Interviews
Susan Mallery
Sabrina Jeffries
Laura Griffin
Alexandra Ivy
Kate Pearce
Lexi Blake

ROUGH RIDER
One unforgettable night can last a lifetime...

SLOW HAND
All he needs to do is whisper in her ear...

Victoria Vane
"Devilishly charming...A touching tale of love."—Library Journal
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29  VICTORIA VANE

Her instincts tell her to high tail it out of Montana, but she can't resist a cowboy with a slow hand...

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Can Lily find her happily ever after with Adam, a man who belongs everywhere and nowhere?

The House at the Bottom of the Hill - new release from Jennie Jones
Dear Reader,

Happy new year! May this year bring peace and prosperity, love and happiness, and everything you desire.

In this new year, there are lots of exciting things happening at The Romance Reviews. First up is our party in March, as we celebrate our 4th Anniversary! Save the date! Authors interested to join the party for promo may email me at carole@theromancereviews.com for details.

The next exciting thing is the new feature to the ezine. We interviewed popular authors on their upcoming/latest releases. Enjoy these interviews with Alexandra Ivy, Susan Mallery, Kate Pearce, Sabrina Jeffries, Laura Griffin, and Lexi Blake. We hope to bring you more in the coming issues. Enjoy!

We will talk about other exciting things in the coming issues.

TRR reviewers have also chimed in on what they think are the best books they’ve read in 2014. These will also be featured on the blog, but until then, here’s a sneak peek:

It was a Historical Fiction but I liked it because you can see the same things today when it comes to abuse and people trying to hide it. It was also a lovely exciting romantic tale. Read more. (Recommended by Linda Hays-Gibbs)

Romantic, refreshing and perfect. Though it’s a Valentine’s Day story, it’s really a good one to read during any season, especially if you need a little cheering up... Though the story was short, I thought it was the right length for this story, ending on a note of possibilities and hope. One of the best short stories I’ve read! Highly recommended. Read more.

(Recommended by Ashia)
Wow, without a doubt, this has got to be one of the most clever, unique plots, I have ever read! This book blew me away both with its completely unguessable suspense filled plot and its erotic nature...Read more. (Recommended by BJ)

A dark and gritty voyage through a world of mystical powers, eroticism, violence, emotional and physical abuse. (Recommended by Jennifer Bosco)

MAKE IT COUNT is one of those books that resonates with you and stays with you long after you have finished reading it. A true keeper, and a book I’m certain to reread time and again.

Best of all, MAKE IT COUNT has heart. It’s there in the issues the author tackled with tact and sensitivity. Her characters are also not cardboard characters, but persons with depth and substance, much like the book is...Read more. (Recommended by Ashia)

Ms. Reisz is really in a class of her own. The religious symbolism and forbidden nature of this romance is so engaging that I was unable to put this book down until I finished it all! Then I spent a number of days afterwards digesting just how intricate and well crafted this romance was...Read more. (Recommended by BJ)

A steamy emotional charged romance that follows a couple as they begin a friendship that turns into so much more. (Recommended by Jennifer Bosco)
I loved the way the author used the study of language as part of the romance. Read more. (Recommended by KindleRomance)

I enjoyed the action, excitement, and humor. Read more. (Recommended by KindleRomance)

Happy reading, everyone!

Carole
After a whirlwind courtship, the Christmas season finds plain-Jane-with-a-secret Elle Houston engaged to one of the brightest stars in the Hollywood firmament—and falling for the personal chef at her ritzy, pre-wedding resort.

**Review by Ashia**

CHRISTMAS STAR is a lovely, heartwarming romance perfect for any season.

Elle Houston can't believe she's engaged to a Hollywood A-list movie star, Taylor Collins. However, she's filled with misgivings, especially when Taylor had to go to New York for a shoot instead of spending time with her in the days before their wedding. He sent her to the ritzy, exclusive resort where their wedding was to take place, where she met their personal chef, Luc Favreau, and felt an instant connection to him...

Christine Ashworth imbued this short story with a fairy tale, magical feel surrounding the unlikely romance between Elle and Luc. Theirs is an insta-soul-mate-deep-recognition kind of start to the relationship. Yet, I like that they didn't rush into it. They decided to take the time to get to know each other, to be friends first, to let these initial feelings build on solid ground.

Elle is a likeable heroine. I can certainly empathize with her feelings of awe at having caught the uncatchable Grade A movie star and wondering if it all was real. Yet, she's also grounded in reality, and what I like most about her is her independence and her wanting to make her own way.

Luc is a romantic! My kind of guy. I almost swoon every time he opens his mouth. Such a guy probably doesn't exist in real life, so I'm taking what I can get in books. And he cooks! Can he get any better? He's perceptive and probably great in bed, too, and he's a hunk! I am sooo green with envy.

**Perfect reading any time. A gem!**
The story is filled with intriguing little details that make Luc's expertise seem authentic, details like techniques in cooking and wines. These don't come off as dry reading, however; there was just enough to give flavor and round out Luc's character. The author's secondary characters come across as unique individuals, but none more especially than Conway Davis, Taylor's agent and manager. He's intriguing and I don't mind getting to know him a lot better!

One thing, though. Some dialogue toward the end come across as a little cheesy, but it's no biggie and didn't deter my enjoyment of this story. As the first book in a series, it certainly served its purpose in stirring interest in me to read the next book! The best thing about CHRISTMAS STAR is that, despite its title, it is perfect reading any time, but especially for when you need a lovely, heartwarming tale to lift up your spirits. A gem. Don't miss this!
Welcome, Kellyann, and please do tell us more about your intriguing serial, **101 NIGHTS**!

**Q: What inspired you to write the serial, 101 Nights? What is it about?**

I’m fascinated by the legend of the jinn. I’ve written two novels with a male genie and thought it was time to give equal time to a female genie. I also wanted to take the time in a story to show how there really could be another world where genies live and which is accessible to us. I did a lot of research into the transfer of electromagnetic fields and how a scientist who knows what he’s doing might be able to capture protons and electrons from a different dimension and rearrange them here, like capturing the proverbial genie in a bottle.

*101 Nights* is about a genie, Amani Zarin, whose world is losing its energy. Her uncle is a scientist and discovers one of those dimensional passages to Earth, which has an abundant supply of energy. Amani is chosen to be the ambassador from Jinnistan to work with a human scientist, the devastatingly handsome Jason Masters. She has to live with him in the New Jersey suburbs for a little over three months (101 Nights) to explore the spike in energy that occurs when genies are near humans ... the closer the better.

**Q: Interesting! What was the rationale in making this a serial instead of one book?**

My publisher, Boroughs Publishing Group, has developed a line called Romantisodes, which are serials or like a soap opera that continues from story to story, but with new intrigue and a climax in each one. They approached me about writing a genie installment and I was all for it. The story continues over five books. You really should start with the first one, but it’s not hard to catch up if you start with two or three, which is generally how it works with a serial.

**Q: How do you keep track of the details?**

I keep an active file of notes as I’m writing. I usually have three windows open on my screen: one with my draft; one with an outline; and another with details about each of the characters and who did what with whom.
**Q: What was their first meeting like?**

Amani and Jason first meet on their wedding day in the first book, *TO HAVE AND TO HOLD*, and this is how it happens:

Closing her eyes, Amani steeled herself. She had avoided looking at the man at her side, Jason Masters, her new husband, had avoided looking at him all through the ceremony and before. Now she glanced at him sidelong.

Despite her barb at Westcott and the people who worked with him, Dr. Jason Masters was by no means little. Amani was taller than most human men, yet he was taller than she by a forehead. That irked her. Neither was he bad-looking. For a human. Okay, he was hot. She had come across the term in her cultural research of the human world and liked it. *Hot*. Forged from fire, her people reveled in flame. This word suggested the comfort of Jinnistan’s scorched mountains, the joy of riding Sinbad into the Bitu Valley so rife with fissures to the center of the earth that the air crackled with fire.

Her new husband’s jaw flexed, and cocking her head Amani assessed him further. The poor guy was agitated. But, who wouldn’t be? It was his wedding day and he was meeting his bride for the first time. Oh, and by the way, she was a genie. And in a bad mood.

His full lips formed a straight line—an attempt to appear stoic or munificent? No. Neither. He appeared raw and somewhat bewildered but resigned to his task. A good scientist with a difficult hypothesis. A hypothesis that was even now standing in front of him.

He turned, and the expression on his face was both wary and...surprisingly playful. “Do I get a kiss?”

His voice was smooth and deep. For an irritating moment he seemed pleased with what he saw, with Amani, then Amani’s gaze whipped back to the Covalink CEO, the main architect of this spectacle, who’d scoffed and turned away. Sudden anger at Westcott’s demeanor, her situation, and humans in general got the better of her. In one graceful flip of her hand, Amani flung back the curtain of hair from her shoulder and flourished three fingers at Westcott’s retreating back, preparing to singe his suit just enough to make her feel better.

“Whoa, there!” Her husband’s grip on her wrist was faster than she would have given him credit for, and Amani was startled to find herself staring into eyes the color of the Topaz Caves on the far side of Jinnistan. A lock of brown hair had fallen across her husband’s broad brow, and he twitched his head as though to shrug it away. The strands clung together as though damp. “Not a good idea.”

“Is any of this a good idea?” she snarled at him, consciously ignoring the tiny coterie of Covalink executives and Jinnistan ambassadors who were now beginning to mingle. With a twist of her arm, she dislodged his grasp. If not for the flower-laden pedestal at her hip, she would have moved entirely away from him.

She barely saw his lips move, but his voice was low and rueful. “Too late now.”

Their faces were close enough for a kiss, she realized. Her husband stared back, not blinking, his black eyelashes as thick as the fringe on a hand-tied carpet. The way they shadowed his amber eyes
reminded Amani of a soft feather caressing her naked back, and the thought sent a shiver down her spine. Even more potent, for the second their gazes locked she felt challenged and equal at the same time. Her shiver radiated outward, wrapping around her waist and making her suddenly all too aware of his closeness. Something inside her trembled.

He quirked his lips. “Now, how about that kiss?”

Smirking like a child, she leaned into him. “Fine.” She knew her duty. Kissing a human would be no more momentous than stepping on an ant—for her. For him? Well, he would be the ant. The contact would provide a nice electrical shock on those soft, full lips. “Pucker up, pretty boy.”

**Q: Why are Amani and Jason perfect for each other?**

Because they complement each other. She’s fiery and short-tempered, but loyal and would do anything to save those she loves. Jason is more analytical and takes his time with decisions, which drives her crazy, but he’s ferocious when it comes to love.

**Q: Which is your favorite scene in the entire serial? Why?**

This scene is from the fourth book, **DANGEROUS DEVOTION**, and I think it encapsulates some of the difficulties that Amani and Jason have in maintaining a relationship. Even though it’s about being from two different worlds, literally, the obstacle of misunderstanding is the same any couple might have and shows how wrong perceptions can stop you loving fully and freely.

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Amani’s body ached. And as consciousness returned, she smelled his scent. The smell of thyme and wood chips. She had noticed it the first day she met him, at the makeshift altar in a Covalink conference room. It seemed like a lifetime since that day. Something tickled her nose. Blinking her eyes open, she saw the curly top of his head where her chin rested. He lay on his back with his arms loose around her waist. His chest was no longer rising and falling.

Alarmed, she pulled back to peer at his face. Eyes closed, he looked as though he slept.

"Jason. Jason." She eased from on top of him and went to her knees at his side, looking around. Loamy soil cushioned her knees. They had landed on the bank of a river. The shushing sound that filled her ears was that of a waterfall. The Turquoise Falls of Jinnistan. All around them the evergreen trees of the Jade Forest rose like sentinels. Beyond their needled peaks, the sky was white and magenta. Spray from the falls misted them, cooling their bodies. She lay his head on her lap, running her hand across his brow.

His body was still warm, but dropping in temperature.

“Jason. Please. Wake up.” As she bent over him, she listened for a breath. Nothing. She leaned closer. Gently, she used her fingers to open his lips. His jaw dropped slightly. With an inhale, she pressed her mouth against his and exhaled. His lips were soft, still warm.

