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A TLR SPECULATIVE FICTION SPOTLIGHT
2023

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AUTHOR
INTERVIEWS

BOOKS

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EDITOR'S NOTE

We are excited to bring you the Speculative Fiction edition of the only Sapphic Fiction Magazine.

In this issue we had the pleasure to interview inspiring authors and showcase incredible books in the fantasy, science fiction, horror, dystopian and paranormal genres.

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Sheena & Tamara

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Interview

TANAI WALKER

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF WRITING CURSE OF THE GORGON?

My favorite part about writing *Curse* were the antagonists. I wanted to make villains that were both believable and wickedly bad. Thora, the main antagonist was especially fun to write. She is devoted to her mission and she doesn't allow anything to stand in her way. Even when she shows her softer side it is not at the expense of her schemes. Her dialogue was fun to write as well: a cross between Miranda Priestly from *The Devil Wears Prada*, and a Bond villain. I've never experienced a character getting away from me, but Thora definitely came through on her own and let me know what she was all about. She's been dropping hints about her next moves for book three.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO WRITE CURSE OF THE GORGON? WHAT WAS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE WITH IT AND WHAT WAS THE EASIEST PART? WHAT UNEXPECTED THINGS DID YOU DISCOVER WHEN WRITING IT?

It took me ten years to complete *Curse*. In my defense, I've had a lot going on. Of course, my greatest challenge is finding enough time. About thirteen years ago, I started work as a public school teacher. The artist/writer lifestyle was just not working out for me. A few years into my teaching career, my novel *Sacred Fire* was published by Bold Strokes Books. The next year, *Rise of the Gorgon* was released. I was excited, but at the same time I saw the genuine need for competent, compassionate educators, especially in black and



brown communities. I made the conscious decision to devote more effort into becoming a better teacher. That meant less time for writing. Then, Covid 19 happened and during lockdown I made that push to finish *Curse*.

There were also some challenges with plotting. *Curse* was never meant to be more than one book. I never thought I would write a series as I have always had a hard time giving my attention to one set of characters to finish one book. There is always some new idea brewing in my head. The original book's premise was the reporter Elle Pharell waking up in a strange government facility with no memories of how she got

there or why. I was experimenting with a nonlinear timeline, but it wasn't really fleshed out and there were a lot of unanswered questions. When I showed the book to the editors at Bold Strokes, they suggested that I build on the world behind the story, and so I wrote *Rise of the Gorgon* in one year. I strayed away from my nonlinear experiment and wrote something a bit more formulaic, a prequel that focused on the start of Elle and Cass' love story. Writing *Rise* changed the trajectory of the original idea and I was at a loss of what to write next for some time. I wanted to make sure that I made all the right decisions about plotting and pacing. After a few false starts, I came up with the alternating arcs between Cass and Elle with cliffhanger endings.

I'm an action junkie so it is always a treat to write scenes with car chases, helicopter crashes, shoot-outs and hand-to-hand combat. I wouldn't say it was easy, but I really look forward to writing those scenes.

WHAT UNEXPECTED THINGS DID YOU DISCOVER WHEN WRITING IT?

This isn't really something unexpected because I am always learning new things about writing. The best way I learn is by trying and failing miserably. With this book, I learned a lot about pacing, when to release certain information to the reader and how. A writer has to make many major and nuanced decisions about things like plotting and dialogue.

WHO WAS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER TO WRITE AND WHY?

I have two favorite characters and those are the main protagonists Elle and Cass, a.k.a the Gorgon. I put this distance between them that was more than just physical separation but a mental one as well. In keeping with the theme of mind control, I also added a psychic separation; the discovery of a connection which transcends the physical and mental. I wanted to put them through strife before they got their happily ever after, and even then I wanted to leave a big question mark.

DO YOU INCLUDE BELIEF SYSTEMS IN YOUR WORLD? WHY OR WHY NOT?

I have been a student of conspiracy theories since high school, and the *Gorgon* books are an amalgamation of

several. One of my sisters, Tianna shared this interest and I modeled the character Tammy Crockett after her. We were Alex Jones fans before he went off the rails. Yes, I know that conspiracy theorists have become synonymous with extreme right groups such as QAnon. Not everyone who follows conspiracy theories believes the earth is flat or that reptiles in human skin run the world. I approach every conspiracy theory with an open mind, but also with logic. Take MK Ultra, the illegal C.I.A experiment on unwitting civilian participants. All of this was once speculation, but later turned out to be completely true. In researching the *Gorgon* books I read real life accounts from these victims who were drugged and tortured in order to become mind control subjects. There are more conspiracy theories that turned out to be true. With this in mind, how can I not question what else the powers-that-be might be hiding from the general population?

ABOUT TANAI WALKER

Tanai Walker is a middle school art teacher by day, by night she is the author of books featuring wlw.

twalkerauthor.com



WORD SEARCH

Fill in using the highlight tool in your PDF reader
or print out. Answer on page 50

A V U Y S A T N A F V C L E U D B B N B
N A S T R F M H N Y C E S J H Z A O A W
D M P Y O L C D R S C L D Z W O I O K E
R P A D U P J R I A Z Q G H E T P G Q D
O I V B C G I Y H A W G Y A O B T Z E Y
I R W P A U A A R O M S A P L A O T X F
D E X H G L Q W I S Z R O N N A N B G A
S Y P N I Q U E S T Q U E I P U X S J F
I Y J E F A H I B R F P E M A P Q Y F S
S T N P I L S E M I T B I H K C G U Y I
C S E P Y U T C F W S E B F H O Z T T A
R B N L R S M J L G J R M S R Y R A W F
E O Z V E N H J O I Z U O E K D D J P G
A M I O Q P M H C O D S Z O V S R M S K
M V G S M A O A P O C A L Y P S E O V Q
E L N M C N K R M O K E I L S F K E W T
J E S H T K R G T J T R S N I E V Z E S
Y O H I Z R B N M B P T Z T M C D G G D
F A O P K E I H F Q M G J C P Y P O W M
M Z U A F A W X Y D K I M E K N B R A J

ALIENS
ANDROIDS
APOCALYPSE
DUEL
FANTASY
GALAXY
GORE
HAUNTED
MERMAID

POTION
QUEST
SCREAM
SURVIVE
SWORD
TELEPORT
TIMESLIP
TREASURE
UTOPIA

#Romance #Paranormal #Vampires

A LONG TIME DEAD

by Samara Breger

Somewhere foggy, 1837 . . .

Poppy loved the night, which is why it wasn't surprising to wake in an unfamiliar home, weak and confused and plagued with a terrible thirst for blood, to learn that she could no longer step out into the day.

And, of course, Roisin—the curious woman who has lived for centuries, who held Poppy through her transformation, and who is now teaching her how to adjust to her new, endless life. A lonely woman, with kindness pressed up behind her teeth. Their time together is as transformative to Poppy as the changes in her body, and soon she finds herself hopelessly attached. But Roisin has secrets of her own.

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A Long Time Dead is a lush, Victorian romance, drenched in blood & drama, about the lengths two women go to secure a love that cannot die.

Together and apart, they encounter scores of vampires, shifty pirates, conniving opera singers, ancient nobles, and a found family that throws a very particular sort of party. But a threat looms—one woman who is capable of destroying everything Poppy and Roisin hold dear.

Release date: 16 May 2023

Publisher: Bywater Books

Genre & Tropes: Romance, Paranormal, Vampires

#Demons #Workplace #NoStringsAttached

A TOUCH OF WRATH

by Arizona Tape

Wrath has never tasted so good.

When Demi enters The Forked Tail restaurant, the last thing she expects is to find herself drawn into the culinary art of cooking with the Seven Deadly Sins.

Nothing is as important to Lana as the food she creates, and when there's a problem with her wrath supplier, she worries that she'll have angry demons to contend with.

The two of them soon come up with a plan to help them harvest wrath, but do they have what it takes to pull it off or is their partnership doomed to fail?

*A glutton
demon satisfies
her appetite
in more ways
than one.*

A Touch Of Wrath is book one in the Forked Tail, a light-hearted urban fantasy with demons, cooking, and a friends-with-benefits to lovers f/f romantic subplot.

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Release date: 10 August 2022

Publisher: Indie Author

Genre & Tropes: Demons, work place, no strings attached

Series: The Forked Tail

AURORA'S ANGEL

by Emily Noon

Alone since her father's murder, Aurora has spent years hunting his killers. Battle-weary she's ready to start over where no one knows who or what she is – she just has one last mission. Everything is going to plan until she discovers the beautiful winged girl caged underground. Her decision to rescue Evie and to escort her home, despite avians being infamous for selling out shifters like Aurora to cutters and black-market flesh dealers, will put her on a perilous path.

As the women travel together their attraction grows but Aurora is guarding her lonely heart almost as much as her dangerous secrets and Evie is struggling to accept how important Aurora has become to her.

Two extraordinary women, a dangerous journey and the start of an epic love story.

With their enemies conspiring to kill them, they'll need each other. Aurora is powerful but she's also emotionally scarred. It will be up to Evie to save Aurora from herself and to fight for them, before it is too late.

LAMBDA Literary Award Winner

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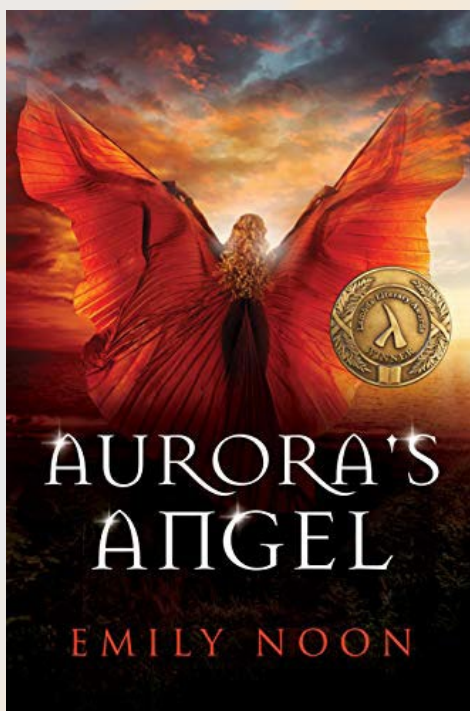
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Release date: 2 August 2019
Publisher: Indie Author, Bluefire Books
Genre & Tropes: Fantasy romance, Opposites attract, Shifters
Available on KU: Yes

Interview

SD SIMPER

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF WRITING THE STING OF VICTORY?

What's funny about *The Sting of Victory* is, like many authors before me have experienced, I didn't set out to write a whole book. I set out to write a short story, and it got a little out of hand. The twist is that the short story in question would actually later become the second book in the series. Among *Gods and Monsters*, the second *Fallen Gods* book, begins the MC's journey to save the woman she loves by embarking on a metaphorical journey to hell and back, but it turns out I needed to back up a little and give the story a better foundation - a foundation that became a whole entire book. Thus, the dark romance between Flowridia and Ayla became the central focus, and *The Sting of Victory* was born.

Part of the enjoyment was the ongoing discovery that this was a much bigger story than I'd initially conceived. It was a standalone, then a trilogy, then a four book series, and finally a six book series, with a tease for a sequel series (with a new story but some familiar faces). The characters were on a journey, but so was I. I've loved exploring that journey alongside them.

WHAT UNEXPECTED THINGS DID YOU DISCOVER WHEN WRITING IT?

