

FamilyFiction

May 2020



Fantasy Author
MORGAN L. BUSSE

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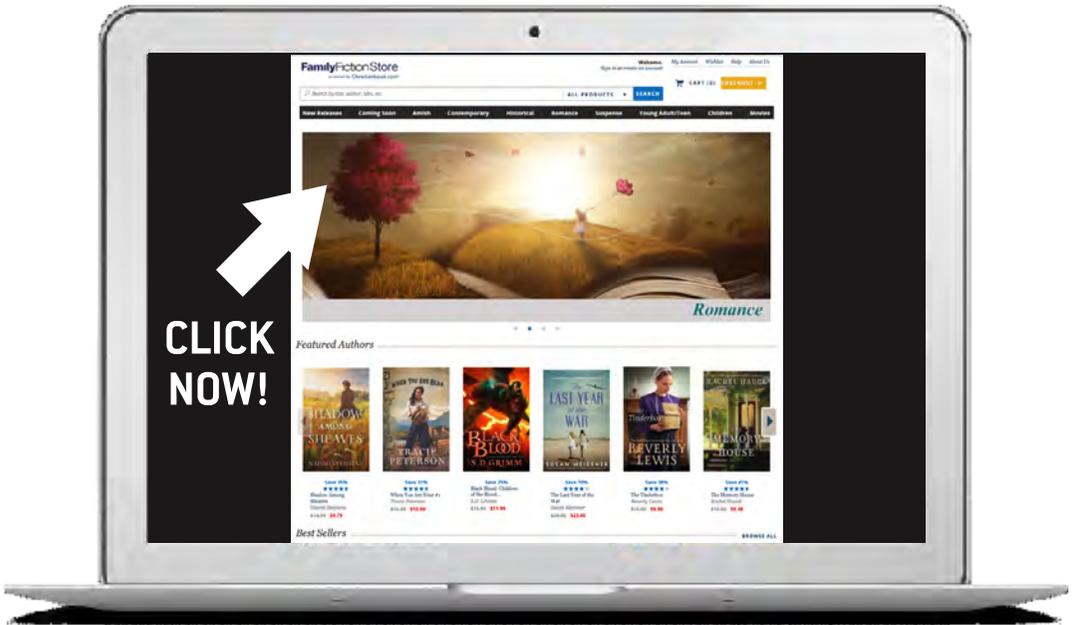
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Historical Romance Author Lynn Austin Releases *If I Were You*

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SPECULATIVE: MORGAN L. BUSSE

ONLY GOD CAN HEAL THE BROKENNESS

The fantasy author explains how she infuses her faith into her fantastical worlds.

A writer by day and a mother by night, **Morgan L. Busse** is the author of the **Follower of the Word Series** and the steampunk series **The Soul Chronicles**. The first novel in her fantasy series **The Ravenwood Saga**, **Mark of the Raven** (Bethany House), won the 2019 Carol Award and the 2019 INSPY Award. Morgan brings that saga to a rousing conclusion with **Cry of the Raven** (Bethany House): As war looms, will Lady Selene Ravenwood's power be enough to save the ones she loves? Morgan answers questions about the themes in *Cry of the Raven*, explains the part of the series that surprised her when writing it, and reveals why it's actually not difficult to write about the fantastical from a biblical perspective.

What is a theme or idea you explore in *Cry of the Raven*?

I've always wanted to write about a married couple and show how two people can be strong in their own right and even stronger together. When one spouse is down, the other can help lift him or her up.

But I also wanted to be realistic in how I wrote the married relationship—the ups, the downs, the fights, the triumphs. I think I accomplished that with *Cry of the Raven*.

What can you tell about the world of *The Ravenwood Saga*?

It's a fantasy set in a world where seven Great Houses were given gifts to rule their people thousands of years ago. However, as the years went by, some gifts weakened,

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some were twisted, and one disappeared completely (or so people think).

Into this story comes Selene, oldest daughter and heir to the Great House of Ravenwood. On the day she inherits her gift of dreamwalking, she starts to discover how her family has hidden their gift from the rest of the world and uses it for hire, either to find out political secrets or to assassinate. Selene questions the use of their gift and searches for the real reason they were given the ability to dreamwalk.

How does this series compare/contrast with your previous series?

In this story I delve into family dynamics, politics, and the ultimate question of when we are given a gift, how do we use it? I've never written about families before, so that's been an interesting twist.

What can you tell us about Lady Selene? What do you consider the essential qualities of a leading character?

Selene is an intelligent, determined, and thinking character. Her strength is in her desire to do what is right, especially when everything around her is wrong.

I think the essential qualities of a leading character needs to be someone who critically thinks, weighs the pros and cons of their actions, and is not satisfied with the status quo. Ultimately, the lead character is someone I want to be like someday, not perfect, but growing and learning.

What part of this series surprised you the most when you were writing it?

The characters always surprise me. I usually know the big events in the story and lead the plot toward those events.

But as I write, it is like the characters come alive. They tell me why they think and act the way they do. Even the villain has her own hopes, dreams, and hurts. It is as if they are real people, and I'm telling their story.

As you're world-building, you need to create a place that's recognizable enough for readers to join you, but also different from what other authors have done before.

How do you balance that?

I'm a huge history lover! Because of that, I'm always drawing inspiration from history, cultures, and civilizations. As a world-builder, I find it helpful to look at how our own world came to be, and then use that as inspiration for my novels.

“I don’t find it hard to be accurate. I am a visual person, and so when I teach, I use visual ideas to help people grasp biblical concepts.”

For example, in my Ravenwood series, I based the Dominia Empire on Genghis Khan and the Mongol Empire. I studied how he led his people, how he inspired his people to fight, and how he went about conquering the lands.

In my steampunk novels, I use a lot of pieces from the Victorian era to shape my worlds—from the rise of science during that time period, to the clothing styles, to modes of transportation (both real and made up).

I find combining something familiar and my own imagination helps ease the reader into my worlds.

How difficult is it for you to create a fantastical world infused with a biblical worldview? What are the challenges?

I am a finite human being, which means I will never be able to show God in all His glory and the facets of His being. That said, I always strive to present God in the most theologically accurate way, and I want my readers to walk away from my stories with an overwhelming awe of God in their hearts.

I also portray sin as a brokenness in our lives, which only God, not ourselves, can heal. It is when we come to God and realize our need of Him that we can finally break free of our past and move forward as new creatures. That is how I infuse a biblical worldview into my stories.

Do you find it hard to include a biblical perspective and be accurate when writing speculative fiction?

