

# FamilyFiction

February 2016

## *The Romance Issue*

**JODY  
HEDLUND**

Delights Historical  
Romance Fans

What's Trending  
with Christian Fiction  
Romance **NOW**

**5** Must-Read  
Romance Novels!



PLUS Leslie Gould,  
Robin Lee Hatcher &  
Susan May Warren!

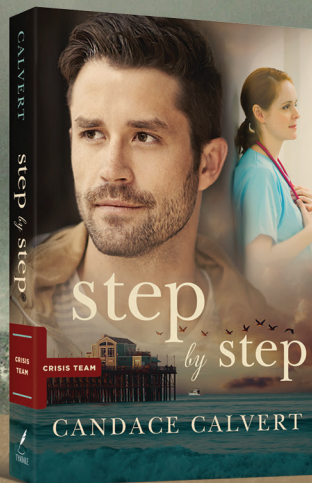
**GO!**

**SPECIAL: START READING NOW!!**  
2 Fantastic Excerpts in this Issue!

# A WIDOW STARTS OVER. A CHAPLAIN STIRS UP THE PAST.

Three years after a tragic accident left her a widow, ER nurse Taylor Cabot is determined to move on. Her relationship with a handsome plastic surgeon even gives her hope for the last point on her Survival List—"fall in love again." At least until crisis chaplain Seth Donovan steps back into her life, reawakening unanswered questions about her husband's death. But nothing prepares Seth for the feelings that arise when he sees Taylor again . . . and sees her moving on with another man.

When a community crisis hits home and puts lives at risk, emotions run high and buried truths are unearthed. Will hope make Taylor's Survival List?



"CALVERT'S WRITING IS ON POINT, WITH BELIEVABLE DIALOGUE AND A DETAILED SETTING."

Foreword  
magazine



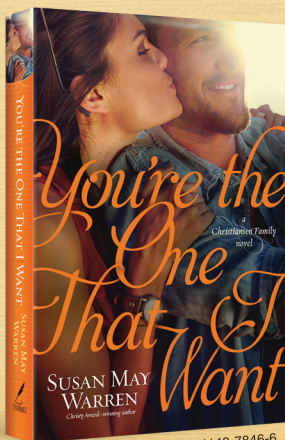
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ISBN: 978-1-4143-9034-5

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## Can a bad boy come home and have a chance at love?

"Sigh-worthy."  
SERENA CHASE,  
USA Today  
"An exquisite  
romance."  
Romantic Times  
"An amazing  
series."  
Radiant Lit



ISBN: 978-1-4143-7846-6

Owen Christiansen has been in a downward spiral since an injury ended his NHL career. But a job on an Alaskan crabbing boat offers a fresh start . . . maybe even a shot at romance with Elise "Scotty" McFlynn, the captain's daughter.

Scotty doesn't believe in happily ever after—especially with someone like Owen. Thrust into an unfamiliar world of family, faith, and fresh starts, Scotty begins to see potential for a happy ending . . . if she's brave enough to embrace it.

Check  
out more  
Christiansen  
Family  
romance!



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## **JODY HEDLUND**

Takes us inside her Beacons of Hope series



## **WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW**

A look at the current climate of  
Romance in Christian Fiction

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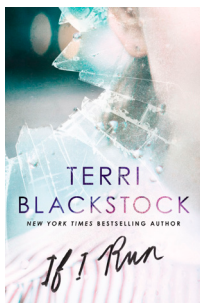
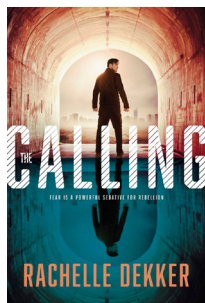
## DEPARTMENTS

FEBRUARY 2016

### START READING NOW!!

2 fantastic excerpts in this issue!

CLICK ON BOOK COVER TO GO



### ONE QUESTION:

How did you propose to your wife, or how did your husband propose to you?



**5** Love Stories to brighten your winter

Check out a list of all new releases this month!

<http://www.familyfiction.com/books/new-releases/>

Watch recent book trailers here!

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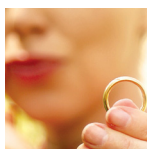
### AMISH



**Leslie Gould**

*Plus New Releases*

### HISTORICAL



**New Novellas in 2016**

*Plus New Releases*

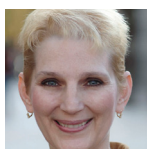
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**Susan May Warren**

*Plus New Releases*

### CONTEMPORARY



**Robin Lee Hatcher**

*Plus New Releases*

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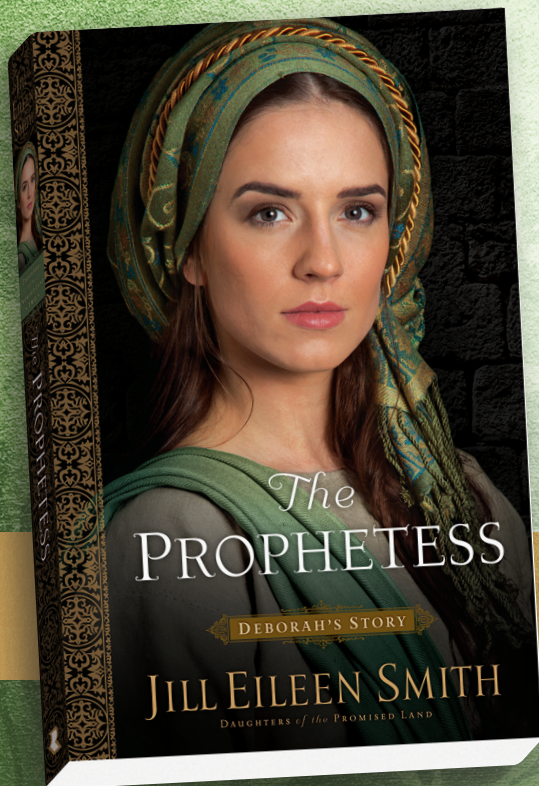
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# "NOT TO BE MISSED!"

