

Charity Parkerson

Punk & Sissy Publications

E-book

B0778621R8

★★★★★



"Tell me what you want. I'll give you anything." Rylan
"Give me you." Tim

Love is love!

My review for *Unlovable (Hooked #7)* will be a little different than most. Perhaps it is because I've grown to love the characters the author describes; to the point, I feel so connected to them, it is as if the author has looked into the window to my soul and seen what I hide behind my own mask.

Sometimes it's not that we are unlovable, but maybe we feel so broken we don't think we deserve the love we are given. It's like this for Rylan. This beautiful man has lived through a terrible evil that has made him secure his feelings behind a mask of coldness.

But, no longer can Rylan hide when Tim shows him what

it's like to love and be loved.

"They belonged together, these moments always made everything clear, and Tim knew this was the other half of his soul."

Rylan's and Tim's story is a must read! Charity Parkerson has written a beautiful, heart-wrenching story, and you will never want it to end!

Sharing what I love,

Veronica

Lonestar Lady, continued

voice that made her think of a marten's fur, spun her around. She stared pointedly at the nosy stranger, deciding to get a better look at him since he was determined to butt into her business. Her heart did a little tumble.

He'd braced one arm up on the doorframe to pitch his lean body onto one hip in a lazy pose that was both insolent and wholly masculine. He stood over six feet and the width of his shoulders took up the space in the doorway. Long-legged and rangy, he was dressed in the clothes of a farmer – loose-fitting pants and shirt, suspenders, scuffed work boots, a blue bandana tied around his neck, and a wide-brimmed buckskin colored hat stuck on his head. Nothing fancy, but he sure wore them well. His rolled-up sleeves displayed powerful, deeply tanned forearms. The top two buttons of his shirt were undone, giving a glimpse of taut skin with a sprinkling of black hair.

"Jail?" That word stuck in her brain, buzzing there like an angry wasp, and bringing her back around to what he'd revealed. "Jail, you say? What for?"

He stuck a matchstick between his lips. "Drank too much and tore up a saloon. Got tossed into jail for it." One corner of his mouth kicked up in a devilish grin. "I'm sure he would have met you at the train if he could have busted out of there. I know I would have."

Her gaze tangled with his and Gussie had a hard time extracting hers. There was something about him – something daring and intense – that sparked rebellion and recklessness in her. And had he just paid her a compliment?

"He's right, I'm afraid . . . about Babbitt, that is," Mr. Albert added, when she sent him a startled look. "And I can't say when Bob will be released. He must stay there until the judge is ready to hear the charges brought against him. That could take a week. Maybe longer."

"Ain't that just my luck," she murmured to herself, kicking fitfully at her travel satchel. The cat moved farther away from her. Worry squirmed its way through her. "What in tarnation am I supposed to do now?"

"Oh, dear." Mr. Albert wrung his hands. "There aren't overnight accommodations here, but there are in Van Buren or Alma."

She fought back her despair and kept her voice steady. "I can't be spending what money I have left on a hotel room. I didn't think I'd have to be paying for anything after getting to Ft. Smith." At best, she had a couple of dollars in her coin purse. When she'd left her snoring pa in St. Louis, her intention had been to take more than a few dollars off him, but he'd lost almost everything the night before at the gaming tables. She'd stuck four dollars in her pocket, leaving Clem Horton the remaining three.

The frustration, anxiety, and humiliation she'd felt while walking along wagon trails, begging rides off passersby, sleeping under the stars, and being scared most every step she took bubbled to the surface and broke into a boil. Her throat tightened, and tears stung her nose and swam in her eyes.

Galldarnit! She would *not* bawl in front of these two men! Sniffing and swiping at her eyes, she reined in her emotions, holding herself in check – just barely. "What is the nearest town with decent job prospects for a female?" Her voice held a trace of a quiver.

"Uh . . . that would be Van Buren, I suppose," Mr. Albert said, watching her now with a trace of alarm. He looked past her to the eavesdropper. "Wouldn't you agree, Lonestar?"

Lonestar.



Deros

John A. Vanek

Coffeetown Press

Trade Paperback

978-1603816199

☆☆☆☆

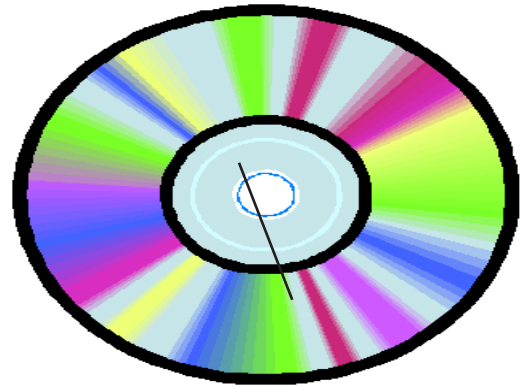
In Jake Austin's forty-some years, he served in Vietnam as a medic, became a doctor, and now he's an ordained Catholic priest. Now he's back to his hometown, Oberlin, Ohio, facing the sins of his youth and his lost love, Emily, who he callously betrayed. With a vengeful murderer wreaking havoc, Jake adds sleuth to his wheelhouse, and he's considered the number one suspect.