I don't find it hard to be accurate. I am a visual person, and so when I teach, I use visual ideas to help people grasp biblical concepts.

Naturally, that comes into my writing as well. I don't preach in my stories, I show who God is, what sin is and what it does to us, and what sacrificial love is by telling a story. The great thing about fantasy is you can actually show it.

What is the most difficult part about writing for you?

Writing the first draft. I'm a really slow writer, so it takes me months to write the first draft. That means being disciplined enough to sit down every weekday and write.

Sometimes it feels like I'll never finish the story. But after a couple of months, and as I approach the ending, it's all worth it.

How does your faith impact how you approach storytelling?

I love writing about people who are faced with hard choices full of darkness and despair, and then find the light. I don't set out to write those stories; they just happen. When I start writing about a character, they begin telling me about their past, their fears, and that they don't know how they're going to keep going. As I keep writing, the light starts to seep into their life, and I get excited because I know it's God working in the background.

Yeah, it's fiction, but I see this all the time in real life, and I love that it shows up in my writing as well. My favorite scenes are the ones when a character finally comes face-to-face with God

Morgan L. Busse

and realizes that they were never alone. God was always there with them.

I love those scenes because I want the reader to realize how much God loves them, and that no matter how dark life becomes, He is always there—helping us, carrying us. **FF**

Visit Morgan L. Busse's author page here:

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Cry of the Raven

The Ravenwood Saga #3

Morgan L. Busse

Bethany House



Lady Selene Ravenwood has come into her full power as a dreamwalker just as the war with the Dominia Empire begins. Working with the other Great Houses, Selene and Damien use their gifts to secure the borders and save those devastated by the

war. But conflict, betrayal, and hatred begin to spread between the Great Houses, destroying their unity as the empire burns a path across their lands. At the same time, Damien Maris starts to lose his ability to raise the waters, leaving the lands vulnerable to the empire's attacks.

The only one who can unite the houses and restore her husband's power is Selene Ravenwood. But it will require that she open her heart to those who have hurt her and let go of her past, despite the one who hunts her and will do anything to stop her power. Will Selene survive? Or is she destined to fall like the dreamwalkers before her?



CONTEMPORARY: RACHEL HAUCK

THE FASCINATION WITH STORY CIRCLES

A gilded-age mansion hosts the setting for the sharing of stories in a city of strangers.

Best-selling Romance and Contemporary genre author **Rachel Hauck** is a Christy award winner and a recipient of *Romantic Times'* Career Achievement Award. Her latest novel, ***The Fifth Avenue Story Society*** (Thomas Nelson): When five New Yorkers receive an anonymous, mysterious invitation to the Fifth Avenue Story Society, no one is prepared to reveal their deepest secrets to a roomful of strangers. Yet they discover the stories of their hearts—and the kind of friendship and love that heals their souls.

In our exclusive interview, Rachel explains what sparked the book, divulges her favorite character, and shares the journey of writing the storyline.

Rachel, explain to us what the Fifth Avenue Story Society is. This society is about community, about the story that is in each one of us. The characters are fortunate enough to meet in an old, gilded age mansion library.

We're introduced to five specific people—are they the only members of the society, or do they meet still others there? The five are the only members of the society. Later on there's an honorary member, but for the duration the five who received the mysterious invitation are the only ones who attend the Monday evening meetings.

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What can you tell us about your characters?

The characters are all a little broken and wounded. They are trying to work their way out of past mistakes when they get invited to the Fifth Avenue Library. They all have secrets.

Are they based on anyone you know? Did you have a favorite?

I suppose all characters have aspects of people I know, of myself, but when developing the society's fab five, they took on a life of their own. I love all the characters, but I think Ed is my favorite. (*Shhh*, don't tell the others.)

Which character surprised you the most?

What a great question. I had to think about it. I'm not sure any of them surprised me—I am the story boss after all—but they all blessed me!

What inspired this story?

I spoke at a local writers meeting and during the announcements, the leader said, "Don't forget to get with

your story circles,” and I was launched into story world. I instantly saw a group of people sitting in a circle, wondering what they were doing there. The story kind of bloomed up from my heart.

I came home and wrote a synopsis for *The Story Circle* in ten minutes and emailed it to my agent. He loved it. Later on, my publisher and I agreed *The Fifth Avenue Story Society* was a better title.

Was there a particular reason why you set it in New York City?

I do love the city, but my stories are usually set in the south. For this one, I wanted a rich, historic setting for the society. When I thought of the library being the remains of a gilded age mansion, I knew I had to go to Fifth Avenue.

Were there challenges when you wrote the story?

Oh, where to begin. The original draft had seven characters. After my initial editorial letter, we decided to cut it down to five. I also had in mind to keep this a short, literary kind of story and in doing so, cheated myself and the reader out of many story elements.

It wasn't until the second rewrite that I expanded the book to be what it is today. Juggling five characters was a bit more taxing than I imagined. I also had three romances going in a *Breakfast Club* sort of setting. Finding the balance there was a bit tricky. This was probably the hardest book I've ever written but I'm proud of the results. Many thanks to my editor and my writing partner for rolling up their sleeves to help me out.

What are your goals with writing the story—are there spiritual themes you're touching on?

While all five characters had a story arc and happy conclusion, not all five could have a spiritual epiphany. I was in our church prayer room one morning when the Lord clearly spoke to me, "I only want this." And it was Coral's journey. I was a bit surprised but as I meditated on the idea and envisioned where the story would go, I knew it was right. The Lord's wisdom never fails!

My goal was to really show how we help each other find truth. Find the story within. Not every story needs to be a book, but every story needs to be told, even if it's just to family.

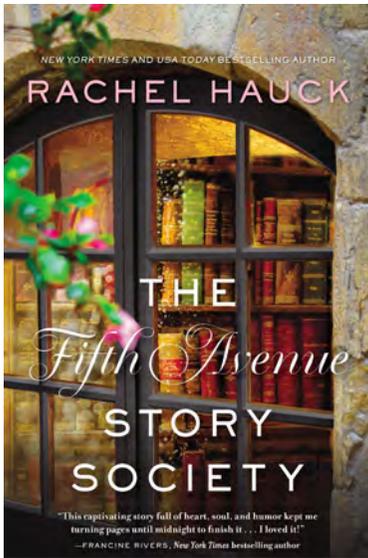
What would you like readers to take away after reading *The Fifth Avenue Story Society*?