—TOSCA LEE, *New York Times* bestselling author



CANAAN HAS RAVAGED ISRAEL.  
THE PEOPLE ARE IN HIDING.  
**ALL THAT STANDS BETWEEN  
SURRENDER AND HOPE  
IS ONE UNTESTED WOMAN.**

With her trademark impeccable research and imaginative storytelling, Jill Eileen Smith brings to life the story of Israel's most powerful woman in this intriguing and inspiring novel.

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[JillEileenSmith.com](http://JillEileenSmith.com)



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Deidra Romero is a twenty-something blogger and bookworm. She loves good company, good coffee and a good story.

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*"Our family has a wilderness lodge in Alaska where I've worked as a guide for about twenty years. Basically, I keep people safe all summer while I show them big furry bears and whales bigger than our boat. Two years ago I was on the job when my doctor called . . .*

***Being told you have stage-four cancer changes your life. It was no joke what we were faced with.***

*The survival rate is less than twenty percent. I prayed, 'God, how do I do this? You will lead me. You will direct me. You will guide me.'*

*My wife and kids rallied around me. We spent time in daily prayer and worship, and they prayed scripture over me. It was five months of chemo, six weeks of radiation on a daily basis and then a ten-hour surgery involving two specialists.*

*In total, the bills came to more than \$160,000, and our fellow Medi-Share members shared nearly every cent! I felt incredibly supported through it all.*

***Medi-Share is family—people who stick with you through the hardest times of your life. I don't know how we could have done it without them."***

—Jordan and Jennie



See their video at [mychristiancare.org/stories](http://mychristiancare.org/stories)

- Over 164,000 members sharing your medical bills
- Affordable family options to fit almost any budget
- No enrollment period—you can join any time



**Medi-Share™**  
Affordable, Biblical Healthcare

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*Medi-Share is not health insurance. Medi-Share is not available in Montana.*



A photograph of a lighthouse perched on a dark, craggy rock cliff. The cliff is partially covered in snow. The lighthouse has a white base, a red middle section, and a black lantern room. The foreground is a vast, flat expanse of broken ice and snow. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The title 'Hope, Light & Romance' is written in a large, elegant, white script font in the upper right corner, with the author's name 'Deidra Romero' in a smaller, simpler font below it.

# Hope, Light & Romance

*Deidra Romero*



## **Jody Hedlund Continues her Beacons of Hope Series**

It's the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in the 1870s and Tessa Taylor's big plans are ruined. Her dreams of starting a new life as a teacher are thrown into Lake Superior along with her quest toward independence. She is allowed to stay through winter and determines she will use the season to prove her value even though the town requested a male teacher. Jody Hedlund delights fans with the third book in her Beacons of Hope series this winter.





*Undaunted Hope* isn't just a historical novel. It's also packed with romance and intrigue as two men compete for Tessa's heart. Fans who know Jody's writing will recognize Tessa from Jody's book, *Hearts Made Whole*. Jody commented, "In *Hearts Made Whole*, Tessa is spirited and impetuous. In the process of trying to escape from her life at a lighthouse, she makes a terrible mistake that has repercussions that follow her into *Undaunted Hope*. I like to think she finally finds her redemption."

Tessa's search for redemption becomes clear early on as she vows to prove herself indispensable in order to maintain the teaching position for which she was hired. Percival Updegraff, superintendent and chief mine clerk, begrudgingly agrees to allow Tessa to stay through the winter since finding a replacement before then would be impossible. Tessa's students fall in love with her and determine that she is the right fit for their widowed father. However, their uncle has other plans as his affection for Tessa grows.

While the two men compete for Tessa's attention, it becomes apparent to her that everything is not as it seems and someone is charting her every move. When asked about this element

of suspense Jody said, "I always set out to write a stomach-tingling, heart-warming romance! While I don't consider myself a suspense writer, I do always try to have some level of tension and an element of 'unknown' within my novels."

The setting for this book is unique. Unlike the previous novels in the series, this book is set in the Upper Peninsula. Jody had the rare opportunity of doing a lot of on-site research for this book. She actually stayed at the assistant light keeper's house which overlooks Eagle Harbor and Lake Superior. "Every morning I woke up to the sound of the crashing waves and every evening I watched the sunset. It was one of the most beautiful, peaceful places I've ever stayed."

While she was researching, Jody came across the diary of Henry Hobart, an actual schoolteacher in the area during that time. She gleaned much from his experiences and hardships. "I loved reading his diary and learning about all he experienced, especially those unique things that came with being in such a remote area of Michigan and living among the mining community."

Jody says that this story is really one of perseverance. "Just like Tessa, I hope that readers will find the

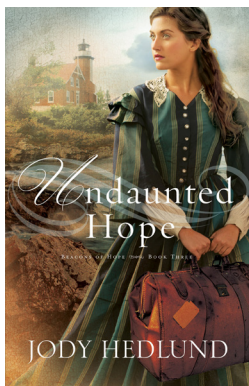


## BONUS Q&A WITH AUTHOR JODY HEDLUND!

strength to face their fears. We all have things that frighten us, and many times we find it easier to run away from those things that scare us.” Jody desires for readers to know that God is ever-present during the most difficult times.