It's so strange to look back at who I was when writing *The Sting of Victory*. I wrote the very first scene back in January of 2016, in the midst of a spiraling mental health crisis, and my goodness does the story reflect that. It's a dark and brutal



tale featuring some dark and brutal characters, and discovering which characters became my mirror was telling. The initial drafts of *The Sting of Victory* were therapy sessions, a taxing and often cruel conversation with my own ugly thoughts. But allowing myself the creative space to purge those toxic thoughts through writing inadvertently taught me to understand my own damaged mindset.

(I did later go to real therapy. Life is good now.)

The books I've written in different eras of my life end up being an interesting snapshot into my own mindset during those times (I'm sure many can relate), and *The Sting of Victory* is yet another example. It's enjoyable to revisit, but it reads significantly darker, seven years later,

than it did when I was stuck in the trenches with it. The most interesting discovery came in hindsight - to see my mentality as a severely mentally ill twenty-two year old and note how much I've grown and healed. The story was once a mirror of who I was; now, it's like looking at an old photo.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF WRITING A BOOK IN THE DARKER FANTASY GENRE?

We all have our addictions, and mine is deep, intense emotions. I love experiencing those emotional highs, but, at least nowadays, my life is thankfully not particularly dramatic, so I get that high by writing (and reading) scenarios I would never ever wish to experience in real life. I get to live the trauma of surviving a zombie apocalypse or being tortured half to death over and over from the comfort of my keyboard - or, more specifically, the emotional fallout of surviving such an ordeal. And, selfishly, because I'm the one at the keyboard, I know in advance whether everything will be okay (or not), thus removing the stress of experiencing other people's fictional works (which I still enjoy, don't get me wrong, but it's nice to sit in the driver's seat sometimes). The aftermath of high emotional intensity brings catharsis, and writing that catharsis can be deeply rewarding. Dark fantasy and horror gives me all the freedom in the world to explore that.

DO YOU INCLUDE BELIEF SYSTEMS IN YOUR WORLD? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Writing epic fantasy comes with world-building, and I am incapable of going halfway on something like that. Every kingdom has a culture, and every culture has a god and a religion to go alongside it. I had a culty religious upbringing (that's a whole other essay), so writing detailed belief systems is oddly familiar to me.

Something I committed to early on, however, is to not let my own biases affect the political systems in *Fallen Gods*. With few exceptions, each political system and religion is given the grace of being fleshed out and presented factually and fairly. I let the characters and readers decide who is wrong or right.

The exception is the kingdom of Moratham, which features more in my other series, *Sea & Stars*, because it's transparently based on the religion of my youth. My

biases might show juuust a little bit.

ARE ALL THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN YOUR BOOKS HUMAN OR DO YOU LIKE TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT RACES?

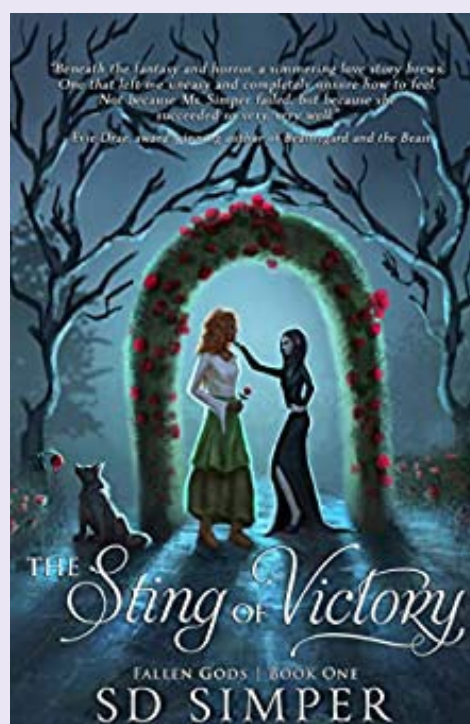
The lead of *Fallen Gods*, Flowridia, is human, albeit a human with strong magical powers. None of the other major characters are human - everything from your typical elves to gigantic, beefy demon women. I grew up reading classic fantasy and playing dark fantasy video games, so creating a world with an exciting variety of races simply feels right and familiar to me.

Part of the fun in that is building a culture around races with different DNA than your average human. What changes when you live for hundreds of years? How does that affect your view of family structures? Do you fall into apathy or become hyper ambitious? What if you're a non-magical race in a magical world? How do you survive? So many questions; so little time. Introducing different races means to introduce new rules to a world where anything can already happen.

ABOUT SD SIMPER

Author of lesbians committing war crimes.

sdsimper.com



#Pirate #Knight #EnemiesToLovers

BLACK PORT

by Rachel Ford

A secret order, hunted by two rival kingdoms. A network of spies and saboteurs.

Valia Iceborn is the daughter of two worlds, and a servant of none: her mother was a Northern outlaw and her father a Southern deserter. She grew up in the wilds of No Man's Land, but the open sea is her home. She swears no allegiances, lest they be to gold.

Knight Protector Portia Daysen is a loyal of daughter of the empire. She goes where she's told, and does what she's told. When the empire sends her to the bustling city of

*A secret order,
a network
of spies and
saboteurs - and
a deadly truth.*

Black Port to ferret out a mysterious secret order threatening stability in the region, she doesn't think twice.

Plunged into a world of deceit and derring-do, where no one is who they pretend to be, and nothing is at it seems, Daysen's investigation leads her to Valia's dock.

And crossing sabers with the most formidable – and charming – foe of her career might be the last mission Knight Protector Portia Daysen ever takes.

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Release date: 1 January 2022

Publisher: Indie Author

Genre & Tropes: Pirate, Knight, Enemies To Lovers

Series: Knight Protector: Black Wyvern

Available on KU: Yes

CAPTIVE IN THE UNDERWORLD

by Lianyu Tan

A dark lesbian romance retelling of the Hades/Persephone abduction story, set in mythological ancient Greece.

In the land of the dead, Queen Hades' word is law. Hades gets what she wants—always—and what she wants is a certain goddess of the springtime.

Innocent Persephone chafes beneath her mother's hawkish gaze and mercurial temper. Demeter has rebuffed all her daughter's suitors, but she is not yet satisfied; she strives to crush Persephone's spirit.

Still, when Hades pulls her into the dark realm of the underworld, Persephone longs for the world above, even if it means an eternity under her mother's thumb.

With her tears and pleas for freedom ignored by pitiless Hades, Persephone must learn to satisfy her keeper in all ways, lest she suffer the consequences.

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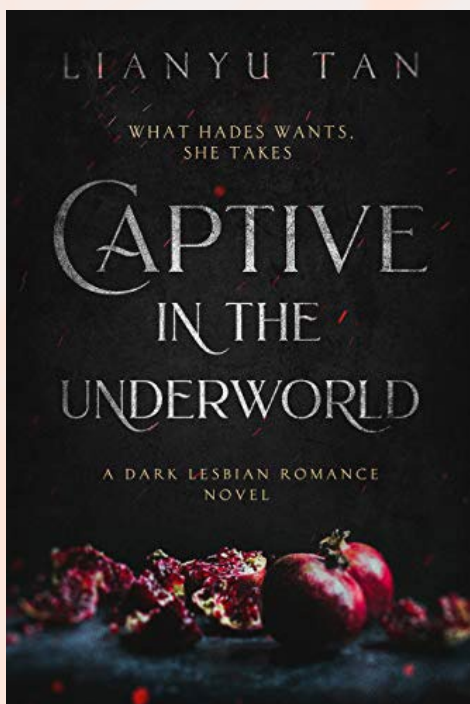
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*An F/F dark romance
retelling of the
Hades/Persephone
abduction myth*

And though she cannot deny that something blooms within her, something forbidden, Persephone despairs of ever feeling the sun upon her skin once more.

No matter the cost, Hades intends to keep her.

Forever.

* * *

Captive in the Underworld is a standalone dark lesbian romance novel set in mythological ancient Greece. It is rooted in the misogyny and cruelties of the Hades/Persephone myth and contains sensitive material. Due to mature content and dark themes, this book is intended for adult readers only. It contains scenes depicting non-consensual sex, death, abuse, kidnapping, assault, and other intimate partner violence. It is not recommended for readers sensitive to such content. See extended warnings at lianyutan.com.

Title: Captive in the Underworld

Author: Lianyu Tan

Release date: 8 Jan 2021

Publisher: Shattered Scepter Press

Genre & Tropes: Deities/goddesses, Dark Fantasy, Dark Romance

Interview

JENN GOTT

WHO WAS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER TO WRITE AND WHY?

Definitely my protagonist, Jane. She's a comic book artist, and her whole perspective is built up around that. In fact, she literally pictures the events of her life unfolding the way she'd lay them out on a comics page—especially when she's under intense stress or trauma.

This was especially fun for me because I was a visual artist growing up, but hadn't picked up a sketchbook in many years by the time I sat down to write this novel. In my childhood, my drawings were free and unstructured in the way of youth, but of course by this point I'd learned a lot of the visual language used in comics and movies. It was such a joy to take that knowledge and construct these moments for Jane, to figure out exactly how to bring that vision of her comics pages to life in the minds of readers. Words aren't the typical tool people use when they "draw" a picture, but I embraced the challenge and am so, so proud of the result.

WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT FOR A GOOD SPECULATIVE FICTION BOOK: THE SETTING AND ATMOSPHERE; THE TECHNOLOGY, OR THE CUSTOMS AND HISTORIES? WHY?

For me, it's always the setting and atmosphere.

As both a reader and a writer, I always fall in love with stories for the "vibes." Other aspects are important too, of course (I love a character-driven narrative!), but even the most compelling story will fall flat to me if the ambiance of the book isn't fun.



This is especially true in speculative fiction. I'm not that interested in clever concepts or using spec-fic as a lens to view some aspect of the human condition. Those are great, but I read for escapism first, so what I am really here for are the trappings. Give me grand alien vistas! Give me funky costumes that would make excellent cosplay! Give me magic and powers that are deeply cool, even if they don't make perfect sense. I'm here for a romp, and for me, the best romps are splashy, bright, and unapologetic in their adherence to a particular mood.

This ambiance is, of course, partly created by inventing cool technology, peppering your world with fascinating customs, and building a rich and engaging history. But for me, those elements serve the setting, not the other way around.

TELL US BRIEFLY ABOUT THE WORLD IN YOUR BOOK. WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU WHEN DECIDING WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT YOUR WORLD?

In *The Private Life of Jane Maxwell*, I wanted a setting that felt specifically like the world of superhero comic books. Which meant adding just the right amount of cheesiness.

I say that with absolute love, because I am ALL FOR a campy fictional universe. It is, in fact, that kitschiness that draws me into superheroes in the first place. I want that bombastic flare: the POW! bubbles and the dramatic costumes and the supervillain monologues.

This setting also means I'm working in a world based 99% on reality. As a result, there's not a ton of room for extensive worldbuilding—but that just means every detail matters. From the names of streets and buildings to the details of their superhero tech, every aspect is carefully chosen to embody a particular mood.

The other thing that was important to me was Easter Eggs. Because Jane is a comic book artist—a woman in what is largely a man's world—I wanted to honor the real-life women who'd come before her. If you look carefully, you'll find their names and references to their work hidden in all sorts of little corners of my world.