Closing her lips around his, she breathed again. Warmth from his throat curled into her mouth, as though air rose from his lungs. She pulled her mouth away, inhaled, and closed her mouth around his again. Suddenly, soft lips became firm and he was kissing her. A gasp of surprise passed from her lips, but she didn’t break away. The kiss grew deeper.
He buried his fingers in the twist of her hair at the back of her neck. Probing with his tongue like a man hungry for more, he pulled her harder against him. She lost her balance and fell against his chest, still meeting him thrust for thrust, sliding her tongue in and out to meet the dance of his.

“Am\text{"}ani.” Her name was a moan in his throat.

And a door to reality. She twisted her head away and laid her palm flat on his chest, rising above him like a cobra.

“\text{"}Jason. I thought you were—”

“\text{"}…missing you. That’s why I came along for the ride.”

“No.” She pursed her lips, considering him. “I doubt that.”

His gaze was heavy-lidded but held the mischief she had seen there so often when they were together, when he was pleased.

She tilted her head. The Heart of Bitu dislodged from her cleavage and swung between them on its silver chain. Jason glanced at it. A tiny line appeared between his eyes as he lifted his gaze to hers once more.

There was the shadow of severity in his eyes now. But she ignored it. She couldn’t care what he thought about her. “As with any married couple, I’ve learned about you.”

“What have you learned?”

“For one thing, I know that look.”

“Really?” He raised an eyebrow. “What am I saying with my eyes?”

“That’s the look when you get what you want.”

He looped his arms low at her back and tugged slightly. “That’s right. I have what I want.”

Amani bit down on the swell of joy that rose in her chest at his words. She wanted to believe him. But it didn’t matter how he felt about her. She had never come on this journey for reasons having to do with love, lust, or personal satisfaction of any sort. Her mistake was in letting herself be convinced by those dreamy amber eyes of his—even for a brief time—that she could find happiness in the arms of a human. Her work to save Jinnistan didn’t leave room for her and someone else. There were already enough people who counted on her. She had to simplify her life and her mission. She had to remind herself of all the reasons that he was wrong for her.

“By that, I’m guessing you mean you have a jinni.”

His brow creased. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“I’m worth five million dollars as a jinni, but not as a wife.”

He dropped his arms to the ground at his sides. “That’s the problem, isn’t it? I’m your husband and it’s a big problem for you. Especially when you have Sumer the Destroyer waiting to ride you through dimensions.”

Amani jerked up to sit on her bent knees. “Watch yourself, human.”
Q: Among all the characters in the serial, major and minor, which is your favorite? Why?

I love Sumer, the rebel genie who was once Amani’s lover. He hates humans and tries to sabotage her efforts to collaborate with them. He’s big, furious, but sweetly still in love with her, despite all his bluster ... and tattoos ... and muscles.

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

Jason was difficult. I wanted him to be charming and a little mysterious, but that was hard when he’s going up against genies. I had to make sure he wasn’t overshadowed by Amani. I think there needs to be a balance between the two main characters, where each has their strengths and unique qualities that make them irresistibly readable. I think I got it. He’s really a doll.

Q: Will there be more in the 101 Nights serial? Please give us a sneak peek.

The serial wraps up with the fifth book, which is EVER AFTERS and should be released in February. Four books are already out: To Have and To Hold; Reluctant Rapture; Ties that Bind; Dangerous Devotion. In this final book, Amani and Jason face their biggest challenge ever, completing the contract of their 101 Nights and each returning to their own world.

Q: What’s up next for you?

I’m writing a stand-alone romance that will include angels along with genies. Meanwhile, my thriller, Gnaw, is being shopped around by my agent. It’s about Ann Cane, a journalist who hides out in a small Long Island town to escape a predator and encounters a killer coyote. Along with my writing, I work as a book editor helping authors get their books into top-seller shape. I’ve worked with about half a dozen authors in the past several months and just love it.

Good luck! ☺ Seems you’ve been very busy. Thanks a lot, Kellyann, for giving us these insights into your amazing serial! Now for the Fast Answer Round:

Favorite household appliance: Oven
Favorite TV series: The Blacklist
Favorite movie: The Quiet Man
Favorite book: Outlander
Can’t leave home without it: Kindle

Favorite chocolate: Aero
Favorite superhero: Aqua Man
Favorite food: Soup
Most influential person: Tommy Mac (my dad)
About the Author, Kellyann Zuzulo:

Kellyann Zuzulo is an award-winning author who loves to write about a world where genies and humans mingle. Her novel, The Genie Ignites, was a finalist in the 2013 Abalone Awards, which recognizes “Outstanding Ethno-Cultural Romance.” Her 101 Nights series from Boroughs Publishing Group puts a modern spin on the dream of genies, placing her warrior-genie heroine Amani in a New Jersey suburb with a hunky human husband and nosy neighbors.

She also works as a book editor and edits both fiction and non-fiction books for clients who seek clarity, continuity, and beauty in their written work. Kellyann is a member of International Thriller Writers, Backspace Writers Group, and Romance Writers of America. She lives on the East Coast with her husband, three children, and two terriers.

Book 1 in the 101 NIGHTS

When hot-tempered ambassador Amani Zarin makes a deal with her uncle to save her beloved homeland, she becomes America's first desperate genie housewife. To rescue Jinnistan, she agrees to marry Jason Masters, the unexpectedly sexy scientist whose chemistry starts explosions in all the right places and who—with her assistance—holds the key to saving her homeland. She and Jason must navigate conniving board members, hostile ex-lovers, and nosy suburban neighbors to achieve wedded bliss—at least for 101 Nights.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD is the first installment in the ongoing tale of love, lust, lies and loyalty that surround a beautiful genie living in the New Jersey suburbs.
For the good of her homeland Amani has accepted her marriage and is settling into life among humans, but she is about to be tested...by Jason's people and her own.

Amani’s relationship with Jason is steadily improving, and things have never been hotter behind closed doors. Amani’s found friends. She’s feeling a little more at ease among humans. For that reason, she is reconsidering her backup plan that could destroy their world. But just as everything seems perfect, a hurtful secret is revealed, and Jason is threatened. It doesn't help when her former lover turns up with a vengeance and a twinkle in his dark eyes.

With a growing circle of human acquaintances, Amani has begun to realize that her heart is softening to the whole race. But just as Jason Masters makes her knees go weak, so also does he make her question her wisdom. Then the couple find themselves trapped between Amani’s powerful ex-lover and Jason’s conniving boss, and the only solution requires trust, friendship, and a desperate flight to a place that might mean death for one or both of them.
An Interview with Alexandra Ivy on BLOOD ASSASSIN

The Sentinels, Book 2

Out of the Shadows

At six-foot-three and two-hundred-fifty pounds, Fane is a natural born guardian. A flawless mix of muscled perfection and steely precision, he has devoted years of his life to protecting a beautiful necromancer. But after she found love in the arms of another, Fane has been a warrior adrift. He swears allegiance only to the Sentinels. And no woman will ever rule his heart again.

Into The Fire

Not only a powerful psychic, Serra is that rare telepath who can connect to minds through objects. When the daughter of a high-blood businessman is kidnapped, Serra agrees to help. But when she stumbles onto a conspiracy involving sectors and ancient relics, her life is in mortal danger—and Fane is her only hope. Is the warrior willing to risk his body, his soul, and his heart, for Serra? Or will one last betrayal destroy them both?

Available now at Amazon

Welcome to The Romance Reviews!

Q: Where did you get the inspiration for The Sentinels series?

The initial inspiration came from the Avengers and the Xmen. I love, love, love Marvel comics and the super-heroes they created over the years. The only thing that was missing for me a good romance to go with them. So I created a world of mutants and added in a steamy hot love-story.

Q: What makes this paranormal series stand out from the rest?

This isn’t the usual vampire, shifter, fairy story. This is humans with extraordinary abilities and the challenges of living among mortals, as well as dealing with high-bloods who use their powers for evil.

Q: Tell us about BLOOD ASSASSIN, and the main characters, Fane and Serra.

Fane is a lethal Sentinel who has recently completed his duties at Valhalla. He plans to return to the monastery in Tibet. Serra Vetrov, is a powerful psychic, who has loved Fane for years and is deeply pissed by his decision. She decides that she’s had enough of loving a male who doesn’t return her feelings. Then Serra disappears and Fane senses something is wrong. Desperately he follows her to St. Louis and discovers that she’s been kidnapped by a lethal assassin, Bas, who needs her talents to track down his 4-year-old daughter, Molly. Together they must rescue the little girl before the poison that’s already in Serra’s body is released and kills her.
Q: Fane walked away from Serra when they first met when she was 18. Why? And why did he decide to come to her aid now, several years later? What happened to make him have a 180-turn?

Fane has always been dedicated to his duty. He couldn’t bear the thought of Serra wasting her life on a male who could never give her more than a small portion of his time and attention. Turning her away seemed the noble thing to do. But when her life is threatened, he realizes that his dedication to duty can’t compare to his need for the beautiful psychic.

Q: What was the most heartbreaking scene in the book?

Here’s an excerpt:

He’d showered and changed since she’d last seen him. The scent of his clean male skin teased at her senses, while the tight muscles shirt that was tucked into his green khakis emphasized the beauty of his sculpted muscles.

She had a sudden vision of licking her way over the swirling tattoos exposed by his shirt before the buzzing in her head overrode the treacherous thought.

“Fane, what do you want?” she muttered, pressing her fingers to her temple.

“I didn’t like how we left things.”

She shrugged, holding onto the door as a dizzy spell nearly sent her to her knees. Damn. How much had she had to drink?

“If you want me to pretend I’m happy you’re leaving then you’re wasting your time,” she muttered, the words coming out with an unexpected slur.

Fane frowned, studying her with a searching gaze. “Have you been drinking?”

“None of your damn business.”

His jaw tightened, but his expression remained carved from granite. “Can I come in?”

She hesitated. It was more than a reluctance to spend time with Fane. The weird buzzing in her head was slowing to become a persistent murmur. As if someone was whispering directly in her mind.

Obviously she needed to spend some time working on the shields that protected her from random conversations that floated on the psychic plane.

Sensing Fane’s growing concern, Serra heaved a sigh and stepped back, giving a mocking wave of her hand.

“Please...enter.”

Stepping over the threshold, Fane glanced down at the locket that was still clutched in her fingers.

“What is that?”

“A gift.”

Without thought Serra slid the chain over her head to allow the locket to nestle against her cleavage.
There was a burst of heat as Fane narrowed his gaze. Anger? Jealousy? Lust?

Impossible to say.

"From who?" he growled.

She took a sharp step back. "None of your business."

His lips parted, as if he intended to argue. Then, muttered curse, he gave a regretful shake of his head.

"Serra, I sorry. I..." His words were cut off as she turned away, her fingers rubbing her temple as she struggled against persistent murmurs. "Are you okay?"

"I’m fine."

Of course he couldn’t leave it there.

Fane might not allow her any place in his life, but he was happy enough to shove his handsome nose in hers.

"You seem distracted."

"You’re not the only one who has a life and duties."

"Serra." He gently touched her shoulder. "Look at me."

She hissed at the pleasure that seared through her, desperately wanting to turn and bury herself against his hard body. She didn’t know what was wrong with her, but she was certain being in his arms would make it all better.

A dangerous illusion, she sharply reminded herself.

Fane didn’t want her in his arms.

Not now. Not ever.

"Go away, Fane," she commanded, shrugging off his hand.

"You’re in pain."

"I’m tired." She grimaced, not about to admit she was feeling increasingly queasy. "I want you to leave so I can lie down."

"Do you need a healer?"

"Oh for christ’s sake." She whirled back to stab him with a furious glared. Was he deliberately trying to piss her off? "Just go."

He studied her for a long moment. A romantic fool might think he was trying to preserve the last memory of her.

But she wasn’t a romantic fool. Not anymore.

Perhaps sensing her fierce need to have him gone, Fane gave a slow, solemn dip of his head.