“He’s there walking right beside us and He’ll help us come out on the other side stronger as a result.”

*Forever Safe*, the final book in the Beacons of Hope series is slated to release in June. And Jody did give us a little hint about its protagonist: “The main character in *Forever Safe* does make an appearance at the end of *Undaunted Hope*. I won’t say who it is, so that I don’t spoil the surprise for those who haven’t read *Undaunted Hope*.” **FF**



**UNDAUNTED HOPE**  
BEACONS OF HOPE  
Jody Hedlund  
Bethany House

**What are your all-time favorite novels?**

*Anne of Green Gables* was one of my favorites as a child because it played a role in developing my creativity as a writer. (Followed closely by *A Little Princess* and *Little Women* because they also featured strong, creative girls.)

**What do you make of the current climate of romance in Christian fiction?**

I’m pleased that the Christian romance market is broadening out with what is available. I believe that Christian authors should glorify God with their stories and that means we need to refrain from explicit content. However, I do believe there is a place in the Christian market for a wide variety in the types of romances, everything from sweet to sultry, especially if we hope to meet the diverse tastes of readers.

My stories tend to be on the more sultry side of the romance. Bedroom doors are always closed and clothes always stay on. I want my characters to remain noble and exemplary role models for godly relationships. However, I do manage to weave in a bit of toe-curling romantic tension.

# *Where We're Headed*

A Look at the Direction of Christian Romance

*Deidra Romero*



The landscape of Christian publishing has been changing since sales began declining in 2013. However, a few things have remained constant: devoted fans, talented writers and great stories. We're taking a look at where Christian romance is headed and what fans can expect.



## NEW PUBLISHERS

Several new publishers have entered the market in the last few years. Some of them are micro-publishers such as Mountainview Books, while others are the products of authors and publishers staking a claim to bolster the industry. Most notably, literary agent Steve Laube purchased Marcher Lord Press in 2014 and rebranded it as Enclave Publishing. Though Enclave doesn't specialize in romance, some of their speculative and sci-fi novels contribute to the genre. Another new publisher on the scene specializing in romance is Ashberry Lane, started in 2013. They've garnered great reviews and are offering opportunities to authors writing stunning stories.



## NEW PLOTS

It's no secret some plot lines in Christian romance are overplayed. However, some new books published in 2015 and the beginning of 2016 are attempting to break that mold. For example, Suzanna M. Wolfe's historical romance tells the unlikely and forgotten story of Augustine of Hippo's concubine—a woman's whose name has been lost to history. The back cover states, "A tale of womanhood, faith and class at the end of antiquity, *The Confessions of X* is more than historical fiction ... it is a timeless story of love and loss in the shadow of a theological giant."



## MORE FROM THE BESTSELLERS

Fans can also look forward to more from their favorite authors. **Beverly Lewis, Karen Kingsbury, Cindy Woodsmall** and **Wanda Brunstetter** are showing no signs of stopping or slowing. Last year the top authors published over a dozen books and this year Brunstetter already has seven books slated for release!

## MORE FROM INDIE AUTHORS

Independent publishing is exploding right now. Not only are indie authors able to capture an audience all on their own, thanks to social media, many authors are becoming “hybrid” authors, pursuing traditional publishing houses while venturing to publish projects on their own. Amazon and Goodreads are wonderful places to discover up-and-coming independent authors. However, some Christian fiction fans feel publishers should remain the “gatekeepers” to this sacred and special genre of fiction. It is clear that independent publishing is only gaining steam thanks to the changing climate in publishing as a whole.

## FEW DEBUT AUTHORS

Because publishers are choosier with the books they publish, few debut authors are expected to emerge in the Christian romance genre this year. In an interview with Publishers Weekly last year, Jonathan Merkh, publisher at Howard Books, stated, “We firmly believe in the power of fiction and don’t want to slow down, but we will probably slow down in the acquisition of first-time authors.”

## MORE NOVELLA COLLECTIONS

One trend that does not appear to be slowing down is the novella trend. Many authors are publishing novellas as prequels to new projects and offering them for free as eBook downloads. Last year, Zondervan offered a Year of Weddings Novella Collection. Each month had a dedicated novella from an all-star romance author. Packaged separately or by the season, these novellas were a hit with fans. Readers love the flexibility of a novella with the impact of a full novel. **FF**

New from Amish Country's Most Beloved Storyteller

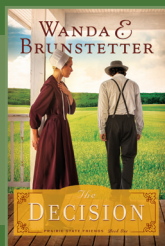
# WANDA & BRUNSTETTER

## *Jealousy May Destroy Three Young Lives*

Priscilla Herschberger finds herself pursued by Elam, a childhood friend from her community, and David, an outsider raised in the modern world. Elam would do almost anything to convince Priscilla that David would never fit into the Amish way. Will flames of jealousy rage out of control and ruin lives?

