

THE  
ROMANCE  
REVIEWS

October 2014  
QUARTERLY

# BURIED THREADS

Inside!!!  
Harlequin  
Holiday  
Prizepack  
Giveaway

*...all lust is grief.*

KAYLIN MCFARREN

## Cover Story Excerpt

26 KAYLIN MCFARREN



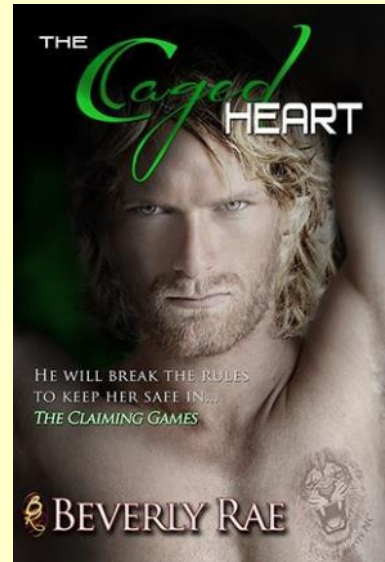
Time is running out as the prophecy's day of reckoning draws near...

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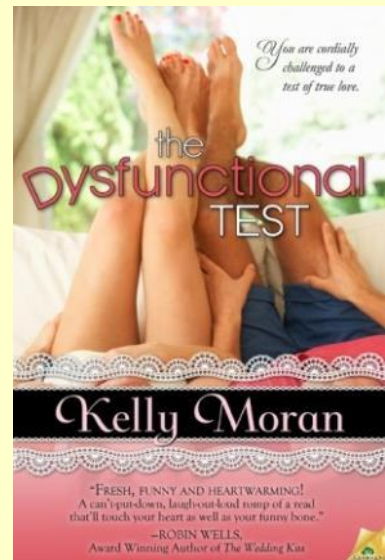
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Hearts can be broken and hearts can be stolen. Once they're caged, they're no longer free.



"Great escape reading!"  
~ Library Journal

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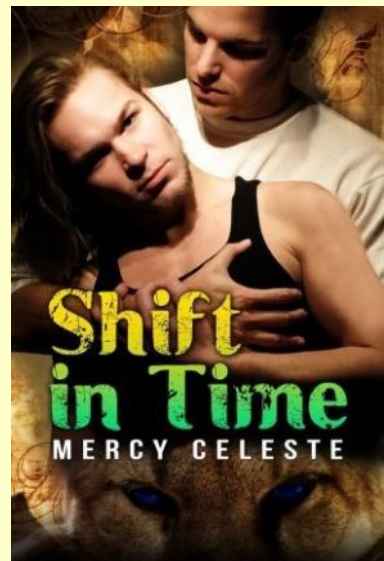
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Jasper Jones wants nothing to do with rock star Dean McQueen, but Dean is in love.



True love's first kiss will not break a curse. Everyone knows that. Or does it.

# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Reader,

Trite as it sounds, time doesn't stand still. We are already in the 2<sup>nd</sup> "ber" month—October. Pretty soon, the holidays will be rolling around and it's the end of 2014! You may ask, where the hell did time go?! Believe me when I say I'm as puzzled as you are.

We have concluded our **Fall into Love Party** about 2 weeks ago. Are you a winner? [Check it here.](#)

The next party will be next year in March, as TRR celebrates its **4<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!** Too far away, you say? In between then and now, we do have two awesome contests in this issue to tide you over. A giveaway of a print copy of The Guardian's Wildchild and a \$10 Amazon Gift Card from **Feather Stone** (p. 11) and a **Harlequin** holiday prizepack (p. 25)!

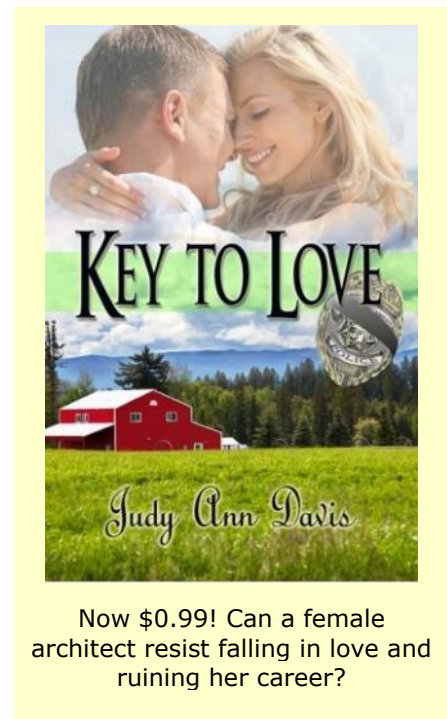
Speaking of awesome prizes, **winners of the previous ezine contests** have been announced in previous ezines, so if you're a winner, be sure to follow the directions and send the email to get your prize! Winners of the \$50 GC, please also send an email to [ezine@theromancereviews.com](mailto:ezine@theromancereviews.com) as to the email address where we should send the GC. Check all the ezines to see if you're a winner:  
<http://www.theromancereviews.com/ezine.php>

In this issue, we continue to bring you exciting articles from **Frances Housden, Ainslie Paton** and **Juliet Madison**.

For recommended reads, please check out the **TOP PICKS** from TRR reviewers on pages 51 to 53.

Happy reading, everyone!

*Carole*



# review spotlight



Rating:



[Amazon](#)

[Amazon Kindle](#)

[Barnes and Noble](#)

Sparks fly when up-and-coming artist Carmen Harris meets football star Natron Dakers at her first gallery opening. Carmen soon discovers that Natron is the type of man who sees what he wants and goes after it... and apparently what he wants is her. Almost before she knows it Carmen finds herself taking everything Natron gives her and begging for more, and when he reveals that he wants to be her dominant daddy and her to be his submissive little girl, she doesn't hesitate to agree.

At the top of his profession, Natron has money, fame, and all the perks that go with them, and now at last in Carmen he has found a woman he wants to share it with. His life feels complete... until in a split second everything comes crashing down when a devastating injury threatens to end his season—and maybe his career. Natron fears he will lose it all, but will he self-destruct or can he dig deep and fight hard for himself, his teammates, and his little girl?

## *Review by Rachel's Willful Thoughts*

Author Normandie Alleman dives into the kinkier side of the BDSM lifestyle with the depiction of a Daddy/little girl relationship in DADDY'S GAME.

Football star Natron Dakers is no stranger to women vying for his attention. When he meets artist Carmen Harris, he finally gets his chance to do the chasing.

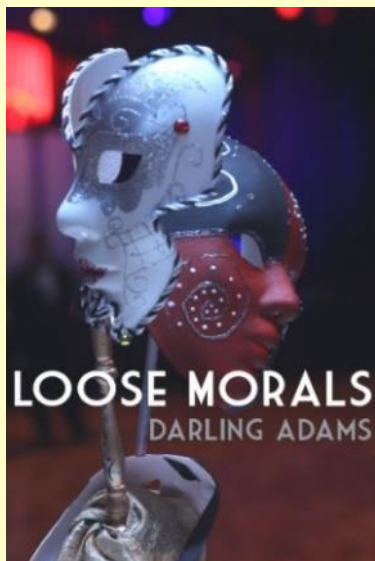
The most impressive part of the story is the fact that the author clearly explains through the characters what this type of relationship entails, and more importantly, the fact that it has nothing to do with pedophilia. With that definition in mind, the reader can focus on the storyline.

Natron is the epitome of sexiness, with plenty of talent and money to burn. Carmen is portrayed as a rather quiet, unassuming artist who is swept up like Cinderella by Prince Charming. The big difference is when Natron and Carmen face challenges that threaten their relationship, there are no happily-ever-after guarantees.

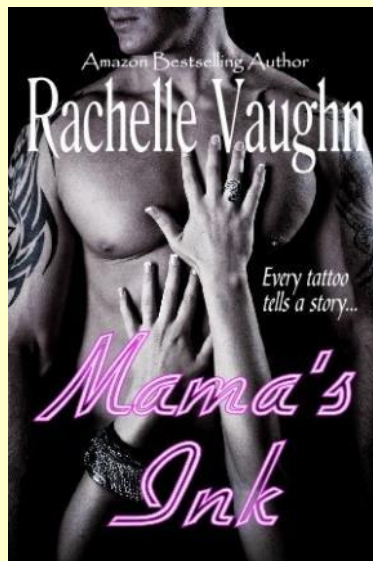
This is a storyline packed with hot passionate encounters with a definite kinky edge. One scene even managed to raise my eyebrows...and I've read plenty of spicy scenes.

The author pays plenty of attention to the details of the story, providing a rich background of life as a football player.

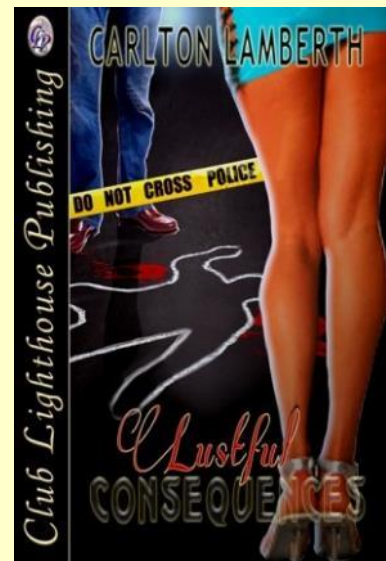
I found DADDY'S GAME to be engaging because of an unusual storyline that maintained my interest from start to finish.



Paranormal BDSM



A bad boy, a motorcycle and a haunting past...



Lustful Consequences is a gritty, contemporary fatal attraction tale of desire gone wrong.

# The Quest

Kai Andersen



**Protecting the princess is his duty**

**Especially from himself...**

Giselda of Mithrien is a fake, and she knows it. When Prince Michael of Ermont offers for her hand, she's overjoyed. Michael can give her everything her heart desires—wealth, security, status. So why is she attracted to Rodin, son of the palace gardener?

**What if she proves irresistible...**

Rodin knows he's nothing and no one in Giselda's eyes, but he can't help hungering for her. Brought together by a desperate mission, Rodin can't resist awakening his princess to the sensual arts. Much as he loves her luscious body, he wants her heart even more.

**And he didn't want to resist?**

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*sneak peek*

**G**iselda contented herself with the thought that he wanted her. Well, he couldn't seem to keep his hands off her body.

"How about if I show you a place where we can continue?" Uncertainty and surprise flickered in Michael's eyes, and she pressed on. "Some place where there are no prying eyes, where we wouldn't be disturbed ..."

He released her. She could feel the reluctance in his arms, but the thought of privacy was a great lure. His head swooped down for a swift kiss. "Lead on, my great beauty. I can't wait until I have you in my arms again."

"That is --" She slanted him an impish smile. "-- if you can catch me."

She danced out of reach and laughed as she raced down the path. She sensed Michael's initial surprise, and then she heard his pounding footsteps behind her. She ran past waist-tall azalea shrubs, rosebushes, and rhododendrons. The wind blew hard against her face, teasing her hair and lifting her skirts. Elation swamped her.

Michael was attracted to her; he wanted her; he was going to make her his bride!

She was going to be queen!

Sheer joy rushed through her.

Giselda laughed as she ran, giggling as Michael's longer legs caught up with her and his arm snaked around her waist. He whirled her until she grew dizzy.

Helpless tears slipped past her eyes. She could not seem to stop laughing. "Stop, stop!"

He enfolded her within his arms, his forehead resting against hers. Both of them were panting. "My ... reward?"

"A ... kiss?"

"Not enough."

"What --"

"How about your room ... tonight?"

Excitement swirled through her. Michael had never suggested anything so improper. His advances had always been kept to stealing a kiss here and there. Never had he suggested something ... something like this, something so wild and thrilling and ... *indecent*. She should be shocked, and the princess in her was. The woman in her was in turn exhilarated and anxious to know The Secret.



She had heard of many things that men do to women in bedchambers -- and sometimes not in bedchambers -- but she hadn't really seen it, nor experienced it. She wanted to know what the fuss was all about. She wanted to know what it was that had held her stepbrother so in thrall that he had gone through all the castle maids and the women in the village. Well, that was before he married. And somehow, she didn't think she wanted to wait until her wedding night to satisfy her curiosity, unless *tonight* was her wedding night. Anyway, Michael was going to be her husband soon ...

Giselda was about to reply when something caught her ear. At first she thought it was the hard pounding of her heart. But when it came again, she was sure. It was a moan. A low, feminine moan.

"I'll show you things you've never --"

"Shh." She pushed against him. "I heard something. Someone may be hurt."

"But you haven't answered me yet --"



"Keep quiet."

Her sharp ears caught the low sounds. They seemed to be coming from the trees some feet away to the right. She noted in a distracted way that their retainers had stopped a good distance from them, presumably to give them some privacy.

As she walked toward the grove of trees, the moans became mixed with sighs and whimpers. Increasingly perplexed, she pushed aside the branches with some trepidation as she forayed deeper into the green foliage.

"Hello? Is anyone hurt --"

Shock rendered her speechless. And immobile.

Dim sunlight filtered through the dense leaves.

The woman's head was pressed against the tree trunk, her eyes closed and her mouth half-opened as she panted and moaned as if in pain. Her dress was pulled down from the neck, exposing her dark skin. The man's mouth was fastened to a dark globe and made sucking motions as his hand disappeared under the woman's skirt. Giselda watched, fascinated, as the woman splayed her hand blatantly against the front of the man's trousers.

Even with his back to her, Giselda knew who it was.

Time seemed to stop. She heard nothing but harsh breathing and the hard pounding of her heart.

Rage filled her, a rage that demanded release.

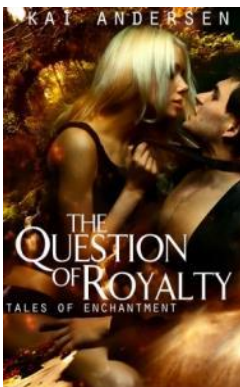
She screeched with all the fury that welled up inside her. "Stop. *Stop it!*" When the couple appeared to ignore her, she forcibly pulled Rodin away from the woman. "How dare you -- you -- you engage in such acts in front of me!" she spluttered.

The woman opened her eyes and dropped to her knees, her whole body trembling. "Your -- Your Highness." One hand pulled up her dress in desperate movements.

The terror in her voice appeased some of Giselda's fury, but Rodin's mocking voice brought it all back.

Green eyes taunted her. "Well, well, if it isn't Her Royal Highness herself. Want to join in the fun?"

"I would never demean myself," she said in a cold voice.



"Then why interrupt us?" His voice was silky smooth. "If you don't mind ..."

"How dare you talk to me like that? I said 'no' and I mean 'no!'" Giselda tried to push him farther away from the kneeling woman, but he was like a stone statue glued to the ground. "I'm the princess, and I expect to be obeyed!"