"Goodbye, Serra."
She didn’t bother with goodbye as he turned and left her apartment.

They’d said everything that needed to be said.

**Q: What are you working on now?**

I’m working on a new Romantic Suspense series for Zebra at Kensington, called the ARES series. It’s the stories of five soldiers who were held hostage together in Afghanistan and now have returned to the states to open their own private security firm. KILL WITHOUT MERCY will be published January 2016.

**About the Author:**

Alexandra Ivy graduated from Truman University with a degree in theatre before deciding she preferred to bring her characters to life on paper rather than stage. She currently lives in Missouri with her extraordinarily patient husband and teenage sons. To stay updated on Alexandra’s Guardian series or to chat with other readers, please visit her website at [www.alexandraivy.com](http://www.alexandraivy.com).

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**Touched in ways she never thought possible, Tania meets a man who will take her completely**

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**Hot New Release!**

When their fantasies turn into realities, love in the city becomes more complicated.
DEA agent Eve Taylor has had her fill of alpha males. When Resolutions' operative and former lover, Dillon "Mac" McKenna, threatened her hard-earned independence, she ran. On a mission to gather evidence against a Colombian drug-lord, Eve discovers the drug-lord is helping terrorists plan an attack on American soil. Before she can escape with the vital information, she's captured and comes face to face with her mortality...

As a teen, Mac watched his family fall apart after his mother died doing dangerous U.N. work. The possibility of losing Eve to a mission ignited an overwhelming need to protect her. When he forced her to choose him or her job, she walked away. Two years later, it seems all his nightmares have come true and he's tasked with rescuing her from a Colombian prison. Mac has never stopped loving Eve, but does he dare risk his heart when he's so terrified of losing...

On the run, Mac and Eve must learn to trust each other again in order to stay alive.

"Eve," Rex said. "You’ve got about a hundred yards until you’ll reach Carlyle."

"Yeah, I see him. Be hard to miss those Dumbo-size ears."

Rex and Randi’s muffled laughter rumbled over her ear bud. Eve looked through her NVGs. Danny grabbed his crotch, a smirk plastered on his lips. "Hey, doll face, if you think my ears are big, you should see my—"

Gunfire erupted.

Danny clutched his chest and dropped to the ground. Eve, a tingle coiling up her neck and settling in her scalp, stood in horror, her chest constricted in a tight knot. A bullet whined past her right ear and she dove for cover, returning fire while rolling onto her side.

"Danny’s down," Randi yelled.
No shit. Eve crawled to a better position behind a low bush and searched for the source of the gunfire. Mud and leaves stuck to her, thorns scratched across her clothing. *Crap.* “This area is supposed to be secure.”

“I don’t know where the hell these guys came from,” Rex growled.

“Sounds like two shooters.” Eve took off her NVGs, improving her depth perception. “I spotted muzzle flashes about twenty-five yards back on my right, near the flowering bushes. You see them?”

“Negative on that.” Rex’s voice held frustration. “How about you, Randi? Got ‘em in your sights?”

“I can’t see anyone.”

Eve’s heart pounded hard and loud in her ears.

“Carlyle’s not moving,” Rex said. “Cover me while I check on him.”

“Copy that.” Eve emptied her Glock into the bushes and re-loaded without missing a beat. The acrid smell of fired weapons filled the air.

The barrage of bullets ceased and Eve replaced her NVGs.

Rex checked his fallen teammate’s pulse. He looked up, shook his head, grabbed Danny’s mic and ear bud, and shoved them in his pocket. “No pulse. Carlyle’s dead.”

_Aw, Danny._ Eve had seen men die before, but Danny wasn’t just a member of her team. He was a friend. Losing him hurt. She shuddered then sucked in another deep breath to clear the onslaught of sorrow. She fought back tears she didn’t have time for and concentrated on getting the rest of her crew and the flash drive out safely.

She shook the heaviness from her arms. Reluctance trickled into her voice despite her best efforts. “Time to pull back. The extraction chopper will be at the rendezvous point in ten.”

“Dammit,” Rex said. “Eve, he—”

“I know. Danny was a good man. But we’ve got to go. ASAP!”

Gunfire sliced the predawn air again, forcing her into action. “Grab Danny. No way are we gonna leave him here for Mendoza’s bastards to mutilate.”

“I’m on it.”

Eve closed her eyes, willed herself to stay calm. “You need help?"

“I’ve got him,” Rex yelled, barely audible over a volley of gunfire. “You worry about getting your own sweet ass out of here in one piece. Randi’s already at the wall.”

Eve said, “Randi, the wall still clear?”

“For now, but we need to hurry.” Randi’s voice wavered. “All this gunfire’s gonna bring out Mendoza’s men in hordes.”

“Too late,” Rex shouted. “Reinforcements are already here.”
“Let’s get a move on.” Ready to sprint to the wall, Eve patted the pocket holding the flash drive, wishing she’d taken the time in Mendoza’s study to put it in her boot heel hidey hole. “Where the hell are these guys coming from?”

Rex, still firing his M-16 at the enemy, slipped an arm around Danny’s body and heaved him over his shoulder.

Eve covered him with her weapon, stayed low, and began a zigzagging run toward the wall. As she neared the cover of the trees, a bullet slammed into her left shoulder, dropping her on impact. Pain sliced through her and she fought to stay conscious. She rolled onto her hands and knees struggling to get up. Her left knee screamed from the blunt force of her fall.

Rex put Danny down and moved toward her. “Eve, stay down! I’m on my way.”

“Negative on that. I repeat, negative on that. I’m okay. You get Danny to the extraction site. I’ve got your back.”

Eve forced herself to stand, hadn’t had time to straighten to full upright when another burst of gunfire echoed in the air.

Rex took a hit and tumbled to the ground.

_Holy crap._ “Rex!” Bullets flew around her as she tried to get him to answer. Her fingernails bit into her palms, and she fought to keep her voice steady. Sweat trickled down her forehead, and she wiped it.

“Rex, can you hear me? How bad are you hit?”

No response.

“Rex, answer me!”

Still nothing.

“Shit, shit, shit.” Eve stared at the blood pulsing from her shoulder. “Randi, get over the wall and haul ass to the rendezvous point.”

“I can’t leave you and Rex.”

“Randi, I’m ordering you to retreat. Now move!” Eve gritted her teeth, fighting pain and frustration.

“What about the flash drive?”

It would take Randi longer to backtrack than for Eve to reach the wall, even stopping to check on Rex.

“The intel is secure. I’ve got it and I’m still in the game. I’ll be right behind you. Go, go, go!” Fragments of Randi’s breathless agreement—or argument—she couldn’t tell for sure, crackled through Eve’s earpiece, followed by the rustling of the agent’s hurried retreat.

Eve reloaded and fired off several more rounds, inching her way toward the line of breadnut and mango trees near Rex and Danny. She fought the veil of blackness threatening to take her down. _Dizziness. Shit, where’s that coming from?_ Covered with sweat, she began to shake. By the time she reached the trees, Eve knew she’d underestimated the severity of her injury. A horrible judgment call, rendered even worse knowing what else Mendoza was involved with.
She wouldn’t get to Danny and Rex. She couldn’t reach the wall. Even if she did, she didn’t have the strength to climb it. She’d lost too much blood. With her injured shoulder growing numb, she was one handed. Her knee popped with blinding pain every time she tried to bend it. It’d be impossible to tuck the flash drive into the hiding place in her boot. And she damned sure wasn’t willing to risk another team member’s life by calling Randi back. There was no time. Danny and Rex were already dead.

No longer able to stand, she went down on her good knee, pulled the knife from its ankle sheath, and struggled to dig a hole. The smell of wet dirt encircled her like a veil. She buried the flash drive, covered it with mud and rocks then topped the mound with a scattering of wilted leaves. She peeled a piece of bark and carved a small V into the inner layer of the mango tree nearest her buried treasure.

Nausea and pain hammered her. Still she managed to cover her tracks and crawled on one knee back to the area behind the pool house. Eve glanced at her fallen teammates one more time and cringed, a sharp pang of guilt smacking her insides. She prayed Randi had reached the extraction point in one piece. Randi would regroup and bring another team back for Eve.

She dug out an iodine gauze pack from a pocket, tore the wrapper open with her teeth, and pushed the gauze into her wound. It stung like a son of a bitch, but it had to be done.

The flash drive was safe, at least for now, and a surge of satisfaction rose in her throat. The wet ground grew colder by the second. Or was Eve going into shock? Was she dying? That’d be one hell of a note. Who’d retrieve the flash drive if she were dead? Who’d get the vital new intel to the IDEA? So many lives were at stake. She snorted. Apparently, anyone could’ve done a better job than she did.

Occasional bursts of gunfire echoed in the distance as the distorted voices of Mendoza’s men moved closer. The damned monkey started chattering again. She flipped onto her back and forced her breathing and heart rate to slow. The night’s stars faded into the orange-red sky of morning sunrise and a welcomed calm washed over her. For the first time in her life, Eve wished she was still back home in Duncan Falls, Iowa with her four overprotective brothers. The Alpha Four, she called them. They’d be royally pissed if she didn’t somehow get out of this mess.

Her mind turned to thoughts of Mac, the only man she’d ever loved. Maybe he’d been right after all. Maybe she wasn’t cut out for this line of work. Maybe she did need him. So many maybes.

Eve closed her eyes and the maybes and darkness took her.

About the Author:

As a child, Teri made up her own bedtime stories. When her children came along, Teri always tweaked the fairy tales she told her daughters, giving them a bit more punch and better endings when needed.

Now she spends her days turning her ideas into books. She lives in Marietta, GA with her husband.
An Interview with **Susan Mallery** on

**THE GIRLS OF MISCHIEF BAY**

*Mischievous Bay, Book 1*

New York Times bestselling author Susan Mallery is world renowned for her "insightful, funny, and poignant" stories (Booklist). With her brand-new Mischief Bay series, she brings vivid color to the story of three friends on the brink of a new life.

Nicole Lord wants to be a good wife, but there's a difference between being supportive and supporting her husband, who quit his job to write a screenplay she's never seen. He won't even help take care of their son, leaving Nicole to run the house and work full-time.

Sacrificing a personal life for her career is how Shannon Rigg became a VP at her firm, but she wonders now whether she made the right choice. An exciting new relationship with a great guy convinces her that it might not be too late—until he drops a bombshell that has her questioning whether she really can have it all.

Although Pam Eiland adores her husband, she feels restless now that the kids are grown. Finding sexy new ways to surprise him brings the heat and humor back to their marriage, but when unexpected change turns her life upside down, she'll have to redefine herself. Again.

Through romance and heartbreak, laughter and tears, the girls of Mischief Bay will discover that life is richer with friends at your side.

Pre-order now at Amazon
(Available February 24, 2015)

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Susan, welcome to The Romance Reviews!

**Q: THE GIRLS OF MISCHIEF BAY is the first book in your brand-new Mischief Bay series. Where did you get your inspiration for the series?**

I've noticed that when it comes to friendship, age really doesn't matter. There's something ineffable in each of us that responds—or doesn't respond—to certain people we meet. Maybe it's a shared sense of humor, a certain way of looking at the world. When the chemistry is right, friendship feels instantaneous. It's love at first sight, but without sexual tension.

These are the kinds of friends who will be with you for a lifetime. THE GIRLS OF MISCHIEF BAY is about three women who share a friendship like that, and the ways that they come through for each other when life is challenging.

I love writing romance, and you can be sure that there's plenty of boy-girl action in THE GIRLS OF MISCHIEF BAY. But the central relationship is the friendship between three women—one in her twenties, one in her thirties, and one who just turned fifty. Forever friends.
Q: How different is this series from your other contemporary series?

The Mischief Bay women’s fiction series will be very similar in tone to my Blackberry Island novels, BAREFOOT SEASON, THREE SISTERS, and EVENING STARS. You’re going to laugh, because life and love are filled with humor. I’m not going to lie to you… you’re going to cry, too. But you can relax into the reading experience knowing that the ending will be satisfying. You’re going to close the book with a happy sigh. The world is a good and just place in Susan Malleryland.