AVAILABLE FEBRUARY 2<sup>nd</sup>

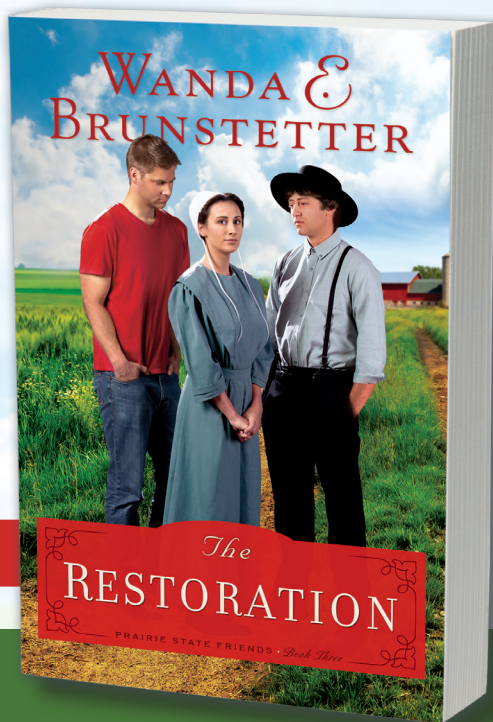
COLLECT THE SERIES:



**THE DECISION: BOOK 1**  
Journey along with Jonah Miller where he seeks a new beginning and a new chance to love.



**THE GIFT: BOOK 2**  
Can a young Amish couple ever find peace and love in a modern-day marriage of convenience?



How did you propose to your wife,  
or how did your husband propose to you?



**JERRY JENKINS:** Dianna and I were making plans for the weekend and agreed on a certain restaurant “for tomorrow.” I said, “You want to know what I’d really like?” She said, “Of course.” I said, “All your tomorrows.” She said, “I’d really like that, too.” January 23, 2016, was our 45th anniversary.

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/jerry-b-jenkins/>

**DANI PETTREY:** My husband and I met when he asked me to dance. It has turned out to be the dance of a lifetime. We had only been dating for three weeks when he shocked me with a proposal. We were visiting the Grand Canyon and went out for a nice dinner. Before dessert arrived he stepped out of the booth, got down on one knee and proposed. It had been an extremely short courtship, but I knew he was the one. Twenty-four years later he still is.

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/dani-pettrey/>



**DEBORAH RANEY:** Ken and I still argue over who proposed to whom. We attended different colleges an hour apart, and before Ken came to visit me one October weekend, he told me he was bringing me a surprise. “I’ll give you a hint: it’s round, shiny, has a hole in the middle, and it will always make you think of me.” I was SO excited! And do you know what that man brought me? A Monkees record album—yes, round, shiny, hole in the middle, and with a stupid song on it that was supposed to make me think of him. He thought it was SO funny! Lucky for him, he made up for it that Christmas when he took me shopping for an engagement ring. Forty-one years later, that story does make me laugh, but NOT then!

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/deborah-raney/>



## How did you propose to your wife, or how did your husband propose to you?



**ACE COLLINS:** We were watching a football game, and at half-time I looked at her and said, "You are going to marry me, aren't you?" She immediately answered, "Sure!" To make up for the rather lame proposal, I gave her a teddy bear two weeks later. She played with it for a while before noting the engagement ring around its neck. That was a look and a moment we will both never forget!

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/ace-collins/>

**LISA HARRIS:** Twenty-seven years ago this holiday season, my then future husband took me up Colorado National Monument for the afternoon. A friend of mine had accidentally spilled the beans the day before and told me that he was going to propose, so I couldn't wait to see my ring and say yes. Up on the mountain, though, he handed me a present ... a large stuffed monkey. Obviously that wasn't at all what I had been expecting, and I was so disappointed. But, thankfully, right after that, he pulled out a stunning diamond ring and proposed. And of course, I said yes!

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/lisa-harris/>



**BECKY WADE:** My husband took me to a fancy restaurant the night he proposed. He intended to propose at the table but it turned out that our table was very centrally located and entirely too public so he altered his plans. When we finished our meal, he led me to an empty room the restaurant used for private parties. It had floor to ceiling windows and a great view of the Dallas skyline at night. He went down on one knee and ... voila!

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/becky-wade/>

# 5 Love Stories to brighten your winter

Rel Mollet

With love in the air as Valentine's Day approaches, discover five authors whose novels overflow with burgeoning attraction and reawakened love, and are filled with faith and hope.



**A SPY'S DEVOTION**  
THE REGENCY SPIES OF  
LONDON  
Melanie Dickerson  
Waterfall Press

## **A Spy's Devotion by Melanie Dickerson**

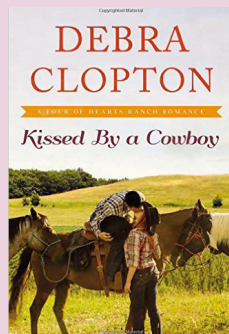
Plunge into a new Regency romance with **Melanie Dickerson's** *A Spy's Devotion* (Waterfall). With shades of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, wounded soldier Nicholas Langdon returns home from war to fulfill a secret mission and finds himself falling for the beautiful Julia Grey. Intrigue, danger and love surround them both as they try desperately to protect their beloved England.

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/melanie-dickerson/books/a-spy-s-devotion-the-regency-spies-of-london/>

## **Kissed By a Cowboy by Debra Clopton**

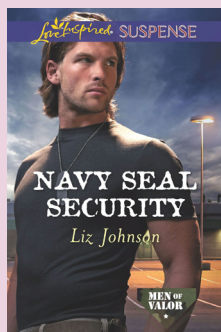
**Debra Clopton** has penned another romantic story of love and healing with *Kissed By a Cowboy* (Thomas Nelson), featuring a quintessential cowboy and a woman who has sworn off men after a humiliating divorce. Cassidy Starr returns to Wishing Springs to reopen her great aunt's strawberry farm and bed & breakfast, and to lick her wounds. She's not prepared for her former flame's determination to rediscover the love they once shared as rancher Jarrod Monahan decides to show Cassidy love can be forever.