"You are seriously taxing my patience, Your Highness." His eyes gleamed, and a feral smile graced his lips. "I'm not seducing you, so I don't know why you're protesting so much." An unholy light came into his eyes. "Or perhaps that's the reason for your protests? You want me to seduce you instead?"

His words were like a shot of cold water to her system. Was that what she wanted? For him to seduce her? Why were Rodin's actions affecting her so much?

Giselda stopped pushing against him. She glared at him with dislike. "Go! Do your dirty act away from my sight!"

Rodin brought her up sharply against him. She could feel every inch of his hard body, and there was one especially hard portion nudging the juncture of her thighs. "We'll see what you're calling dirty when your precious prince sticks his dick into you."

Giselda's face flamed. "I've tolerated your insolence long enough, Rodin. Just because Frederick holds you in high regard, you think you can get away with anything. Well, in case you've forgotten, I'm the princess of this land, and I can have you beheaded. You are only the --"

Rodin cut her off. "I know what I am, princess. Believe me, I have never been more aware of what I am than in this moment." He set her down slowly. "But if you know what's good for you, you'll mind your own business." He pulled the other woman up. "I believe my lady and I have some unfinished business. If you will excuse us, Your Highness." He sketched her a small bow and, scooping the woman up in his arms, strode out of the grove.

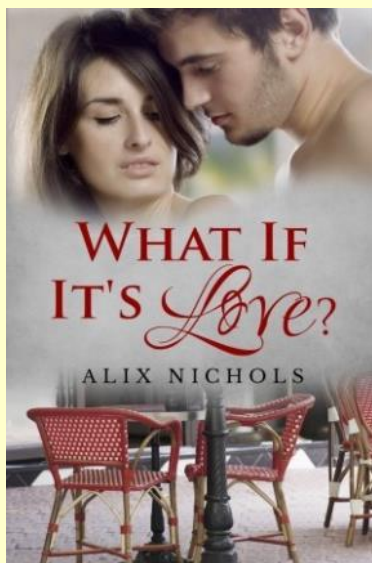
Giselda felt like she'd wandered into the path of a fierce storm and was still trying to fight her way out. She suddenly lost all sense of direction.

### About the Author:

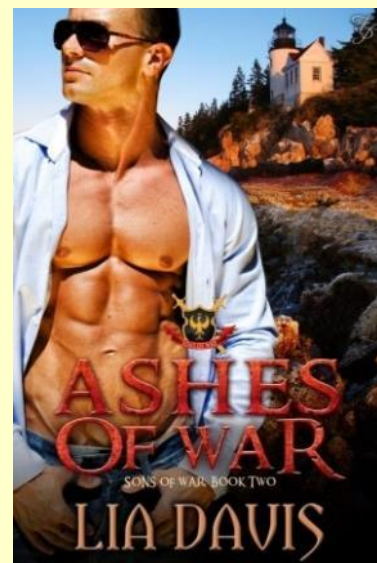
Kai Andersen has always loved books. She loves heroes and heroines with whom she can identify with, i.e. characters who are flawed, who have their own sets of strengths and weaknesses, who find love and passion in each other's arms. So, these are the kinds of stories she writes. Or hope to write.



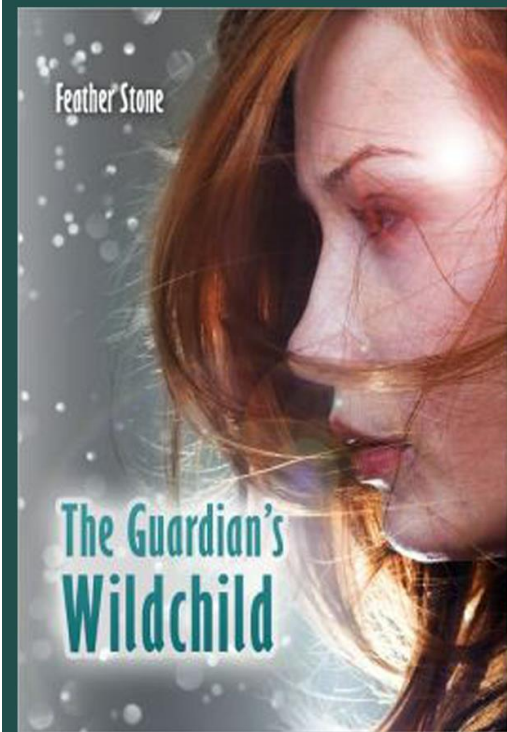
Power, Family, Loyalty: The coveted three can join a shifter & Valkyrie in love or tear them apart



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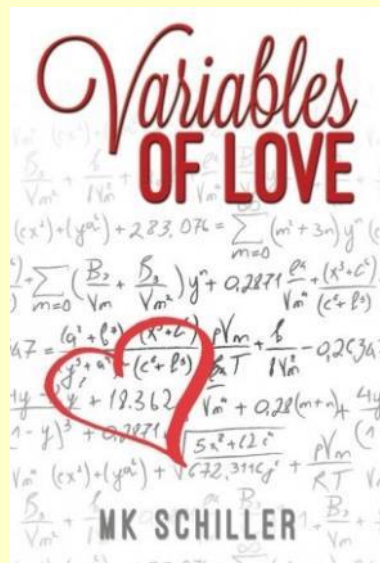
Through stunning imagery, an intricate and adventurous plot, and a strong cast of characters, Feather Stone gives readers a fascinating glimpse into the future—  
a future that is chilling, yet full of hope.

For a chance to win 1 signed print copy of THE GUARDIAN'S WILDCHILD and \$10 Amazon Gift Card, send an email to [ezine @ theromancereviews.com](mailto:ezine@theromancereviews.com) :

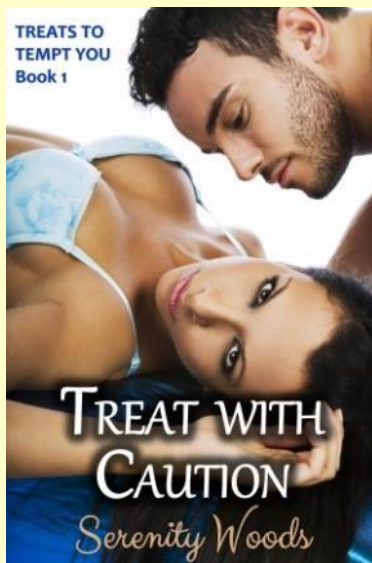
**Subject:** Contest: The Guardian's Wildchild  
**Body of Email:** What is the name of the Guardian's Wildchild?  
**Deadline:** October 31, 2014  
**Hint:** Follow the link

Terms and Conditions:  
 1. Emails that do not follow the instructions above will automatically be disqualified.  
 2. Winners will be announced in the December 2014 issue.

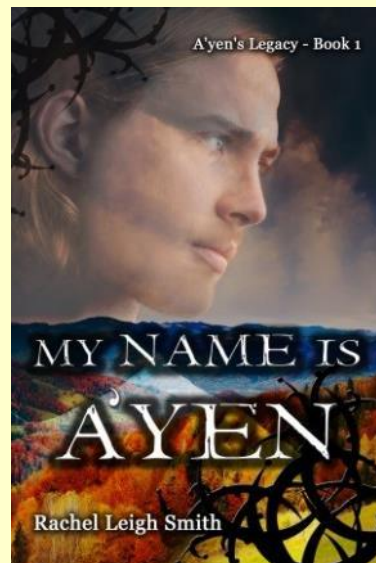
CONTEST AD



Variables of love – He was her fling. She was his everything.



Free first in series! Who will win the bet on Midsummer night?



They've taken everything from him. Except his name.

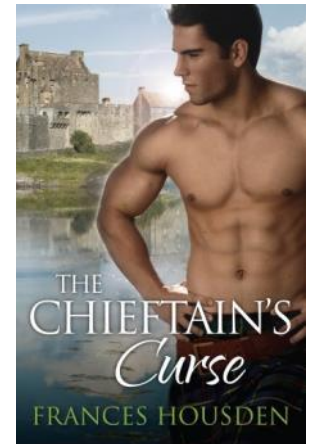
# The Chieftain & Me

By Frances Housden

I once wrote a blog on my website about plot-points in fiction and in our lives—those moments that send us off in a different direction. The first books I had published were contemporary romantic suspense, books filled with cops, spies and alpha males who knew what they wanted and how to get it. Then one of those real life plot-points sent me spinning off with no clear idea of what I wanted to do next. Naturally I thought I'll give the Regency period a go. Unfortunately, as much as I love Georgette Heyer, drawing room comedies are just not my style, so I thought I would take a look at the Peninsular Wars and Waterloo since the sight of blood has never scared me. So I did research, masses and masses of research and enjoyed every minute of it. The book that resulted didn't sell, and I did masses and masses of revisions, but my love for the book was unrequited.

Then, when I was lying in bed one Sunday morning, the next plot-point in my life struck. DH was in the shower and though I was half-asleep I could hear the soothing sound of the shower running as I thought about what I should write next. I was thinking maybe I should give in and try writing a Scottish book, when at last I had a revelation—really—the guy who popped into my head was so clear he might have been in the room with me and he was stark naked. Believe it or not that wasn't actually what held my attention—no this guy's long hair was whipping around his head as he shook his blood-stained fists in the air, yelling, "Will this bloody curse never end!" You might say that caught my attention. I wanted to know who he was and what curse had sent him into such frenzy? By the time I had my shower—an extra long one—I knew he was called Euan McArthur and I had the beginning of *The Chieftain's Curse* in my head.

I now believe that some plots are just sitting at the back of our minds waiting for us to give them the right password. Although it took four years to sell *The Chieftain's Curse*, Escape Publishing was established at just the right time. I was sitting at dinner with one of the editors and said could I send my book to her and emailed her a copy that very night and the rest as they say is history with a little help from plot-points. Euan McArthur obviously knew something I didn't, for *The Chieftain's Curse* has gone on to become a finalist in the Historical section of the RWA's 2014 RITA Awards, and as I sit here writing this I'm making plans to be in San Antonio Texas in July.



This one book idea has now grown into four. I'm working on the final book of my *Chieftain* Series at the present time and book two, *Chieftain by Command* is coming out in September with a Yuletide novella, *The Chieftain's Feud*, available in November. This is where I have to confess that I'm definitely a pantsner. I'll know the beginning and sometimes where I want it to end but the rest just grows naturally out of what went before. That's what happened with the hero in *Chieftain by Command*. He suddenly appeared in the first book and I knew I had another Chieftain for my series. Another method I use to shape my plot is history itself. Knowledge of the period and what was taking place at that time, and in that setting, can give the story an authentic feel and a researchable backdrop to hang the plot on.

Here is where I admit that although I reside in New Zealand, I was born and raised in Scotland. As I like to say, I grew up with St Margaret, King Robert the Bruce and Mary Queen of Scots. My grandfather was a keen Scottish history buff and would take me to visit many of the historic sights in the area where we lived. I've stood in Dunfermline Abbey, gazed down upon Robert the Bruce's grave and sat in the cave where St Margaret used to meditate when she was still simply a queen. I've also drunk from the well where Mary Queen of Scots rested on the way to the island

castle on Loch Leven where she was incarcerated by Elizabeth. The time period I chose for my books is the late 11th century shortly after William the Conqueror and the Battle of Hastings. King Malcolm Canmore—the one who killed Macbeth—is on the throne and his wife is Queen Margaret.

It's a bloody period in history – Malcolm was inclined to bend the knee to William one day then change his mind as soon as the Normans retreated by attacking across the Borders. And although he's in the background he doesn't make an appearance in *Chieftain by Command* which is set in the Cairngorms, and below is a small taste.

*Bienn á Bhuird - Scotland*  
*Year of Our Lord 1082*

*Fate, in the guise of King Malcolm Canmore, had sent Gavyn to this dark place. A high hall, a longhouse built of ancient logs weathered by wind and rain to the colour of aged pewter. A building more suited to the worship of Norse gods than a home for mere mortals.*

*With its back nestled into the shelter of the rocky mountainside, the hall surveyed the whole valley from a broad shelf reached by worn steps carved aeons ago from the cliff-face. Clan Comlyn had ruled from this hall for longer than living memory, but war and ambition had rid the world of the last males in a long line bearing the Comlyn name. Inside the hall, pitch tipped rushes fixed around the walls, scented the dark hollows near the roof, corners where smoke from the fire pit drifted. An unlikely setting, one might say, for the marriage of the daughter of one mighty chieftain and the son of another.*

*Kathryn Comlyn, the only glimmer of brightness in the hall, stood before her groom like a tall, slim, white wand, her hair flowing down her back in a wash of pale sunlight from the huge open doors behind them.*

*Gavyn's lip curled as he thought of himself, thought of how others saw him, this mercenary whom cruel life experiences had cloaked in an aura of darkness, sliced away any claim to being handsome. To the guests it might appear that his bride felt nervous, she kept her lashes downcast, hiding her large aquamarine eyes from her battle scarred groom.*



*Kathryn nervous, never, her bridegroom knew better.*

As I mentioned before, this was a bloody period in Scottish history—for most of the medieval era Scots were either fighting the English or each other. It's my opinion that if you want to stay true to the period there is no point in trying to write a fairy tale, unless of course your surname is Grimm. That's why my stories will always be dark and filled with characters you wouldn't want to take home to mother, but it's also why they work. They are gripping historical romances, sexy, and suspenseful filled with hot highland heroes, and the heroines who can't help loving them.

About **CHIEFTAIN BY COMMAND**:

*From the bestselling, RITA nominated author Frances Housden, comes the gripping, sensual, suspenseful follow-up to The Chieftain's Curse...*

Gavyn Farquhar's marriage is forged with a double-edged blade. Along with the Comlyn clan's lands, a reward from the King, he is blessed with an unwilling bride, Kathryn Comlyn, and an ancient fort with few defenses that desperately needs to be fortified before it can act as a sufficient buffer between Scotland and the Norsemen on its northern borders.

Gavyn needs wealth to meet his king's demands, and he knows of only one way to get it – with his sword. Leaving his prickly bride behind in the hands of trusted advisors, he makes his way to the battlegrounds of France and the money that can be made there.

Two years married and Kathryn is still a virgin. A resentful virgin, certain that, like her father before her, she is perfectly capable of leading the Comlyn clan. In her usurper husband's absence, she meets the clan's needs, advising and ruling as well as any man.