Set in 2002, *Deros* is an expertly crafted, thoughtful and angst-filled mystery about a man paying for his sins by serving others, who finds his vows tested by his still-powerful feelings for his high school sweetheart. Jake is living out the adage that "you can never go home," while learning that one cannot run away from their past. Jake is a flawed man with a good heart whose struggles are authentic. The vantage point into the life of a priest and the sacrifices this vocation requires adds texture to his characterization, paired with his obvious shortcomings as he faces the people he has wronged

in his past. A prominent theme of this story is "the ties that bind us," in good and bad ways, both in Jake's interpersonal relationships and the suspenseful mystery.

Danielle Hill





AUDIO BOOK REVIEWS

and feigned coldness and detachment from others. This historical is a quick, entertaining novel with deft description, pacing, character development, erotic romance, and a bit of nail biting action.

Lacy Hill

The Irresistible Miss Peppiwell (Scandalous House of Calydon #2)C

Stacy Reid

Brilliance Audio

978-1536696219

CD's

★★★★

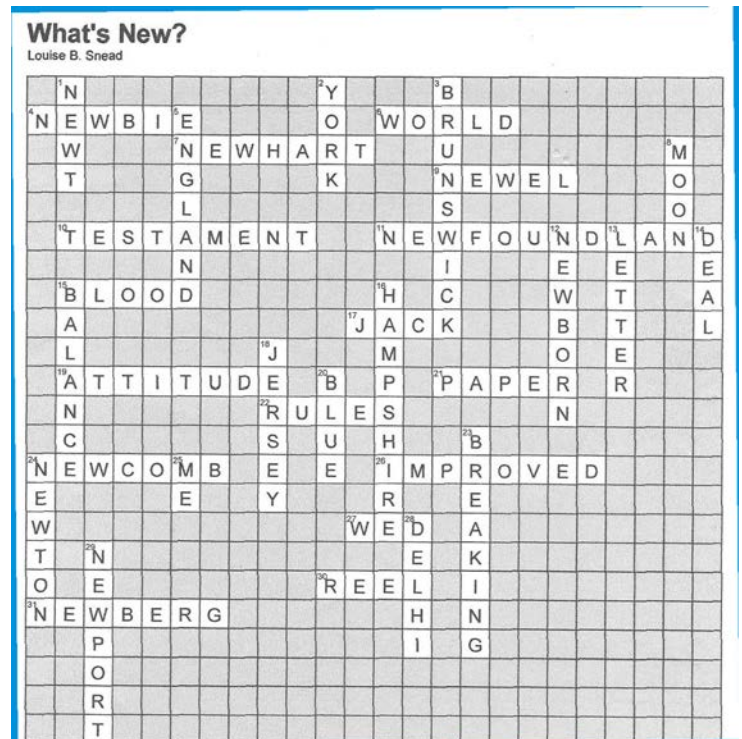
Phillipa longs for independence and freedom from society's strict limitations and expectations for young women. Her heart is set on not marrying but, instead, traveling and pursuing adventure.

Lord Anthony Thornton is a rake, dealing with a family secret that could ruin him, his younger sister, and anyone associated with him. But he is unable to resist Phillipa who intrigues him.

Phillipa's and Anthony's interactions are emotionally and sexually charged and well developed, as well as their characters. However, surprisingly, some plot developments were needlessly overwrought and drawn out by an inexplicable lack of honesty between them. Further, too often Phillipa's choices, and how she treated Anthony seemed inconsistent with the freespirted, independent woman who claimed not to care for or about London society's expectations.

Anna ParkerNaples' narration is engaging and makes listeners feel like they are in the midst of the lives of the characters. Initially, ParkerNaples' narration choice for Phillipa seems a little strange and disconcerting, but as the story progresses, it turns out that it suits Phillipa's personality

Affaire de Coeur



Booty from the Other Genre



The Wicked Ones: Children of the Lost

J. L. Foster

Amazon Digital

E-book

978-1981513758

☆☆☆☆



*“Deep into that darkness
peering, long I stood there, wondering,
fearing, doubting, dreaming dreams no
mortal ever dared to dream before...”*

—Edgar Allan Poe

Daniel Tanner is a broken man whose dreams both haunt and terrify him. After the loss of his son and the break-up of his marriage, he finds himself on the edge of darkness. Does he go on living as the shell of the man he has become or just end it all and join his son in the afterworld? Just as Daniel is about to make his decision, a mysterious phone call from a man he's never met opens a new door of opportunity for a lifestyle he had not known existed...one where the monsters under the bed and hidden in the closet are real.

Daniel has been invited to join

a band of unfortunate souls; a group of hunters who are united from a shared loss and with one motive in mind: seek out and destroy the wicked ones.

“I am the tears that come from his eyes when he cries for help. I am the thing with teeth that eats his flesh. I am the nightmare you lock into a corner of your mind. I am the key that undoes the lock and the pain that comes out. I am your misery. I am—”

J.Z. Foster has weaved a web of terror and heartbreak in his horror novel *The Wicked Ones: Children of the Lost*. Would definitely recommend to my fellow horror lovers!

Sharing what I love,
Veronica



AdC

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HAPPY CHINESE NEW YEAR

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