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/debra-clopton/books/kissed-by-a-cowboy-a-four-hearts-ranch-romance/>



**KISSED BY A COWBOY**  
A FOUR HEARTS RANCH  
ROMANCE  
Debra Clopton  
Thomas Nelson





**NAVY SEAL SECURITY**  
MEN OF VALOR  
Liz Johnson  
Love Inspired Suspense

## **Navy SEAL Security by Liz Johnson**

In **Liz Johnson's** latest romantic suspense novel, *Navy SEAL Security* (Love Inspired Suspense), physical therapist Mandy Berg is saved from a lethal attack by one of her patients, Navy SEAL Luke Dunham. Luke's only goal since returning stateside was returning to active duty, but following the attack, Luke discovers he has a new mission—to protect Mandy at all costs, even if it means losing his heart and his life.

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/liz-johnson/books/navy-seal-security-men-of-valor/>

## **On Lone Star Trail by Amanda Cabot**

Gillian Hodge despises motorcycles and the men who ride them after her promising career as a concert pianist was cut short by a motorcycle accident that crushed her right hand. When widower TJ Benjamin loses control of his motorcycle, he finds himself with an unwilling rescuer in the lovely Gillian and begins to wonder if love is possible once again. Discover **Amanda Cabot's** *On Lone Star Trail* (Revell).

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/amanda-cabot/books/on-lonestar-trail/>



**ON LONE STAR TRAIL**  
TEXAS CROSSROADS  
Amanda Cabot  
Revell



**STEP BY STEP**  
CRISIS TEAM  
Candace Calvert  
Tyndale House

## **Step by Step by Candace Calvert**

**Candace Calvert** continues her medical romance Crisis Team series with *Step by Step* (Tyndale). ER nurse Taylor Cabot is attempting to move past the tragic death of her husband three years earlier. When crisis chaplain Seth Donovan reappears in her life she is forced to face the unanswered questions surrounding her husband's death she was determined to flee. Upon seeing Taylor move on with another man, Seth's feelings for her are reawakened and he can't seem to let go.

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/candace-calvert/books/step-by-step-crisis-team/>

Leslie Gould's second book in her *Neighbors of Lancaster County* series tells a familiar Amish tale. A young Englisher is in love with an Amish girl. Can these two from different cultures find a way to be together or will they choose tradition instead of love and happily-ever-after? *Amish Sweethearts* (Bethany House) is everything fans of Amish romance are hoping for this year!



**Can you tell us about the inspiration behind the plot in *Amish Sweethearts*?**

For the last six years, as I've been writing Amish fiction, my husband was serving in the Army Reserve (30 years total—he just retired!), including as the commander of a field hospital in Afghanistan. Several years ago I thought: What if a military family moved next door to an Amish family? The result was the *Neighbors of Lancaster County* series. *Amish Sweethearts* focuses on the oldest son, Zane, of the English family and the oldest daughter, Lila, of the Amish family.

**What's your spin on this familiar plot of Amish girl meets English boy?**

Zane follows in his father's footsteps and joins the Army, even though he knows he's in love with Lila. Meanwhile, Lila, who's committed to remaining Amish and marrying the bishop's son, does her best to deny her love for Zane. Neither one of their families

wants them together—even though it's obvious to all that the two care about each other deeply. The Amish family is non-resistant and pacifist. The English family values military service and loyalty to country. The differences between the two families seem more extreme than ever!

That's the set-up for *Amish Sweethearts*. You'll have to read it to see if Zane and Lila's love can overcome the vast cultural divide between their two backgrounds, or if they're destined to live out their separate lives.

**When you need information about the Amish, where do you turn to?**

I'm always reading about the Amish: scholarly books, biographies, autobiographies, blog posts, cookbooks, *The Budget* (a Plain newspaper), and other sources. I also have a good friend who grew up Amish, and she graciously answers my questions and reads my manuscripts in their early stages. I



“

MY ADVICE IS TO WRITE, WRITE AND WRITE! DON'T WAIT FOR THE CONFIDENCE OR THE SKILLS. BOTH WILL COME IN TIME. LEARNING TO WRITE IS A LIFELONG PROCESS."

also have several contacts, both Amish and Mennonite, in Lancaster County and other Amish communities who answer specific questions that I have. I'm so grateful for all of these sources; I wouldn't be writing fiction about the Amish without them.

**You've been writing for over a decade now ... can you share some of your best writing tips?**

Yes, my first novel was published 13 years ago, but I wrote fiction for a decade before being offered my first novel contract. So, wow! I've been at this a long time!

My advice is to write, write and write! Don't wait for the confidence

or the skills. Both will come in time.

Learning to write is a lifelong process.

When you're not writing, read books about writing fiction and also read good fiction to see how other authors do it. Also, join a writers' group, which will give you A) deadlines, B) feedback and C) a community of people who understand all your quirks—yes, every writer has them!

My other piece of advice is to write fast and furious on the first draft. Get it done! Then begin the rewriting process. If you're the kind of person who writes clean and slow and finishes your manuscripts, disregard this advice. But if you tinker and tinker and tinker and never finish a manuscript, this advice is for you.



**AMISH SWEETHEARTS**  
NEIGHBORS OF LANCASTER  
COUNTY  
Leslie Gould  
Bethany House

**Do you have more books planned for your *Neighbors of Lancaster County* series?**

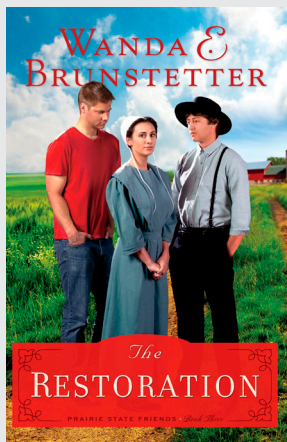
Yes! I'm currently working on *Amish Weddings*, the third and final novel in the series. (*Amish Promises* is the first in the series.) It's always sad to come to the end of a series and say goodbye to a cast of characters that have truly become imaginary friends, so I'm really cherishing writing this last story.