First, I'd like them to be entertained with a dash of hope. Second to know that they are valued, and that God is writing their story. Also, that facing the truth about your past can bring a lot of healing. All of the characters in *Fifth Avenue* had to confront the lies they believed about themselves, and others, and when they did, they turned a corner. **FF**

Visit Rachel Hauck's author page here:

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Rachel Hauck



The Fifth Avenue Story Society

Rachel Hauck

Thomas Nelson

Buy Now 

Executive assistant Lexa is eager for a much-deserved promotion, but her boss is determined to keep her underemployed.

Literature professor Jett is dealing with a broken heart, as well as a nagging suspicion his literary idol, Gordon Phipps Roth, might be a fraud.

Uber driver Chuck just wants a second chance with his kids.

Aging widower Ed is eager to write the true story of his incredible marriage.

Coral, queen of the cosmetics industry, has broken her engagement and is on the verge of losing her great grandmother's multimillion-dollar empire.

When all five New Yorkers receive an anonymous, mysterious invitation to the Fifth Avenue Story Society, they suspect they're victims of a practical joke. No one knows who sent the invitations or why. No one has heard of the literary society. And no one is prepared to reveal their deepest secrets to a roomful of strangers.

Yet curiosity and loneliness bring them back week after week to the old library. And it's there they discover the stories of their hearts, and the kind of friendship and love that heals their souls.

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HISTORICAL: MICHELLE GRIEP

A MILLION DIFFERENT WAYS

The author shares how God is working in all our lives, whether we see it or not.

Michelle Griep's been writing since she first discovered blank wall space and Crayolas. She's the Christy Award-winning author of several historical romances. Her latest novel is ***House at the End of the Moor*** (Shiloh Run Press), which combines historical romance and suspense. When a politician threatens to ruin her reputation, an opera star flees the spotlight for the wilds of the moors to live in anonymity—and crosses paths with an escaped convict who is desperate to prove his innocence.

In this exclusive interview, Michelle explains the real inspiration behind the story, reveals the most challenging part of writing the novel and explains how her faith impacts her as a storyteller.

Reclusive opera star saves escaped convict!

Do you listen to opera? What inspired this story?

True confession time, eh? No, I don't listen to opera. Way too much singing. I'm more of an instrumental kind of gal. So clearly it was not my adoration of opera which was my inspiration. Truthfully, the idea came from the convict.

On a recent trip to England, I visited the Dartmoor Prison Museum. The prison itself is set in the middle of the moor, so even if a convict busted out of the building, escaping would still be difficult at best. As I hiked that rugged land, I wondered what it might be like to come across one of those convicts—so lo and behold, a story was born.

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How significant are the moors to the setting of the book? What made you want to set the book there?

The first half of the book takes place in Dartmoor, making that barren outland an essential element to the story. I purposely set this novel on a moor because ever since I read *Jane Eyre* I've been intrigued by such a forbidding landscape. And then when I tromped around on a moor myself, that sealed the deal. Hiking in that lonely place brings all sorts of stories to life.

Maggie Lee is an opera star, currently at the top of her game—but she needs to escape threats made by a powerful politician. What made you want to build a story about her?

In the Victorian era, job options for women were extremely limited. Not many women were able to support themselves without a man. And sometimes women today feel that powerlessness as well. So I created Maggie, an independent woman who has her own distinct vulnerabilities—just like any other contemporary woman. She gave up her career not only

for her sake but for her father's, the age-old dilemma of self-sacrifice for someone you love.

As a man running from the law, Oliver Ward is an unusual main romantic character. What do you consider essential qualities of a leading man?

Unpredictability tops my personal list. I love a hero that cannot be contained by the heroine or even by the author. A willingness to die for those he loves is also a crucial trait. And there's got to be some flaw in the man that he learns to master by the end of the tale. Above all, he must be a man of integrity, one who keeps his word.

In *House at the End of the Moor* we have an opera star, a vengeful politician, and an escaped prisoner. What was the most challenging part in writing this novel?

Pulling off the reverse heist. There were so many details to consider, like how on earth were Maggie and Oliver going to get those jewels back to the owner without being discovered by the law and make sure that the true thieves were brought to justice?

Which character surprised you the most as this story unfolded?

Sebastian Barrow caught me off guard, especially at the end. I didn't set out to write him such a drastic character arc, but I surely do love it when a secondary character leaps off the page and makes those kinds of demands.

You have several genres weaving through this story—historical, crime, romance—how do you balance the elements as you go?

The first step is just to get the story down. Then I went back and wove in some romance and added in bits and pieces about the crime. The historical aspect is much easier to write on the first draft because I've done so much research on that era.

What would you like to be the reader's takeaway after reading of *House at the End of the Moor*?

Hope—namely that God is working in everyone's lives all the time in a million different ways whether we see it or not. Who'd have thought that two innocuous little words could change Barrow's life so much? That befriending a sick convict would free a missing marquis? That saving a sheepdog would turn the dog into a savior in its own right?

These are the little things that only God can orchestrate, and He's doing that right now in each of our lives, no matter how bleak things may look. How hopeful is that?!

How does your faith impact your storytelling?

It is my goal to seamlessly weave biblical truth into my stories without beating the reader over the head with a Bible. Jesus told enormous truths in His little parables. I aim to do the same.

What do you consider the best way(s) for readers to support their favorite authors?

First off, spread the word. Let others know about your favorite reads. Word of mouth is the best way to get an author's books into readers' hands.

Michelle Griep

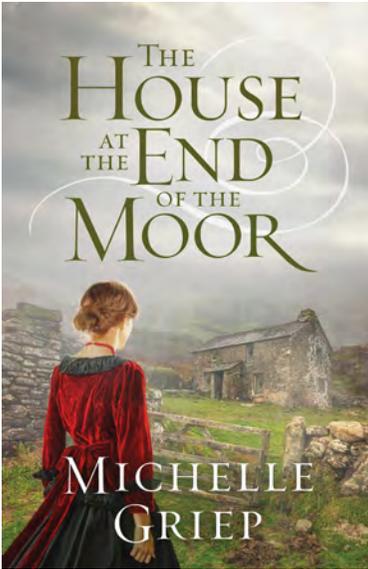
And tying into that theme, leave a review. Somewhere. Anywhere.

Last, but not least, feel free to drop your favorite author a note. Trust me, even the big names read all their emails, and hearing from a reader is always a boost of energy for a writer. **FF**

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House at the End of the Moor

Michelle Griep

Shiloh Run Press



What Can a London Opera Star and an Escaped Dartmoor Prisoner Have in Common?