Q: Tell us about THE GIRLS OF MISCHIEF BAY.

Nicole is a young mom whose husband quit his job to write a screenplay, leaving her to shoulder the load of paying the bills while he goes surfing every morning because it helps him think. Does she have a right to complain, or is it her duty as his wife to support him no matter what?

Pam has been happily married for years, but she’s starting to feel... restless. Her marriage is getting dusty, and she comes up with some hysterical ways to recapture the spark.

Shannon’s story is a true romance. So exciting for her friends to watch her fall in love! She wasn’t sure it would ever happen for her. Men have always been intimidated by her successful career. But when she finds the right guy, she learns that a real man wants her to shine.

Q: Care to share a scene from THE GIRLS OF MISCHIEF BAY?

Nicole turned on the coffeemaker and leaned against the counter to wait for it to work its magic. It was early still. Quiet. The time of day she liked best—except when she was exhausted, which was most of the time.

She told herself that eventually the situation would get better. That she would figure out a schedule that worked, that her son Tyler would get older and need her less, that Eric would get a real job and start helping support the family again.

The last thought made her feel both guilty and angry. Because as much as she loved her husband, there were times when she didn’t like him very much.

No, she thought. She didn’t like what he’d done.

Before he’d quit his well-paying software development job to write a screenplay, things had seemed more balanced. But lately...not so much.

She told herself she had to be fair. That he had the right to follow his dream. Only it wasn’t the dream she minded as much as the fact that he hadn’t asked her first. He’d announced it two days after he’d already resigned.

It had been a Friday morning. Eric had walked in to the kitchen, wearing shorts and T-shirt.

“Don’t you have to get dressed for work?” she’d asked.

He’d taken her hand. “I’ve quit my job. I’m going to write a screenplay.”

Then she hadn’t heard anything beyond the keen screaming of fear that had filled her head.

Quit? How could he quit? They had a mortgage and she was still paying back her old boss for buying out the exercise studio. They had a four-year-old and nearly no savings. They’d put off having a second kid because they couldn’t afford it.

“Mommy?”
She turned as Tyler walked into the kitchen. He was tousled and still half-asleep. One hand held his battered, red stuffed toy, Brad the Dragon.

She pretended to stagger as she lifted him. “You grew!”

He giggled at the familiar comment. “I can’t grow every night.”

She kissed his cheek and breathed in the scent of his skin. Whatever else went wrong in her day, Tyler was always right.

“How did you sleep?”

“Good.” He snuggled close. “Brad had bad dreams, but I said he was safe with me.”

“I’m sure he appreciated having you to protect him.”

She carried Tyler over to the table. He released her to stand on his chair. With a quick, graceful movement, he settled into a sitting position.

She walked over to the pantry. “Oatmeal and berries?” she asked.

Tyler looked at Brad the Dragon, then nodded. “We like that.”

Nicole would have been worried about her son’s constant companion, except Brad stayed home when Tyler went to preschool and from everything she’d read, his attachment was completely normal. She was sure having a couple more siblings would ease his dependence on the stuffed toy, but there was no way that was happening anytime soon. She was barely able to keep them financially afloat as it was. If she got pregnant... She didn’t want to think about it.

Not that it was much of an issue. She barely saw Eric these days. They passed in the hall and their brief discussions were generally about logistics regarding Tyler. Sex wasn’t happening.

As she measured out the oatmeal, she mentally paused to wonder if Eric was cheating on her. He was by himself every day. She didn’t know how much time he spent writing. Once he was done surfing for the day, he could be seeing anyone.

Her stomach tightened at the thought, then she turned her attention back to getting breakfast for her son. She had to get Tyler fed and dressed. Once she got him to preschool, she had a full day of classes to teach, payroll to run, groceries to buy and life to deal with. Worrying about Eric’s possible affairs was way down on her list.

As she carried the oatmeal over to Tyler, she thought maybe her lack of concern was the biggest problem of all. The question was—what, if anything, did she do about it?

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

Thank you, emotionally driven is exactly what I’m going for. I want to take readers on an emotional journey. I read recently that people who read have greater empathy than people who don’t, and I believe it. Emotion is what makes us connect to each other, in fiction and in life, and reading teaches us to think about what other people are feeling.

What I try to do when plotting my women’s fiction novels is to come up with an emotional conflict that allows readers to see both sides. You don’t necessarily have one character who’s right and another who’s wrong. Instead, you have two well-intentioned people who have opposing views, and who have to find a way to negotiate peace. It’s much more interesting to me to explore the intricacies of our relationships with each other when neither person is a villain.
Q: What are you working on now?

I’m having a blast right now writing MARRY ME FOR CHRISTMAS, the fourth Fool’s Gold romance of 2015! For those of you who are familiar with the series, Madeline from Paper Moon Wedding Gowns is the heroine. And she’s falling in love with an action movie superstar named Jonny Blaze. The world’s sexiest guy and—or so Madeline thinks—the world’s most ordinary woman. But in Jonny’s eyes, of course, Madeline is spectacular.

About the Author:

New York Times bestselling author Susan Mallery has won the hearts of millions of readers around the world with books described as “immensely entertaining, intensely emotional” (RT Book Reviews), “hilarious” (Fort Worth Star-Telegram), and “heartwarming” (Publishers Weekly). One major retailer recently described her as “the queen of romantic fiction.” While she deeply appreciates the accolades of critics and booksellers, Mallery is even more honored by the enthusiasm of her readers and the word-of-mouth that catapults her toward the top of the bestsellers lists time and again.

Susan Mallery lives in not-so-sunny Seattle with her husband, as well as a toy poodle and two cats who make her laugh every day and who are not even a little bit impressed by her growing fame.

In rural Montana...

Wade Knowlton is a hardworking lawyer who’s torn between his small-town Montana law practice and a struggling family ranch. He’s on the brink of exhaustion from trying to save everybody and everything, when gorgeous Nicole Powell walks into his office. She’s a damsel in distress and the breath of fresh air he needs.

Even the lawyers wear boots...

Nicole Powell is a sassy Southern girl who has officially sworn off cowboys after a spate of bad seeds—until her father’s death sends her to Montana and into the arms of a man who seems too good to be true. Her instincts tell her to high tail it out of Montana, but she can’t resist a cowboy with a slow hand...

When they got back into the truck, Wade reached over her to open the glove box, brushing his shoulder against her breasts. Although accidental, the sudden intimate contact made her breath catch and her nipples pebble against her bra. Their gazes met, intense physical awareness once more electrifying the air between them.

“Sorry.” He broke the sudden tension. “You know that wasn’t intentional, don’t you? I was just hunting a notebook for you.”

“Yeah.” She gave a nervous laugh and willed herself to breathe again. “You hardly seem the type who needs to resort to covert tactics to cop a feel.”

He retrieved a small pad and pen and closed the glove box. “Thought you might want to jot some things down while we drive. There’s much you’ll need to do when we get to Virginia City.”

“Right. Thanks. That’s thoughtful of you.” She was glad he’d shifted the conversation back to a business level. It helped her sex-starved brain to kick into the proper gear.
“By the way,” his husky voice broke into her thoughts, “if I was inclined to make a move, you’re right that I’d do it without pretense.”

“So you aren’t inclined?” She bit her lip the moment the words were out, wishing she could pull them back. He leaned toward her, bracing his arm on the back of her seat, studying her face with an intensity that made her shift in her seat.

“I was always taught that a gentleman waits for an invitation.”

She fixed on his mouth, wondering what it would feel like. Would his lips be firm or soft? How would his tongue feel? How would he taste? She wet her lips, telling herself it was just a nervous reaction.

“That’s close enough for me.” Wade murmured and made his move.

Cupping her face, his mouth came over hers with smooth and well-practiced confidence. His kiss was an unhurried exploration, his lips sliding warm and firm over hers. Slanting his head, he added tiny, teasing flicks of his hot tongue and then toe-curling nips of his teeth until he caught her lower lip between them. He slowly released, staring into her eyes as if waiting for her to protest, but Nikki was too overcome to make any sound.

When she made no sign of resistance, he claimed her mouth again, but this time he was more demanding, his tongue probing the seam of her mouth until she parted her lips. The first contact of his tongue jolted her senses. Shutting her eyes and stifling a moan, Nikki curled her fingers in his hair, losing herself in the sensation of their tangling tongues. Holy shit! This man knows how to kiss. Too well. It took all she had not to melt into the seat beneath him.

That thought was enough to jar her brain and kick her protective instincts back into gear. She pressed her hands pressed against his chest, but he was first to break the kiss.

“I didn’t invite that,” she insisted, knowing it was a lie.

“I think you did, but don’t worry. I won’t do it again until you ask.”

“What makes you think I will?” she challenged.

He turned the key and started the engine. “Because you enjoyed that every bit as much as I did. I dare you to deny it.”

She couldn’t. The kiss promised dangerous things. It had been a long time since she’d felt attraction this strong. Maybe never, but Wade Knowlton was everything she’d sworn off—all in one big hot cowboy package. Shit. Very bad word choice. Her gaze instinctively drifted southward to his crotch. She shifted it quickly away. She definitely didn’t need her mind to go there. Another silence ensued, longer and less companionable than the ones before. “Do you mind if I turn on some music?” she asked, eager for any distraction.

“Be my guest, though I warn you there aren’t many choices.”

Intent on replacing the tension that permeated the air with music, Nikki reached for the radio dial. It was then she noticed the lack of an audio jack or even a CD player. “How old is this truck anyway?”

“I’d guess it’s about a 1980 vintage, which makes it about as old as me,” he said.

“Really?” she laughed nervously. “I don’t think I’ve ever ridden in a vehicle that was older than I am.”
“And how old is that,” he asked.

“Twenty-eight last month,” she said.

“You seeing anyone?” he asked.

The question, posed out of the blue, took her by surprise. “Not presently. It’s been a good six months since I’ve dated anyone seriously.” She turned the dial, flipping absentlty through static-filled stations. Finally hitting a station with a decent signal, Nikki quit fumbling with the radio. The upbeat tempo of Rascal Flatts’s “Life is a Highway” filled the air. Country. Argh. She hated country. The music was a reminder of all too many mistakes she’d made.

“I’m guessing it was a bad breakup?” he said.

“Yeah.” She gave a dry laugh. “You might say that. Why do you ask?”

“I’m just wondering why you seem so gun-shy.”

“I have a number of good reasons to be—most of them with first and last names.”

“We’re not all assholes, you know so you shouldn’t hold it against every man you meet. You can trust me when I say I’m here to help you, not to hurt you.”

“Why?” she asked. “Why have you gone out of your way for me like this?”

He grinned. “Technically speaking it isn’t that far out of my way.”

“I’m not talking about the drive. I mean the airport, picking me up, feeding me, and giving me a place to stay.”

“Maybe because it’s the right thing to do...or maybe it’s because I like you.”

“Like me? You don’t even know me,” she insisted.

“I know enough”—he shrugged—“and I like what I see.”

_Ditto, cowboy._ She’d been taking a subconscious inventory of him from the moment she’d met him and was hard pressed to find anything _not_ to like. On top of all that, one kiss had scattered her wits to the four winds.

“Here it is,” Wade announced. “Don’t blink or you’ll miss it all.”

Nikki opened her eyes to find they’d arrived in Virginia City. She almost gaped when they drove down the center of town. Lined with false front buildings with clapboard siding, it looked like the set of _Gunsmoke_. “This is it? There isn’t even a traffic light.”

“Nope.” He chuckled. “The onetime capital of the Territory of Montana, and now the seat of Madison County, has fewer than two hundred full-time residents.”

“It’s surreal. I’m half expecting to see horses and stagecoaches...and a saloon.”

“All that happens in the height of summer when the town becomes a living museum. If you’re looking for the saloon, the Pioneer’s right over there.” He jerked a thumb to indicate a building beside the old Opera House. “This community thrives on the tourist trade now. The rest of the time it’s still pretty much a ghost town. Hard to believe this was once a thriving metropolis. The town was all built up around a single gold strike, the biggest one ever recorded in the Rockies.”
“Wow. I had no idea of the Old West history here.”