CLICK ON A BOOK COVER FOR MORE INFORMATION



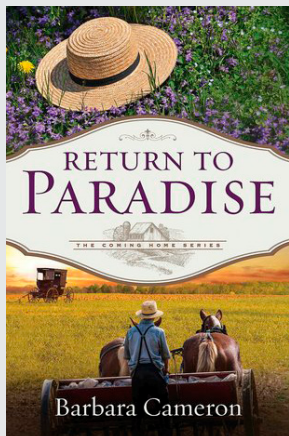
## AMISH SWEETHEARTS

NEIGHBORS OF  
LANCASTER  
COUNTY #2  
*Leslie Gould*  
Bethany House



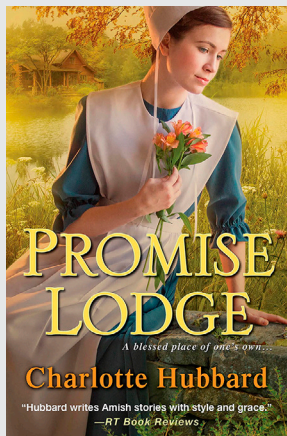
## THE RESTORATION

*The Prairie State  
Friends #3*  
WANDA  
BRUNSTETTER  
Shiloh Run Press



## RETURN TO PARADISE

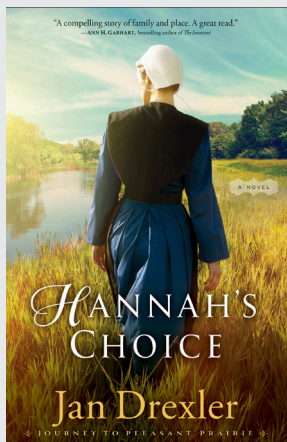
COMING HOME  
SERIES #1  
*Barbara Cameron*  
Abingdon Press



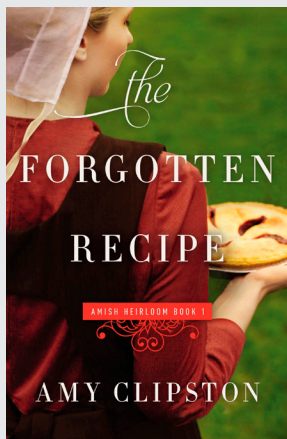
## PROMISE LODGE

PROMISE LODGE #1  
*Charlotte Hubbard*  
Zebra

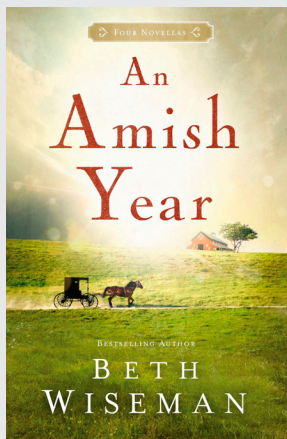
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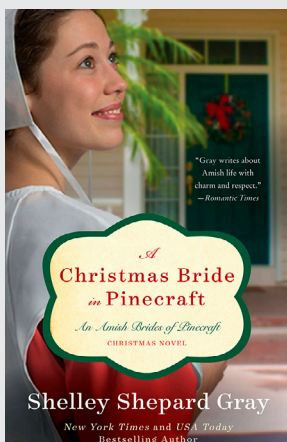
**HANNAH'S CHOICE**  
JOURNEY TO  
PLEASANT  
PRAIRIE #1  
*Jan Drexler*  
Revell



**THE FORGOTTEN  
RECIPE**  
AMISH HEIRLOOM  
*Amy Clipston*  
Zondervan



**AN AMISH YEAR:**  
**FOUR AMISH  
NOVELLAS**  
*Beth Wiseman*  
Thomas Nelson



**A CHRISTMAS  
BRIDE IN  
PINECRAFT**  
THE PINECRAFT  
BRIDES  
*Shelley Shepard  
Gray*  
Avon Inspire





If you are looking for some bite-sized romance to balance some of the more serious love stories this February, look no further than *With This Ring?: A Novella Collection of Proposals Gone Awry* (Bethany House). An all-star crew of writers is lending their talents to this collection, which is sure to thrill fans.

Authors **Mary Connealy**, **Karen Witemeyer**, **Regina Jennings** and **Melissa Jagears** have teamed up to bring readers a novella collection that features a few fun aspects: romance and humor with a historical setting.

These beloved authors combined have sold over 1 million copies of their books! Fans of Mary Connealy will be delighted to see two of their favorite characters reunited. In Regina Jennings' novella, two friends pretend to be newlyweds in order to flee from danger. Karen Witemeyer's protagonist, Marietta, decides to take matters into her own hands to prevent "the one" from getting away. And Melissa Jagears offers a tale of unlikely circumstances and how love finds a way in.

*"This quartet of authors consistently write with hilarity, warmth and toe-curling romance. Their individual contributions to this entertaining collection hold true to form. Connealy tips her hat to long-time fans with a grin-inducing reunion and clever word-smithing. Witemeyer's ingenious story-within-a story adds even more humor and drama to her contribution. Jennings and Jagears perfectly complete the ensemble with witty tales of friendship and breathless kisses."*

—RT Book Reviews Top Pick

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS:



**Karen Witemeyer** is a winner of the Carol Award and has been a finalist for the RITA Award and National Readers' Choice Award. She lives with her husband and three children in Abilene, Texas.