Opera star Maggie Lee escapes her opulent lifestyle when threatened by a powerful politician who aims to ruin her life. She runs off to the wilds of the moors to live in

anonymity. All that changes the day she discovers a half-dead man near her house. Escaped convict Oliver Ward is on the run to prove his innocence, until he gets hurt and is taken in by Maggie. He discovers some jewels in her possession—the very same jewels that got him convicted. Together they hatch a plan to return the jewels, clearing Oliver's name and hopefully maintaining Maggie's anonymity.

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The bestselling author of more than one hundred books, **Robin Jones Gunn** is best known for the wildly popular **Christy Miller Series** for teens. Her award-winning Christian fiction for women includes the **Glenbrooke and Sisterchicks Series**, and her **Father Christmas** novels have been made into three Hallmark movies. Her latest



novel, **Being Known** (Multnomah), asks *“What does it mean to be truly known? In a marriage, in a friendship, or by a loving God?”*

In our interview, Robin shares where the initial set of questions that spurred the story came from, reveals what “Haven Makers” means to her, and we explore some character bits more in-depth.

Being Known is a novel that asks a thoughtful set of questions. Where did they come from?

I receive a lot of mail from readers and many of them generously share their personal stories with me. I saw a recurring theme over the last few years as they’ve talked about the longing to feel close to God and to others and know that someone genuinely loves them.

Have the shifts in our culture over the last decade contributed to this need for deeper relationships? So much of our connections are now virtual instead of face to face. We have become skilled at portraying a polished, surface level version of ourselves with our virtual friends. We self-protect by not talking about our true



struggles as our circles expand because we don't know who we can trust with our intimate hurts.

The voices of these Beautiful Readers motivated me to write a novel about women, married and single, who form a close face-to-face friendship and go heart-level deep in their communication.

***Being Known* is book two of the Haven Makers Series. What was your goal in writing the Haven Makers?**

A "haven" is such an inviting, affirming concept.

I have extraordinary women in my life who are havens to me. They provide safe harbor during difficult seasons and speak truth to me in a way that I can receive it and make needed changes in my life. Those friends are Haven Makers for me and their input and unwavering love has changed my life many times over.

When I put together the five women characters in the first book, *Becoming Us*, I wanted to show what it looked like to have friends you can count on and grow with over the years. I didn't originally plan for both Christy Miller and Sierra Jensen to be two of those characters. But as I started writing I kept "seeing" them in the room and I soon knew they needed to be part of the Daughters of Eve, as the women started calling themselves.

It's painful when I hear from readers who don't have any sort of nurturing community with women in their real life. My goal in writing this series was to motivate those readers to both seek heart-to-heart, face-to-face friendships and to do so by becoming a Haven Maker themselves. I think we become Haven Makers when we invite others to come as they are and receive the comfort and small joys of being known.

Are any of the ladies in Haven Makers based on real people?

Aside from Christy and Sierra being two imaginary friends that I've known for many years, I found inspiration from my daughter and her friends. I was in awe of the creativity and caring that her circle of friends expressed to each other.

One of the young women, Alyssa Bethke, invited my daughter and me to a Favorite Things Party at her home. What's interesting is that I've known Alyssa for a decade. She and I co-authored a non-fiction book titled, *Spoken For: Embracing Who You Are and Whose You Are*. You'd think I'd feel right at home going to her house for a party.

Well, being the "high functioning introvert" that I am, when I arrived that night and heard the young women talking and laughing, I almost didn't knock on the door. I felt like a 6th grader

on the first day of school. All I could think was, *What if I don't fit in? What if nobody talks to me? I shouldn't have come.*

I did finally knock on her door. It was a wonderful evening in every way. When I got home, I journaled about how I felt and how that lovely circle of young women made me feel so wanted and included. That became the inspiration for the opening scene of *Becoming Us* when Emily almost turns around and goes home. The story shows how much she would have missed if she'd let fear make the decision for her.

While writing their stories, did any of the characters surprise you?

The only surprise was how many times I changed the name for one of the characters. I've written over 100 books and most of them are in series. Many of my characters show up in multiple series. It's turned into an Easter egg hunt for some loyal readers.

That's why it was challenging to find a name I hadn't already used and make sure it truly fit the personality of the character. I was halfway through the first book before I was confident that her name was Tess. As I was writing about Tess in *Being Known*, I remember pausing and wondering how I could have possibly considered any other name for her. She's a very familiar imaginary friend to me now.

What spiritual themes are you exploring?

Relationships change in different seasons. For Jennalyn, her closeness to God seems to narrow as she gives in to the delayed grief she didn't fully process a few years earlier when she lost her mother. The silence draws her inward and continues to diminish her most important relationships.

Those who have waited on the Lord during painful seasons will recognize what Jennalyn is going through. They might also understand how vulnerable she is when an old boyfriend shows up and seems to be the only one who knows her and understands.

How can a woman navigate the emotional tug in such a season? Who will speak truth to her when she finds it easy to turn to what-if scenarios?

The power of being in close fellowship with women who know you well is a spiritual theme that is rarely focused on in novels. That's why I wanted to explore what can happen when we are vulnerably honest with our true friends and they point us back God.

What are you hoping readers will take with them after reading *Being Known*?

A closer relationship with God—to realize they are fully known by God and to desire to know Him fully.

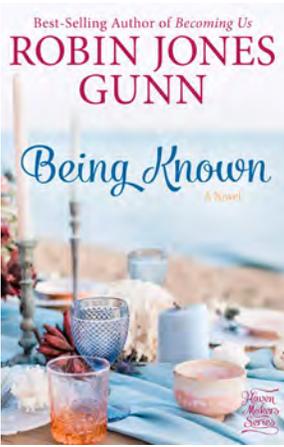
I'd also love to see more women find ways to connect on deeper levels with other women because we need each other. We need friendships that are havens during the difficult times in life. **FF**

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Prolific best-selling author **Irene Hannon**

is the author of dozens of novels, including contemporary romances and also romantic suspense titles.

She concludes her west coast beach-based **Hope Harbor Series** with **Starfish Pier** (Revell). As two seemingly incompatible souls search for common ground, might they discover a deeper connection—and find that love can banish darkness and light the way to a future filled with promise?



In this interview, Irene touches on her research for the series, hints at one of her lead character's challenges, and shares her hopes for readers of the novel.

How is *Starfish Pier* different from your other books set in Hope Harbor?

One of the things that makes this story unique is that the heroine has some physical challenges. I've often heard complaints that all heroes and heroines in romance novels are physically perfect. Not so—and this book illustrates that.

This is your sixth book set in Hope Harbor. Why did you choose this location?