“There’s tons of it. We even have a boot hill. If that kinda thing interests you, I’d be happy to give you the ten-cent tour later.”

“Yeah.” She smiled. “I think I’d like that.”

He parked the truck on the street, hopped out, and came around to offer his hand to help her step down from the truck. “My office is right here.” He inclined his head to the false front building. “It was once Miss Ruby’s boardinghouse.”

“Boardinghouse or bordello?” she asked.

“Probably one and the same.” He grinned. “Half the reason I signed the lease was that I liked the irony of practicing law in a former bawdy house.”

He opened the door with Evans & Knowlton, Attorneys at Law etched on the glass, and gestured for Nikki to precede him inside.

“Mornin’, Iris,” he greeted a plump middle-aged woman. “This is Miz Powell. She’s up from Atlanta and will be using the office to take care of some personal business. Please allow her free rein to the computer, fax, etc…”

“Sure thing, Wade.” Iris smiled at Nikki. “Nice to meet you, Miss Powell.” She then gave Wade an assessing once over, her brows meeting in a frown. “You look like you could use some coffee.”

“That rough, eh?” He rubbed his bristled jaw. It was a particularly nice jaw, strong and square with the sexiest dimple in the middle of his chin. Why did he have to have that? She was such a sucker for dimples. Nikki wondered what the ones above his ass looked like. She’d noticed that part of him too but acting on her physical attraction to him could only lead to trouble.

What was wrong with her? One moment he was aggravating as hell and the next she was checking out his ass? Her intense reactions to him bewildered and annoyed her. She’d been around a number of hot cowboys before—more than she cared to remember and certainly none worth wasting brain cells thinking about. What made this one any different? He’s your lawyer, nothing else, she reminded herself.

“Now, I didn’t actually say that,” Iris replied. “I’d be happy to run down to The Cafe while you get cleaned up. The usual?” she asked.

“Just coffee,” Wade replied. He hung up his hat, and then came behind the desk to glance over Iris’s shoulder. “What’s on the docket this week?”

“No much. Just more disputes over grazing rights.”

“Grazing rights again! I’m damned sick of environmentalists and special interest groups sticking their noses into our business. Give ’em an inch and they’ll take it all, not giving a damn that the majority of people here are just trying to eke out modest livings.” Wade raked his hand through his sandy hair with a curse. “Damned vegan tree-huggers will destroy our entire state economy.”

Iris rolled her eyes as if anticipating a full-blown tirade. “Be back in a jiffy.” She winked at Nikki as she slipped out the door.

Nikki grinned. “I take it you’re not a card-carrying member of the Green Party?”

“No.” His gaze narrowed and brows pulled into a frown. “You’re not one of them I hope.”
“Who me?” Nikki shook her head. “No, sir-ee, I’m a live-and-let-live Libertarian and a longtime omnivore. My grandparents had a chicken farm in Lavonia. I betcha didn’t know Georgia is the country’s biggest chicken producer.”

“No, ma’am.” His shoulders visibly relaxed. “I didn’t, but then I’m not a big chicken fan myself.”

She let her gaze travel over him in a slow appreciation of his tall, lean, muscular frame. She guessed he stood at least six-three in his boots. “I suppose not,” she said. “It would be only prime grass-fed beef and Idaho potatoes for you.”

He crossed his arms over his broad chest and leaned on the door frame studying her. “Miz Powell, if I didn’t know better, I’d think you were undressing me with those pretty blue-green eyes of yours.”

A guilty flush infused her face but she refused to give him the advantage. She opted for a strong offense instead. “So what if I was? Weren’t you quite fixated on my ass at Denver airport?”

He raised a sandy eyebrow. “You noticed that, eh?” His confession came with a shameless grin attached.

She jutted her chin. “Quid pro quo, Counselor. What do you say to that?”

He approached her slowly, the smile in his eyes transforming in a blink to a wicked gleam. A gleam that promised very bad things. His reply sent a warning signal to every nerve in her body. “I’d say, why just use your eyes?”

About the Author:

Victoria Vane is an award-winning author of smart and sexy romance. Her works range from historical to contemporary settings and include everything from wild comedic romps to emotionally compelling erotic romance. Her books have received more than twenty reviewer awards and nominations to include the 2014 RONE Award for Treacherous Temptations and Library Journal Best E-Book romance of 2012 for The Devil DeVere series. She lives the beautiful upstate of South Carolina with her husband, two sons, a little black dog, and an Arabian horse.
An Interview with Laura Griffin on BEYOND LIMITS

Tracers, Book 8

An FBI agent and a Navy SEAL race against time in New York Times bestselling author Laura Griffin's newest Tracers novel. "Griffin delivers the goods!" (Publishers Weekly)

FBI agent Elizabeth LeBlanc is still caught in the aftermath of her last big case when she runs into the one man from her past who is sure to rock her equilibrium even more. Navy SEAL Derek Vaughn is back home from a harrowing rescue mission in which he found evidence of a secret terror cell on US soil. Elizabeth knows he'll do anything to unravel the plot—including seducing her for information. And despite the risks involved, she's tempted to let him. Together with the forensics experts at the Delphi Center, Derek and Elizabeth are closing in on the truth, but it may not be fast enough to avert a devastating attack...

Following in the bestselling tradition of the Tracers series, including Exposed, Scorched, and Twisted, Beyond Limits pulls out all the stops with Griffin's most gripping thriller yet.

Pre-order now at Amazon
(Available January 27, 2015)

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Laura, welcome to The Romance Reviews!

Q: What's the Tracers series about?

The Tracers are an elite group of forensic scientists who help investigators solve their very toughest cases. I've had so much fun writing the series because each story has some sort of forensic twist. In BEYOND LIMITS, the Tracers help the FBI unravel clues to a terrorism plot.

Q: Tell us about BEYOND LIMITS and the main characters, Elizabeth LeBlanc and Derek Vaughn.

Elizabeth is an FBI agent determined to prove herself on a major case. Derek is the Navy SEAL who has inside info about the terrorists she is pursuing and wants to help. Elizabeth is wary of Derek and knows he's going to be a huge distraction for her, but Derek is tenacious. He won't stop until he has not only helped Elizabeth with her manhunt, but turned her life upside-down, too.

Q: Sounds exciting! Elizabeth and Derek captured a lot of readers' imagination and hearts when they first met in SCORCHED. A lot clamored for their book. What do you think made Elizabeth and Derek so beloved to readers?

These two had sparks from the moment they met in SCORCHED, but they were working against each other. In BEYOND LIMITS they start out with that tension, but ultimately they must work together, and everything comes to a head when Derek forces Elizabeth to face up to her feelings for him.
**Q: Elizabeth and Derek thought about each other for almost a year before they met again in BEYOND LIMITS, through circumstances outside their control. If it weren't for the initiating event in your book, would Derek ever make the first move to contact Elizabeth again?**

Derek is a SEAL, so the word “quit” isn’t in his vocabulary. Derek would have pursued Elizabeth to the ends of the earth to get her to give him a chance.

**Q: What's the most intense scene in BEYOND LIMITS?**

I love the scene where Elizabeth and Derek are back together alone for the first time after a year apart:

She crossed the hotel room with a flutter in her stomach and peered through the peephole. For a moment, she just stared. Square jaw, erect posture, ridiculously muscled body. In her memories, she’d made him less impressive, more average-looking. But of course, that was wishful thinking. There was nothing average about this man, and he was standing outside her room, refusing to go away.

He looked directly at the peephole and her heart skittered. He knew she was gawking. She pulled open the door and her heart did another little dance. She’d forgotten his eyes, too--whiskey brown with gold flecks. The look in them now was pure determination.

God help her, he’d come here on a mission.

**Q: What kind of research did you do in the writing of BEYOND LIMITS? Please share an interesting experience.**

Elizabeth is an FBI agent, and despite all her training, nothing will prepare her for the events that unfold in the book. I’ve had a chance to tour the FBI Academy at Quantico, and it’s a fascinating place: the obstacle course, the firing range, Hogan’s Alley where agents-in-training learn to do takedowns. The training is rigorous, but ultimately every agent has to get out there and face unpredictable situations. Despite all her intensive training, there are many times in the book where Elizabeth is afraid.

**Q: What's next in the Tracers series? Please give us a sneak peek.**

Right now I’m working on SHADOW FALL, a new Tracers book featuring some of my favorite characters--Mark Wolfe, Kelsey Quinn, Mia Voss. The hero is Mark’s brother, Liam Wolfe, who runs a private security firm and finds himself being investigated for a brutal murder.

**Q: Yay! Love to see previous characters again. Anything else you want to tell readers?**

People often ask me if you need to read the Tracers books in order. You don’t! The characters overlap from book to book, but each story features a different romantic couple and a stand-alone mystery. So you can plunge right in.
About the Author:

New York Times and USA Today bestselling author LAURA GRIFFIN started her career in journalism before venturing into the world of romantic suspense. She is a two-time RITA Award winner (for the books SCORCHED and WHISPER OF WARNING) as well as the recipient of the Daphne du Maurier Award (for UNTRACEABLE). Laura currently lives in Austin, where she is working on her next book.

Visit Laura online at www.LauraGriffin.com.

The Family Saga with humor, heat & heart—not to mention beer, bourbon & basketball

The family saga with humor, heat & heart—not to mention beer, bourbon & basketball

Can a Pakistani woman forge her own destiny?
**Review Spotlight**

**GARDEN OF SERENITY**

Rating: ★★★★☆

Amazon Kindle  
Barnes and Noble  
Book Depository

What would you do if the one thing you thought you'd never need becomes the very thing you can't live without?

A woman blinded by life ...

The human population of the 23rd century is dying. As an honored Healer and the Chief Administrator to the largest hospital in the capital city, JAHARA KHATERI has successfully avoided her obligation to mate with a male and fulfill the archaic laws of procreation. But with her 30th birthday fast approaching-time has run out.

A man working for change ...

BRENIMYN is a gifted breeding instructor at the Garden of Serenity. Enslaved by the government and forced to submit to all females who request his services, he's searching for the one woman strong enough to lead a revolution. When Brenimyn is paired with Jahara, he wonders if his instant reaction to her is a desperate attempt to fulfill his destiny or if he's truly found his soul mate.

Two people willing to die for their love ...

When Brenimyn shows Jahara the ways of the ancients, she can no longer deny that theirs is a world gone horribly wrong. As the bond between their hearts grows stronger, Jahara realizes she wants nothing more than to stand at Brenimyn's side and lead the people of the Garden into a fight for monumental change. But the government finds their loving relationship a threat to their hierarchy and they will stop at nothing to keep these two rebels from succeeding in bringing about a new world order.

Review by Ashia

GARDEN OF SERENITY is a compelling adult dystopian, and it revolves around the theme of gender inequality. This time, however, it's the males who are at the bottom of the social structure, being relegated to the role of breeder and laborer. While women are the ones who hold the important positions in society and move the world forward.
At the center of this is a government order for all women to take two years off to breed, to combat the dying population. They are sent to the Garden of Serenity, where the male breeders live. Women have the right to choose whichever male--or males--they want to breed with, and whether or not to leave their children behind when the two years are up.

Dr. Jahara Khateri has put off the inevitable for a long time, until finally she has no choice but to go to the Garden, thereby being of a more advanced age than the other girls. Though she has had prior relationships with other women, the head male breeder Brenimyn affects her like no other.

Brenimyn, on the other hand, has been waiting for a strong woman like Jahara to lead them in a revolution to change the world order, a world where men and women are equals...

Nina Pierce delivered a suspenseful, erotic read that twists and turns. The stunning revelations also came thick and fast. Just when you think you know what's going to happen, she reveals another surprise, creating depth and substance to the story. In a way, it is also deeply moving and profound, and it makes the reader think and reflect on the real world, how no matter how much we say we are living in modern times and that the world has changed so much, gender inequality is still very much a part of us.

While Jahara and Brenimyn are the main characters leading the change, the charge and the romance, the novel wouldn't have been possible or the revolution successful without the secondary characters, some of whom stood out due to their complexity.