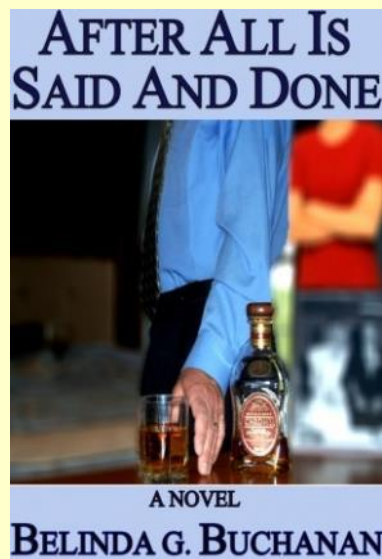
But she is an intelligent woman, and she knows the only respect and power she will ever hold will be through her husband. And to wield it, she needs to make him love her. An easy task to set, but impossible to complete, when said husband has been gone for two years, and there is no word of his return. But Kathryn is undeterred. After all, faint heart never won a Chieftain.

### About the Author:

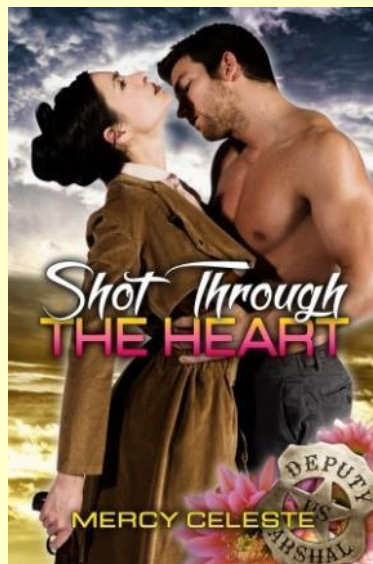


Frances Housden lives in New Zealand—a beautiful country not so very different from Scotland, where she was born. She began her career as a published writer after winning Romance Writers of New Zealand's prestigious Clendon Award. She is now delving into the world of historical romance, using her love of history to take her readers on an exciting trip into the lives of memorable characters. *The Chieftain's Curse*, her first Scottish Medieval and seventh book in the *Chieftains Series*, followed by *Chieftain by Command*, a novella *The Chieftain's Feud* in November and a final book in the series to be released in 2015. Frances loves to hear from readers. Visit her at

her website [www.franceshousden.com](http://www.franceshousden.com)



What would you do if you found out the son you loved wasn't yours?



The Wild West was never this wild.



She may be a thief, but he's stolen her heart



Welcome, **K D Grace**, and please do tell us more about your fabulous series, **LAKELAND WITCHES!**

**Q: What inspired you to create this series?**

Actually, **Body Temperature and Rising** was my first attempt at an erotic novel. It began its life entitled **Love Spells**, as a project for National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo). The novel was inspired by the experience of nearly getting lost in the mists on the high fells in England's Lake District. During that walk, I had the eerie feeling that I could easily walk right into a ghost or a demon or even right out of the world. The original novel got finished, but didn't get submitted until much later when I had several published novels under my belt and felt I had the writing skills to tackle it properly. Then it got reinvented as the first book of the **LAKELAND WITCHES TRILOGY**.

**Q: Please tell us a little about the overall series arc.**

The series is about the Elemental Coven and their battle against a demon named Deacon, who has held a grudge against the coven's high priestess, Tara Stone, for a very long time. The Elemental Coven is unique in that it practices a type of sex magic that allows them, among other things, to enflame ghosts to walk in the physical plane. When we first meet the Elementals, through the eyes of Marie Warren and Tim Meriwether, who have no idea that they possess these same gifts and more, the coven has been decimated by Deacon and is struggling just to survive. Each new novel adds to the coven's ranks as it prepares for the final battle – in **Elemental Fire** – against Deacon. The novels deal with life and love and struggle in a coven of witches where sex is literally magic and a way of generating incredible power.

**Q: When you started this series, did you already have a clear vision of the books and characters you wanted to write about? Or did that evolve over time?**

The series actually began as a single novel. It was only when I tried to write it for Xcite Books that I realized I had way more story than I could cover in one novel, and what I really had on my hands was a trilogy. There are lots of other stories waiting to be told about the Elemental Coven. In fact, at the moment I'm writing a serial called **Demon Interrupted** based on Ferris Ryder, one of the intriguing characters who turns up in book 2, **Riding the Ether**, and becomes an integral part of the coven. Ferris was totally intriguing to me almost from the first meeting. I'm elated to have his story unfolding on my blog, and FREE for readers to enjoy.

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**Q: In the first book, *Body Temperature and Rising*, how did Marie react upon realizing she could unleash demons and enflesh ghosts?**



Marie is such a practical sort of person that she's not one to spend too much time wallowing in her guilt. Once she gets over the shock of the fact that there are ghosts and demons and witches and magic, once she realizes that she has unleashed Deacon and he's a horrible threat, her basic response is, 'Okay, what can I do to help fix it? Teach me how to fight Deacon.' Tim is the one who has to be dragged in kicking and screaming, but for completely different reasons. Here's an example. Deacon has just attacked Marie for the first time and Tim, believing that Tara Stone has murdered one of her own coven sisters, refuses to go back to the Elementals for help. He has found a witch online to help them.

Here's a short excerpt. Enjoy!

Marie ate the offered sandwich and another before Tim dropped the bombshell. 'I called Sirena. Get your jacket. We're going.'

She bit back her protests. Even though she didn't believe for one minute it would do any good. He certainly seemed to. And maybe he was right. Maybe her vision was coloured by the fact that in times of crisis it had been Anderson and Tara who had rescued her, and her encounter with Deacon made her more certain than ever that she didn't have all the facts, and the only place she would get them was from Elemental Cottage. She would go with Tim tonight and get the woo-woo out of the way, but then she was going back to Elemental Cottage, with or without him. She had gotten lucky with Deacon this time, but the next time she might not be so lucky, and what if the next time it was Tim he went after? Did he have her gift? The Elementals hadn't mentioned it if he did. At any rate, she wanted answers, and the only place to find them, she was now certain, was with the Elementals.

**Q: Who are the Elementals? How are they crucial to the story/series?**

The Elementals are a coven of witches, who practice very powerful sex magic. The trilogy is their story, and specifically their coven leader and high priestess, Tara Stone's story. The demon, Deacon, seeks revenge upon Tara for a curse Tara's mother put upon him, and he's been pursuing her through time. Practitioners of their specific type of magic are very long-lived. In order to avenge himself, Deacon has made it his goal to take everything from Tara that matters to her. All that stands between him and free reign over humanity is the Elemental Coven, and Deacon is a very nasty piece of work.

**Q: In the second book, *Riding the Ether*, what was Cassandra's first meeting with Anderson, a sexy ghost, like?**

For Cassandra, who is a succubus, being able to have sex, let alone even touch anyone, is a pivotal experience. She has spent most of her life trying to discover just exactly what she is, and loathing herself because of her desires. In the beginning, she won't even trust herself to be with Anderson anyplace other than the Ether. Here is a little teaser of her watching Anderson sleep after their first time making love in the Ether and reflecting on what her experience has meant to her.

Here's an excerpt:

It was Anderson in his unnecessary sleep that interested her, fascinated her, drew her. He was erect. In a thought that would have been worthy of a teenage girl, she wondered if he was erect from dreams of her. She could find out easily enough, but she never invaded people's dreams on purpose. She never entered people's private places. She ran her hand along his flank feeling her



own essence against his flesh as surely as she felt his on her. She could take him now while he slept and he would never know it. She could give him such sweet dreams of her, such passionate dreams that he would come in his sleep, and she would wear the energy of his release, the energy of his dream like a tight fitting skin that fit almost as closely as her own, that nourished her, gave her strength in a way her own never could. That she could do such things frightened her. That she still wanted to do such things frightened her even more. She bent over him and pressed her mouth against his parted lips breathing a kiss against them, and he sighed softly.



**Q: In the third and final instalment of this trilogy, Elemental Fire, we finally have Tara Stone's story, whom we met back in Book 1, and with whom the demon Deacon has a grudge. Who is Tara? And how did she draw the attention of this demon? What shaped her to be the person she is?**

Tara's relationship with Deacon is possibly the best insight into what has shaped her and into the truly monstrous nature of Deacon and the disturbing link they share. Tara's mother is responsible for the death of the physical body Deacon's demon hoped to possess, so there is an element of the ghost and enfleshment theme of the stories even in Deacon. But Tara's mother dies in a riding accident before Deacon can exact his revenge, so he turns his rage on her only daughter.

Tara's whole adult life has been shaped by Deacon taking from her, never harming her, but causing the death and destruction of those she cares about, so she has become very hardened in order to protect those she loves, in order to keep the Elemental Coven together. She's paid a horrendous price for her efforts. There is very little she won't do to protect her own, but Tara opens her heart to no one, except for her dear friend and high priest, Anderson, who is a ghost. Tara, at one point tells Tim that he will never meet anyone more neurotic than she is. Tara will not have sex with the living, but only with ghosts, because she fears that the kind of attachment a sexual relationship entails is exactly what Deacon will take note of, and he has already killed her husband and her sister.

**Q: Despite the mistrusts on both sides, why are Kennet and Tara perfect for each other?**

The thing about Kennet and Tara is that they both want nothing so badly as to destroy Deacon. The difference is that Kennet is driven by revenge for the loss of his wife and sister, even to the point of allowing the demon, Lucia, to possess him in order to get that revenge. Tara, on the other hand, is driven by the need to protect her coven and those she loves. They balance each other, in that Kennet brings Lucia's brutal objectivity into the coven and the Elemental Coven and Tara's protection of it offers Kennet a family and a place to belong. And in a way, Lucia plays demon matchmaker, needing the two of them to work together, but even she can't foresee the chemistry between them.

**Q: Which is the most erotic scene in the entire series?**

Wow! That's hard to say. There are a lot of them, but I think the ménage between Marie, Tim, and Anderson near the end of *Body Temperature* and *Rising* is definitely one of the hottest. A lot of the sizzle, in my opinion is because of what I call 'Anderson-speak.' Whenever Anderson opens his 19th century mouth, what comes out is hot in a very different sort of way, and when it comes to guiding a very nervous Tim in this little ménage, Anderson is the right man for the job.

Here's an excerpt from the first book, **Body Temperature and Rising**:

Anderson gave Marie's hand a reassuring squeeze and moved to sit next to Tim. 'Intuition has long been one of my gifts, Tim Meriwether. Am I wrong in believing that you wish more from me than just to watch me share the pleasures of Marie's body with you?

'No. No you're not wrong.' Tim ran shaky fingers through his hair. Then he took a deep breath, and glanced from one of them to the other, his gaze coming once again to rest on Anderson. He squared his shoulders and offered a twitch of a smile. 'No. You're not wrong.'

Anderson didn't give him time to contemplate. His large hand slid to the nape of Tim's neck, and he pulled him into a series of kisses, at first gentle and fleeting, little more than brushes of the lips, flicks of the tongue, like dragon flies skimming the surface of a pond. Tim's nervousness was palpable in the charged atmosphere of the room. But so was his arousal.

'I've never been with a man before,' Tim whispered. 'God that sounds so cliché.'

Anderson cupped his stubbled cheek. 'But you have imagined how it would be, have you not? All men have. It is a part of our nature to love our own flesh and the shape of it. Therefore we cannot but love it in others of our sex, though it may not be a love we consciously allow ourselves to feel.' He nodded at Tim's still bare penis. 'If this is the gift you have been regularly offering up to our Marie, then I most certainly understand why sharing your bed pleases her so.'

### **Q: Which is the most kickass scene in the entire series?**

It has to be the very first time we really see Tara go up against Deacon. The scene is in **Body Temperature and Rising**. Tim, still not trusting Tara Stone, is in a desperate situation, hanging from the side of a cliff face trying to rescue Serina Ravenmoor. He is facing Deacon, who has given him a choice of saving Serina's life or Marie's, but not both, Tara and the Elementals arrive.

Enjoy this!

'I won't make it that easy for you, Mr Meriwether.' He spoke between laboured breaths. 'I have informed you of my demands. They have not changed. As you see, I hold the upper hand.' He lifted the blade so that it caught the reflecting light of the moon. 'A fraction of a second, Mr Meriwether. A fraction of a second is all I need to assure a swift death for that one,' he nodded to Serina, who whimpered against Tim's back. 'And a very painful death for your Marie.' He stroked the flat of his blade with a thick finger. 'You see, to your sweet Marie, I will make that fraction of a second seem like a thousand years, and I promise visions of her suffering will haunt you in your dreams for as long as you walk among the living. It's simple, really. All you need do, Mr Meriwether, is take your own blade, cut the charlatan free and give a tiny shrug. Then you will be relieved of your burden. I will allow you to descend to safety and return home to fuck your Marie, and no one will ever be the wiser.' He nodded to Serina, who whimpered on his back but didn't move. 'At some point someone will find a decomposing corpse, and when the coroner's report comes back, the conclusion will, of course, be suicide. Suicides happen all the time, after all, a tragic part of the human condition. Make your decision Mr Meriwether. My patience grows thin.'

Tim would have doubled over with the pain between his hip bones had he not been pressed tight against the rock. He didn't waste breath cursing, though he felt like it. What he needed was a clear head, what he needed was a way out, a way to assure Marie's safety. But a split second for him was only that, a split second. Once again the image of Tara snapping Fiori's neck flashed through his head followed quickly by Fiori, Sky and Anderson fiercely flanking Tara Stone in her defence in spite of the truth she did not deny, a thousand years of suffering, Deacon had said. A thousand years of agony at his hand, played out in a split second. And suddenly, Tim understood completely. With every ounce of strength he could muster, he mentally shouted and screamed and begged for Tara, for Anderson, for the Elementals.

'Your time is up, Mr Meriwether.' Deacon raised the knife. 'Indecision is such a weakness in a man.'

The reflection of the blade in moonlight flashed blindingly bright. In the blue, black after images that paraded across his retinas, Tim saw Tara Stone flanked by Sky and Fiori, drawing a blade of her own, long, thin, and desperately sharp, a blade that hissed and crackled with old magic. He didn't know how he knew that, but he did. Tara's voice carried on the wind. 'It's your time that's up, Deacon. You will go, and you will leave me and mine alone. There will be no more sacrificial lambs, but bared swords and sharpened daggers waiting for you. There will be no more meek for you to trample upon. I will live to see my mother and my husband and my sisters and all of those you have stolen from me avenged. And you will be returned to the dust, forgotten as though you never existed. Lightening crackled, heat sizzled, and with a wide, sweeping arc, Tara Stone brought the blade upward and rent Deacon from groin to shoulder with a deafening crack of thunder. And just like that, he was gone.