I like small-town settings, and I love the ocean. Everything I'd read about Oregon suggested it would be the perfect place to set this series. After a research trip there, during which I traveled the coast from top to bottom, my hunch was confirmed—and Hope Harbor was born.



In each of your Hope Harbor novels, you feature characters that have very different career fields. In *Starfish Pier*, one of your main characters is an ex-Delta Force operator who is now running fishing charters. What type of research was required to accurately depict this type of career?

I invest a great deal of time and energy researching all of my books. For example, in the first novel, the heroine was a cranberry farmer, so I connected with a cranberry farmer in Oregon, who provided invaluable help. With *Starfish Pier*, my hero is a former Delta Force operator, so there isn't a great deal of discussion about his past. I could find what I needed online. I actually had to do more research for his current career as a charter fisherman, which is front and center.

What do you hope readers will gain from *Starfish Pier*?

I hope it encourages readers to think about the value of life in all its stages, from conception through natural death. And I hope it leaves them uplifted and with a better appreciation for the tremendous power of love to transform lives.

Irene Hannon

In addition to writing contemporary romance novels, you're also a master at writing romantic suspense novels. What are the pros and cons of writing both genres?

For me, there are no cons. Alternating between the two is a perfect balance. After an intense suspense novel, where I delve into dark minds, I love visiting Hope Harbor. While there's plenty of drama in my contemporary romances, it's typically not of the life-and-death variety! **FF**

Visit Irene Hannon's author page here:

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Starfish Pier
Hope Harbor #6
Irene Hannon
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A native of coastal South Carolina, bestselling author **T.I. Lowe** sees herself as an ordinary country girl who loves to tell extraordinary stories. She kicks off her new **Carolina Coast Series** with ***Beach Haven*** (Tyndale House):



Feeling guilty in the aftermath of a hurricane, ex-Marine Lincoln Cole decides to help free-spirited Opal Gilbert repair her store. But even as he tries to keep her at arm's length, her well-meaning meddling begins to heal his wounds—and capture his heart.

In this interview, T.I. explains her inspiration for the book, shares the challenge of her characters' romance, and reveals the part of the story she just loved.

What inspired you to write *Beach Haven*?

The Bible verse shared at the beginning of the book sums it up. “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11). Storms in life can come in and make such a mess that this promise can get overlooked.

Haven means “refuge,” so I was inspired to write a story centered around finding our haven in God during these storms, seeking his refuge and redemption in the aftermath. Readers will see this physically manifested through a hurricane and spiritually demonstrated through Lincoln's redemption of faith.

What was the most difficult part of writing this story?

When I create a character with such an altruistic background as Lincoln's military career, my goal is to pay my respects and to



honor them. I'm always a little nervous about getting that right and mindful of how it will be perceived.

What can you tell us about your characters Opal Gilbert and Lincoln Cole?

Opal is what folks consider weird. Different. Too silly at times. She allows people to form those opinions but doesn't allow them to keep her from enjoying the eccentric fit of her quirkiness. Opal's purpose is to inspire readers to own up to their uniqueness.

Lincoln is a big ole teddy bear hiding behind a grouchy pout, but boy does he have one fierce stubborn streak. Once his mind up is made up about something, there's no wavering from it. Lincoln finally reaches a point in the story where there is no other choice but to come to terms with accepting God's repurposing plan for his life.

Neither one of them wanted a relationship. Opal's focus was restoring her shop in the aftermath of Hurricane Lacy, and Lincoln's focus was restoring his life, which was left in ruins

due to a career-ending injury and the poor choices he made afterward. Even though they both fight against their developing feelings, of course love wins in the end.

Exploring the unexpectedness of their love story was an appealing challenge for me. They butt heads quite a bit, but both have that endearing quality where they have each other's back. I'll share one of my favorite scenes below that showcases this when a guy makes fun of Opal in public.

What role does faith play in this story?

Life is a gift from God, even when we perceive it to be in ruins and past repair. During a confrontation with Lincoln, Opal points this out to him by checking his pulse. She tells him, "Each pulse you have is another chance. Another opportunity ... You're a living, breathing miracle. Your life is a gift from God and yet you've just wasted eighty-eight chances to appreciate that in the last minute."

What lessons or truths do you hope readers take away from *Beach Haven*?

Just because a chapter of your life inserts an unexpected plot twist and is far from what you had planned doesn't mean the story is over. Embracing change is never easy, but it's a part of life.

I'm most excited for readers to experience the victory of redemption. Lincoln will make mistakes, he will fight against necessary change, and he will try running from his faith and the feelings developing for Opal.

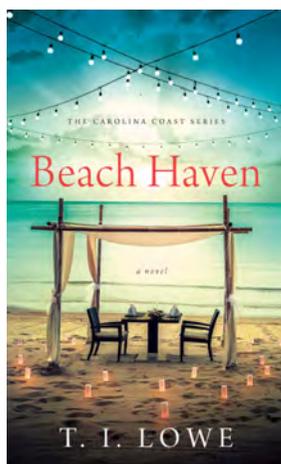
T.I. Lowe

I loved, loved, loved when I finally got to the part of the story where this giant of a man humbles himself to accept it all. He is a decorated soldier and wore bravery like a fine suit before he was wounded in battle, but I found him at his strongest when he stood up for Opal and when he reconciled with his father. **FF**

Visit T.I. Lowe's author page here:

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Beach Haven
Carolina Coast #1

T.I. Lowe
Tyndale House



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His previous career as stealth pilot gives Suspense author **James R. Hannibal** a wealth of first-hand knowledge to draw from. He continues his series starring young CIA officer Talia Inger with ***Chasing the White Lion*** (Revell): To rescue a group of kidnapped refugee children, Talia must rely on the man who assassinated her father. But as Talia and her elite team of thieves con their way into the heart of the first-ever crowdsourced crime syndicate, she'll run right up against the ragged edge of her family's dark past.



In this interview, James gives us a peek at how much of his experiences as a deception officer can be used in his fiction, shares how Talia's faith affects her work, and explains how Compassion International plays into the plot of his latest novel.

As a former tactical deception officer and stealth pilot, you've experienced your share of danger and intrigue. How does your past experience inform your books?

In thriller writing, a classified past is both a blessing and a curse. I've had amazing experiences I'm never allowed to speak of in public, and those hidden experiences meant my first three novels had to pass through multiple program security offices before publishers could ever see them.

However, even though I can't talk about my real experiences, I can draw from them as I write, giving me an edge. Research is a little easier too. Any writer can find the information I put into my



stories, but it will be a difficult hunt. I have the unfair advantage of knowing which rocks to overturn.

Can you provide a brief description of your new book, *Chasing the White Lion*?