IS IT IMPORTANT TO SHOW WHAT DAY-TO-DAY LIFE IS LIKE IN YOUR WORLD? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Not the day-to-day life for everyone, no. Again, the world is 99% real—it simply isn't necessary. However, because my story is about parallel worlds, it was important to show the everyday contrasts between them for my protagonist.

At the beginning of the book, Jane is living in a world

without superheroes. While it's technically a city that doesn't exist in our world, it's an easy stand-in for an East Coast US Metropolis. Everything is extremely recognizable, and her life (while not without drama), isn't that different from anyone else's.

The fun, then, was coming up with the differences AFTER she jumped to the parallel reality. How was her family different, what shape did this other version of her life take? What small differences and everyday choices snowballed to create huge change? There's superpowers here, yes, but I really wanted to dig into her domestic life as well. Because in the end, this is what I love about superheroes: they pull you in with the spectacle, but the best ones stay with you because they go deeper than the mask, showing you layered, emotionally-complex heroes anyone can relate to.

ABOUT JENN GOTT

Jenn Gott is a fantasy and superhero writer who uses words to play movies in your head.

jenngott.com



CONSECRATED GROUND

by Virginia Black

Like her father before her, Joan Matthews is a witch. For generations, their family of binder witches has protected Calvert, Oregon from vampires by strengthening the land with spellcraft. Pushing back against tradition, Joan defied her father and left town to become a war witch, one who fights the monsters hand-to-hand. But when her father dies, Joan returns to find her hometown assailed by a vampire lord's endless attacks—and the answers lie with the one woman who chose a rival over Joan.

Leigh Phan harbors a dark secret forcing her to live a moment-to-moment existence. Her only hope of survival lies in trusting the war witch who left her behind.

*Two women
besieged by a
shared past and
the threat of
a malevolent
vampire's
invasion must
face the truth to
save their town
and each other.*

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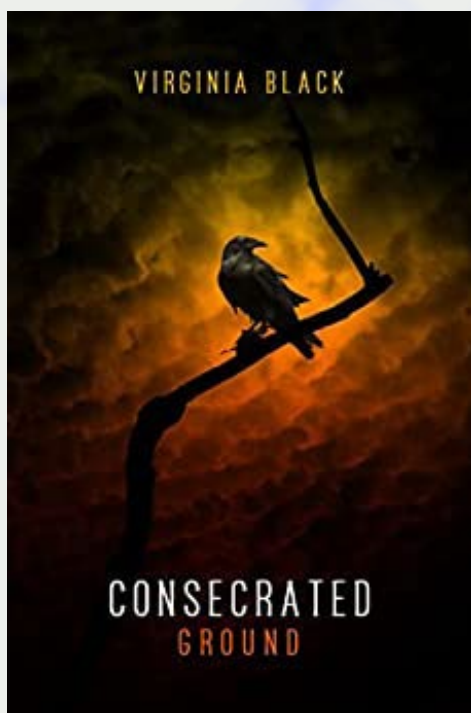
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Now it's up to Joan to fight for a town she abandoned, while Leigh faces a destiny she never imagined was possible. With Calvert on the brink of total destruction, Joan and Leigh join forces and face inconvenient truths in order to save their town—and each other.

Release date: 7 February 2023

Publisher: Bywater Books

Genre & Tropes: Small Town,
Second Chance Romance,
BIPOC Leads

#Sci-fi #Spec #Paranormal

CURSE OF THE GORGON

by Tanai Walker

Cassandra Hunt is the Gorgon, an assassin/spy. She was programmed via mind control by Thora, her handler, for Olympicorp, a shadowy, cultish conglomerate bent on world domination. Everything changed when she met reporter Elle Pharell. They survived Olympicorp's mass experiment gone awry and fell madly in love.

Now, in exchange for Elle's safety, Cass works with a global intelligence collective seeking to apprehend members of Olympicorp. But things don't go as planned when Elle is abducted. Untangling Olympicorp's sinister intentions is Cass's only chance of seeing Elle alive again, and Thora offers to help, for a price.

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*When
conspiracy
theory
becomes fact
will Cass and
Elle survive?*

Elle wakes up at a secret medical facility with no recollection of how she got there, and the staff won't answer questions about her lost memories. The one question she can't get out of her head? Who is the mysterious woman she only remembers as the Gorgon?

Release date: 11 April 2023

Publisher: Bold Strokes

Genre & Tropes: Sci-fi, spec, paranormal

Series: Book 2 of the Gorgon Books

Available on KU: Yes

Interview

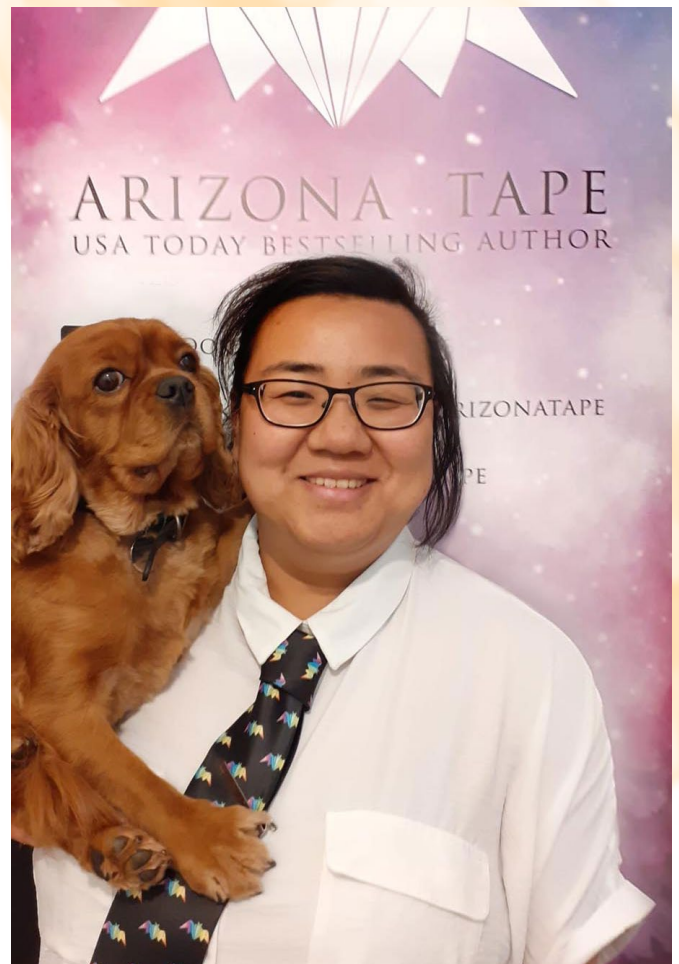
ARIZONA TAPE

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF WRITING THE FORKED TAIL SERIES?

That's a good question! I think my favourite parts are when I'm writing my food scenes. The series is set in The Forked Tail, a restaurant for demons where they cook with the seven sins. Because each sin has a specific flavour profile, it's really fun for me to come up with how a sin would taste and trying to describe it to the reader in a way that makes sense. For instance, wrath is spicy because being angry can make you all hot and fired up.

WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT FOR A GOOD SPECULATIVE FICTION BOOK: THE SETTING AND ATMOSPHERE; THE TECHNOLOGY, OR THE CUSTOMS AND HISTORIES? WHY?

I think all of these are important and should be used together to create a coherent world. I personally tend to think about setting first. My mind often wanders about what the world would look like "if this and this would be different" and then I go from there to try and figure out the other elements and themes I want to write about. I've been leaning a lot towards modern



urban fantasy and paranormal romance lately so technology always plays a big role in making it feel current. Mostly, I think a good speculative book should be crafted in a way that convinces the reader that it's real.

TELL US BRIEFLY ABOUT THE WORLD IN YOUR BOOK. WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU WHEN DECIDING WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT YOUR WORLD?

In the Forked Tail, the humans are mostly irrelevant to my demon main characters, Demi and Lana, who only interact with them to harvest their sins. Lana is a chef who specialises in cooking with those sins and has signed up for a cooking competition to challenge herself. I watch a lot of cooking shows so that's where I got my inspiration from. Demi is a foodie that loves tasting and trying new things and it's their love of food that brings them together. Since this series is based on my love of cooking and eating, it's important that the dishes I describe are real, that readers can practically taste what the characters are eating. If you're not hungry at the end of the book, I haven't done a good job. It also has to have the thrill of a cooking competition, complete with twists and unexpected eliminations. And because I'm a romantic, Demi and Lana need a happy ending so I'm always working towards getting them there, not that they're making it easy for me. They're very insistent on pretending that they have no feelings for each other.

ARE ALL THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN YOUR BOOKS HUMAN OR DO YOU LIKE TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT RACES?

No, a lot of my main characters are not human. I have written about shifters, demons,

fae, gods, vampires, all sorts! I just think it's good fun and it's a really good way to explore what being human means. When I'm writing those fictional races, I tend to have them in a human world because I like seeing how those two would interact. Sometimes, I feel like I'm a different species anyway so my characters are a reflection of that feeling.

ABOUT ARIZONA TAPE

Arizona Tape writes urban fantasy and paranormal romance with relatable characters and cute pets.

www.arizonatape.com



#FantasyofManners #HistoricalFantasy #Bodyguard

DAUGHTER OF MYSTERY

by Heather Rose Jones

Margerit Sovitre did not expect to inherit Baron Saveze's fortunes—even less his bodyguard, a ruthlessly efficient swordswoman known only as Barbara. Wealth suddenly makes Margerit a highly eligible heiress and buys her the enmity of the new Baron. He expected to inherit all, and now eyes her fortune with open envy.

Barbara proudly served as the old Baron's duelist, but she expected his death to make her a free woman. Bitterness turns to determination when she finds herself the only force that stands between Margerit and the new Baron's greed.

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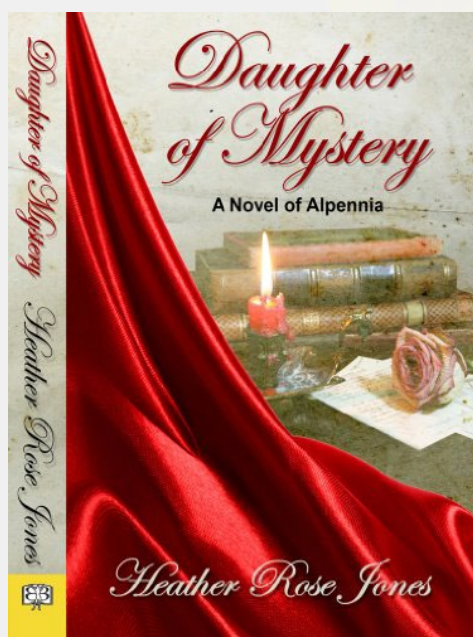
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*Alexandre
Dumas
meets
Georgette
Heyer, but
with magic
and lesbians!*

At first Margerit protests the need for Barbara's services, but soon she cannot imagine sending Barbara away. And Barbara's duty has become something far more hazardous to her heart than the point of a sword. But greater dangers loom than one man's hatred: treason and black magic!

Release date: 2 August 2022

Publisher: Bella Books

Genre & Tropes: Fantasy of Manners, Historical Fantasy, Bodyguard

Series: Alpennia

Audiobook Narrator: Kitty Kelly

Audiobook Publisher: Tantor Audio

DREAMS

by SERENA J. BISHOP

Aurora's life is perfectly mundane. That changes when Aurora starts dreaming of a woman. A woman who Aurora falls head over heels for. She knows the romance that develops between them isn't real, but the dreams make life so much better that she hurries to bed every night...until she discovers that her dream woman isn't imaginary. Her name is Leela and she is in a coma.