Jahara starts out uncertain and passive, though with moments of "rebellion". Understandable, as she didn't wish to be at the Garden, and also because Brenimyn unnerves her and throws everything she knows into question. She comes into her own when she realizes her feelings for Brenimyn, and that's when she starts to shine.

However, I did think that the events in the first half of the book moved too fast and the revelations came too soon, and subsequently, some of Jahara's behavior wasn't that believable. True, she doesn't espouse the prejudices that most of the women harbor against males, and maybe being a healer helped in that. However, it still is a big leap from that to being the face of the revolution, even with Brenimyn at her side. But there was no protest from her, no hesitation or doubt, just acceptance (though reluctant), and that didn't quite ring true.

Brenimyn is a great hero--strong, idealistic and determined. His most enduring characteristic is his patience--waiting for three long years while secretly planning and educating people. While it's great to see a hero so in love with the heroine, even the first of the two to realize it and declare it so, sometimes I wonder if the person he loved is the woman in front of him or the woman he envisions.

The story moved along at a clip pace, and I liked that there was a balanced mix of erotic sexiness, suspense and action. That said, the story could do with another sweep for grammatical errors, but it didn't hinder my enjoyment of the story. If you like your romance spicy and the dystopian setting, don't miss GARDEN OF SERENITY!
An Interview with Lexi Blake on YOU ONLY LOVE TWICE

A woman on a mission

Phoebe Graham is a specialist in deep cover espionage, infiltrating the enemy, observing their practices, and when necessary eliminating the threat. Her latest assignment is McKay-Taggart Security Services, staffed with former military and intelligence operatives. They routinely perform clandestine operations all over the world but it isn’t until Jesse Murdoch joins the team that her radar starts spinning. Unfortunately so does her head. He’s gorgeous and sweet and her instincts tell her to trust him but she’s been burned before, so he’ll stay where he belongs—squarely in her sights.

A man on the run

Since the moment his Army unit was captured by jihadists, Jesse’s life has been a nightmare. Forced to watch as those monsters tortured and killed his friends and the woman he loved, something inside him snapped. When he’s finally rescued, everyone has the same question—why did he alone survive? Clouded in accusations and haunted by the faces of those he failed, Jesse struggles in civilian life until McKay-Taggart takes him in. Spending time with Phoebe, the shy and beautiful accountant, makes him feel human for the first time in forever. If someone so innocent and sweet could accept him, maybe he could truly be redeemed.

A love they never expected

When Phoebe receives the order to eliminate Jesse, she must choose between the job she’s dedicated her life to and the man who’s stolen her heart. Choosing Jesse would mean abandoning everything she believes in, and it might mean sharing his fate because a shadowy killer is dedicated to finishing the job started in Iraq.

Pre-order now at Amazon
(Available February 17, 2015)

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Lexi, welcome to The Romance Reviews!

Q: What’s your inspiration for the Masters and Mercenaries series? What is the series about? What connects all the books in the series?

The Masters and Mercenaries series is completely inspired by my love of James Bond films. I grew up watching them and loved the action and the crazy gadgets. When I got to be older, I always wanted for Bond to fall in love and stay in love. Since that is never going to happen in the movies, I decided it would be fun to do the romantic suspense version. Masters and Mercenaries is about a team of ex Special Forces operatives who form a company of their own, but also do work for the world’s intelligence agencies. At the heart of the series, McKay-Taggart Security Services is really a family and that’s what connects each book.
**Q: Tell us about YOU ONLY LOVE TWICE, and its main characters, Phoebe Graham and Jesse Murdoch.**

Phoebe and Jesse have been circling each other for a while. They’ve been around since book four and their book is number eight. It’s one of the things about *Masters and Mercenaries*. Character’s arcs can go across multiple books. I rarely simply introduce two characters and have them go at it. I like slow burns. Since the moment Jesse joined McKay-Taggart, they’ve been attracted, but Phoebe has a secret she’s been hiding for years. Jesse knows her as the company’s accounting manager, but she’s actually a spy planted specifically to watch him.

**Q: What was the first meeting between Phoebe and Jesse like?**

Their first meeting actually happens off page and several books back. The first meeting between Jesse and the real Phoebe occurs when she’s activated by the group she works for. She heads to a hotel and realizes she’s received a kill order. When she finds out the kill order is on Jesse, she has to make a decision she never thought she would. Her job or the man she’s spent months falling in love with. Naturally, Jesse is a bit perturbed at the discovery that his office crush is a spy.

**Q: What was the most erotically charged yet heartfelt moment between them?**

There’s a moment in Sanctum where Phoebe has to put all her trust in Jesse. It’s her first introduction to the lifestyle. She’s agreed to try flogging, but won’t allow herself to be tied down so Jesse serves as her St. Andrew’s Cross. They go through the experience together and form a much deeper connection than before.

**Q: What’s up next in the *Masters and Mercenaries* series? How many books more are there?**

I’ve got two books set in the M&M world coming out this spring. *Adored* is one of the *1001 Dark Nights* set. It’s about Laurel and Mitch, who have been featured in other books. And I introduce a new setting in a story called Luscious. It’s about the crew at Sean Taggart’s restaurant, Top. Look for it in the Brenda Novak collection to aid diabetes research – Sweet Seduction. And then this August, M&M book nine will be out. Who will it be about? You have to read YOU ONLY LOVE TWICE to find out!

**Q: What are you working on now?**

Right now I’m working on the second book of my brand new series with Shayla Black called *The Perfect Gentlemen*. The first book is called Scandal Never Sleeps and it’s coming out this July. I’m working on book two – Seduction in Session. It’s romantic suspense set against the glitzy world of billionaires, military men and yes, even the president. I promise our president is the hottest man to ever hold the office! It should be a wild ride.
About the Author:

Lexi Blake lives in North Texas with her husband, three kids, and the laziest rescue dog in the world. She began writing at a young age, concentrating on plays and journalism. It wasn’t until she started writing romance that she found success. She likes to find humor in the strangest places. Lexi believes in happy endings no matter how odd the couple, threesome or foursome may seem. She also writes contemporary Western ménage as Sophie Oak.

Visit her at: http://www.lexiblake.net/

Kat pays the price when she steals the motorcycle belonging to the president of the local MC!

Fun and sexy! A BDSM Chick-lit. When Russell loses a bet, he must follow Juliet's orders.

Can Cassie learn to forgive and trust the Fae Huntsman who loves her?
Rancher Jase Carlson doesn't understand the ache in the hollow of his chest, since his ex-wife ripped his heart out. She doesn't follow the court rules where his children are concerned, making him even more pissed off. Harboring a bad attitude, he wishes he wasn't a gentleman when he comes to the aid of a quick-tempered, sexy blonde. He can't allow her tight jeans and sweet smile to sway him, even after he's coerced into spending time alone with her. Fighting the torturous battle going on within his own mind and body, he can either deal with it—or succumb to the woman who appears to be everything he didn't know he needed.

In an attempt to save her rebellious teen sister from herself—as her guardian, Brenna Page leaves everything behind and moves to Canyon Junction, Arizona. When she unexpectedly meets a hot-headed cowboy with intense blue eyes and muscles to die for, the first thing she wants to do is get away. Since she can't seem to shake him, Brenna wonders if that same grudge-filled cowboy with an attitude is someone worth taking on. But still dealing with painful memories, and a sister who wants nothing to do with Arizona, the last thing she needs right now is a horse ranching cowboy interfering.

One wrong turn. Two broken families. Brought together by chance, and need.

Review by Angie Just Read

She never expected to get lost embarking on a fresh start. He never expected to find a woman who'd make him dream of a brighter future. Sometimes, a little aid in finding a new direction is all the help love needs in guiding one to better things.

As guardian to her younger sister Chloe, schoolteacher Brenna Page could no longer stand idly by as her teenage sibling self destructed in the aftermath of the car accident that killed their parents and Chloe's twin. Accepting a teaching job that would move her and Chloe away from the memories of pain and loss was Brenna's only hope of mending the ever-growing rift that existed between once loving sisters. But Brenna never expected a wrong turn would lead to a chance meeting and a budding romance with a handsome gentleman cowboy struggling to overcome his own heartbreaking loss.
Jase Carlson’s wife had ripped his heart out when she’d left and taken his precious children with her, and sadly, Jase had never seen it coming. But, with the divorce final, what good was having been granted sole custody of his young son and daughter when his ex-wife had secreted them away and refused to abide by the court’s decision? To date, each of Jase’s attempts to locate his children had led to a dead end that had the worried father increasingly turning to alcohol as a means to find the much needed oblivion of sleep. But stopping to help a pretty stranded motorist that just happens to be Canyon Junction’s newest resident has Jase fighting feelings he never thought his heart would ever experience again.

With this second installment in the Double Dutch Ranch Series, Mary J. McCoy-Dressel again invites her devoted fans into the realm of Canyon Junction, Arizona and the lives and loves of the Carlson brothers and their ranch beneath the beauty and splendor of the Superstition Mountains. And, while the tone and subject matter tackled in HEARTBREAK'S REWARD differs from its predecessor Cowboy Boss and His Destiny, Ms. McCoy-Dressel’s adeptness at creating fascinating heroes and heroines will leave readers filled with anticipation as the romance and drama unfolds between two characters as likable and well-rounded as Brenna and Jase.

Besides the steadily growing sizzle between the cowboy and the teacher, there’s an added benefit of revisiting the charming cast from the previous book, as well as the timely introduction of several new characters and a first taste of the third Carlson brother, Dane. Cowboy junkies everywhere will want to add this author to their favorites list!
Let's welcome CLARA GRACE WALKER to this issue of the ezine!

Q: Hi Clara, do tell us something about yourself.

I’m a lover of life and a student of the universe. Being a writer, it probably goes without saying I love books, words and imaginary worlds, and it’s been that way since I learned to put pen to paper. Creativity is the fuel that fires my existence.

In the real world I’m a soft touch, lover of animals and curious about the mysteries of life. I’m also stubborn, (I like to call it determined), occasionally unreasonably enthusiastic and surprisingly shy. That’s one of the things I love about writing, though. I can step out of my shell, while remaining safely tucked inside.

Q: What is something your fans won’t know about you unless you tell them?

I have a plan to survive the zombie apocalypse. I also have two back-up plans, just in case. They involve walling off certain areas, luxury yachts and airplanes. So if you’re a skilled mason, can captain an oceangoing vessel or pilot a plane, I’ll probably seek you out to join my survival team.

Q: Be sure to look me up! LOL Which do you prefer: ebook or print book? Why?

I used to be an absolute print book snob...until I got a Kindle. Now it’s by far my preferred reading method. There’s a lot to be said for the ability to pack 100 books to take with you on vacation! You could say it was love at first ebook. :)

Q: Why do you write romance? What do you love about the genre?

Happy endings are my favorite! I also believe love is the strongest force in the universe. I can’t imagine life without romance and love to sustain it.

Q: How does editing affect you? Like it or hate it? Why? What has your experience with editing your books been like?

I love the editing process. For me, creating a first draft is the most difficult part of writing. Editing that creation, shaping and molding it into something better, brings me enormous joy and satisfaction.
Q: Where do you get all your ideas? Where do you find your story ideas and inspirations?

Observing people, their actions and reactions, is always enlightening. Each one of us carries our own unique experience and our own stories. I find that simply paying attention to people and the world around me provides a lifetime of inspiration.

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

Nick in GOSSIP is definitely my favorite. I fell in love with him instantly when I started writing the book. If I were ever given a magic wand, capable of bringing one of my characters to life, it would be Nick.

Q: Who among your heroines is your favorite? Why?

I love all my heroines. They are each wonderful women in their own way. Mindy, from REDEMPTION, however, has the strongest pull on my heart, because she has endured a great deal of trauma, but manages to retain love and tenderness inside her. She also emerges from her sufferings as a strong, capable woman.

Q: What’s next for you? Are you currently writing anything new? Please give us a sneak peek!