**Q: How do you come up with such unique and emotionally driven plots?**

I take my ideas from lots of places, and they usually start out pretty simple and get built upon. As I said, the Lakeland books began with me and my husband nearly getting lost in the mist on the high fells. My novel, **The Initiation of Ms Holly**, came from being stuck in the Eurostar Tunnel beneath the English channel in a malfunctioning train for four and a half hours. Most ideas come from simple experiences that just intrigue me and begin to grow in my head. I have a very active imagination ☺

**Q: What scene was most difficult to write, either because of its emotional intensity or level of technical difficulty?**



The final encounter with Deacon, in **Elemental Fire** was very difficult to write because it was the culmination of all the efforts of all the coven and of my efforts as a writer. And, frankly, it was hard to let Deacon go. He was an outrageously sexy, horribly terrifying fun baddie to write. But what made it hardest was to know that I would have to take Tara Stone and Fiori right up to the breaking point, right up to the point where if there's a way out, it's not at all clear, and it will not be without sacrifice. Then I'd have to push them beyond. God, if anyone ever deserved a HEA, it's Tara Stone, but she had to work really, really hard to earn it, and I didn't want readers to feel like she had cheated them to get there. It was an emotionally devastating scene to write, and I have to say, I was proud of the whole Elemental Coven at the end.

**Q: What kind of research did you do in the process of writing this series? Please share with us an interesting fact that you came across.**

KD: As I said, I spent several years working with a Wiccan coven in South England, which gave me a lot of insights and basic understanding of things like casting magic circles, skrying, calling the quarters and the running of a coven.

But the very best thing about the Lakeland novels was the time I got to spend in the English Lake District. The books are set near Keswick on Derwent Water, a place I'm familiar with because my husband and I are avid long-distance walkers and love walking the high fells in the Lake District. In fact, the real shape of the story comes from the magic of the landscape, the feel that the land itself is steeped in ancient elemental power. It's my favourite place on the planet. For the scene in which Tim is attempting to rescue Serine Ravenmoor, I had the help of a man who is a long time member of the Keswick Mountain rescue. Brian Spencer and his wife, Vron, have basically taken my husband and me under their wings to teach us navigation and map skills. Their advice and help was invaluable. Thanks to them, we are both comfortable taking a map and a compass and

heading out onto the high fells, knowing that we'll stay safe, have a great time and end up in the pub at the bottom of the fell rather than lost on the moors. Also, they've showed us some of the secret places and told us lots of stories and lore of one of the few places in England not to be conquered by the Normans. There are some very chilling stories about the Secret Valley and the ambushing of the Normans there. All of the place names and the fells mentioned are fells I've climbed, some in sunshine, some in mist, and I hope that the magical feel of the place itself infuses the books, because it truly is a magical landscape.

**Q: Who are some of your romance influences? What about your writing influences, if different?**

Not much difference for me, really. I love Nora Roberts, adore J. R. Ward, Karen Marie Moning, Patricia Briggs. At the moment I'm rediscovering Diana Gabaldon's fabulous Outlander novels again with the advent of the television series, which sadly, I can't get yet in the UK. I think beyond a shadow of a doubt, Claire Randall and Jamie Fraser are the ultimate romantic couple to me. Diana Gabaldon's books are brave and sexy and heroic. She is definitely one of my writing legend to me.

**Q: What's up next for you?**

I'm just now settling in to write another Grace Marshall novel. Grace's stuff is sizzling hot, but has much more of a romance focus than KD's. From the beginning of the *Executive Decisions* trilogy, readers were always asking for Wade's story – Wade is the very secretive genius inventor who is the techno-brain behind Pneuma, Inc. Well, Wade's story is now in the works. It'll be out by Valentine's day.

Awesome! Not that long to wait. ☺ Thanks a lot, K D, for giving us these insights into your amazing series! Now for the **Fast Answer Round:**

**Favorite chocolate:** 87% dark!

**Favorite cartoon character:** Pink Panther

**Favorite superhero:** Iron Man

**Favorite food:** Taco Salad

**Most influential person:** my husband, Raymond

**About the Author, K D Grace/Grace Marshall:**



Voted ETO Best Erotic Author of 2014, K D Grace believes Freud was right. In the end, it really IS all about sex, well sex and love. And nobody's happier about that than she is, otherwise, what would she write about?

When she's not writing, K D is veg gardening. When she's not gardening, she's walking. She walks her stories, and she's serious about it. She and her husband have walked Coast to Coast across England, along with several other long-distance routes. For her, inspiration is directly proportionate to how quickly she wears out a pair of

walking boots. She also enjoys martial arts, reading, watching the birds and anything that gets her outdoors.

K D has erotica published with SourceBooks, Xcite Books, Harper Collins Mischief Books, Mammoth, Cleis Press, Black Lace, Erotic Review, Ravenous Romance, Sweetmeats Press and others.

K D's critically acclaimed erotic romance novels include, [The Initiation of Ms Holly](#), [Fulfilling the Contract](#), [The Pet Shop](#). Her paranormal erotic novel, [Body Temperature and Rising](#), the first book of her Lakeland Witches trilogy, was listed as honorable mention on [Violet Blue's Top 12 Sex Books for 2011](#). Books two and three, [Riding the Ether](#), and [Elemental Fire](#), are now also available.

K D Grace also writes hot romance as [Grace Marshall](#). [An Executive Decision](#), [Identity Crisis](#), [The Exhibition](#) are all available.

### Book 1 in the LAKELAND WITCHES TRILOGY



[Amazon UK](#)  
[Amazon US](#)

American transplant to the Lake District, MARIE WARREN, didn't know she could unleash demons and enflesh ghosts until a voyeuristic encounter on the fells ends in sex with the charming ghost, ANDERSON, and night visits from a demon. To help her cope with her embarrassing and dangerous new abilities, Anderson brings her to the ELEMENTALS, a coven of witches who practice rare sex magic that temporarily allows needy ghosts access to the pleasures of the flesh.

DEACON, the demon Marie has unleashed, holds an ancient grudge against TARA STONE, coven high priestess, and will stop at nothing to destroy all she holds dear. Marie and her landlord, the reluctant young farmer, TIM MERIWETHER, are at the top of his list. Marie and Tim must learn to wield coven magic and the numinous power of their lust to stop Deacon's bloody rampage before the coven is torn apart and more innocent people die.



## Book 2 in the LAKELAND WITCHES TRILOGY



[Amazon UK](#)

[Amazon US](#)

Cassandra Larkin keeps her ravenous and dangerous sexual appetite secret until she seduces Anderson in the mysterious void of the Ether. Anderson is the sexy, insatiable ghost who can give her exactly what she needs.

But sex is dangerous in a place like the Ether...

When the treacherous demon, Deacon, discovers the truth about the origin of Cassandra's powerful lust, he plots to use her sex magic for revenge on Tara Stone and the Elemental Coven, who practice their own brand of sex magic.

Cassandra must embrace the lust and sexuality she fears and learn to use its power. Will she stand with Anderson, Tara, and the Elemental Coven against Deacon's wrath or suffer the loss of friendship, magic and love?

## Book 3 in the LAKELAND WITCHES TRILOGY



[Amazon UK](#)

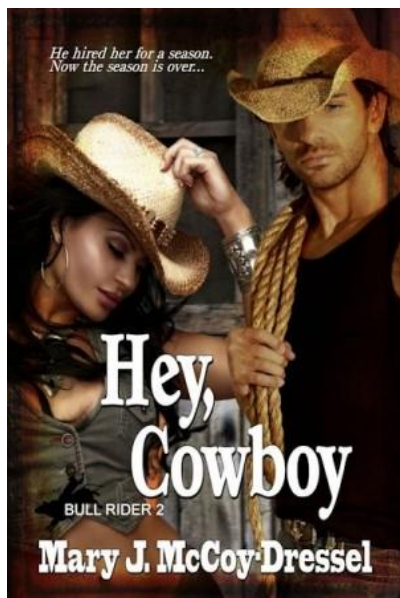
[Amazon US](#)

Obsessed with revenge, KENNET LUCIAN makes a deal with a demon, a deal he comes to regret when he meets TARA STONE, head of the Elemental Coven, and a powerful witch with a desire for revenge at least as great as his. Even though the attraction between the two is magnetic and the lust combusive, Kennet must betray her to accomplish his goal, which is ultimately her goal as well; to put a final end to the demon, Deacon's, reign of terror.

But can Tara trust the man who has wormed his way into her heart and the heart of the Elemental Coven? Can she trust LUCIA, the demon with whom Kennet is allied, a demon with her own agenda. The path to Deacon's destruction is far from clear, and the price that must be paid to be free of him forever may be too high, even for Tara Stone.



# review spotlight



Rating:



[Amazon Kindle](#)  
[Barnes and Noble](#)

In *Hey, Cowboy*, a break in the season finds Velia Armano and Caulder McCutchen back in Tucson, Arizona. Family, friends, and rowdy cowboys are brought together to share in joy...and sometimes pain.

The last year with Caulder has given her trust and strength like she's never known. But, her strength is weakened. Enemies harbor a vendetta against her and her family...and anyone who gets in the way.

Caulder vows to protect Velia, yet little does he know the lengths he'll have to go— He learns that sometimes a hero has to prove he is one.

He'd like to give her the world, be the man she needs, but an injury during break threatens his career. How can he give her everything when his future hangs in the balance?

All they ask for is a peaceful life together—a new bull riding season with a chance to win the coveted gold buckle, and a happily ever after.

Happiness is within reach if their burning love is strong enough to overcome enemies plotting against Velia's family—and a possible career-ending injury for Caulder.

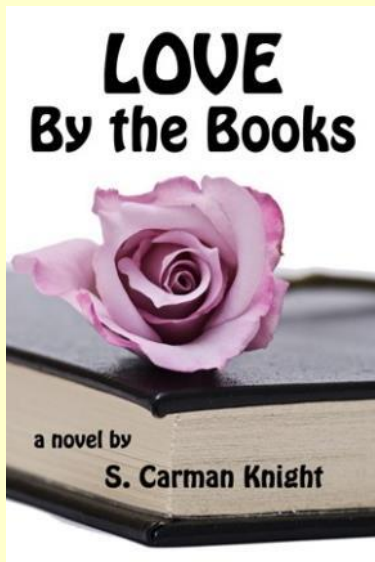
## *Review by Angie Just Read...*

If you fell in love with Velia Armano and Caulder McCutcheon in *HOWDY, MA'AM*, ease on in and see where this couple's continued journey takes them in *HEY, COWBOY*. It's another wonderful ride!

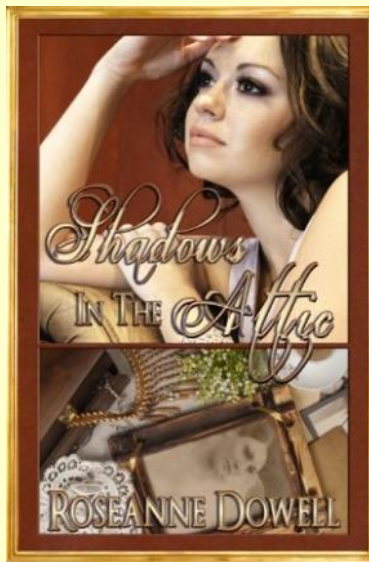
Bull rider Caulder McCutcheon and professional photographer Velia Armano's year together has brought them joys, disappointments, closure, and most importantly love, but as they attempt to make a life together, ugly reminders of the past create new obstacles before the upcoming rodeo season even begins.

Mary McCoy-Dressel's outstanding follow up to *Howdy, Ma'am* is well-plotted, realistic, and strikes a finely tuned balance between romance, drama, and family issues that keeps the reader totally immersed in the trials and tribulations of a wonderful couple one can't help but empathize with and cheer for.

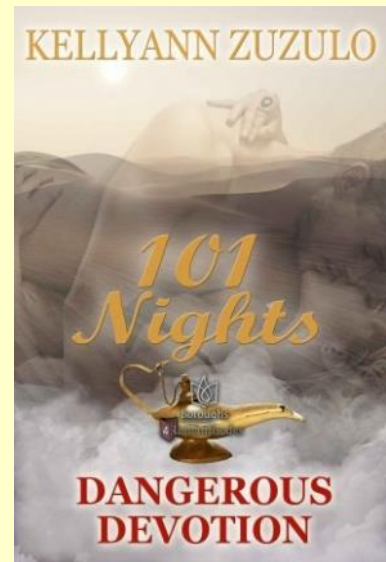
Fans of contemporary cowboy romance will fall in love with Calder and Velia all over again and are bound to seek out other titles by a talented author who really knows her stuff. Ms. McCoy-Dressel has me addicted to her gentleman cowboys and leaves me eagerly anticipating each new tale.



They loved before. Can they find love again?



Now available in bookstores



Love can be dangerous... especially when you never expected to fall. READ for \$1.99



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  - The Heart of Christmas by Brenda Novak
  - The Lodge on Holly Road by Sheila Roberts
- One copy of Her Holiday Man by Shannon Stacey (ebook)
- One package of ornament charms
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1. Only one (1) winner will be chosen.
2. Send an email to:
  - [ezine @theromancereviews.com](mailto:ezine@theromancereviews.com)
  - and answer the following question:
  - What is your favorite holiday? Why?**
  - Subject: Contest: Harlequin
3. Contest Deadline: November 20, 2014
4. Winner will be announced in the December 2014 ezine.

# Buried Threads

Kaylin McFarren



A disturbing prophecy sends a treasure hunting duo on an urgent race to rescue a country in Kaylin McFarren's heart pounding new novel, *Buried Threads*. Full of erotic suspense and wild adventures, this is one trip that readers will never forget!

Rachel Lyons and Chase Cohen work together as the successful owners of a treasure hunting company. But a seemingly simple assignment – to track down a priceless gem that is believed to be buried in a shipwreck deep within the Sea of Japan – takes a startling, and dangerous, turn.

Faced with a monk's dark prophecy that a natural disaster will soon strike Japan, killing millions, Rachel and Chase must embark on the mission of a lifetime in order to uncover the three cursed samurai swords that can avert the catastrophe.

Chaos ensues as their adventure takes them from shark infested waters and creepy caves to haunted hidden tombs and a confrontation with Yakuza gang members. Time is running out as the prophecy's day of reckoning draws near. Will Rachel and Chase succeed before disaster strikes?

**ISBN:** 9781492120469

**Publisher:** Creative Edge Publishing LLC

**Publication date:** October 2013

**Genre:** Erotic Romantic Suspense

**Buy Links:**

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[Kaylin McFarren Website](#)

sneak peek

Reluctantly, she took the proffered hand. "Rachel Lyons." She bristled at the man's touch – the strange sensation it evoked. Although she wanted to draw her hand away quickly, his other hand closed over hers and held it tight. After an endless moment, he released his grasp and leaned back in his seat, giving her the space she craved.

How odd.

He pointed at her files and borrowed copies of *Emperors of the Han Dynasty* and *The Knights of Templar*. "Looks like you're got some heavy reading to do. We definitely have a lot in common."

She quirked her brows. "We do?"