Aurora must risk everything to save Leela, a woman she's only ever met in her mind. But in order to help, Aurora must convince Leela's neurologist and parents that she and Leela have a bond that transcends the physical plane.

Can Aurora fight through a progressively

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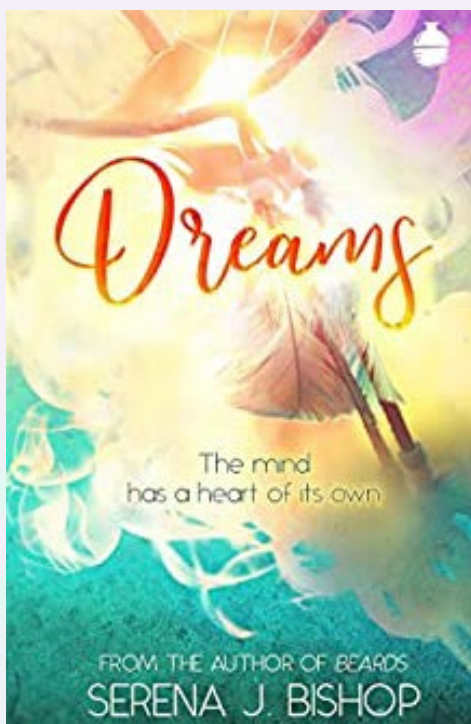
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*The mind
has a
heart of
its own*

nightmarish landscape to wake Leela? And if Leela wakes, will she recognize Aurora as the one who saved her? Their dream-relationship might not be real, but if there is any possibility of making her dreams come true, Aurora has to try.

Release date: 9 September 2019

Publisher: Indie Author

Genre & Tropes: Medical Sci-Fi, Dream Woman, Modern Fairy Tale

Series: Dreams trilogy

Available on KU: Yes

Interview

CATHERINE LUNDOFF

WHO WAS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER TO WRITE SO FAR AND WHY?

Honestly, I love them all. It's like picking amongst the children, figuratively speaking. I like that Becca is open to evaluating her life and recognizing that she can figure out how to handle big changes in her life. I like Erin's kindness and loyalty to the other Pack members. I like my secondary characters because they're just plain fun. In my head, this is something of an ensemble cast novel, even though the first book is primarily told from Becca's perspective. It feels more like a community that way, which is what I intended

TELL US BRIEFLY ABOUT THE WORLD IN YOUR BOOK. WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU WHEN DECIDING WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT YOUR WORLD?

So Silver Moon and its sequel are hyper-realistic novels set in the recent past. The setting is a mythical town in the American West, set in the area of the Colorado/New Mexico border. Magic works there and its call is what creates werewolves from ordinary middle-aged women. There are other kinds of supernatural creatures in



the area who are drawn there by the town's magic and there are hints of that in Silver Moon. I started out with the desire to write about middle-aged women because I wanted more representation in fantasy, then about

menopausal werewolves and after that, the world building just came along from there.

IS IT IMPORTANT TO SHOW WHAT DAY-TO-DAY LIFE IS LIKE IN YOUR WORLD? WHY OR WHY NOT?

In this case, yes. Because I'm writing in a contemporary setting, the daily life of my characters makes them more relatable, more accessible to readers. At the same time, I need to be careful about describing specific technology or events or pop culture that is very in the "now" because it won't age well unless I make this series seem more historical than not. It's a tricky balancing act, but hopefully no one will be reading it in ten years and wondering about their cell phones or something!

ARE ALL THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN YOUR BOOKS HUMAN OR DO YOU LIKE TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT RACES?

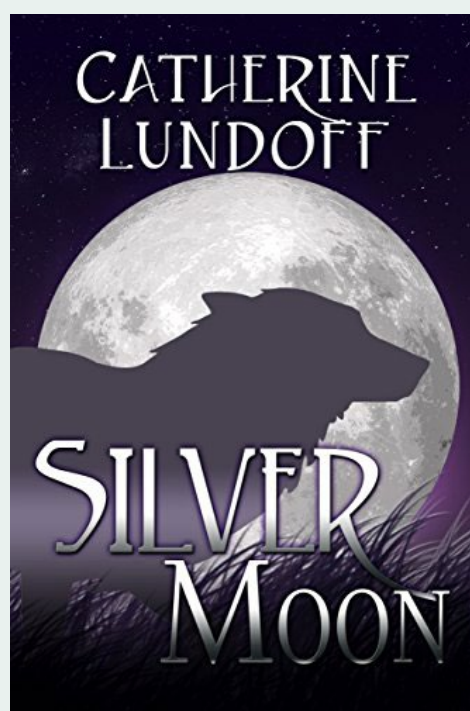
My main characters are human...except when they're werewolves? There are a few purely human characters living in Wolf's Point too and they come on stage as either antagonistic or supporting characters. I have suggested that there are other supernatural creatures in Wolf's Point besides the werewolves and plan on playing with that more in subsequent books. As to why my protagonists are menopausal werewolves, it's a combination of wanting to see more representation of middle-aged queer women in science fiction, fantasy and horror, and wanting to turn the notion of werewolves on its head. The wolves in the Pack are

created through magic, magic that began with the Native people who lived in the valley before the Europeans came, then expended and grew and changed as it absorbed the traditions of new immigrants too. The original intention of the spell was to create a group of protectors for the valley, in this case, women past child-bearing, but it's taking on a new interpretation of what being a "protector" means.

ABOUT CATHERINE LUNDOFF

Catherine Lundoff writes menopausal werewolves and more and I like to keep my readers on their toes.

catherinelundoff.net



FAE AND MOON BOUND

by Domina Alexandra

Less than a year as a newly awakened werewolf and Omega, Bonnie's life has yet to be boring. Surviving rogue werewolves, ghouls, and a dangerous stalker should make Bonnie feel more confident in surviving the future, but then again, she lets herself be captured to protect her pack and family. One thing Bonnie had not anticipated was being reunited with someone from her past.

Bonnie will have to leave behind her impulsive legacy and go through the ultimate test if she wants to maintain independence. Placing trust in her pack, old connections, and new allies is easier said than done. As Bonnie's family's past

*Will Bonnie
find herself
lost in the past
or will she let
go and realize
for the first
time, she has
her own set of
claws.*

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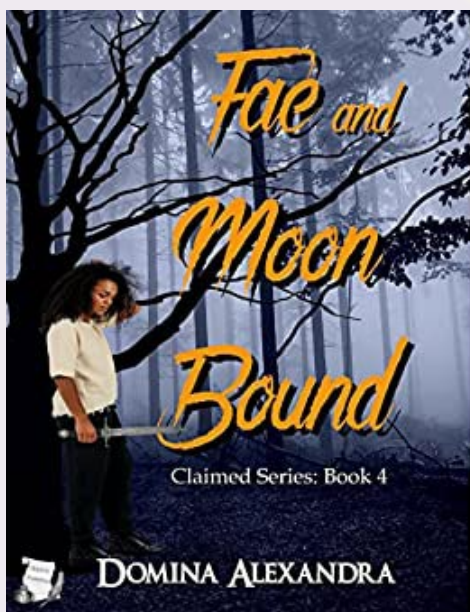
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begins to surface, it will bring her one step closer to a new enemy who has every intention of claiming her. And this enemy doesn't take "No" for an answer.

With her Alpha mate Rikki, at her side, Bonnie just might make it through this new and very, unwanted nightmare.

Release date: 28 April 2023

Publisher: Triplicity Publishing

Genre & Tropes: Paranormal Romance, Ex-Lover Stalker, Cross-Species Lineage

Series: Claimed series book 4

HAUNTING LOVE

by K. A. Moll

Anna Crestwood was raised in the strict beliefs of a religious sect nestled in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains. Gabe Garst is a police officer, a powerful medium, and the daughter of Anna's new landlord.

Her work with juvenile delinquents and ghosts is all that keeps her going. Inside she's dead, certain that her capacity to love is buried with her late wife, six feet under. Grieving, depressed, and alone, suicide seems like her best option. When she stops by Anna's to check out an electrical problem, she stumbles across hauntings; encounters a demon, old, dark, and dangerous; and senses the stirrings of mutual attraction. Unfortunately, both

*Two women
find love
in the
intersection
of Heaven
and Hell.*

women must battle personal demons before anything can come of it.

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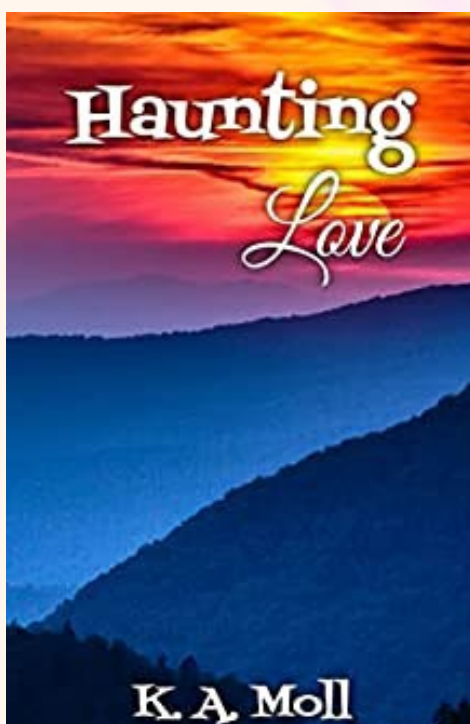
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Release date: 29 September 2019

Publisher: KAM Books, LLC

Genre & Tropes: Paranormal Romance, Soul Mates, Butch/Femme

Interview

DOMINA ALEXANDRA

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF WRITING FAE AND MOON BOUND?

I loved that Bonnie finally reached the self-awareness of her flaws and ignorance. It only took four books to reach that growth. And because of that, Bonnie was able to finally connect with her pack and mate without barriers. Writing intimate scenes can come in all shades and for Bonnie and Rikki, there was always a comfort and exploration between them but in this book, I loved having them reach a new level of kink and intimacy. If I could say one word, overall, that reflects how much I enjoyed writing this book, it would be, “Thrilling.” So dynamic.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF WRITING A BOOK IN THE SHIFTER TROPE?

When I write shifter books, I like to do my history lessons in the mythology classification of werewolves. And when I think of the pack system, traits, abilities, I can't help but feel like in many ways we as humans are werewolves inside without the ability to shift and just



a tad bit calmer. Ha! So, with that in mind, I'm entertained by how much more I could do with a human mindset, wolf mindset, and then add a twist of change that most readers don't find in many shifter books.

WHO WAS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER TO WRITE AND WHY?

Greenly is my favorite character. He has such a calming and infectious presence. To be honest, I'd like to write a short story with him as the main focused character with Lloyd by his side, of course. Greenly is the heart of the pack.