I’m close to finishing the first draft of EXPLOITS, Book 1 of my new Sex & Secrets series. In each book of the 4-book series, either the hero or heroine will be hiding something from the other. In EXPLOITS, our heroine Sunny is trying to hide a dead body from her love interest Jeremy, who also happens to be the police chief of Delray Beach, Florida. Following is the scene where she first encounters him (Please note: first draft, and therefore, subject to editing):

Ruby wouldn’t be happy until she’d had her shot at celebrity matchmaking, so Sunny quit arguing and agreed to meet Mr. Movie Star. With any luck, once it became clear she wasn’t going to fall for Mr. Movie Star, and probably vice versa, Ruby would give up on the idea and move on to Plan B. Or as Ruby would say, Phase Two.

Stepping in from the balcony, she scanned the dimly lit ballroom, locking eyes with a tall, dark stranger. He stood quietly with his back to the wall, sipping on a can of Coke. Something about his bearing, the self-assured stance, the gaze that travelled the room, assessing everything in his path, had her knees buckling. He was more damn handsome than any man she’d ever seen. And in that suspended moment when she spotted him, he looked her way. And Cupid might as well have shot an arrow.

Q: What qualities make a villain one that readers love to hate?

A truly good villain never sees him/herself as the bad guy. In their mind, they are the hero, complete with all the reasons and justifications for their behavior. In essence, they are a human being, and presenting them as such is what turns a villain into someone the reader can love to hate.

Q: If you were a superhero, what name would you go by? What powers would you have?

I’d call myself Stardust and sprinkle magic dust from the universe onto people, filling their hearts with love.
Q: If you were given the chance to have a Hottie Harem, who would you invite to join? Who would be your favorite?

Oh, what a great question! I’d definitely invite my hero Nick from **GOSSIP** (after turning him real with my magic wand), and he would be my favorite. I’d also include Adrian Paul, Brad Pitt, Karl Urban and Aragorn from **Lord of the Rings**.

Q: If you were giving a dinner party who would you invite? Why?

Ernest Hemingway, several of my writer friends, my Hottie Harem, Oprah, Ellen DeGeneres, Angelina Jolie, my friends Carrie, Debbie and Lauren, Lennie James, George Harrison, Jesus, Ghandi and Buddha...for the excellent conversation and the visual talents of the Hottie Harem. :)

Q: If you could go one place, anywhere at all...tap your heels together and you’re there...where would it be why?

The future...so I could experience it.

Q: What is the best appliance ever invented?

The microwave oven...because I hate to cook.

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

- **Favorite vehicle**: My old Jag (Spunky)
- **Favorite color**: Pink
- **Favorite actor**: Brad Pitt
- **Favorite actress**: Angelina Jolie
- **Favorite author**: Ernest Hemingway
- **Favorite movie**: Lord of the Rings
- **Favorite book**: A Farewell to Arms
- **Favorite food**: Ice cream
- **Favorite dessert**: Also ice cream
- **Favorite chocolate**: Godiva
- **Favorite music**: Everything from super sappy, to Top 40 dance tunes
- **Favorite reality show**: Don’t have one
- **Favorite television show**: The Walking Dead
- **Favorite flower**: Lily of the valley
- **Favorite scent**: Same
About the Author:

Bestselling romantic suspense author, Clara Grace Walker, writes about fictional worlds populated with characters living out soap opera style lives. Expect sex, murder, and more than a little back-stabbing inside the pages of her books.

Her debut series, Desire Never Dies, is comprised of three books, Gratification, Gossip and Redemption, all of which have made their mark on Amazon’s bestseller list. People and circumstances are rarely what they seem in these stories, and getting to the truth can be a dangerous thrill-ride. So hop on board and hang on by your fingertips as you read your way to Happily Ever After.

Currently, Clara is immersed in the romance, danger and intrigue of her upcoming four-book series, Sex and Secrets. Expect the first book of the series, Exploits, in 2015.

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An Interview with Sabrina Jeffries on
IF THE VISCOUNT FALLS

Duke’s Men, Book 4

The heir presumptive to the Viscount Rathmoor, Dominick Manton once had his heart’s desire within reach—a bright future as a barrister and engagement to Jane Vernon, a wealthy baron’s daughter. Then a shattering betrayal by his vindictive brother George snatched away Dom’s inheritance and his hopes of offering Jane a secure future. Brokenhearted, and attempting to end their engagement without destroying Jane’s reputation, Dom staged a betrayal of his own to convince her that he’s not the husband-to-be that she thought.

Now George is gone and the viscountcy restored to Dom, since his brother’s widow, Nancy—Jane’s cousin and closest confidant—never bore an heir. But when Nancy goes missing, a panicked Jane calls on her former fiancé to track down her cousin. Dom knows the mistakes of the past may be unforgiveable—but now, entangled together in mystery and danger, will they rekindle a passionate longing that was never lost to begin with?

Pre-order now at Amazon
(Available January 27, 2015)

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Sabrina, welcome to The Romance Reviews!

Q: What’s your inspiration for the Duke’s Men series? How did the series come about?

I’ve always been fascinated with missing persons’ agencies (Without a Trace was one of my favorite TV shows). So I thought it might be fun to have a Regency-era agency that primarily focused on finding people. Plus, it was so much easier for a person to go missing back then . . . and the ramifications were far greater if the person was someone like a duke’s son.

Q: How does it feel to come to the final book of the series in IF THE VISCOUNT FALLS?

Sad, wonderful, and terrifying. Sad because I’ll miss these characters. Wonderful because they’ve all had their happy endings, and I know they’ll all be okay (yes, they’re that real to me). And terrifying because it means I have to start a new series that may or may not capture readers’ imaginations like this one did!

Q: Do tell us more about Dominick Manton and Jane Vernon.

Dominick (Dom) is the owner of Manton Investigations. In his youth, he was disinherited by his older legitimate brother for helping his younger bastard half-brother and half-sister. Cut off without a farthing, he became an investigator, but he knew he couldn’t afford a wife, so he rather foolishly forced his fiancée into the position of jilting him (in the Regency era, if a man jilted a woman it would result in ruin for her, but if she jilted him, it was more socially acceptable). They’ve been apart for twelve years, and he’s missed her for all twelve.

Meanwhile, Jane has finally moved on with her life, despite what happened with Dom, and has accepted a proposal for a marriage of convenience to a friend. But she still cares for Dom, so when a case throws them together and they realize they still desire each other, they have to
decide if they can get past what he did, if they’re even the same people anymore, and if they can make a marriage work after all these years.

I had so much fun writing them. Dom is one of those men used to doing everything his way, and Jane just won’t stand for it. He has to learn to compromise and she has to learn to forgive. But she gives him a run for his money first!

Q: What was their first meeting like?

Since their first meeting is already over when the book begins, I can’t really do their very first meeting. But I can do their first one of the book:

When Dominick Manton entered the drawing room at his sister’s house, where he’d been visiting, Jane started, her lovely eyes widening as she spotted him. She wore a riding habit of purple wool that accentuated every curve to good effect. Looking agitated and windblown and heartbreaking beautiful, she sucked the air from his lungs and made his blood run hot, even after all these years.

God save him. “What the blazes are you doing here?”

She lifted an eyebrow. “How delightful to see you, too.”

Damn, he hadn’t meant to sound annoyed. “Forgive me. I’m merely surprised to find you still in Yorkshire. I assumed you’d be well on your way back to London by now. Weren’t you supposed to leave by packet boat day before yesterday?”

“The spring rains washed out the bridge on the road to Hull, so I had to return to Rathmoor Park.” Something indecipherable glinted in her eyes. “I was unaware you were paying such close attention to my schedule.”

Blast. He hadn’t meant to give that away. “I pay attention to everything regarding my estate and those in my charge. Which includes any visitors to the dowager house.” Especially the visitor he hadn’t dared to go near himself.

Was that disappointment in her face? No, surely not.

“I see,” she said in a colder tone. “Then it’s a pity you haven’t been around the past two days. Because while you’ve been gone, one of those ‘in your charge’ has gone missing.”

“Who?”

“Nancy. According to the servants, my cousin headed off alone on the mail coach to York to visit her great-aunt, Mrs. Patch, directly after I left for Hull. But though Nancy told them she was going only for the day, she hasn’t returned.”

He let out a breath. Was that all? “York is half a day’s journey from Rathmoor Park. Nancy probably decided to remain in town with her aunt, and since she assumed you were on your way to London, she didn’t bother to inform anyone at the estate.”

“Well, she did, actually. Indeed, it’s her letter to the housekeeper, which arrived late in the evening on the day she left, that alarms me.”

She held out the missive, and he moved close enough to take it from her, which, unfortunately, was also close enough to smell her lavender scent. God, why must she still be wearing lavender after all these years? It conjured up memories of their kisses in the arbor behind her uncle’s house, the ones he’d refused to think of in their years apart.
Determinedly he retreated out of smelling distance of her and forced his attention to the letter. Obviously, Jane thought she had cause for concern, though he couldn’t imagine why. She probably wouldn’t even have known Nancy was gone if not for having missed the packet boat to London.

He looked at the letter and gave it back to her. “This only proves that she’s not missing at all. She writes that she’s decided to travel with her great aunt to Bath.”

“Yes, but that’s not true!”

This got more perplexing by the moment. “How do you know?”

“Because I sent an express to Mrs. Patch to ask if Nancy wanted her maid to join them, and this is what I received in reply early this morning.”

Jane jerked another letter from her pocket and thrust it at him. It was written with more formality than Nancy’s:

Dear Miss Vernon,

I believe there has been some misunderstanding. I have not had the pleasure of my dear Nancy’s company since before her husband’s demise. She is certainly not here, nor had we made any plans to travel to Bath. Have you perhaps confused me with another relation of hers?

If I can be of any further assistance in this matter, do let me know. I would be very happy to see you when next you are in York.

Very Sincerely Yours,
Mrs. Lesley Patch

A twinge of unease slid down his spine. “Blast it all.”

Q: What is the most romantic scene between them?

“So that’s it,” Jane bit out. “You’ve got your mind made up. My cousin ran off with a lover, and you’re washing your hands of the whole thing.”

“Can you give me a good reason why I shouldn’t?”

Something in his voice made her glance at him. That’s when it dawned on her—Dom wanted to unearth her secrets. Nancy’s secrets.

She jerked her gaze from him, fighting to hide her consternation. “Merely the same reason I gave you before. Nancy could be in trouble. And it’s your duty as her brother-in-law to keep her safe.”

“From what?” he demanded. “From whom? Is there more to this than you’re saying?”

Ooh, the fact that he was so determined to unveil the truth about Nancy while hiding his former collusion with her scraped Jane raw. “I could ask the same of you,” she said primly. “You’re obviously holding something back. You have some reason for your determination to believe ill of Nancy. I wonder what that might be.”

Two can play your game, Almighty Dom. Hah!
He was silent so long that she ventured a glance at him to find him looking rather discomfited. Good! It was about time.

“I am merely keeping an open mind about your cousin, which is more than I can say for you,” Dom finally answered. “She isn’t the woman you think she is.”

“Because she wouldn’t give in to your advances twelve years ago, you mean?” She would make him admit the truth about that night if it was the last thing she did! “Perhaps that’s why you’re determined to blacken her character. You’re angry that she resisted you and went off to marry your brother instead.”

“That’s a lie!” When several people on the street turned to look his direction, Dom lowered his voice. “It wasn’t like that.”

She stifled a smile of satisfaction. At last she was getting a reaction from him that was something other than level-headed logic. “Wasn’t it? If you’d convinced Nancy to marry you, you might not have had to go off to be a Bow Street Runner. You could have had an easier life, a better life in high society than you could have had with me if you’d married me. Without being able to access my fortune, I could only have dragged you down.”

“You don’t really believe that I wanted to marry her for her money,” he gritted out.

“It’s either that or assume that you fell madly in love with her in the few weeks we were apart.” They were nearly to the inn now, so she added a plaintive note to her voice. “Or perhaps it was her you wanted all along. You knew my uncle would never accept a second son as a husband for his rich heiress of a daughter, so you courted me to get close to her. Nancy was always so beautiful, so—”

“Enough!”