"In regard to your interest in history. So what is it you do, Miss Lyons?" He flashed a wide disarming smile.

She hesitated before answering. "I find missing things too...under the sea."

"You're a treasure hunter?" he asked.

Rachel nodded.

"That sounds intriguing."



She opened her file and felt his gaze sharply, as if he had reached out and touched her skin. She sensed that he wanted to delve further into her life, but for the next two hours she studied ocean topography and reports on strange sea creature sightings, and made a point of not sparing him more than the briefest of glances. The lights on the plane were eventually dimmed and all around her window shades were being pulled down. It had been three long days since Chase left their warm bed in her father's beachside cottage for salvage preparations in Japan. His absence and the anticipation of her trip had left Rachel completely exhausted. As the air thickened and the airplane cabin stilled, her eyelids fought gravity. The gentle swaying and steady hum of the engines lulled her into a deep, dreamless sleep.

Eventually, the sound of the breakfast cart jolted her awake. Still groggy, she forced her eyes open and inhaled the enticing aroma of hot coffee, reminding her of freshly ground heaven. However, her calm was short lived. With one look to her side, she realized the file she'd been reading prior to drifting off to sleep had been tucked into the seat pocket ahead of her.

You've got to be kidding me. Rachel studied Shinzo while he sheepishly sipped his coffee. His concerted effort to avoid eye contact left her wondering if he'd taken advantage of her carelessness by snooping through her confidential papers. Everything she'd been sworn to keep secret might have been exposed to this invasive stranger, endangering not only Trident Venture's project but also the individual who had risked his life to hire them.

She hesitated before asking, "Did you by chance move my file?"

"Your papers fell," he answered. "By the looks of them, you might want to keep those close to you, Miss Lyons."

His inference was unnerving. Although tempted to ask if he'd found anything of interest, she simply mumbled, "Thank you."



With that, Shinzo turned his view to the window.

Mindful of the cart's proximity, Rachel stood abruptly and pulled down her carry-on. She emptied the seat next to her, zipped her bag shut and returned it to the overhead bin. Then she resumed her seat and stared straight ahead with her hands clenched in her lap. Buried anxieties were surfacing by the second, curbing her appetite. She shook her head, declining breakfast when it arrived on the hands of the blond stewardess.

"That looks delicious," Shinzo said, lowering his tabletop. Rachel watched as a tray containing a cheese omelet, blueberry yogurt cup, croissant

and strawberry jam was set down before him. The stewardess returned a second time with coffee, cream and sugar.

Wonderful. Rachel picked up the in-flight magazine and flipped blindly through its pages. She rocked her heel nervously, anxious for this tortuous ride to be over. Her cheeks warmed at the practically pornographic noise that came out of her seatmate, as he threw his head back and munched gratifyingly, his eyes closed in contentment. She noticed a spot of jam on the corner of his mouth and looked away determinedly.

"There's nothing better than warm bread and eggs in the morning," he said, recovering from his omelet orgasm.

Rachel glared at the annoying man, willing him be sucked out the window. But then she'd never know his whole story. "You're not a private investigator, are you, Mr. Shinzo?" she grilled.

He picked up his torn roll and smeared it with more jam. "I never said I was."

"But you inferred as much."

"That was never my intent. If you recall, I never told you what I actually recover."

She shook her head and sarcastically laughed. "Oh my, God...you're a treasure hunter, aren't you? I've been sitting next to my competition this whole time."

Shinzo chuckled. "Not quite."

"So, what do you collect then?"

"I think you'd have a hard time believing me if I told you."

"Try me," she said then inwardly cringed on her insistence.

After another well-chewed mouthful, he looked directly at her and replied in a matter-of-fact tone. "Souls."

### **About the Author:**



Although Kaylin wasn't born with a pen in hand like so many of her talented fellow authors, she has been actively involved in business and personal writing projects for many years. As director of a fine art gallery, she assisted in furthering the careers of numerous visual artists through promotional opportunities in national publications.

Eager to spread her creative wings, she has since steered her energy toward writing novels. As a result, she has earned more than a dozen literary awards and was a 2008 finalist in the prestigious RWA® Golden Heart contest. Kaylin is a member of RWA, Rose City Romance Writers, and Willamette Writers. Receiving her AA in literature at Highline Community College originally sparked her passion for writing. In her free time, she enjoys giving back to the community through participation and support of various charitable and educational organizations in the Pacific Northwest.

# HURTS SO GOOD

## Anatomy of the Grovel

By Ainslie Paton

What is it that's so satisfying about a good grovel? That moment when the hero, usually, but sometimes the heroine, acknowledges they've gotten it wrong, mucked up, blown it, and realise it's all on them to make things right.

It's that last ditch, bended knee, prostrate moment where the stakes are spectacularly high and the act of *I'm sorry please forgive me*, plays out from the depths of despair, with serious consequences for the happy ever after.

Think the final scene of *When Harry Met Sally*, when Harry expounds on what he loves about Sally and she responds with, "I hate you," and she so clearly doesn't. Or Pat's letter to Tiffany in *Silver Linings Playbook* where he makes her cry in the middle of the street. Or Patrick singing *Can't take my eyes off of you* to Katarina in *10 Things I Hate About You*.

The grovel happens at the very point in the story when the couple is done for, their relationship ripped apart, their chance of making it dashed.

It's the moment we almost drop the book in the bath, fling the e-reader at a wall, out of sheer frustration, because this is it. The entire weight of the story comes down to the effectiveness of the grovel.

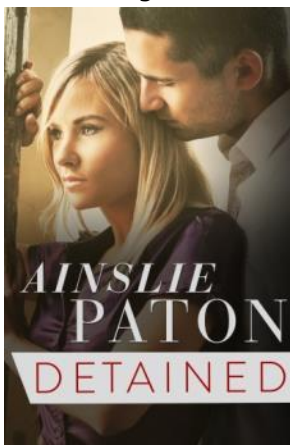
Of course it's also the moment where you can't stop reading because you have to know how it's going to go, and a grovel gone wrong means the whole story is doomed.

It's the pre-grovel moment where the reader's heart is most at risk. And not because you know the grovel is coming, but because of the innate fear it won't be good enough. It can't be some weak namby-pamby I'm sorry. It can't be some half hearted why don't we give it a second shot.

It has to be Jack Colton and his big boat parked outside Joan Wilder's apartment in *Romancing the Stone*, Edward Lewis in the open top of his limo serenading Vivian Ward on her fire escape in *Pretty Woman*, or Jerry McGuire with his, "You complete me," to Dorothy Boyd.

It has to have us a hello.

Which is another way of saying it has to be heroic. A perfect combination of self awareness and soul bearing delivered at exactly the right pitch, in the most trying circumstances. At the point of grovel there is a huge chasm of loss over which the party in the wrong throws a bridge to the wronged party made of all the deepest, most painful truths, and then hopes like hell they'll cross it.



It might be done with humour, with anger, with tender reluctance or hopeless fatalism. And with no expectation of success. Whatever the emotion, it's in full flight, because only the most passionate appeal has any chance of making it.

The very worst thing one of my beta readers can say to me is that I've mucked up the grovel. Because if I get a *make him work harder*, comment back then I know I've loused up one of the most important heartbeats of the happy ending. Here are some snippets of grovels I

hopefully didn't muck up.

In ***Detained***, billionaire Will Parker manipulates journalist Darcy Campbell to keep a secret that could ruin his reputation. It's a secret that could make Darcy's career. She figures out he's using her, but by that stage she's fallen for him.

"He's a deceiving, rotten, duplicitous bastard. He tricked me into doing this."

"That would be my brother you're talking about."

"That would be the man I love. How much trouble is he in now?"

Will was in a lot of trouble and he needed A class grovelling from inside a police interview room.

Will turned back to face her. "I used to be at my fighting weight when I was alone." He had one hand shoved in his coat pocket, the other fisted at his side, keeping them still while he stirred the air with his words. "That's how I did best, when I was accountable to no one but myself and Pete. It was a very good life. But you screwed with that." He stepped towards her, and it took all her energy to hold her ground.

"You got in my head, and you made me dream about different things, not ore and steel and making money, but acceptance and laughter and love. And you. Always you, when I didn't even understand what I was dreaming."

She sighed as understanding blossomed.

"And if that's not ruin enough, you've wrecked my desire to play maverick. I'm going to do this right and the setting is, well for us, it's perfect." He went down on one knee.

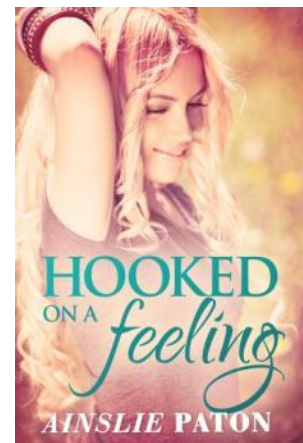
In ***Floored***, undercover cop, Sean and chauffeur Cait, fight about her role helping in a police sting. Sean warns her off, but no one tells Cait what to do. Furious, Sean storms off. His dramatic grovel takes place in the form of a one man hostage rescue operation during which he takes a bullet and nearly loses his life.

There was movement amongst the bikers and then she saw him in the faint filtered light from the verandah. Sean. Alone. Feet planted wide, arms open to show he had no weapon. He was utterly surrounded. Defenceless. He was going to get himself killed.

Sean has to do some minor grovelling about that before the story ends.

He pulled himself together enough to take her hand and put it over his heart. "We'll always be here," then move their joined hands to her heart. "And here." She sighed and he caught it on his tongue before he went on. "When it's good, when it's bad, when it's forty-four flavours in between. You're going to love me when I forget to be considerate, and I'm going to love you when you forget to trust me and that's for always."

In ***Getting Real*** and ***Hooked on a Feeling***, it's the heroines who do the grovelling. *Getting Real's* Rielle Mainline is a rock star with a bad attitude who skipped out on her romance with roadie Jake Reed. When



she comes back to town having sorted her life out, Jake doesn't want to know her. She's forced to carve out her heart in front of him to get him to accept an apology.

Rielle opened her eyes and stepped forward. Jake was right there in front of her. He was real, not a memory. She could touch his beautiful body again. She spread her hand gently across his ribs and accepted his flinch as a reprimand.

"You told me and you showed me, you loved me totally, completely." She thought he might step away again but he held her eyes. "And I did the most fucked up thing I've ever done in my adult life. I threw that love in your face and I ran and I did it because I thought I was doing right by you."

In *Hooked on a Feeling*, Gayle rejects Ray's offer of marriage. It's 1975 and she's not ready to settle into a new marriage so soon after the failure of her last one. She wants to explore being free and independent. Except she realises Ray and his daughter Kim are the best things that have ever happened to her and her son, Dean.

Gayle bares her heart and her hopes to Ray in a desperate attempt to cool his anger towards her and get a second chance at love:

She let a breath out; let a wish in. "I love you, Ray. I love you so much it scared me. I've never felt this way. I didn't trust it, thought it was only physical. What happened at the quarry was an excuse to push you away. I should've trusted you, talked to you."

He shook his head, his arm slapping against his side in frustration. "I don't understand."

"I want another chance for us." She wanted to fuse her life with his.

"What does that mean?"

It meant everything, but it was in his hands. "I don't know. I hurt you."

Ray was still, his head down, while all around them was suburban chaos. Nev was lighting shells and the kids were lining up to chase down the green plastic army man with his white parachute. That's what she needed now from Ray, a parachute, a softer landing. It was the best she could hope for.

He jerked his chin up, his first real smile emerged. "I've had worse."

What is it that's so satisfying about a good grovel? It's the heroic nature of a clash between the ideals and expectations of two different characters. It's the hurts so good heart of a great romance. The point at which the only thing that matters is the love of the other person, and the only way to get it is total honesty at the risk of utter failure. No wonder it's addictive.

May all your reads have great grovel.

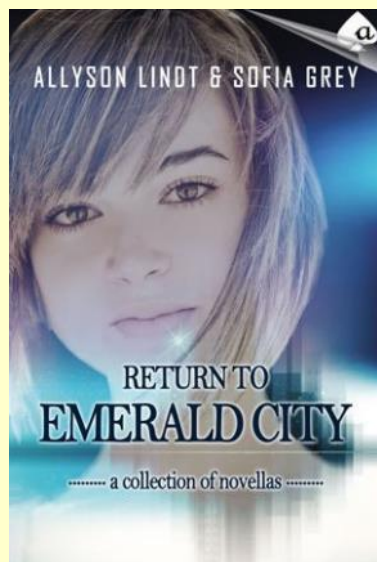
**About the Author:**

Ainslie Paton is a corporate storyteller working in marketing, public relations and advertising.

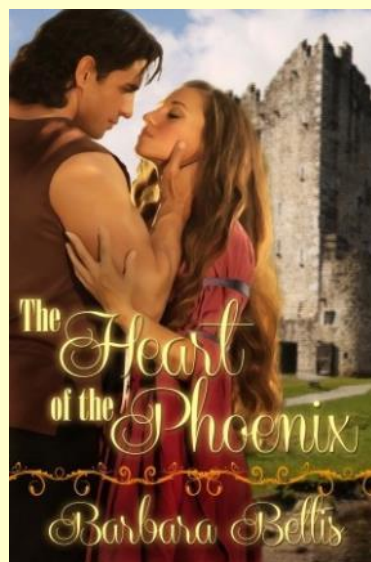
She's written about everything from the African refugee crisis and Toxic Shock Syndrome, to high-speed data networks and hamburgers.

She writes cracking, hyper-real contemporary romances about strong women and the exciting men who love them.

Ainslie blogs at: <http://www.ainsliepaton.com.au/>. You can chat to her on Twitter @AinsliePaton



A collection of novellas inspired by the world of The Wizard of Oz



Some call him a ruthless mercenary; she calls him the knight of her heart.





Let's welcome **Belinda McBride**, where she will tell us more about her fabulous series, **AN UNCOMMON WHORE**.

**Q: Please tell us a little about the overall series arc.**

**THE UNCOMMON WHORE** series is part of a larger science fiction romance I have with Loose Id. All stories take place in a shared universe, but **UNCOMMON WHORE** focus on the people of a small planet called Neo Domus. They were an advanced, but rather reclusive society that eschewed space exploration so they weren't prepared when an invasion from space nearly decimated their population and destroyed their resources. Following the invasion, all the leaders of their people were killed, save for a lone prince: Helios Dayspring. The new king was taken captive and vanished while the population was relocated and left to survive on Neo Domus, a seemingly hostile planet.

The story arcs follow the search for Helios, and his ascent to king as well as his love affair with his best friend and bodyguard Captain Griffin Hawke. The new book, **Prince of Faith**, takes a step away from Griffin and Helios and follows the story of his cousin Markus Dayspring, a suspected traitor.