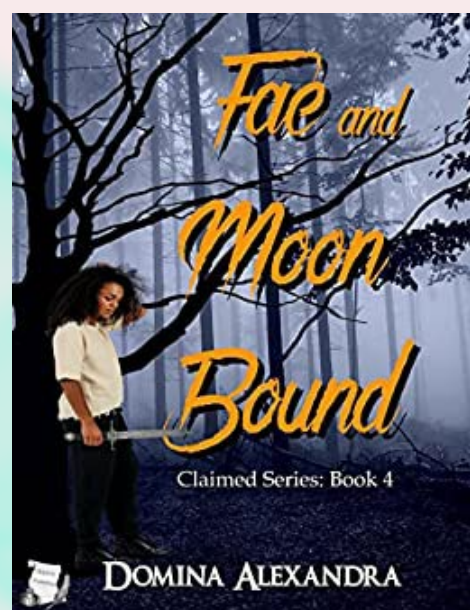
ARE ALL THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN YOUR BOOKS HUMAN OR DO YOU LIKE TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT RACES?

Not all human or shifters. In this book you learn more about Bonnie and her heritage in the supernatural world. Then there's vampires and other things that roam in the night. I think variety of race/species matters, because their unique differences create new challenges and lessons.

ABOUT DOMINA ALEXANDRA

I write Urban Fantasies that gives my characters and readers genuine connections.

[Domina Alexandra on Amazon](#)



INSPIRATION TAKES A VACATION

by Annette Mori

Abby Prentice is suffering through the worst writer's block in her entire career. After deciding to escape her home's confines, she takes a walk on the beach and meets a mysterious woman who, Abby believes, must be the reincarnation of Helen of Troy. After the strange woman claims that she is on vacation, Abby quickly offers her personal services as a tour guide.

Feeling burnt out, Musetta desperately needs a vacation. Her boss reluctantly agrees to three days. On the first day of her adventure, she is delighted to almost literally run into her favorite writer and begin her three-day adventure. As she spends more time with Abby, she finds it

*Will the
women
find a way
to return
inspiration
to the
Northwest*

increasingly difficult to return to her job despite the catastrophic consequences of leaving her position. For the first time, Musetta is falling in love.

Soon into their journey, both women notice something odd is happening all around them. Abby is not the only writer experiencing a block.

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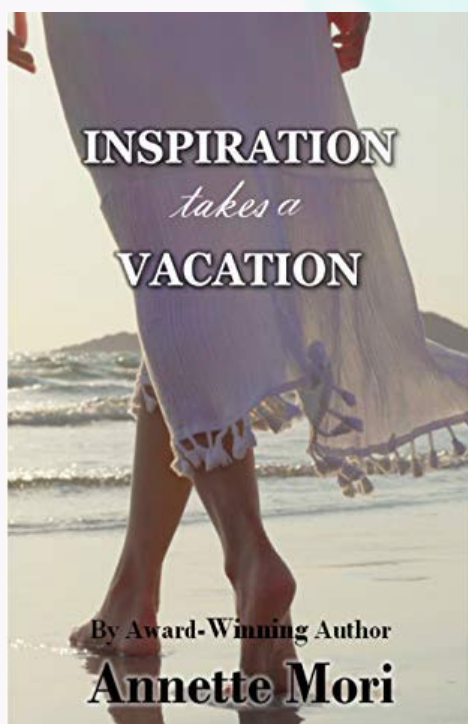
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Release date: 7 January 2021

Publisher: Crazy Cat Lady Press

Genre & Tropes: Small Town, Author, Unrequited Love

Available on KU: Yes

#AgainstTheOdds #ActionAdventure #VikingRomance

LEGACY OF THE VALIANT

by Edale Lane

Humble Kai aspires to become more than the petite, inconsequential young woman her community sees. Persistence pays off when the village holy leaders reveal a prophecy—Kai might actualize her dream of being a hero if she completes three seemingly impossible tasks.

Princess Solveig, descendant of the famous shieldmaiden Sigrid the Valiant, believes she was born to accomplish great things, but her poor eyesight, weak constitution, and lack of physical expertise hold her back. Convinced she can never realize her ambitions, Solveig settles for living vicariously through her warrior girlfriend.

The appearance of a dangerous jötunn wreaking havoc in the kingdom brings the two would-be champions together. Solveig feels both threatened and skeptical when

*Can two
discounted,
unlikely heroes
save the day,
and each other?*

Kai arrives in her father's great hall with a "magic" sword, claiming she's there to save the day after more promising protectors have failed.

With many lives at stake, will rivalry push Solveig and Kai apart, or will they inspire each other to realize the greatness both women desire to achieve—and to survive the coming battle?

Gear up for action and the dramatic storytelling of Edale Lane in this hero's journey sapphic Viking historical romance. If you like to root for an underdog, experience epic world building, and enjoy women with swords, you'll love Legacy of the Valiant, the second book in the Tales from Norvegr series. Buy your copy today!

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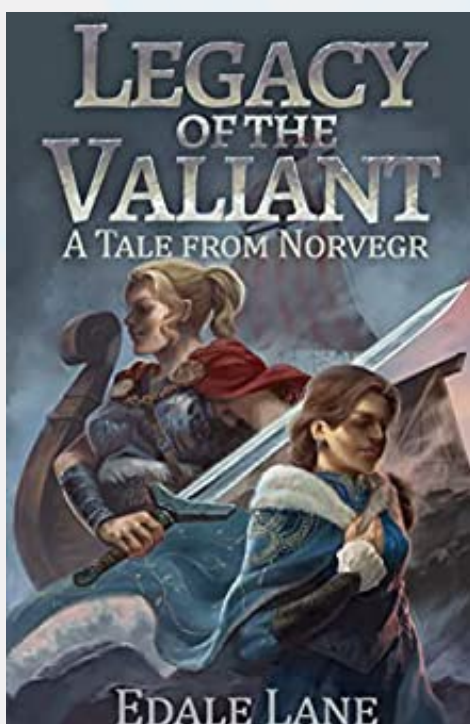
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Release date: 25 April 2023

Publisher: Past and Prologue Press, Indie Author

Genre & Tropes: Against The Odds, Action-Adventure, Viking Romance

Series: Tales from Norvegr

Available on KU: Yes

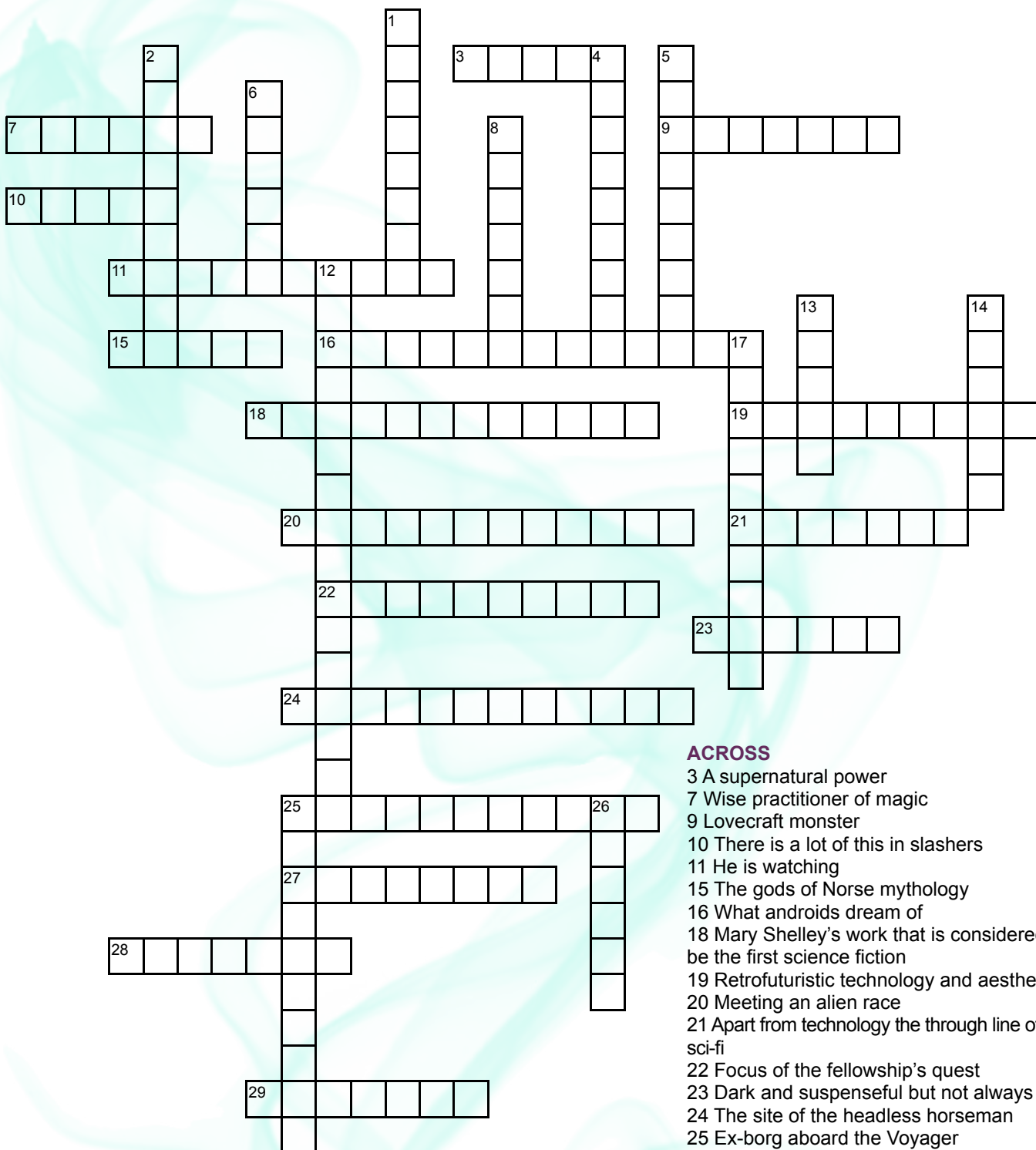


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ACROSS

- 3 A supernatural power
 7 Wise practitioner of magic
 9 Lovecraft monster
 10 There is a lot of this in slashers
 11 He is watching
 15 The gods of Norse mythology
 16 What androids dream of
 18 Mary Shelley's work that is considered to be the first science fiction
 19 Retrofuturistic technology and aesthetic
 20 Meeting an alien race
 21 Apart from technology the through line of sci-fi
 22 Focus of the fellowship's quest
 23 Dark and suspenseful but not always gory
 24 The site of the headless horseman
 25 Ex-borg aboard the Voyager
 27 Leia reigns here
 28 Those in Hillhouse
 29 Scaly gold hoarders

DOWN

- 1 Structure connecting disparate points in spacetime
 2 Spacecraft propulsion system
 4 People eaters
 5 The purpose of an altar
 6 Van Helsing was one
 8 You hope it's not under your bed
 12 Keeper of Arthur's sword
 13 Immortal fae typically good at archery
 14 How many sides does the iconic signature Dungeon and Dragons dice have
 17 Demons take hold
 25 Melodramatic interstellar adventures
 26 A world in the closet

CROSSWORD

Fill in by typing into the blocks in your PDF reader or print out. Answer on page 51

Interview

STORM CAYWOOD

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO WRITE LOVE IN LOW GRAVITY? WHAT WAS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE WITH IT AND WHAT WAS THE EASIEST PART?

It took me a long time for such a short book—over a year. The greatest challenge was understanding what kind of book it was meant to be. I had a draft that was twice as long and filled with heavy external conflict, but that wasn't right for the story I was creating. After lots of edits, a joyful holiday novella emerged.