Without warning, he dragged her into one of the many alleyways that crisscrossed York. This one was deeply shadowed, the houses leaning into each other overhead, and as he pulled her around to face him, the brilliance of his eyes shone starkly in the dim light.

“I never cared one whit about Nancy.”

She tamped down her triumph—he hadn’t admitted the whole truth yet. “It certainly didn’t look that way to me. It looked like you had already forgotten me, forgotten what we meant to each—”

“The hell I had.” He shoved his face close to hers. “I never forgot you for one day, one hour, one moment. It was you, always you. Everything I did was for you, damn it. No one else.”

The passionate profession threw her off course. Dom had never been the sort to say such sweet things. But the fervent look in his eyes roused memories of how he used to look at her. And his hands gripping her arms, his body angling in closer, were so painfully familiar . . .

“I don’t . . . believe you,” she lied, her blood running wild through her veins.

His gleaming gaze impaled her. “Then believe this.” And suddenly his mouth was on hers.

Q: That was hot! Whew. *fans self* Give me the book now! Meanwhile, so what’s up next for you?

My new series, the Sinful Suitors! It’s about a rather unusual gentlemen’s club, St. George’s, where guardians conspire to keep their unattached sisters and wards out of the clutches of sinful suitors. Which works fine...except when the sinful suitors are members! I’m writing the first book now, about American artist Jeremy Keane, who appears as a secondary character in the last two
books of the Duke’s Men. I can never entirely let go of secondary characters, I’m afraid, so I just had to tell his story. THE ART OF SINNING comes out July 21st.

About the Author:

Sabrina Jeffries is the NYT bestselling author of 36 novels and 9 works of short fiction (some written under the pseudonyms Deborah Martin and Deborah Nicholas). Whatever time not spent writing in a coffee-fueled haze of dreams and madness is spent traveling with her husband and adult autistic son or indulging in one of her passions—jigsaw puzzles, chocolate, and music. With over 7 million books in print in 18 different languages, the North Carolina author never regrets tossing aside a budding career in academics for the sheer joy of writing fun fiction, and hopes that one day a book of hers will end up saving the world.

She always dreams big.

Visit her at: http://www.sabrinajeffries.com

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Kate, welcome to The Romance Reviews!

Q: Tell us about The Sinners Club series. Where did you get the inspiration for the series? What connects all the books in the series?

I previously wrote a series called The House of Pleasure and the Sinners is an offshoot from that. Some of the characters cross over into both series. The main difference is that the Sinners are a mixture of plot, mystery and sex, whereas the House of Pleasure books are more erotic.

The Sinners Club is a place where men and women who served their country in various non-military ways during the Napoleonic wars can get support, advice, somewhere to stay and maybe a little sexual entertainment on the side. :)

Q: What makes your erotic romance series stand out from the rest?

It is historical, which is unusual in the current market. It is well researched (I have a Masters degree in history) and I’ve written enough books to be comfortable with my subject matter. As my favorite part is writing the sex scenes and I’m a true believer in anything goes, I think most readers will enjoy both the deep emotion and the sex within my books.

Q: Tell us about MASTERING A SINNER, and the main characters, Alistair Maclean and Lady Diana Theale.

MASTERING A SINNER is the third full book in the series, and has several themes about family and trust in all its different forms.
Alistair has managed a difficult family situation for years and likes to be in control--apart from in the bedroom where he loves to be dominated. I loved the idea of this very quiet, upright and efficient secretary being a secret submissive.

Diana has also had to fight for everything in her life and is on a quest to find her father. Meeting Alistair and instinctively responding to his need to be dominated isn’t on her to-do list, but she is incapable of resisting him and finds him the perfect match both inside and outside the bedroom.

Q: Most BDSM books feature a male Dom and a female submissive. What made you reverse the dynamics in this book?

That was just how it came to me. :) I had already formed an opinion of Alistair in the previous book and I was very interested in what made him tick. The contrast between his very uptight and controlling personality and his sexual needs seemed perfect romance hero material. I’ve always liked turning convention on its head.

Q: What is the most erotic scene in this book?

***Editor's warning: The excerpt below contains male-on-male sexual content.***

Mastering A Sinner
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Minshom smiled and it was one of the most terrifying things Alistair had ever seen. “You should not have spoken. I’m surprised she didn’t punish you for that, but perhaps she thought leaving you with us was punishment enough? I hope you like sucking cock, Mr. Maclean, because I guarantee you are going to be an expert before the evening is out.”

Turning to Diana, Minshom bowed. “Will you take a seat, my lady and observe?”

“I would be delighted to do so.”

She sat facing the table where Alistair was stretched out. Minshom found the leash attached to Alistair’s collar, brought it down over his stomach beneath his already trussed up balls and back up behind his neck. He held Alistair’s gaze as he slowly tightened the leash until Alistair had to push his palms down on the table as he raised his hips, frantic not to have his balls and cock put under any more strain.

“Ah…” He couldn’t stop a hiss of pain escaping.

“Thomas, kneel in front of me and lick Maclean’s cock, will you?”

It was torture; it was heaven, the cruel tug of the leather vying with the softness of Thomas’s tongue on his slick, heated flesh. And he used his tongue well, slipping into every crevice, stirring every hair and nerve in Alistair’s groin until he was groaning and begging for release.

“What do you want, Maclean?”

“I want…I need to come, I—”

“Even though your mistress isn’t touching you?” Minshom tightened the leash once more and Alistair almost leapt off the table.

“Yes, God, please…”

“Stop licking him, Thomas. Maclean, put your hands behind your head and keep them there.” He slowly pushed Alistair back until he was flat on the table, only his legs hanging off the end.
Thomas stroked his thumb over Alistair’s cock. “I’ll suck him while he sucks me. I hope the table can hold us both.”

Minshom chuckled. “Oh it can, do you remember last Christmas with Jane, when we all had each other after the plum pudding.”

Thomas climbed on the table and straddled Alistair’s head. “You’ll suck my cock.” He unbuttoned his trousers and freed his hard length. “Do it well.”

Alistair glimpsed Minshom standing between his legs at the end of the table and beyond him Diana. Then his view was cut off as Thomas lowered himself down over him, the head of his cock pushing at Alistair’s lips.

“Suck him, Maclean.”

He closed his eyes and did as he was told, aware of Minshom stroking his leather encased cock in time to his sucking. Thomas pushed deeper, almost making Alistair gag but he kept sucking because God, Minshom was touching him and very soon he was going to...

Thomas shoved his cock in one more time and started to come down Alistair’s throat. He took it all, the tight grip on his jaw keeping him just where Thomas wanted him.

“That was excellent. Shall we let him come, now?”

“Not quite. Kneel up Maclean and turn around to face Thomas.”

It was a struggle to do as he was ordered when he felt like his cock was about to explode. Eventually he managed it and immediately put his hands behind his head. He sensed Minshom moving behind him but kept his gaze lowered to the table and on Thomas’s unbuttoned trousers where his cock was already stirring.

The gentle tap of a riding crop against his buttock made him quiver.

“You’ll use your mouth to make Thomas hard again while I administer the punishment I’m sure your mistress would mete out to you for coming without her permission. Isn’t that so, Lady Theale?”

“I have no objection, my lord.”

Thomas smiled. “He hasn’t actually come yet, Blaize.”

“He will when I beat him. Won’t you Maclean? I want to see you lose control over your cock. I want to see your seed pumping out on your belly and dripping down your thighs. And then I want to let Lady Theale look at you.” He administered the first measured blow and it goddam hurt, barely missing the leather harness. “Spread your legs wider, Maclean and lean forward ready to take Thomas’s cock.”

Alistair flinched as the second stroke landed and then several more in quick succession. His sense of being on edge became so narrow and sharp that it shaded into something else entirely, and he began to anticipate each blow, to want to beg for it. To show his appreciation he sucked lavishly at Thomas’s cock until it was hard again.

“Maclean?”

He went still his mind already in the place where his pain and pleasure became one. His arse was throbbing along with his cock; and his mouth was full of Thomas’s shaft.
“Stop sucking.”

Q: What are you working on now?

I also write historical mysteries, so I’m finishing up one of those right now. I self publish science-fiction erotic romance and Regency historicals. And I’m going to be writing something new for Kensington this year, that I can’t tell you about yet! But coming up after MASTERING A SINNER is another prequel novella for the *Simply* series, which I hope my readers will enjoy.

About the Author:

Kate Pearce was born into a large family of girls in England, and spent much of her childhood living very happily in a dream world. Despite being told that she really needed to ‘get with the program,’ she graduated from the University College of Wales with a Master’s degree in history. A move to the USA finally allowed her to fulfill her dreams and sit down and write that novel.

Along with being a voracious reader, Kate loves trail riding with her family in the regional parks of Northern California. Kate is a member of RWA and is published by Kensington Aphrodisia, NAL, Ellora’s Cave, Cleis Press and Virgin Black Lace/Cheek. Her website is located at [www.katepearce.com](http://www.katepearce.com) where she has a blog and information about her latest books and the occasional contest.
Top Picks

Contemporary Romance

THE SURROGATE HUSBAND   Wynter Daniels
WHAT TO DO WITH A BAD BOY   Marie Harte
UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR   MJ Schiller

Historical Romance

AN UNTITLED LADY   Nicky Penttila
SAY YES TO THE MARQUESS   Tessa Dare
A PLACE CALLED HARMONY   Jodi Thomas
ALL A LADY WANTS   Connie Crow

Romantic Suspense

BEYOND LIMITS   Laura Griffin
DAMAGE DONE   M.J. Schiller
HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLF   Paige Tyler
FULL THROTTLE   Julie Ann Walker
TRUST NO ONE   Diana Layne
MADE   J.M. Darhower
New Adult

**PUSH** Claire Wallis  
**ELITE** Rachel Van Dyken  
**SOMETHING LIKE NORMAL** Monica James  
**WILD** Sophie Jordan  
**YOU AND EVERYTHING AFTER** Ginger Scott  
**BURYING WATER** K.A. Tucker  
**AFTER** Anna Todd

Paranormal Romance

**CARESS OF DARKNESS** Julie Kenner  
**DARK PRINCE** Michelle M. Pillow  
**HUNGRY** LIKE THE WOLF

Western Romance

**THE TROUBLE WITH TEXAS COWBOYS** Carolyn Brown  
**ROPED IN** Lorelei James

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- *The Two Gentlemen of Altona*  
  Lisa Henry; J.A. Rock
- *The Merchant of Death*  
  Lisa Henry; J.A. Rock
- *Tempest*  
  Lisa Henry; J.A. Rock

**Contemporary Romance**
- *The Half of Us*  
  Cardeno C.
- *Driving Into the Sun*  
  Dev Bentham
- *Yakuza Courage*  
  H.J. Brues
- *Bonds of Denial*  
  Lynda Aicher
- *MISFITS*  
  Garrett Leigh
- *Rescued*  
  Felice Stevens

**Historical Romance**
- *One Indulgence*  
  Lydia Gastrell
BDSM
DEMONS WITHIN  Rhiannon Ayers
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PLAY ME WILD  Tracy Wolff
PLAY ME HOT  Tracy Wolff
RUIN  CD Reiss
EXPOSED BY FATE  Tessa Bailey
BONDS OF HOPE  Lynda Aicher
SONGBIRD  AJ Adams

Contemporary Romance

FALLING FOR THE ENEMY  Samanthe Beck
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THE FLAME  Christopher Rice
NO MORE MASQUERADE  Angel Payne; Victoria Blue
BOX OF 1NIGHT STANDS ANTHOLOGY
ONE NIGHT DENIED  Jodi Ellen Malpas
Motorcycle Club Romance

RIDING DIRTY  Jill Sorenson
WHAT DOESN'T DESTROY US  M.N. Forgy
THE DIARY OF BINK CUMMINGS  Bink Cummings

Menage or More

CLAIMING KARA  Caitlyn O'Leary

Paranormal Romance

PRYMAL OBSESSION  Jianne Carlo
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