CIA rookie Talia Inger returns to infiltrate the world's first crowdsourced crime syndicate, known as the "Jungle." But venturing into the Jungle with Tyler and Talia's grifter friend, Valkyrie, means venturing into a past she's been trying to avoid. The truth about her father may reveal enemies close to home.

Also, the deeper she goes into the Jungle's darkness, the more the lines between right and wrong blur. Talia must learn to trust God and her team, and she must help Valkyrie see that even in the darkest shadows, no one is beyond the saving love of Christ.

In *Chasing the White Lion*, you take readers deep undercover into the criminal underworld where the main heroine, Talia, hopes to rescue kidnapped refugee children from a human trafficking network. How did you come up with the plot for your book?

Compassion International's mission of empowering impoverished children inspires me. Compassion gives children hope, dignity,

and identity. These are in short supply in border refugee camps where neither nation wants to recognize a child's existence.

That lack of identity makes these children prime targets for criminal enterprises. I wanted to bring this to light and bring to light the power of Compassion's work. By extension, every sponsor is as much a hero as Talia. In essence, the crime syndicate in my story will learn that they messed with the wrong kids.

Talia is not only a CIA officer, but she is also in charge of an elite team of thieves. What type of research was required to accurately portray her role?

Thieves and magic go hand in hand. I am bound by a nondisclosure, but I can say that my research on this story led me to an opportunity for remote study with a pair of the most famous magicians in the world. What I learned about deception and misdirection became key pieces of the adventure.

What do you hope readers will gain from reading *Chasing the White Lion*?

My ultimate hope is that readers will see the power of child sponsorship and choose to become heroes themselves through Compassion International or some other child sponsorship program.

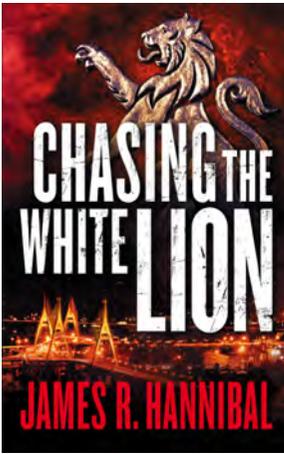
Beyond this, I hope that Talia and Valkyrie will help readers see that we can trust in God for all things—anytime, anywhere—and that no one is beyond the saving love of Christ. He is reaching out. Simply take his hand. **FF**

Visit James R. Hannibal's author page here:

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James R. Hannibal

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Chasing the White Lion

Talia Inger #2

James R. Hannibal

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Professor **Rob Currie** has written two non-fiction books prior to his debut novel for middle-graders, ***Hunger Winter*** (Tyndale Kids), set during the Dutch famine of World War II.



In this interview, Rob explains why the fascination with World War II, shares about his family life that contributed to the curiosity about the subject matter, and reveals the journey that went into crafting his first novel.

What motivated you to write *Hunger Winter*?

When my son was in eighth grade, he wrote a two-page story about World War II in the Netherlands. I thought it was interesting and suggested we could write a longer version of that story together for fun. The idea was that we would each write half of the chapters.

He agreed but soon became more interested in being a teenager than writing a story. By that time, I was hooked on the story and I decided to finish writing it.

Why did you choose World War II and the Dutch famine as your story focus? How much research did you have to do, and what surprised you the most?

I've loved learning about World War II since I can remember, thanks to my father, who was a World War II vet. My wife is of Dutch heritage, so it seemed a logical focus. As I got into the research, I learned about that awful part of the war the Dutch call the *Hongerwinter*.



When I discovered that many people don't know about this part of the war, I knew I had to write about it. But I had to read more material that was specific to the Dutch experience, and I interviewed several survivors of the *Hunger Winter*.

I was surprised to learn how the Luftwaffe used kindness to get captives to reveal secrets. After the war, some of the American prisoners of war who had been interrogated reached out to their Luftwaffe captors because they had developed a friendship with them.

What did you learn about the Holocaust while writing *Hunger Winter*?

There were many brave people who helped the Jews, but there were also many Dutch citizens who turned them over to the Nazis.

Why did you choose to tell this WWII story specifically for kids to read?

There are three reasons. First, my son started the story one day in study hall and it was from a young person's perspective.

Second, I love reading kids' books. Many of my favorite books are kids' books because the good ones are really good and they're clean.

Third, I am passionate about getting more kids to read and I wanted to write a book that would grab kids' attention and hold it.

What was your journey like writing *Hunger Winter*?

After I finished writing the book, over a period of five years, agents and editors advised me to change the story. Their requests, which came one at a time, included requests to add 10,000 words, show more of the characters' feelings, give more detailed descriptions, make it more unique, add chapters about Dirk's older sister, and more.

Each time, it was a six-month process of changing the story to incorporate the good advice, and I hoped that this time it would be accepted. But it was always turned down or no response was given.

Finally, it reached a point that a trusted friend in the book business told me to move on to another book project and let this one go. Then late one afternoon I received an email from my agent saying we had an offer from Tyndale. It was a long road, but every person who pushed me to change the book made it better, and I am grateful for their suggestions.

Looking back, I see the purpose in the process. Soren Kierkegaard once said, "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards." I wanted the book to be published five years ago, but God wanted more time to refine it and me. **FF**

Rob Currie

Visit Rob Currie's author page here:

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Hunger Winter

Rob Currie

Tyndale Kids



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Maggie Platt is a writer, traveler, cancer survivor, and dreamer. Her author debut is with a YA/Speculative novel ***Kingdom Above the Cloud*** (Emerald House Publishers): Amid the glamour of the kingdom above the cloud Tovi is torn between her own dark desires and unanswered questions. When the ring is complete, will her life be over?



In our exclusive interview, Maggie explains the challenges of writing her book, shares the surprises in developing her characters, and reveals how life adds depth to fiction.

What inspired the story in *Kingdom Above the Cloud*?

At first, the story was just a daydream inspired by the question: “What if the nine fruits of the spirit and the seven deadly sins were embodied by characters who were battling for control of the world?”

As I wrote, it became much more personal. Grief, doubt, and clinging to Jesus are all familiar to me, and they show up in how the main character, Tovi, experiences the world.

In the last five years, I have struggled through cancer treatment (healthy now!) and the sudden loss of my mother. Those experiences—and the way God brought me through them—have added depth to the challenges that Tovi faces, even if they aren’t the exact same circumstances.

Did any part of the process of creating this new world challenge you?

So many parts of this process challenged me! World building is a ton of fun, but I am new to it.