The easiest part was writing the holidays. I put in things I love, like latkes and bûches de Noël, and then made up things like suncakes for Martian New Year (inspired by Chinese mooncakes.) It was a lot of fun imagining how holidays might be observed 200 years from now, and what new holidays might emerge.

WHY DO PEOPLE FIND SCIENCE FICTION SO FASCINATING?

I think it fulfills our sense of wonder. Sci-if starts with “what if?” What if Earth unified and became a part of a united federation of planets? What if the ice caps melted? What



if a global pandemic wiped out humanity?

It lets us imagine the future, both what we want and what we want to prevent. As a lesbian, I like to imagine a future without homophobia.

In my books it's a relic of the distant past—my characters have queer grandparents. I believe imagining the future is a liberating act.

And space is just cool.

WHAT UNEXPECTED THINGS DID YOU DISCOVER WHEN WRITING IT?

How high you can jump in $\frac{1}{3}$ gravity! I have my MCs flirt while playing a basketball game, so I found animations on YouTube of people jumping in different gravities. Also, that rice is a great crop to grow hydroponically in space and has already been grown on the International Space Station. Love in Low Gravity is proudly soft sci-fi, but I wanted the science of the setting to have some credibility. I had fun researching. I also discovered a lot of great songs about space by making a personal playlist for the book.

STAR TREK CREATOR GENE RODDENBERRY SAID: "SCIENCE FICTION IS A WAY OF THINKING, A WAY OF LOGIC THAT BYPASSES A LOT OF NONSENSE. IT ALLOWS PEOPLE TO LOOK DIRECTLY AT IMPORTANT SUBJECTS." WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS?

I think for Roddenberry, much of the language of sci-fi was allegory. He used science fiction's quality of fantastical situations, and non-human persons and societies, to cut through the static of real life and take clear, firm stands on moral issues. You see this in the famous episode with the black and white painted aliens, "Let this Be Your Last Battlefield." By placing the moral dilemma far from the constraints of contemporary life, the episode created emotional distance and objectivity, and pushed the viewer to a logical conclusion.

The disadvantage of this method is that allegory flattens, and creating emotional distance removes one of our most powerful ways of learning. I believe that science fiction, and Star Trek, got better when it let in more mess with its logic. My favorite example of science fiction confronting issues is the Star Trek: Deep Space Nine episode "Far Beyond the Stars." It confronts racism not as allegory, but as the lived experience of a Black sci-fi writer in 1950s America. It shows the heartbreak and brutality of racism, not just the absurdity. It also shows the transformative power inherent in story-telling, and is a major inspiration to me as a writer.

ABOUT STORM CAYWOOD

Storm Caywood writes sci-fi with a mission to bring sapphic happily-ever-afters to the future.

linktr.ee/StormCaywood



#SwordandSorcery #ActionAdventure #EstablishedCouple

LILITH'S FIRE

by Brenda Murphy

Mara and Reika's plans for a long-delayed honeymoon are disrupted when Mara's sister Ardat returns from exile.

Banished long ago for abusing her powers, Ardat has spent a millennium in the depths of the earth, forging a weapon powerful enough to destroy the future and the past. Twisted and withered from her time in the void, Ardat is desperate to return to her former beauty and strength. She seeks Seraphina, the infant whose life will restore Ardat's body and offers to exchange the weapon for her.

Unwilling to sacrifice the child, Mara and Reika risk everything to protect Seraphina and save their world, no matter the cost.

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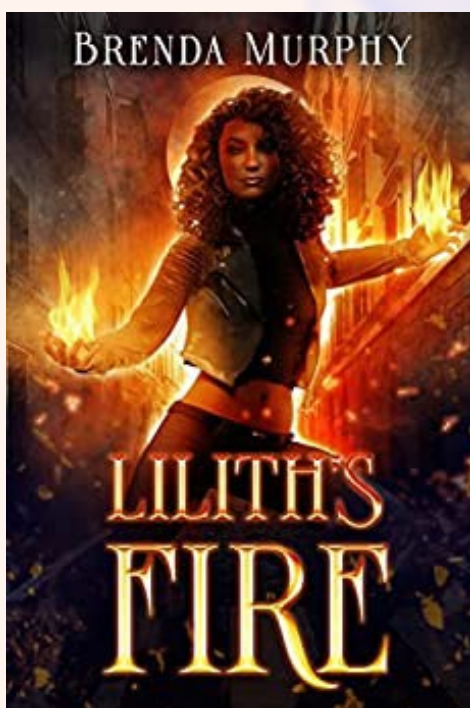
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*What
would
you do to
save your
world?*

Release date: 14 April 2023

Publisher: Indie Author

Genre & Tropes: Sword and Sorcery, Action Adventure, Established couple

Series: Chronicles of Mahon

Available on KU: Yes

#SpaceSapphics #Holidays #Spicy

LOVE IN LOW GRAVITY

by Storm Caywood

Space station school teacher Ada Solomon spends her free time drinking coffee with her best friend and people watching. When she catches sight of a gorgeous stranger Ada is immediately intrigued, and once they meet a flirtation quickly grows.

If only they could move past friendship...

Vivienne Lambert is looking forward to a quiet life on Belco-Psyche station. She misses Paris, but not her old life as a crime syndicate lawyer.

*Can they
catch hold
of happiness
before it
floats away?*

An attractive new friend saves her from loneliness, but her secrets stop her from pursuing her desire...

Fly away for the holidays with this short, romantic read with plenty of spice and a dash of sci-fi!

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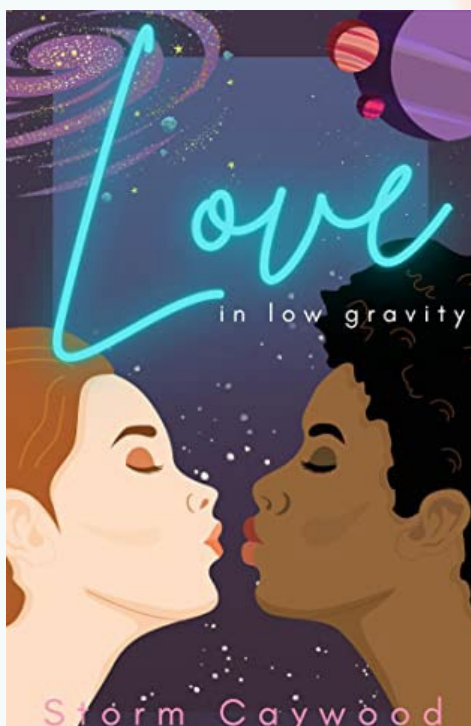
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Release date: 15 December 2021

Publisher: Carnation Books

Genre & Tropes: Space Sapphics, Holidays, Spicy

Available on KU: Yes

Interview

SAMARA BREGER

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF WRITING A LONG TIME DEAD?

I loved building the relationships between my characters, including the friendships. This book is as much about friendships as it is about the central romance. I really enjoyed assembling *The Brood*. I created a backstory for everyone, though it's probably for the best all of that didn't make it into the book. It's long enough already.

WHAT UNEXPECTED THINGS DID YOU DISCOVER WHEN WRITING IT?

I was surprised by how much I enjoyed writing the horror. I love so many fluffy, low-gore depictions of vampires, but I always knew I wanted mine to be dangerous, spooky, and, at times, disgusting. Those scenes, when my characters are wild for blood or messing around with corpses, were the easiest and most rewarding to write. At its heart, *A Long Time Dead* is a romance; right down to its DNA, this book is about two people in love. But it's also a scary book, and I'm very proud of that.



WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF WRITING A BOOK SET IN THE VICTORIAN ERA?

I loved learning about the details of daily life.

I am now stuffed to the gills with fun facts about Victorian England. I have recipes for homemade cosmetics I will never make. I know about food technology advances that are now hopelessly out of date. It feels minute, but I really do believe that all of that detail helped flesh out the world. When I read historicals, the accuracy of the day-to-day is what really draws me into the story. I hope I've done that for my readers.

TELL US BRIEFLY ABOUT THE WORLD IN YOUR BOOK. WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU WHEN DECIDING WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT YOUR WORLD?

The Victorian era had this great dichotomy between the prim, austere veneer of society and the prurient underbelly. I wanted to create a character that inhabits both of those worlds and understands that people are people, with the same basic desires, regardless of class. For *The Brood*, my queer family of vampires, I wanted to pay homage to 19th-century queer society. The queer scandals of the time—the Oscar Wilde trial, the Cleveland Street scandal, and the Boulton and Park trial—revealed that there was a thriving queer community. But it is very telling that the most notable history of said community is of its tragedies. I wanted to portray my version of queer Victorian joy, an amalgam of the few existing sources and my own hopeful imagination.

ABOUT SAMARA BREGER

Samara Breger writes stories about queer women who sometimes—not always—have magical powers, and who always—not sometimes—get their happy endings.

samarabreger.com

bywaterbooks.com



#Fantasy #SmallTown #Werewolves

SILVER MOON

by Catherine Lundoff

Becca Thornton, divorced, middle-aged and trying to embrace her quiet life, discovers that life still holds plenty of surprises when menopause comes with bonus lycanthropy. And she's not the only one. The dull and seemingly peaceful town of Wolf's Point has its own all-female werewolf pack and Becca is about to become its newest member.

But it's not all midnight meetings at the Women's Club, monthly runs through the woods and keeping the town safe. Becca's cute lesbian neighbor, Erin, is starting to haunt her dreams as well as her doorstep. And there are werewolf hunters in town

Menopause, Magic and Werewolves

and they've got Becca and the Wolf's Point Pack in their sights.

What's a newbie werewolf to do, between the hot flashes and the unexpected physical transformations? Can Becca overcome her fears and help the werewolves defeat their greatest enemy?

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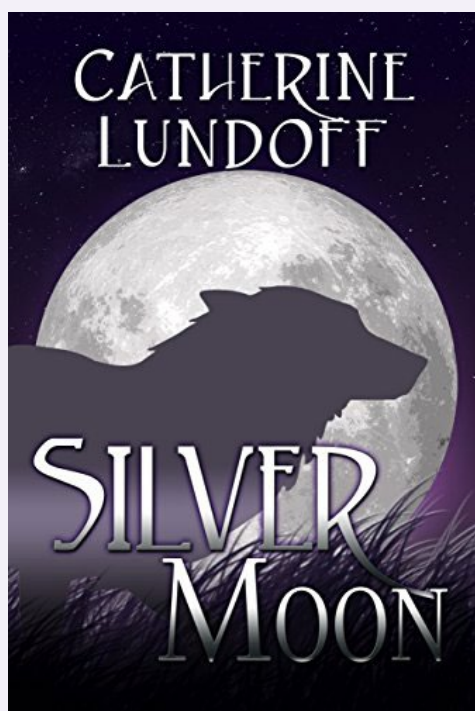
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Release date: 30 May 2023

Publisher: Queen of Swords Press

Genre & Tropes: Fantasy, Small Town, Werewolves

Series: Wolves of Wolf's Point

Audiobook Narrator: Em Eldridge

PIRATES OF ALETHARIA

by Britney Jackson

Emilia Drakon was once the youngest and kindest of the dragon sorcerers, but she's now the last of her kind. Betrayed and angry, she trades her meekness for a sword and embarks on a quest for vengeance that will lead her straight into the arms of the legendary Captain Maria Welles.