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/karen-witemeyer/>

**Mary Connealy** is well-known for her award-winning, bestselling historical romantic comedies. She lives on a ranch in eastern Nebraska with her husband and has four grown daughters.

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/mary-connealy/>

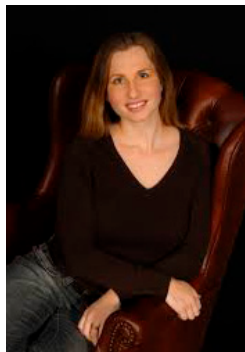


**Regina Jennings** is the author of five acclaimed historical romances. She lives outside Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, with her husband and four children.

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/regina-jennings/>

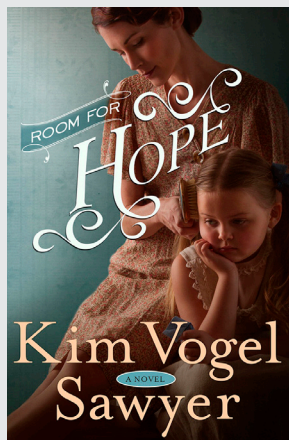
**Melissa Jagears**, author of the Unexpected Brides series, is a homeschooling mother of three little ones on a tiny Kansas farm with a fixer-upper house. Her first novella, *Love by the Letter*, won the 2014 Carol Award for Best Novella.

<http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/melissa-jagears/>



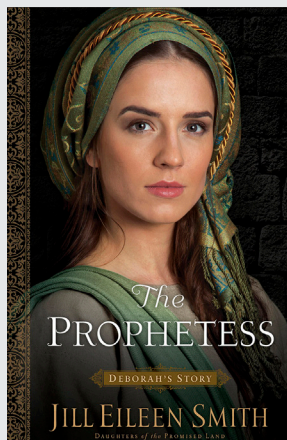
READ MORE ONLINE!: <http://www.familyfiction.com/books/with-this-ring-a-novella-collection/>

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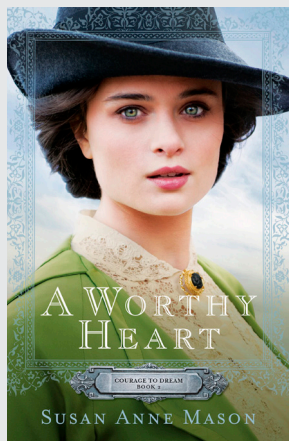
## ROOM FOR HOPE

Kim Vogel Sawyer  
WaterBrook Press



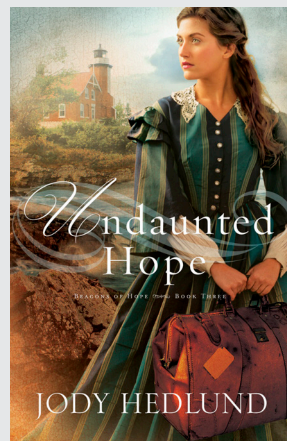
## THE PROPHETESS: DEBORAH'S STORY

DAUGHTERS OF THE  
PROMISED LAND #2  
Jill Eileen Smith  
Revell



## A WORTHY HEART

COURAGE TO DREAM  
Susan Anne Mason  
Bethany House

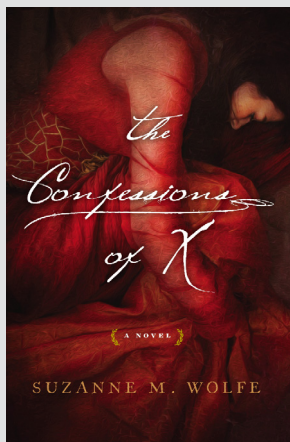


## UNDAUNTED HOPE

BEACONS OF HOPE  
Jody Hedlund  
Bethany House



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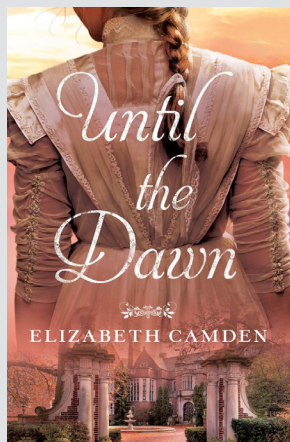
**THE CONFESSIONS  
OF X**

Suzanne M. Wolfe  
Thomas Nelson



**BEYOND THE  
SILENCE**

Tracie Peterson  
& Kimberley  
Woodhouse  
Bethany House



**UNTIL THE DAWN**

Elizabeth Camden  
Bethany House



**AT LOVE'S  
BIDDING**

Regina Jennings  
Bethany House

Beloved author Susan May Warren is continuing her Christiansen Family series with another stunning novel. Each book in the series is dedicated to telling one family member's story. *You're the One that I Want* (Tyndale House) details Owen Christiansen's story. The black sheep of the family is finally taking center stage and Susan answered all our questions about this release.



**Can you tell us a bit about Owen and how he ended up on a crabbing boat?**

Oh, Owen. The troubled child. The man who watched his dreams slip through his fingers when his hockey career was destroyed. The reckless brother, the prodigal son. His story is a long time coming ... and I saved the best for last. After the family fight (a literal fist-fight with his brother), Owen has vanished, making his way through Montana (working for the Jude County Hotshots) and then over to Seattle, where he got wind of a job and traveled north, to Alaska, to work on the fishing boats. He's signed onto the Wilhemina, a crabbing boat whose first mate is Scotty McFlynn.