I wrote most of the plot before thinking through important things like currency, government, family culture, history, etc. I did it all backwards, and that created some interesting challenges when I would back myself into a corner. Thankfully, I have some wonderful friends who are big Dungeons and Dragons nerds (I say that affectionately!), and their skills as Dungeon Masters have helped me so much in this area.

What can you tell us about Tovi and her twin brother?

Tovi and Tali are a study in opposites. They have both survived childhood trauma, and their ways of processing and dealing with their past have moved them in opposite directions.

Tali seeks constant adventure, perhaps to distract him from all of his painful questions. He is confident, curious, and hopeful.

Tovi wants to be just like Tali, but she is held back by her doubts, frustration, and feeling like she belongs nowhere. She keeps Tali grounded, and he gets her out of her own head.

When Tali disappears, Tovi is left to grieve his loss and search for answers alone and without his hope and joy.

Did any of the characters surprise you as you wrote the story?

Goodness, yes! I was several years into writing the story when I discovered one of the “bad guys” wasn’t really bad!

These characters really took on a life of their own as I wrote. I could be driving down the street or taking a shower, and suddenly I would discover something about one of them that I never realized before. I know that sounds absolutely insane, but it's true!

In Adia and all of the surrounding lands, all people are born with a heart in their palms (similar to a tattoo). This symbol means that they belong to Adwin, the creator of Adia. When someone turns away from Adwin, the heart fades.

At first I thought the villains did not have the heart symbol. But, as I wrote and got to know them, I realized some of them do! They hide them beneath fashionable gloves so no one knows their embarrassing secret.

What are the spiritual themes of *Kingdom Above the Cloud*?

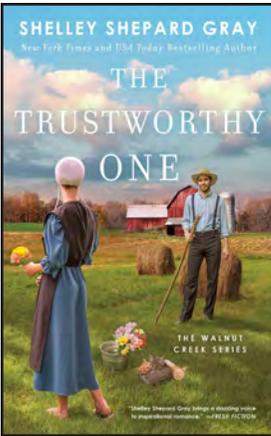
The main arc of the story follows Tovi through doubt, temptation, sin, hopelessness, and finally redemption and salvation. It is unashamedly the story of Christ portrayed through the character of Adwin, who is willing to give his life for Tovi despite her sins and failings. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

Book two of the series will pick up after Tovi's redemption story and follow her through what I have found to be one of the hardest parts of my walk with Jesus: learning to hear His voice and obey, even if it isn't easy. **FF**

Visit Maggie Platt's author page here:

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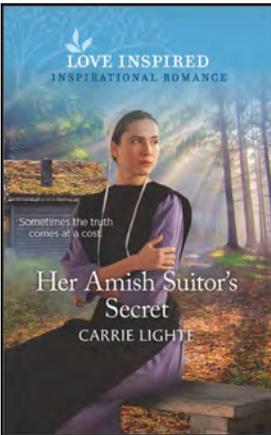
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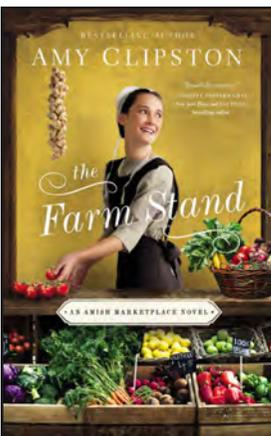
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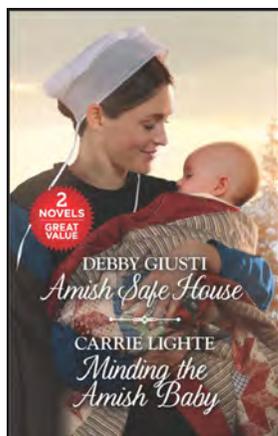
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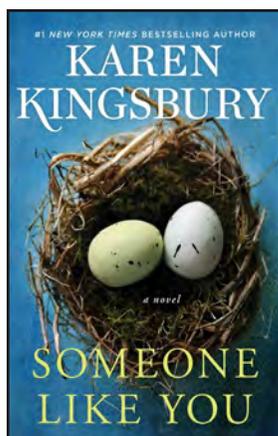
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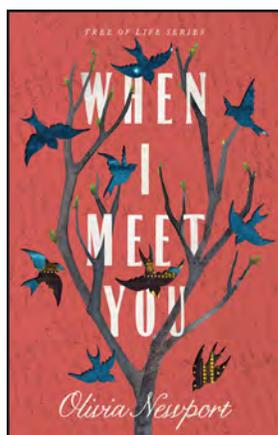
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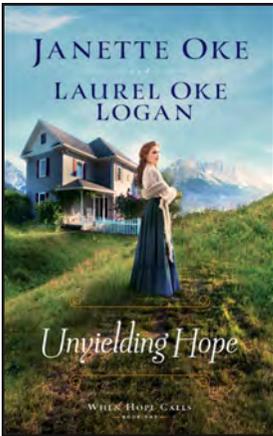
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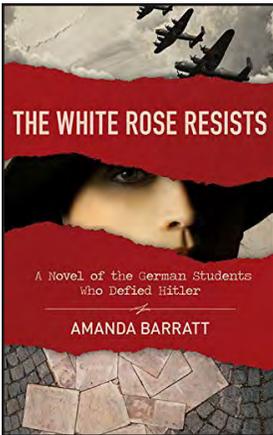
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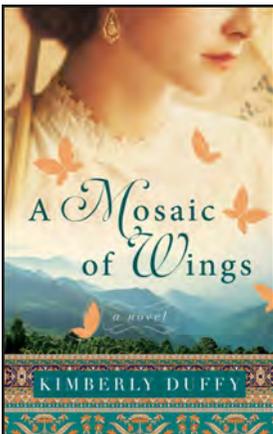
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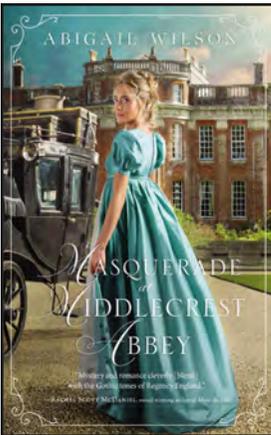
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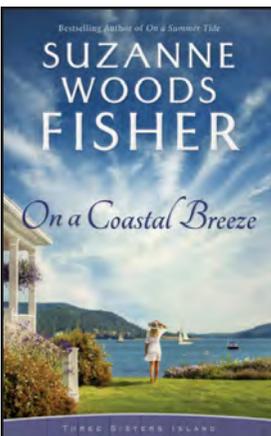