Captain of the famed pirate ship, the Wicked Fate, Maria is every bit as treacherous and bloodthirsty as they say. She has her own vendetta and practically jumps at the chance to trick Emilia into joining her crew.

Emilia Drakon's quest for vengeance will lead her right into the arms of the most dangerous pirate in Aletharia, Captain Maria Welles.

But when their animosity toward each other blossoms into a passionate romance, the two women will have to decide what they want most.

Vengeance?

Or love?

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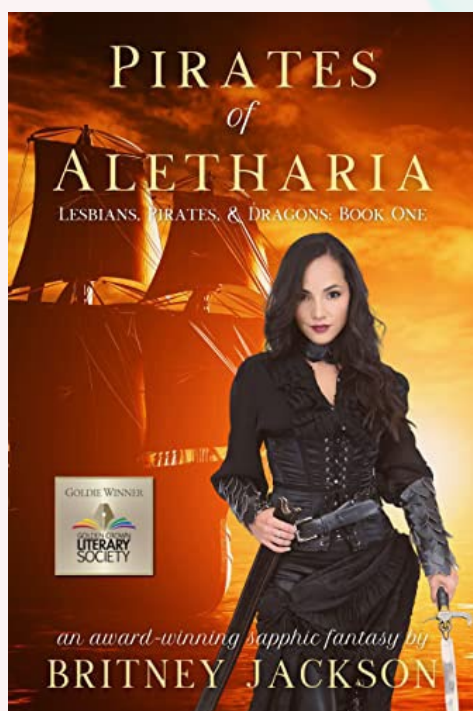
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Release date: 22 November 2022

Publisher: Noctem Publishing

Genre & Tropes: Fantasy Romance, High Fantasy, Enemies-to-Lovers

Series: Lesbians, Pirates, and Dragons

Audiobook Narrator: Lindsey Dorcus

Audiobook Publisher: Tantor Audio

Interview

EDALE LANE

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF WRITING LEGACY OF THE VALIANT?

I really enjoyed writing characters with challenges and limitations. Both heroes of book one in the series, Sigrid & Elyn, were powerful shieldmaidens already when the action began. And while they each faced emotional challenges, they were confident in their fighting ability. In this book, both Solveig and Kai have been dismissed by those around them as unfit to ever become proficient warriors. I liked writing how, through persistence, courage, and creativity, they were able to realize their dreams despite their hindrances.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO WRITE LEGACY OF THE VALIANT? WHAT WAS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE WITH IT AND WHAT WAS THE EASIEST PART?

I started the outline on December 19, 2022, but didn't really dig into writing until the beginning of January. I completed the first draft and sent it off to my editor in the middle of February. After getting the manuscript back, I made corrections and added some scenes, then sent it



to my proofreader around the beginning of March. By then, I had my cover art and could start promoting the upcoming release. After beta readers and my proofreader's input, I added more scenes and finally decided

there was enough. The challenge wasn't in the historical fantasy, action, research, or plot twists—it was in pulling off the romance. When I had originally mapped out the story, I didn't realize it would take so long for the main characters to meet each other. (Don't worry, they do eventually!) They needed more time together on the page, hence the continual adding in of scenes for them to get to know each other, work around suspicions and misgivings, so it would be believable for them to fall in love. The easiest part was the concept, which I had in mind for several months before beginning to write. As a history teacher, I have learned that all myths and legends have some basis in facts. I used that to draw mythology and reality together in this novel, where things aren't always what they appear to be.

WHAT UNEXPECTED THINGS DID YOU DISCOVER WHEN WRITING IT?

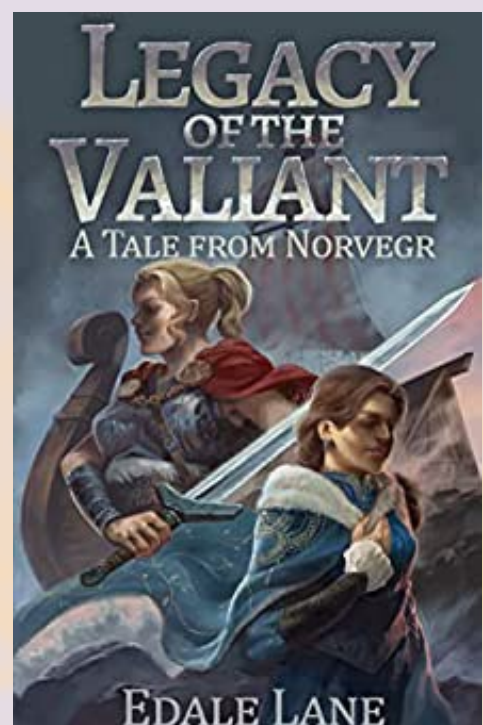
The Viking Era is one of my favorite historical settings, and I've researched aspects of it over the past fifty years. Still, I can always find something new. For example, I didn't realize that so many Christmas traditions originated with "pagan" Vikings hundreds of years before being introduced to Christianity. The yule log, kissing under the mistletoe, wreaths, games and feasts, and evergreen tree decorating, along with Old Man Winter placing treats from the big sack he carried

into kids' shoes, were all Norse Winter Solstice Day traditions. I think you'll find the story behind the mistletoe (which I had never heard before researching this book) particularly interesting. Oh, and one more important new discovery: you can make alcoholic beverages out of almost anything—even seaweed!

ABOUT EDALE LANE

Edale Lane writes mysteries and historical novels with a touch of fantasy which must have a happy ending.

www.authoredalelane.com



THE LAST SCION OF RA

by K. Aten

Eighteen years after the Chromodec Uprising of 2020, the world is a very different place. Kaelen Ra-Evon lands on Earth, a planet where aliens exist and refugees are fast-tracked to citizenship in many countries. Her tale encompasses the age-old notions of loss, love, and found family. Kaelen tries to navigate her new life on Earth, as well as a romance with genius CEO, Leah Lockheed-Tuck, all while honoring her family's legacy as the last of her house.

She's wary of the Chromodec Office of Restraint and Protection, a US agency tasked with policing people of power regardless

Earth needs a vigilante more than the CORP and their rules, but Kaelen Ra-Evon isn't trying to save the world, just one woman.

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of their race or planet of origin. In an attempt to protect the woman she loves, Kaelen becomes a vigilante: Scion. She won't let laws or the CORP stop her from doing what's right.

Release date: 5 April 2023

Publisher: Flashpoint Publications

Genre & Tropes: Workplace Romance, Superhero, Friends to Lovers

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF JANE MAXWELL

by Jenn Gott

As the creator of a popular new comics franchise, Jane Maxwell knows a thing or two about heroes, but has no illusions of being one herself. All of that is shattered, however, when she finds herself swept into a parallel world—one where her characters are real, and her parallel self is their leader.

There's just one problem: that Jane is missing.

Under the growing danger of a deadly new villain named UltraViolet, the team has no choice but to ask Jane to do the impossible: step into the suit left behind by her double, become the hero that they

*She thought
she was just
drawing
superheroes.
She never
imagined she'd
have to become
one.*

need her to be. But with budding powers that threaten to overwhelm her, a family she only half-recognizes, and the parallel version of her dead wife staring her in the face, navigating her alternate life proves harder than she ever imagined...

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Release date: 20 July 2017

Publisher: Indie Author

Genre & Tropes: Superhero, Unbury Your Gays, Marry Your Gays

Series: Hopefuls

Interview

SERENA J BISHOP

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF WRITING A BOOK SET IN A DREAMSCAPE?

I knew readers could relate to the abstract randomness of the dreams in the novel. However, because dreams can be so strange, I had to do something that made the dreams stand out in their own unique way. By making the dreams episodic, full sensory, and connected to a woman in a coma, I could integrate neurology and play with different settings and genres. Doing all of that was a challenge, but I thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it.

TELL US BRIEFLY ABOUT THE WORLD IN YOUR BOOK. WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU WHEN DECIDING WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT YOUR WORLD?

For the Dreams trilogy, I decided that with the exception of my plot, nothing else would be extraordinary. I did this because I feel that it makes the uniqueness of the situation shine through. This also opens the door for opportunities to use humor where there may not have been before.



IS IT IMPORTANT TO SHOW WHAT DAY-TO-DAY LIFE IS LIKE IN YOUR WORLD? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Yes, because I think you learn about characters based on how they approach their day-to-day. Do they make a big pot of coffee at home in the morning or go to a café and order a large chai? How do they get to work: by bicycle, car, or work from home? How

would they react if they were out walking and it started to rain? In an airplane with a crying child? All these little actions and reactions help add those details that make a character come to life. Also, in my speculative fiction stories, my characters have what most would consider a typical life, so that makes what happens to them in the story that much more fantastic.

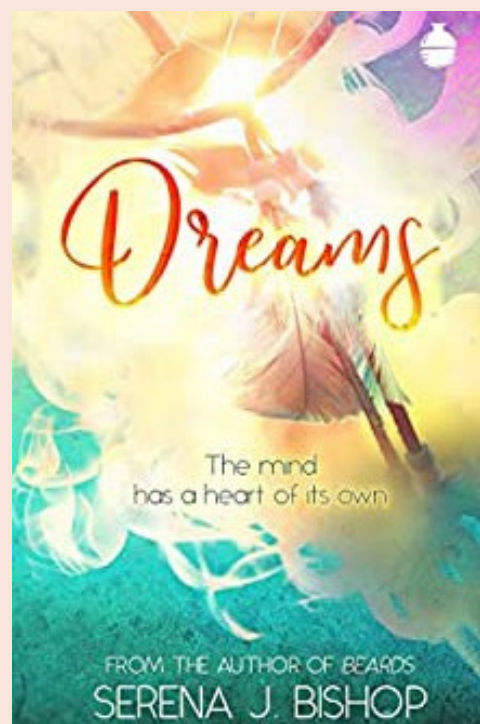
ARE ALL THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN YOUR BOOKS HUMAN OR DO YOU LIKE TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT RACES? EXPAND ON THIS.

All but one character in my books is human. I would say the best way to describe them is a demigod based on their magical origin. I do have an interest in writing more non-human characters because I can let my imagination go wild. Having said that, it would be fun to write fairly well-known “monsters” (think vampires or ghosts) in a horror-comedy. I don’t really have an interest in writing aliens, which is interesting given how much I loved The X-Files.

ABOUT SERENA J BISHOP

Serena J Bishop write stories with humor, heart, and heroines.

www.serenajbishop.com



#DarkFantasy #DarkRomance #IceQueen

THE STING OF VICTORY

by SD Simper

Haunted by a history of horror and abuse, Flowridia, a witch with a tender heart, finds a second chance in the home of her kingdom's royal family. With employment comes friendship, and perhaps she has finally found a place to belong—until she catches the eye of Lady Ayla Darkleaf, a woman with enticing grace and a predatory smile. The corrupt world of politics consumes her, and Flowridia falls into a toxic love affair surely doomed for heartbreak. Yet when Ayla's legacy as a monster unfolds, Flowridia sees only the tender soul hiding beneath.

An ancient deity returns, hell-bent on restoring the world to its natural order, and

*Love the
monster.
Become the
monster.*

Flowridia's kingdom is tasked to stop him. Caught in the ensuing clash of gods, her loyalties will be tempted at every turn—by family, by fate, and by the woman whose claws grip her heart.

Horror abounds, monsters rise, and hearts break in the first installment of FALLEN GODS.