**Q: When you started this series, did you already have a clear vision of the books and characters you wanted to write about? Or did that evolve over time?**

Initially, I was just writing a m/m novella for an anthology and it quickly ran over word count. I had no plans for a series but by the time I finished the book it obviously had a much larger story waiting. I decided to end the first book at a natural break then follow the larger arc in the following books.

**Q: How do you keep track of your series details?**

I keep a series "bible" which is a master spreadsheet on the entire Coalition universe. It's a living document that I keep open and add to as I write. Because some characters cross over from other books, it's easiest just to keep a single list. My editor and line editor keep similar documents for the series so they keep tabs on it too.

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**Q: In the first book, *An Uncommon Whore*, how did Griffin felt when he realized he's found the lost king (Helios Dayspring) that he was looking for, crouched between his knees and wearing the shackles of a whore?**

For starters, horrified. You see, he suspects, but doesn't really know it's Helios at that first scene. It's not till he forces Helios to bare his face in the rented room that he fully understands that his king just gave him a blow job! LOL! In Griffin's mind, Helios is now his king and no longer his friend and lover. To have a king kneel before him is just WRONG. Then he tumbles into relief, guilt, joy, love and fear for the future, because it's pretty obvious that Helios is no longer the man he was. Here's a bit of that scene:

When the pirate abruptly dropped to his knees, I was more than surprised—I was stunned. When he clasped my limp hand, pressing it to his forehead, I became alarmed.

But when he cried, taking great, sobbing breaths, I could do one thing and one thing only.

I dropped to my knees and took the huge warrior into my arms, doing my best to offer him comfort. And I hadn't a clue what was wrong.

"I failed you."

His voice was forlorn and despondent. Ashamed. His hands hung at his sides as I wrapped my arms around his body. Tears slid from his intact eye, trickling down his cheek to settle on my bare shoulder. He outweighed me by many pounds, and I held on tighter to keep from going over.

Okay, so I groped him.

Not to disrespect the man or anything, but he was a complete stranger, if you discount the fact that I'd just given him a blowjob. But still, I didn't even know his name, yet here he was, leaning into my body and crying on my shoulder.

It seemed like the perfect opportunity.

He sobbed; I stroked his back, my hand dropping to his muscular ass. He let out a grief-stricken moan, and I wiggled in a bit closer.

"I am so sorry."

I really didn't know what to say to that. If this man was responsible for my current life status...well, not good. Not good at all. But still...this man was a rock-hard badass, and he was so overwhelmed by emotion, by guilt, that he was falling apart in my arms.



And he knew me. Not Pasha the whore, but me.

"What was your primary responsibility...to me?" That just sounded weird.

"To keep you alive."

A bodyguard, perhaps? That led to some interesting possibilities.

"Look at me."

He resisted, and I leaned back, pulling away from him. Slowly he raised his head and looked at my face. Not into my eyes, though. My current status bothered him immensely.

"I am alive."

**Q: Does giving the lost king the name "Helios Dayspring" signify something? What is it?**

The name came quickly once the character hit the page. I wanted a society of people who were sun worshippers. I'm a historian so this culture was very loosely based on Spartan and Golden Age Greece. (very, very loosely! LOL!) I didn't want to name him Apollo, that was too obvious. And Dayspring is a name that feels like hope...coming into the light after darkness. I wanted his name to reflect hope and life and rebirth.

**Q: It's a good name. In the second book, *When I Fall*, it's interesting to see how Griffin's and Helios's relationship develop further. What further tests and challenges did they have to weather together?**

**When I Fall** picked up about a year after the first book. By then, Helios has gotten a good look at the problems they're facing, including the possible mine fields right within his court. He also got a larger vision of where he wants his people to go. At the end of UC, he'd been a slightly pathetic character who leans very heavily on Griffin. So now, Griffin finds himself no longer a bodyguard, no longer the stout oak supporting Helios. He's a consort, which doesn't sit well.

The larger story in WIF is that now that they've settled into safety, the real horror of what they experienced begins to manifest. Literally everyone suffers post-traumatic stress disorder. In particular, Griffin has a personal burden. He'd been tortured, his daughters were tortured, his wife killed and Helios was lost to him. Now he's coming unraveled. He doesn't trust Helios, largely because he's denying his grief and loss. I know many readers were a little stunned to read this dark book after reading the first book, which was a very different tone. But in all honesty, I had to work through the dark so these two can eventually come back into the light.

**Q: In *Prince of Faith*, the third book, we have Markus Dayspring, the missing prince, who is held captive in a whorehouse. What made Caius decide to rescue him, despite the secrets that he keeps?**

Caius had multiple reasons for running to the rescue of Markus. Of course, he was assigned the task and he's a good soldier who is completely loyal to Helios. But at the close of **When I Fall**, there are some questions about who Caius really is. So he's desperate to return to Griffin's good graces.

Of course, there's a larger, more personal reason for Caius taking on the rescue. He knows what sort of suffering Markus has experienced and feels that he's really the only person who can truly sympathize. In addition, Markus and Caius have a history together. In many ways, their story is a reflection of the Griffin and Helios story. You can see in the cover art that they appear similar. However, they are different people and their story starts in a similar fashion, but the rescue goes stupendously wrong.

**Q: What is the most heartrending moment between Markus and Caius?**

It's when Markus discovers the lair of his enemy and strikes out alone on a suicide mission to get revenge. Here's an excerpt:

"Caius, wait!"

Since he'd joined with the Astrum, Caius had never disobeyed a direct order. He did so now. He ran, blinking to adjust to the dim lighting. Behind him he heard Sera call his name and the angry shouts of the others.

A door was open, and inside chaos reigned. Shattered electronics scattered the floor, and the place reeked of death. He took a moment to assure himself the bodies were strangers and

returned to the corridor, hurrying toward the brilliant lights that appeared to make up the main body of the complex. When he reached the entrance, he paused, immediately spotting Markus. He stood before a monitor, bracing his weight on a desk. His shoulders slumped, and though Caius couldn't see his face, there was a stillness...a tension that frightened him.

He approached, his footsteps ringing out in the silence of the lab. Two men were unconscious on the floor. A small woman lay halfway in the open doorway.

"They aren't dead." Markus's voice was low and strained. "I had to kill the guards; they were too well trained. These ones..." He shook his head. "They deserve trial and punishment."

Caius was close enough to see the monitor, so he looked over Markus's shoulder, studying the footage that was running. He then looked away. His skin pebbled in horror.

"I didn't rape her."

Markus didn't look away from the screen, though he ran a trembling hand through his heavy hair. "I thought I might have...you know. I remembered, but everything was a haze. Like a nightmare." He still studied the monitor, as though unable to look away. "She didn't want to, but I didn't either. But I couldn't have raped her." He finally turned, looking at Caius. His face was deathly pale. "I was tied up, Caius. I couldn't have, could I?"

Gently, Caius pulled Markus from the monitor. "No, you wouldn't have even if you weren't bound. That's not in your character, Markus. I saw the control you had back in the brothel, and on the ship coming here."

Markus heaved a shuddering breath. "I didn't rape her."

"No. You didn't rape her."

He looked at Caius from red-rimmed eyes. Despair etched his face. "Why do I feel as though I did?"

For once, Caius had no answer. The glimpse he'd seen on the screen had been completely out of his realm of experience. All he could do was hold Markus and let him know he wasn't alone. Caius wrapped his arms around him, pulling him close, taking Markus's weight into an embrace. In spite of the treatments and good nutrition, his lover was still too thin and not as powerful as he'd been all those years ago. Caius found himself supporting the other man's weight, giving Markus his strength.

"You didn't do anything wrong, Markus. I know it doesn't mean much right now, but someday you'll understand it to be true."

The volume was down, but even so, Caius could see the edge of the screen. People gathered around their two victims, watching. Taking notes. Those notes were somewhere in the building, probably in the archive of the computer network. There would be faces in those videos, records of the money behind the undertaking. If the culprits weren't all here, he and Markus would find them.

He heard voices, footsteps as searchers fanned out through the complex. The king and General Hawke entered the room, their silent presence a comfort. Markus buried his face in Caius's shoulder.

"Sir, could you turn off the playback?" Caius asked.

General Hawke shut down the video, and Markus groaned in relief. He straightened, pushing his hair back from his face.

"Sorry. I just..." He looked steadily at his cousin. "When I found the lab, it was so close I had to come. The trip didn't turn out quite as I expected."

Helios approached, gazing intently at Markus. "You expected to die."

Caius went rigid, staring at Markus. "Is this why you left my bed in the middle of the night? To get yourself killed?"

Color rose in Markus's pale face. "Our bed. And no...yes... Fuck." He turned away, fists clenched. "I just..." He looked over at Helios, who crossed his arms, refusing to budge.

**Q: What is the most kick-ass scene in the series?**

I write a lot of action and fight scenes, so this might not be THE most kick-ass, but it's memorable. This scene takes place at the end of **When I Fall**. The royal delegation is attending a treaty celebration and has been ambushed. I like it because it shows Helios in his element as a warrior, and Griffin making a near-fatal misstep:



Helios fought valiantly—brilliantly. Bright splashes of blood marred his robes. He was still barefoot, having forgotten his shoes in our rush to celebrate. His sword flashed and wove through the air, biting, crippling, kissing flesh and weaving through muscle. The bleeding giant he fought dropped to one knee and then reached up and grabbed Helios's swinging braid. He fisted it in his massive hand, then jerked hard, dragging Lio relentlessly down toward the wicked blade in his other hand. Without thought, I palmed a dagger and threw it. I winced as it sliced through the thick red hair. Helios stumbled backward but quickly regained his balance and thrust the golden kilij through the Landaun's powerful neck. It'd been a risky throw, but if I'd aimed at the Landaun, Helios still could have fallen onto his opponent's weapon.

The king staggered as he freed the sword, caught his balance, and shook his mane of fiery hair back from his eyes.

A scream carried through the room, more horrible, more filled with abject pain than any I'd heard before. I whirled, sword at the ready, and saw that Leigha had fallen. Ghlen screamed too, his back still to his dead twin. He screamed as though hell itself had ripped out his soul. He fell to his knees, weapons slipping from his nerveless grasp. Gooseflesh rose on my skin, and I shuddered in reaction. Carlotta stumbled to his side to protect the helpless Somian.

As though compelled, I sought out Helios. He'd downed another opponent and was searching for me. When our gazes met, I saw relief there that matched mine. The path to his side was clear, and I pushed past a shattered table, never looking away from him. Fury and love warred in my gut. I was so focused on reaching him that I was too slow to heed the warning that flashed across his face.

"Grif!"

The blow that halted me wasn't painful at first. I couldn't breathe; it felt as though I'd taken a hit to the diaphragm. Automatically I reached out and braced an arm on the wall. Red dots floated into my vision. I looked down and saw the bloody, curved tip of a T'hran protruding from my chest. It had sliced right through my utility vest.

**Q: Among all the characters in the series, major and minor, which is your favorite? Why?**

Griffin Hawke. Griffin is such a hero on so many levels. He was a beloved character residing in my files for a long time. When I started **Uncommon**, it was about him: a one-eyed, one-balled rascal. On the page, he evolved so far from where I started with him. He's so difficult to write, particularly in first person, largely because he really isn't self-focused. He's all about Helios, his kids and his duty. In spite of his love for Helios, he will forever grieve for his lost wife, yet he's grateful for the time they had together. At the same time, he's arrogant, thoroughly dominant and often totally out of touch with his emotions. It's very hard for him to admit to being wrong and to apologize. Yet he feels with such depth and passion. He's the oak to Helios' willow and loves Helios with such depth. He's the character who makes me cry when I write him.

**Q: Which character in the series is the most difficult to write? Why?**

Caius is very, very challenging. He's a case of still waters running very deep. He doesn't easily give up his secrets and inner feelings. What's intriguing about Caius is that he's really more than one person. He's the person he was born as, now he's the bodyguard and soldier. I thought about him and planned his character for a very long time, but he never really emerged until I started writing the scenes of him with Markus. One of the more interesting facets of his character is that he really has no sense of humor. That was kind of strange. But with Markus, they balance each other, even though they're both very dysfunctional.

**Q: What scene was most difficult to write, either because of its emotional intensity or level of technical difficulty?**

In **Prince of Faith**, the beginning sex scenes were really difficult. They were emotional and very uncomfortable, as they were meant to be. I don't want to discuss them in depth here, but those scenes took place out of necessity and were meant to be clinical and detached. At the same time, they are rooted in trust. They are meant to be disturbing and were very uncomfortable. I don't often cry when I write, but they put me right there at the edge, I felt so sad for both heroes. I discussed them often and in depth with my editor and we decided to keep those scenes intact. But I know I took a risk with those scenes, though many readers may react poorly to them. However, I stand by them; they were necessary to the story and the development of the characters.



**Q: Will there be more in the AN UNCOMMON WHORE series? Please give us a sneak peek.**

Yes, I have concrete plans for a forth UW book, tentatively titled "**Fade Into Me.**" It's a return to Helios and Griffin and will close their story arc. I don't have too much written, I'm just doing some development sketches now, but here's a peek. (This might not show up in the final book)

The first thing I remembered was waking.

I was face down, my cheek pressed into a dirty floor, my hair a gossamer web clinging to my lips and masking my eyes. My sweat reeked of fury and humiliation and fear so pungent it seemed almost incomprehensible. I opened my eyes, expecting to wake from the nightmare, to see the comforting presence of Griffin Hawke asleep beside me, but such was not the case.

I saw boots.

Scuffed, slightly reddened with dust. Worn.

While Griffin might like to play the part of irascible merc, he was a soldier at heart, one who never allowed an important part of his uniform such neglect.

Fuck.

Hidden behind the screen of my hair, I tracked the route those boots took as they paced the room. In doing so, I saw other things. My arms were naked but white fabric draped my body. Red dust powered the stranger's boots and dirtied my hands. My feet were bare.

I listened as the stranger paced aimlessly, his movements not borne of impatience or agitation, but of casual curiosity. He was passing the time, unworried and relaxed. He hummed snatches of some melody I'd never heard before. The song was bright and discordant, an odd counterpoint to my situation. Once I completed an inventory and found myself uninjured, I slowly readied myself to fight. I was near naked and without a weapon except my body, which was tough and well-honed.

When the dirty boots moved back into my sightline, but out of range of my hands, he paused.

"Good morning, Pasha. Time to get up."

I exploded from the floor, leaping up to attack, and in that heartbeat I saw the face of my enemy. He was surprised at my movement, but amusement slid over his face. He leapt back with a small laugh just as pain seared through my skull. Before I'd fully committed to my attack, lassitude washed over me in a warm wave, drawing me back to the floor in a puddle of...contentment.

Once again I lay face down on the dusty floor, too relaxed and weary to move.