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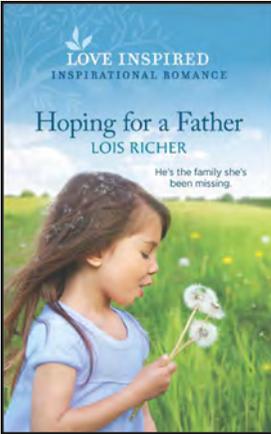
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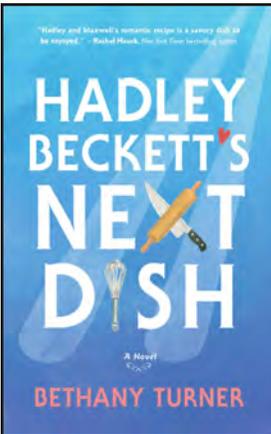


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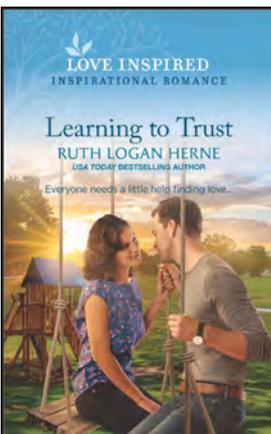
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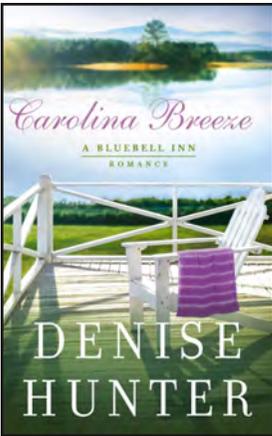
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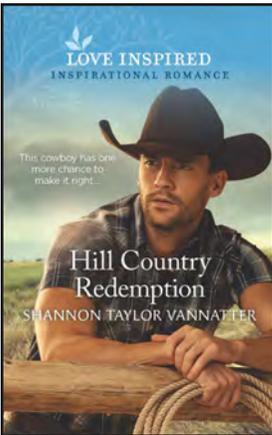
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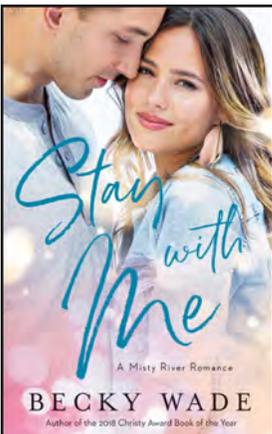
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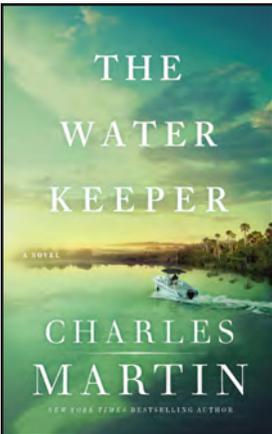
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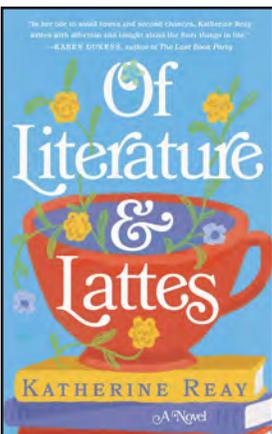


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Of Literature and Lattes

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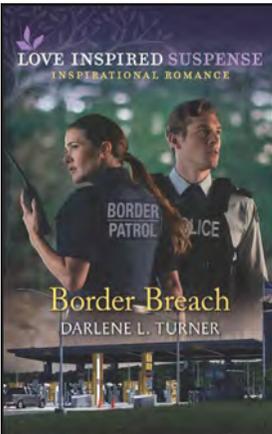
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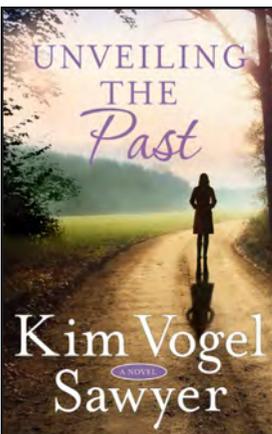


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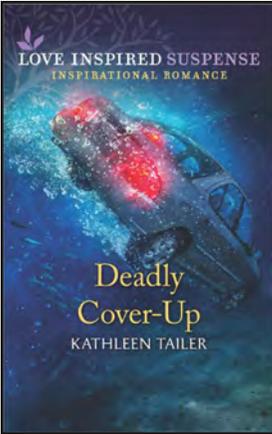
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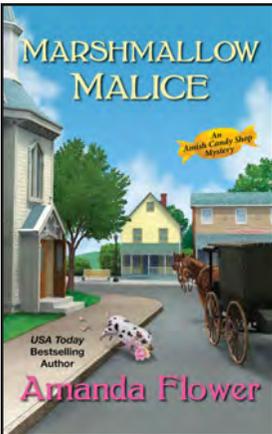


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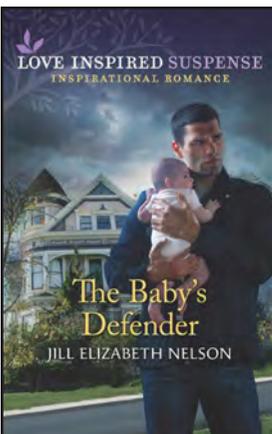
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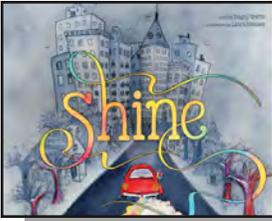
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Love Inspired Suspense

Genres: Suspense, Romance



New Releases: May 2020

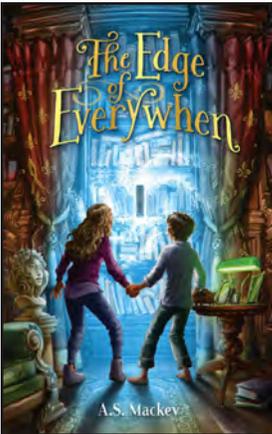


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Written by Dagny Griffin
Illustrated by Laura Bobbiesi
Tyndale House

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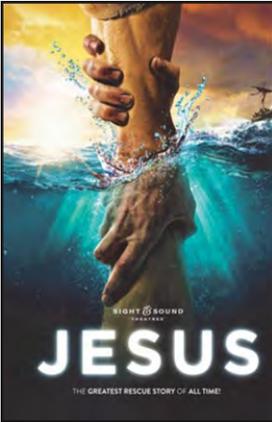
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