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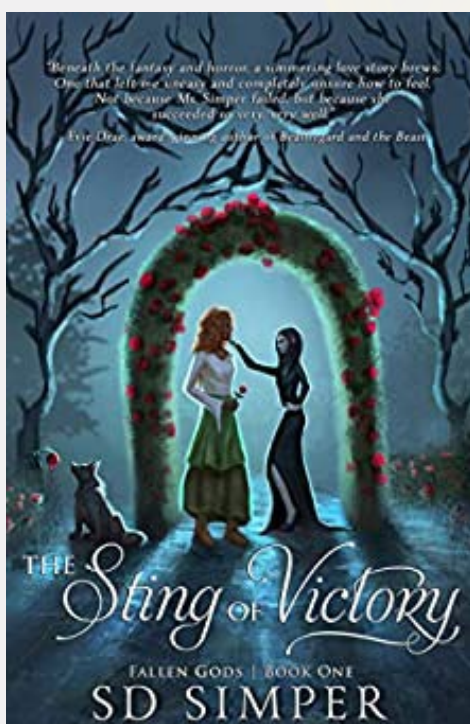
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Release date: 14 September 2018

Publisher: Indie Author

Genre & Tropes: Dark Fantasy,
Dark Romance, Ice Queen

Series: Fallen Gods

Available on KU: Yes

#Dystopian #Suspense

UPHEAVAL

by Rita Potter

It's time for Dillon Mitchell to start living again.

Since the death of her wife, Dillon had buried herself in her work. When an invitation arrives for Tiffany Daniels' exclusive birthday party, it's an offer she can't refuse.

It's not the celebration that draws her but the location. Whitaker Estate is one of the hottest tickets on the West Coast. The Estate once belonged to an eccentric survivalist, whose family converted it into a trendy destination.

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*Is the
world, as
we know,
changed*

Surrounded by a roomful of successful lesbians, Dillon finds herself drawn to Skylar Lange, the mysterious and elusive bartender. Before the two can finish their first dance, a scream shatters the evening. When the party goes underground, they discover something terrible has happened at the Estate.

The group races to try to discover the cause of this upheaval, and whether it's isolated to the area. Has the world, as we know it, changed forever?

Release date: 15 August 2021

Publisher: Sapphire Books

Genre & Tropes: Dystopian, Suspense

Series: As We Know It

Audiobook Narrator: Heidi Bindhammer

Interview

LIANYU TAN

TELL US BRIEFLY ABOUT THE WORLD IN YOUR BOOK, CAPTIVE IN THE UNDERWORLD. WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU WHEN DECIDING WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT YOUR WORLD?

Everyone has their own preconceptions of Hades as a place. I avoided reading any modern texts when writing *Captive*, so I was instead looking up references in things like *The Iliad* and the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, trying to avoid direct contradictions with those texts (aside from Hades' gender, obviously). If my underworld feels familiar, it's because we're all drawing from the same source material.

The reader's impressions of the underworld are filtered through Persephone's initially negative viewpoint: cold, dark, oppressive.

But as for the major landmarks in Hades, of course those are all from myths themselves: The Asphodel Fields, Elysium, Tartarus, the rivers. As a former fanfiction writer, I found it so helpful to have a lorebook I could use ready-made without having to worry about geography. I'm the kind of person who has no sense of direction in real life, and I completely ignore any maps included in fantasy books (although I referred to several maps of Hades when writing this book... which was a struggle because the maps all contradicted each other!)

ARE ALL THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN YOUR BOOKS HUMAN OR DO YOU LIKE TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT RACES?

The main characters of *Captive in the Underworld* are all goddesses, since I stuck reasonably close to the source material, with one exception. I'm just not a fan of modern AUs (alternate universes), personally. But goddesses aren't hugely different from rich, immortal mages--and I love mages, they are my absolute favourite combat class, and I will pick them every time. Who doesn't want the cool glowing hands and the smug superiority of being the most dangerous person in the room? Hades' skillset is very subdued in my book--she's an administrator, not a chesspiece, and Persephone as the point of view character doesn't really get to see all of what Hades actually does in a day. But I loved playing with Persephone's magic, and her growth in it.

The Wicked and the Willing is a colonizer vs. colonized story dressed as a vampire vs. human story. If I ever had to pick between vampires and werewolves, I would pick vampires, hands down. Emo, needy, disease-bearing... I love almost everything about the trope, really. It's a genre that keeps on giving! And Verity, my vampire, was just so fun to write. As I recently told my mailing list (join us here!), her dialogue just fell out of her. She was so easy to write, so opinionated, so passionate.

You might think
that because my blood
runs colder than yours,
I have no heart,
but the opposite is true.
If anything,
I feel too deeply,
love too much.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO WRITE CAPTIVE IN THE UNDERWORLD? WHAT WAS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE WITH IT AND WHAT WAS THE EASIEST PART?

I wrote about 25% including the infamous wedding night in a few months, decided it was trash, and had to take a writing break. I came back to it two years later, scrapped a huge chunk of it and finished it off. So by calendar count, 3 years, by working time, probably less than a year.

Perhaps weirdly for someone who's written erotica (see my stories in the Cleis Press anthologies Best Lesbian Erotica of the Year vols 6 and 7), I haate writing sex scenes.

I really struggle with my feelings towards this book, because when I launched it, I'd assumed the sapphic community was familiar with the dark romance genre and reader expectations about it, but that just wasn't the case in January 2021. I think that's changing now, but it was very lonely for a while writing in the tiniest niche, and having people making assumptions about me as a person.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF WRITING A BOOK IN THE DARK FANTASY GENRE?

I love the darker genres for how deep you can go into misery, death, and damnation. It's thrilling to explore characters who will cross moral event horizons, and to follow them down into the depths of

their depravity. Our emotional palettes are vast, and art should have the freedom to reflect the darker side of that palette.

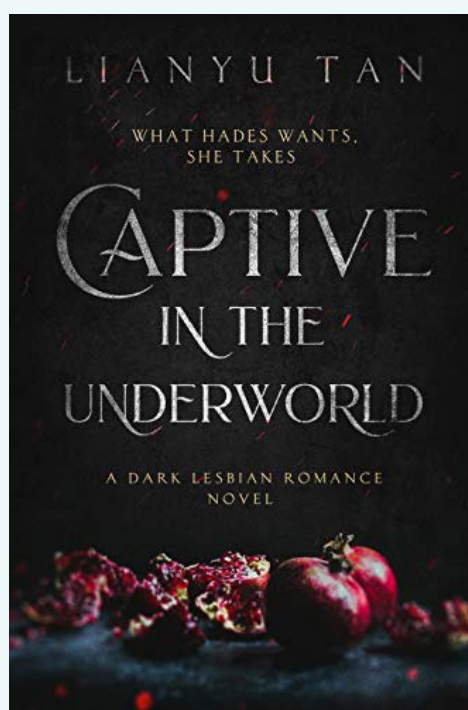
Gore. Violence. Lust. I absolutely cannot watch horror films if they're too violent, even if they're comedies; visual violence is so squicky to me ever since Saw II gave me nightmares for months. Months. But I still crave, sometimes, the dark, depraved heart of a monster, especially if she thinks she's the good guy; that kind of twisted self-delusion is just so compelling.

Of course, it's important to me that everyone knows what they'll be getting from one of my books. I've always had extended lists of content warnings on my [website](http://lianyutan.com).

ABOUT LIANYU TAN

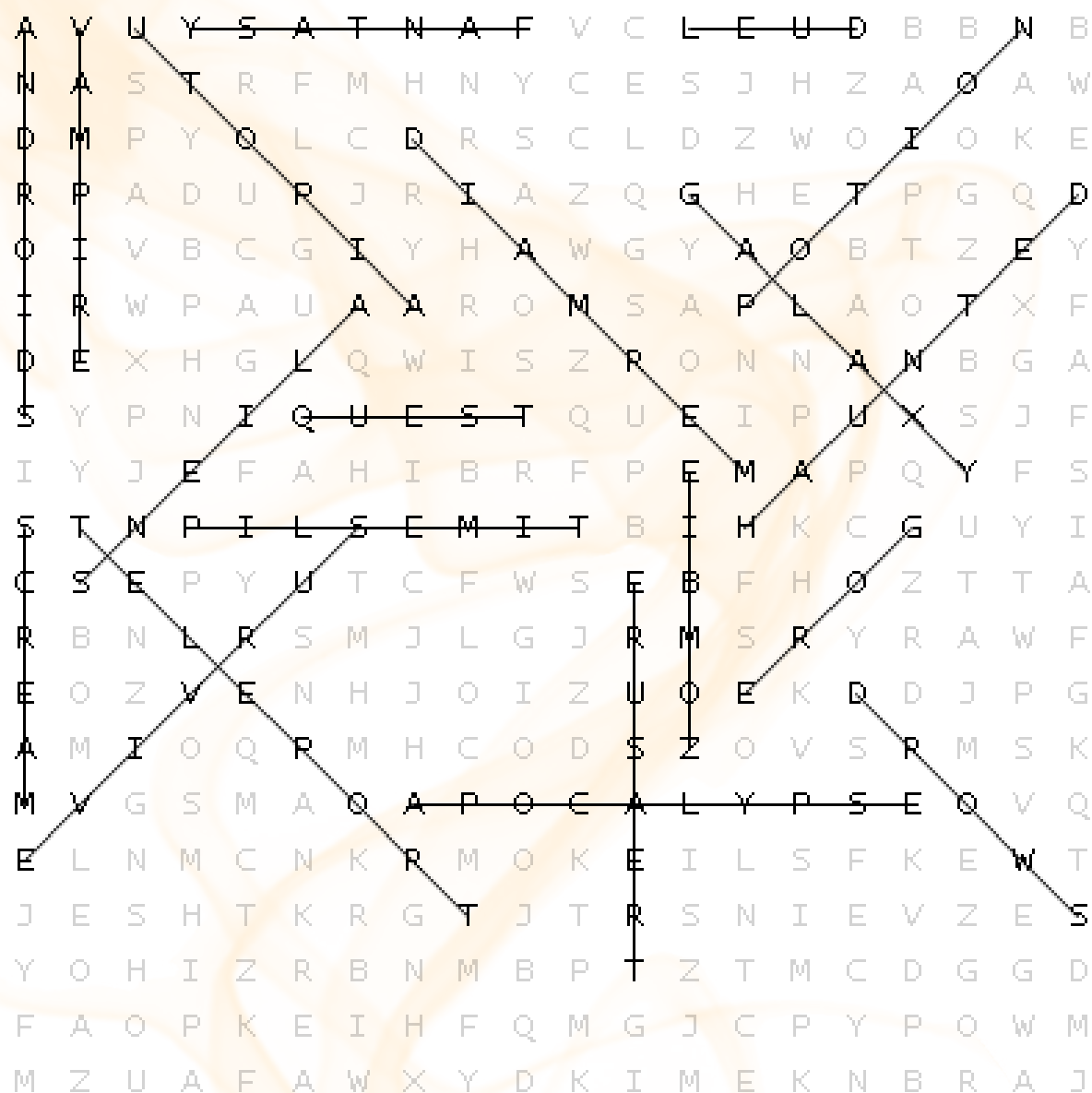
Lianyu Tan is a Lambda Literary Award-nominated author of lesbian dark romance and gothic horror.

lianyutan.com



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ANSWERS



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