I was on Warlan, swaddled in the robes of a slave. The chip in my brain was active.

Next to me, my captor squatted, pushing sweaty hair back from my face. When he spoke, his voice was friendly. Comforting.

"Welcome home, Your Highness."

Robbed of my anger, I stared at his boots and refused to submit to despair.

**Q: Which usually came first for you? Plot or character? Please give us an example.**

Oh, it really varies. Both **Uncommon Whore** and **Blacque/Bleu** came from characters in my files. In the case of **Blacque/Bleu**, I had a character sketch of a vampire with insomnia. It was supposed to be humorous but as I wrote him, Bleu became the romantic, tragic hero.

Other times I have a defined story idea and the characters fall into place as I'm plotting. There have even been times when I see someone and build a story around that person. Once, I was in a grocery store and saw the most beautiful woman...she was a basketball player from the college and easily stood 6'4" and I was just so taken with her. I wrote Belle Oakley in Belle Starr based off that woman.

**Q: Who are some of your romance influences? What about your writing influences, if different?**

The first romance I ever read was *Black Sheep* by Georgette Heyer. I was perhaps in the 6th or 7th grade at the time. Years later, I read a few bodice rippers that dismayed me, and then returned to Heyer. I was impressed by her active heroines. They were often calm and humorous, and sometimes a little older. In *Black Sheep*, Judith was the center of calm and logic where her hero (an early anti-hero) was out of control and passionate. I also fell for Heyer's other anti-hero/s: the Duke of Andover/Avon. (He appeared by two different names in two books) Avon was arguably a bad...if not an evil man. Yet as a hero he was just amazing! Contrast him with some of Heyer's more staid, humorous heroes like Hugo from *The Unknown Ajax* and you see her brilliance in characters.

My writing influences tend to be more in the fantasy realm. I read Tolkien at a young age. After years of studying history, I graduated and the first book I read after graduation was a Wolverine comic. LOL! I fell in love with comics and graphic novels, so I think a lot of my actual writing influence came from that world.

**Q: What's up next for you?**

I'm now writing **Destiny**, a Truckee Wolves/Doms of Dark Haven crossover. After that, I'm going to revise some out of print books for re-release. I'm playing with a couple western romances and a mainstream science fiction book based on characters from my Coalition romances. Oh...a historical, too. LOL!

You sure are keeping busy! ☺ Thanks a lot, Belinda, for an amazing interview and insights into the **UNCOMMON WHORE** series. Now for the **Fast Answer Round:**

**Last book you read:** Traitor by Grace Burrows

**Favorite vacation location:** The UK

**Favorite dessert:** Chocolate in any form

**Favorite drink:** The mango/white cherry mojito made at the Star restaurant in New Orleans

**Favorite place to write:** In my bedroom.

**About the Author, Belinda McBride:**



Belinda is an award-winning, top selling author of erotic romance, speculative fiction and LGBTQ romance. She lives in far Northern California with her family and a pack of Siberian Huskies.

A graduate of CSU Chico, she managed to attend the notorious party school without once getting drunk, arrested or appearing in a "Girls Gone Wild" video. Her main focus of study was classical and archival history, cultural anthropology and theatre arts.

Belinda has won the EPIC Award in Paranormal Romance with *Blacque/Bleu*, and in Science Fiction Romance with *The Bacchi*. She won RWA's Passionate Plume in Science Fiction Romance with *An Uncommon Whore*. In addition, she's had numerous wins and placements in these and other juried competitions. She is the co-creator and author of the wildly popular *Doms of Dark Haven* series, with Cherise Sinclair and Sierra Cartwright.

Belinda's books are available at all the typical distributors as well as on the publisher's homepages.



## Book 1 in the UNCOMMON WHORE SERIES



### [Loose Id](#)

*"As a general rule, you won't find the love of your life while you're on your knees under a table."*

-- Helios Dayspring

Pasha is a slave, whoring for travelers at the most dangerous bar on Warlan. He has no memory, no future of his own, yet deep inside Pasha knows that that he is meant for better things. The day that Pasha spots the dangerous pirate in the bar, he knows that he mustn't let the stranger slip away, regardless of what he must do to attract his attention.

Captain Griffin Hawke spent the greater part of a decade searching for his lost king, only to find Helios Dayspring crouched between his knees, swathed in the robes and shackles of a whore. Though he is appalled by the downfall of his king, the hardened officer finds himself falling for the allure of the sensual creature who has taken his place. Returning Helios to his position on the throne is the only right thing to do, yet Griffin knows that in doing so, he risks losing his lover forever.

*"A whore is a whore is a whore, unless he's something else completely. I guess I must be an uncommon whore."*

-- Helios Dayspring

## Book 2 in the UNCOMMON WHORE SERIES



### [Loose Id](#)

As king, Helios Dayspring is desperate to secure the future of his people and their new homeland. His lost memories are slowly returning, bringing with them danger and betrayal.

As the king's consort, Griffin Hawke wrestles with growing isolation from his lover. When Helios's secrets begin to come to light, Griffin finds that he barely recognizes him anymore. And Griffin is haunted by his own secrets, nightmares that bring torture and death in his sleep.

Surrounded by enemies and allies, seductive aliens and dangerous operatives, Helios and Griffin find themselves tested to their physical and moral limits. Not knowing who to trust, they can only turn to each other.

*Will you be there to catch me when I fall?*

### Book 3 in the UNCOMMON WHORE SERIES



#### [Loose Id](#)

Held captive in a whorehouse, Markus Dayspring wakes every morning with a thirst for revenge, and collapses every night with a prayer for strength. He lives on in spite of deadly addictions and a crippling, shameful secret. When he's rescued by a man from his past, his reawakened love threatens to crush his damaged soul.

Caius also has a secret, one that could ultimately kill him. But his vow to rescue Markus is stronger than guilt, fear and even his loyalty to King Helios. Too many have died because of Caius and rescuing the missing prince might allow him to sleep without nightmares.

Old habits are hard to break and new pain threatens their growing love. Yet one gleaming ray of hope continues to guide them to safety, even in the face of an unexpected violation of trust. With the stakes growing higher by the hour, Markus and Caius must learn to have faith before they can heal and face the future together.



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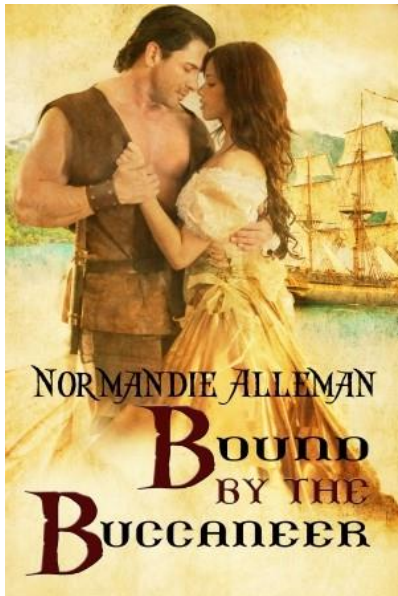
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# review spotlight



Rating:



[Amazon](#)



Two years have passed since Frederica joined Gaston aboard the Ocean's Knave, and with every passing hour they have fallen more deeply in love. By day she is the ship's physician, but at night she serves her captain in his bed, offering her body for him to punish and pleasure until she begs for more. But after a successful run of raiding other pirate ships, the couple have a target on their backs.

Their only hope is to form an alliance with a trio of like-minded captains, but in order to guarantee the cooperation of these unyielding, battle-hardened men, Gaston is forced to offer them a night with Frederica. Reluctantly, she agrees to be shared with the men, but afterwards Gaston finds it difficult to forgive himself for bartering Frederica's charms. As jealousy and desperation threaten to consume him, will Gaston lose his beloved Frederica or can he weather the storm and find a way to bind her to him forever?

## *Review by Isabelle*

Have you ever dreamed of pirates and fetishes? Can you imagine pirates, foursome and spanking? Read Frederica's adventures, and you will encounter this and more!

BOUND BY THE BUCCANEER is book two of a trilogy and I would not recommend it without reading book one first. The story has a progression that would be hard to understand without the foundation of setting and plot that comes from book 1.

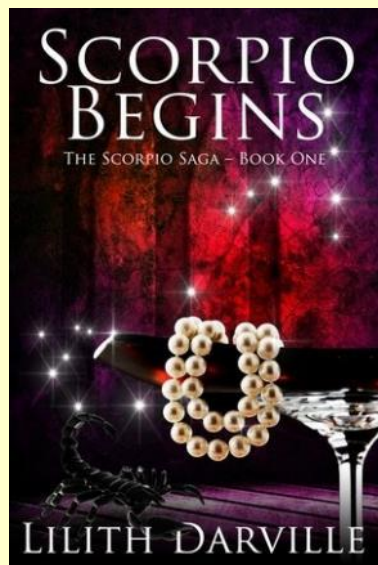
Frederica and Gaston are such well-rounded characters that it's very easy to connect with them. Ms. Alleman's characters are strong on their own, and even stronger as a united force. The author has masterfully explored Gaston's emotions this time around and I am not disappointed. Gaston is adorable!

This is a fast-paced novella that takes the readers into the wonderful adventures of pirating around the Caribbean sea and of sexual discovery. At the same time this book is painting new lands and new treasures, and taking Frederica into a self-discovery journey that she could never have dreamed of as an English lady.

This book is hot! Panty-wetter, scorching hot! The passionate scenes are very well described without being vulgar. It's sexy and romantic at the same time.

I'm already sad Ms. Alleman is going to end this series in the next book. The characters are amazing, and I will miss them. I know the author has several great characters to continue this tales of the seas. I will be looking forward to this!

I would recommend this book to anyone that enjoys petticoat and corsets as much as a crop and ropes!



Scorpio Begins - No strings... Only possibilities...



From wild sexual experimentation to an exploration of female desire her story is all true.

# Serena Fairfax

## AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

We welcome **SERENA FAIRFAX** to tell us more about herself and her books.

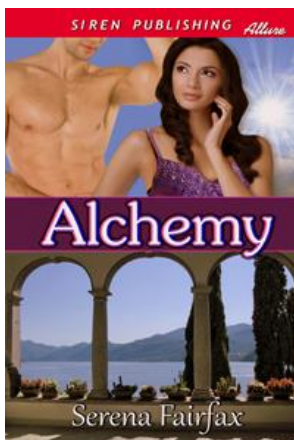
**Q: Tell us something about yourself.**

I spent my childhood in India, qualified as a lawyer in England and joined a London law firm. Romance is hardwired into my DNA so my novels include a strong romantic theme. However, I broke out of the romance bubble with *IN THE PINK*, a quirky departure in style and content. I've also written several short stories that feature on my blog [http://www.serenafairfax.com/serena\\_fairfax\\_author\\_blog/](http://www.serenafairfax.com/serena_fairfax_author_blog/)

Fast forward to a sabbatical from the day job when I traded in bricks and mortar for a houseboat which, for a hardened land lubber like me, turned out to be a big adventure. Apart from writing and reading (all kinds of books), a few of my favorite things are collecting old masks, singing (in the rain) and exploring off the beaten track.

My golden retriever, Inspector Morse, who can't wait to unleash his own Facebook page, and I divide our time between London and rural Kent. (Charles Dickens said: "Kent, sir. Everybody knows Kent. Apples, cherries, hops and women.")

My titles are *STRANGE INHERITANCE*; *PAINT ME A DREAM* (two sweet romances); *WHERE THE BULBUL SINGS*; *IN THE PINK*; *LOVING THAT FEELING*; *ALCHEMY*; *KISMET* and *TANGO* (the last four being erotic romances)



**Q: What is your stress buster?**

I hankered after becoming a boxer but alas...so I'm into skipping and twirl the rope twice a day which is a great way to relax and let off steam.

**Q: What are you reading right now?**

*THE GOLDFINCH* by Donna Tartt. What a feast! Like the mighty Ganges river it never flags – it ebbs and flows and overflows along its long journey, pouring its delights into you. Like the many streams of the river, every chapter brings a surprise.

### Follow

#### Serena Fairfax

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**Q: What is your idea of the perfect date-night evening?**

Well, it would have been with George Clooney but he's off the market now and with such a stunning wife I doubt that, even if I did the dance of the seven veils, he'd be tempted. So, floating in a balloon under a starry London sky gazing down at the bubbling and historic metropolis would be hard to beat.

**Q: What hurdles did you have to overcome before you become a published author? How long did it take you?**

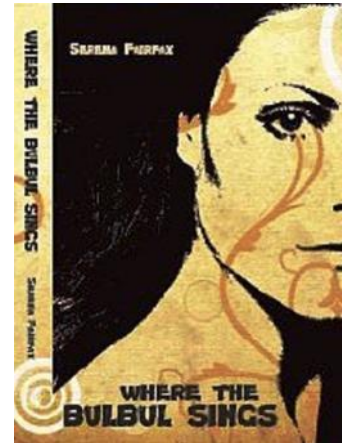
Lots of rejections, rejections, rejections – enough to wall paper a room. I reckon it takes many years to become an overnight success.

**Q: What's your favorite part of the writing?**

Getting the bare bones down. The next best thing is putting flesh on the bones and that involves the development of the plot and emotional content, the highs and lows and deciding what role secondary characters play and whether they should be jettisoned. Last of all is editing and authors are urged to "kill their darlings" so reluctantly I find myself having to wield the knife.

**Q: Who among your heroes is your favorite? Why?**

I have a soft spot for the Maharajah of Walipur who features in *WHERE THE BULBUL SINGS*. He's a glamorous, happy-go-lucky, generous guy who's a bit of a buffoon. He would give a girl a fantastic time and with his amazing palaces, his retinue of servants, his strings of polo ponies, and treasury of precious gems who wouldn't want to count him as a friend.



**Q: Please tell us about your latest release entitled TANGO.**

This is an erotic romance published by Siren Publishing Inc. Violinist Char needs cash fast when her reckless court case against ruthless broker Jude bombs, and she's left with no choice but to accept his cynical job offer. But Jude has decided he can easily mix cold business with hot sex. So why should it matter to Char that Jude is apparently involved with Heather, a married colleague? Equally why should Jude care when Char cozies up to luthier, Steve?

When Jude goes to Portugal to investigate an ecological survey in the hill region of the Algarve, Char who accompanies him is unprepared when, in the simple quinta, a new understanding explodes between them.

Back in London old tensions surface and Char, aware that she's in love with Jude, faces a dilemma when an unexpected windfall presents her with an agonizing choice. Can she risk her heart or should she claim her freedom?



The setting is London and the wide, open spaces of the untamed border country between England and Scotland.

**Q: What do you do when writer's block hits you?**

This is like being trapped in a vault with a steel door. I keep on writing even if it's only a shopping list. You'd be surprised how something mundane like "free range eggs" can conjure up ideas and re-stimulate the creative process.

**Q: What is your advice to aspiring writers?**

Try, try, and try again. Don't give up. Keep writing and, more importantly, keep reading. Eventually the door will open. If you can't source a traditional publisher, then self-publish but not before you've had your work independently critiqued and professionally edited (and I don't mean by your doting family or best friend).

**Q: What is some advice you would give girls and women today?**

Ironing should carry a serious health warning. It's a beastly chore. Don't be fooled by all that propaganda about being able to listen to the radio or your iPod when you're sweltering over the ironing board because, if your mind is elsewhere, your clothes end up in cinders.

Thank you, Serena! Now for the **Fast Answer Round**:

**Favorite vehicle:** Farm tractor- slow and easy.

**Favorite color:** 50 shades of...blue

**Favorite actor:** Rudolph Valentino

**Favorite actress:** Bette Davis

**Favorite movie:** The Shawshank Redemption

**Favorite book:** To Kill A Mocking Bird

**Favorite food:** Roast beef and Yorkshire pudding

**Favorite dessert:** Strawberries and cream

**Favorite chocolate:** Milk chocolate with nuts

**Favorite music:** Country and Western

**Favorite reality show:** The Apprentice

**Favorite TV show:** The Great British Bake Off

**Favorite scent:** The enduring fragrance of Rosa Damascena that's cultivated in Bulgaria's Rose Valley.

**About the Author:**

Serena Fairfax spent her childhood in India, qualified as a lawyer in England and joined a London law firm.

Romance is hardwired into her DNA so her novels include a strong romantic theme. However, she broke out of the romance bubble with *IN THE PINK*, a quirky departure in style and content. She's also written several short stories that feature on her blog.

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Serena and her golden retriever, Inspector Morse, who can't wait to unleash his own Facebook page, divide their time between London and rural Kent. (Charles Dickens said: "Kent, sir. Everybody knows Kent. Apples, cherries, hops and women.")

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# Putting the Comedy into Romantic Comedy

**By Juliet Madison**

When I first started writing, I didn't set out to write romantic comedy, I didn't even know if I could write 'funny stuff'. But when I let my fingers roam free over the keyboard and discovered my voice, some humour began to creep in. At least, I amused myself. Who knew if anyone else would find it entertaining? I stuck with it and when I found a critique partner and nervously sent her my work for the first time, I was relieved when my manuscript came back with comments like 'LOL' and 'Bahahaha!'. Unless she was the only other person in the world to share my sense of humour, then maybe I didn't totally suck at this.

My first novel FAST FORWARD was released in 2013, and my sixth, HAUNTED EVER AFTER has just been released. In the eighteen months I've been published, I've realised three things about writing comedy:

1. DON'T hold back
2. DO use real life experience
3. DO put your characters through embarrassing hell

## **DON'T HOLD BACK**

When writing comedy, you need to take a few risks and embrace the crazy. If a story is realistic then of course the comedic scenes need to be plausible and theoretically possible, but there is room for stepping outside the box and going a little beyond what would be considered normal. I find sometimes that my inner critic will try to stop me from writing something, as though it doesn't want to be offended if nobody finds it funny, but it's usually those instances where I need to do the opposite to what my critic is telling me. For example, sometimes I'll have my character 'think' something funny, and show this on the page as internal dialogue. But when I ask myself 'what would happen if they actually said that out loud?', it can totally turn the scene around from something so-so to something laugh-out-loud. I always ask myself 'what if?', and that can lead to some interesting and humorous situations. Sometimes humour comes from saying something the average person wouldn't dare say, or making an observation that is honest but inappropriate and maybe even a little offensive, but funny nonetheless.



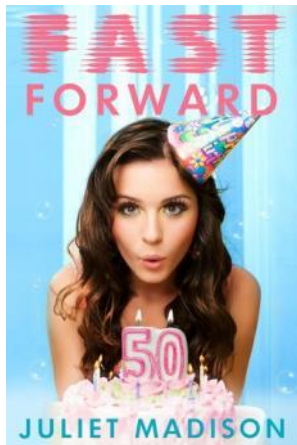
## **DO USE REAL LIFE EXPERIENCE**

If there's any silver lining to suffering embarrassment or experiencing humorous disasters in real life, it's that you can use them in stories! Some of the situations I've written about were inspired by real life scenarios, either my own or other people's. I think a lot of what makes a scene funny is when we can either imagine it happening to ourselves or someone else, or when we feel embarrassed for the character. Laughs can also occur when we see a character we don't like so much get their comeuppance in a funny way. Humour is also enhanced by situations where one thing happens, triggering another thing to happen, and another, and so on. Ever had one of those days where things just keep going wrong but by the end of it you start laughing about it? We've all experienced that, and this strategy is often used in comedy writing.



## DO PUT YOUR CHARACTERS THROUGH EMBARRASSING HELL

The fun thing about writing comedy is that you can put your characters through situations that would make you want to hide under a blanket for the rest of your life if they were to happen to you (insert evil laugh here). But you can also show how your character gets through these challenges to grow and become a stronger person. Comedic embarrassment is character building. And although we feel bad for someone when they are embarrassed, we also can't help but laugh. I've put my characters through many embarrassing and challenging situations, including; giving an important business presentation of which they know nothing about using futuristic presentation equipment they have no idea how to use (Kelli in *Fast Forward*), dancing with a Geek God at a wedding with your ex-boyfriend watching (Mandy in *I Dream of Johnny*), and getting stuck underneath a public toilet cubicle while trying to crawl out and having to be rescued by a male stripper (Sally in *Haunted Ever After*). When writing these scenes, I try to think: 'how can I make this even worse for them?' Aren't I mean? ;)



A reader-favourite comedic scene in my first novel, *Fast Forward*, is the disastrous underwear scene. This has Kelli McSnelly (25 year old model trapped in the body of her 50 year old self in the future) try to squeeze into a futuristic support suit to enable her to fit into a dress she used to wear. Problem is, she can hardly breath and tries to take it off, but then gets stuck with it over her head cutting off her air supply even more and making her blind and partially deaf in the process, not to mention sustaining bruises and injuries from bumping into things as she tries to extract herself from it (and in case you're wondering, this may have been partly inspired by real life experience. Thankfully, I lived to tell the tale.). After writing this scene, I decided to give myself a challenge: to try to put a humorous or disastrous underwear scene in every one of my romantic comedies. Like a trademark. Other books I've put underwear scenes in include; *I Dream of Johnny* (zipper malfunction meets Geek God),

*Haunted Ever After* (ghost steals underpants and flings them around the room), and *12 Daves of Christmas* (frilly granny bloomers get ripped open after character falls over in public). I will have to start keeping a file of potential underwear scene ideas if I'm to keep this trend going!

And the other important part of writing romantic comedy is of course – the romantic part! Why I think romance and comedy work well together is that when it comes to romance, the hero and heroine want to come across as attractive and interesting to their potential love interest, but throw in some comedy and you have new obstacles to them upholding their appealing image. Comedy allows each person to be seen as real and flawed, vulnerable and human. It can also bring about feeling of empathy in the other, if they are witness to an embarrassing or humorous situation involving the other person. And of course – a couple who laughs together stays together!

Most of all, writing romantic comedy is fun and makes me feel good. It's even better when readers enjoy it too, and it's so rewarding to know you've helped bring some fun and laughter into someone's day. ☺

### About the Author:

Juliet Madison is a naturopath-turned-author with a background in dance, art, internet marketing, and perfume sales (yes, she was one of those annoying people in department stores who spray you with perfume). Nowadays she prefers to indulge her propensity for multiple careers by living vicariously through her characters. She likes to put her characters into extraordinary situations

and take them on a challenging journey to discover their true passion and inner strength, weaving in some laughs, tears, romance, and sometimes a touch of magic along the way.

Living near the beach on the beautiful south coast of New South Wales, Australia, Juliet spends as much time as possible writing and coming up with new ideas, while doing her best to avoid housework.

Juliet is the author of six books: *Haunted Ever After*, *February or Forever*, *The January Wish*, *Starstruck in Seattle*, *I Dream of Johnny*, and the Amazon Top 100 Bestseller, *Fast Forward*.

Visit her online at: <http://www.julietmadison.com>



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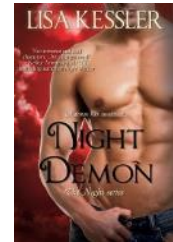
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TRRtweet>

# reviewers' TOP PICKS

## **NIGHT DEMON** Lisa Kessler

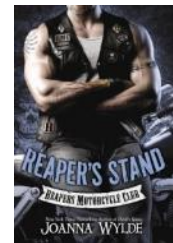
Lisa Kessler describes the story with well orchestrated suspense that draws the reader deeper into the story and...the strong intriguing characters ensure that the readers want to know more.... I was completely caught up in the story from the very beginning. It had some surprising twists that I didn't expect, a fascinating world with the author's own version of Mayan gods and prophecies and captivating characters....

[Read more.](#)



## **REAPER'S STAND** Joanna Wylde

From the hot, gritty sex scenes to the club business affairs and related action-packed scenes, Ms. Wylde knows how to deliver a deeply satisfying MC romance. I also particularly enjoy her special sense of humor...REAPER'S STAND is no exception. From the opening prologue, which starts out with a bang, to the last page, Ms. Wylde had me entertained and fixated on finishing this immersing read...[Read more.](#)



## **HER LAST WHISPER** Karen Robards

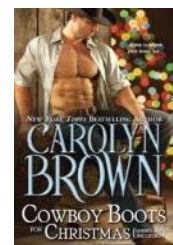
Ms. Robards' mastery with words and superb storytelling make this a compelling read. She was able to make me suspend disbelief about a lot of things regarding the paranormal, not the least of which is a romance between a ghost and a human...

[Read more.](#)



## **COWBOY BOOTS FOR CHRISTMAS** Carolyn Brown

Another splendid read from Carolyn Brown! The characters were wonderful and there was an abundance of passion and laughter throughout...Then the story started taking some heartwarming and hilarious turns that absolutely thrilled this reader to death. The smile never left my face as I devoured it in one sitting...[Read more.](#)



## **INDECENT PROPOSAL** Molly O'Keefe

Molly O'Keefe sure knows how to write romances driven by emotional connections. There is also a bit of passion here too...I also loved that we got to revisit some of my favorite characters from Book 2 of the series...Last, but definitely not least, Ms. O'Keefe's attention to the seedier side of political life is also to be commended, as it plays a prominent role in this novel and provides for an interesting side story to the romance...[Read more.](#)



\*This is not a comprehensive list. For more reviews of Romance books, [check out the site.](#)

# reviewers' TOP PICKS

## **DRIVING INTO THE SUN** Dev Bentham

I loved watching Dusty and Joe slowly get to know each other while they drove together. Their heartfelt conversations and actions toward each other were beautiful and inspiring. There were several thoughtful discussions around prejudicial beliefs and behaviors...A beautiful story that gives new meaning to a road trip.....[Read more.](#)



## **DEMONS WITHIN** Rhiannon Ayers

For fans of MMF erotic romance, there's not much better out there...DEMONS WITHIN has everything to give you a severe case of "the feels"--incredible sex, a heart-wrenching story line and deep, all consuming love that shall set you free...This is the first book I've had the pleasure of reading by this talented author, but it definitely won't be the last. [Read more.](#)



## **WALK WITH ME** Cardeno C.

The perfect ending to what is a sweet and romantic series...I love this entire series and would recommend it to any M/M reader. They're sweet, romantic and a make for a nice, easy comfort read. They're really great on audio, too, for you audiobook listeners...[Read more.](#)



## **TWIN FLAMES** Lexi Ander

The story focused on building the world...The unique world the author created was very interesting and easy to follow. The ending clearly continues into the next story, but I didn't feel frustrated that it was too much of a cliffhanger. Engaging storytelling kept me hooked from beginning to end...[Read more.](#)



## **THE MERMAN AND THE BARBARIAN PIRATE** Kay Berrisford

An enchanting tale with two endearing leads and a romance that will melt your heart...The story is part romance, part adventure tale and both worked really well here...There's a bit of mystery and adventure with a missing will, and there were a few scenes in the book where my heart was in my throat as I wondered if things were going to go right for our two heroes. The suspense near the end had me shaking and I really was unsure whether or not we would get a happy ending... [Read more.](#)



\*This is not a comprehensive list. For more reviews of GLBT books, [check out the site.](#)

# reviewers' TOP PICKS

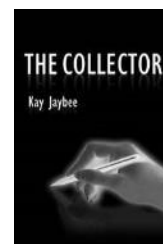
## CLAIMING KARA Caitlyn O'Leary

I was completely engrossed in the story from beginning to end and I must say that it even brought tears to my eyes in a couple of places and smiles at others and the story has a great HEA ending...[Read more](#).



## THE COLLECTOR Kay Jaybee

THE COLLECTOR may be the hottest and coolest book I've read this year...Ms. Jaybee, the true author of THE COLLECTOR, honestly has me curious if she is, in fact, this collector. Her intros were so well written and believable that I fell under an erotic spell while reading...[Read more](#).



## SEXY AS HELL BOX SET Harlem Dae

In the SEXY AS HELL BOX SET, authors Lily Harlem and Natalie Dae join forces as Harlem Dae. It is a union guaranteed to bring the pink to your cheeks, even without the BDSM elements. Nothing is off limits, yet the authors manage to build a solid storyline coupled with plenty of high intensity encounters...All combined, it totaled 604 pages on my e-reader. That's a lot of hotness, but I can tell you the heat was well sustained from start to finish...[Read more](#).



## RIDING DIRTY Jill Sorenson

Although no stranger to action romances, this is Jill Sorenson's first foray into the MC world, so I wasn't sure what to expect. Nonetheless, I decided to give it a shot as I'm a huge fan of MC romances and the book blurb sounded intriguing. Boy, am I glad I did! Wow, was this a hot read! Moreover, the suspense surrounding the mystery of the heroine's past and the intricacies of MC life as they relate to the hero, who is a member of the Dirty Eleven MC, provide a good well-developed plot to complete the package...[Read more](#).



## BOUND FOREVER Hanna Peach

Readers are in for a roller coaster ride from past to present with a few pit stops to visit pure evil along the way. Nothing quite prepared me for the twists and turns. The author's writing style is designed to fully engage the reader, so this is one of those books that you will want to read straight through...Between the buckets of angst and heart-pounding sexual intensity are two very strong main characters. It is definitely not a book for the faint of heart. It's raw, gritty and incredibly satisfying to finally get to a point where there are no rules, restraints or blindfolds. To get to that place, readers will need to put their trust in the author -- and she delivers in a big way. [Read more](#).



\*This is not a comprehensive list. For more reviews of Erotic Romance books, [check out the site](#)

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