**Scotty is Owen's love interest in this novel. What makes her an intriguing character?**

Scotty has grown up as the only child of a salty fisherman, in the harsh world of crab fishing, and the

Alaskan wilderness. She's a tough, smart cop/detective on leave from the department after an event that left her rattled. Her stint as first mate on her father's boat is short-term, but long enough to meet Owen Christiansen, who seems to like her. She's used to men's attention—after all, she's often been the only girl on a crew of men—but she's used to rebuffing them. But Owen is different ... especially when he saves her life.

**If you had to describe the series in a few sentences, what would you say?**

It's a series about family, faith and real life. There are no soft answers, and it's filled with real emotions, conflict, drama and truth.

**How have fans received this series so far?**

I've been overwhelmed with the fantastic response. Readers have compared it to Karen Kingsbury's

“

IT'S A SERIES ABOUT FAMILY, FAITH AND REAL LIFE. THERE ARE NO SOFT ANSWERS, AND IT'S FILLED WITH REAL EMOTIONS, CONFLICT, DRAMA AND TRUTH."

Baxter series, with a little Dee Henderson suspense and Dani Pettrey adventure thrown in. I've had a lot of reader mail saying they're sad that this is the last book, because they don't want to see it end—which, of course, I am too!

**Are there other books planned for this series?**

Not at this time.

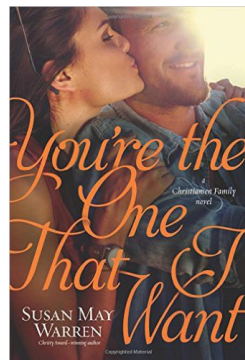
**Do you have any ideas for future novels or are they already in process?**

Yes. I'm combining my love for family drama, adventure and all things

wilderness into a series called Montana Rescue. It's about a Search and Rescue Team near Glacier National Park, sort of a "Chicago Fire" feeling, only set in the beautiful backdrop of the mountains of Montana. The first book—*Wild Montana Skies*—releases next October. I also have three e-book shorts releasing this summer that feature the team members in this series (so readers can get to know them). Look for the first one, (*Where There's Smoke*), in June!

**Will you miss the Christiansens when their story is done?**

Oh, for sure! I love this family and will miss them, but I think readers will really love the ending. I cried ... but am thankful to have known them and written their stories!



**YOU'RE THE ONE THAT I WANT**  
CHRISTIANSSEN FAMILY  
Susan May Warren  
Tyndale House

READ MORE ONLINE!: <http://www.familyfiction.com/authors/susan-may-warren/books/you-re-the-one-that-i-want-christiansen-family/>



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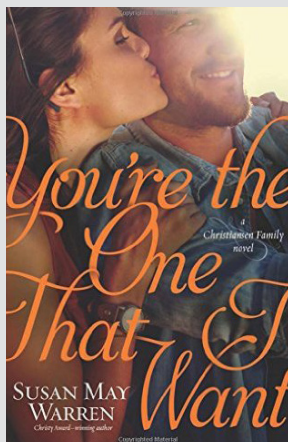
## STEP BY STEP

CRISIS TEAM  
Candace Calvert  
Tyndale House



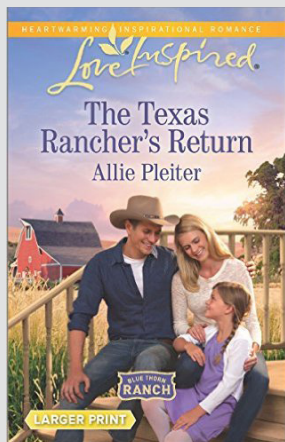
## ALWAYS WATCHING

ELITE GUARDIANS  
Lynette Eason  
Revell



## YOU'RE THE ONE THAT I WANT

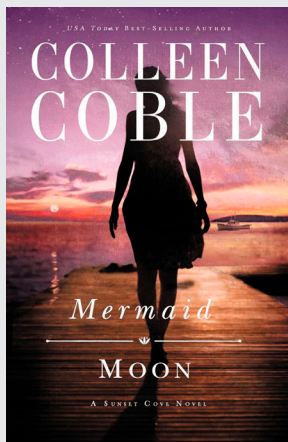
A CHRISTIANSEN  
FAMILY NOVEL  
Susan May Warren  
Tyndale House



## THE TEXAS RANCHER'S RETURN

BLUE THORN  
RANCH #1  
Allie Pleiter  
Love Inspired

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## MERMAID MOON

SUNSET COVE

Colleen Coble

Thomas Nelson



## WITH THIS RING

A NOVELLA  
COLLECTION

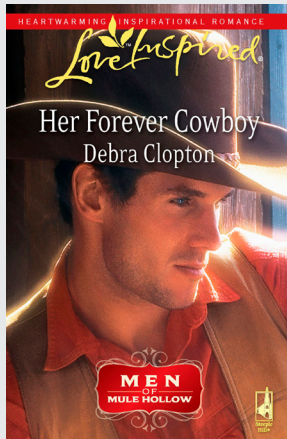
Karen Witemeyer,  
Mary Connealy,  
Regina Jennings,  
Melissa Jagears  
Bethany House



## WHERE SHE BELONGS: A NOVEL

MISTY WILLOW #1

Johnnie Alexander  
Revell



## HER FOREVER COWBOY

YULETIDE COWBOY  
Debra Clopton  
Love Inspired

Robin Lee Hatcher's latest release, *Keeper of the Stars* (Thomas Nelson) continues her Kings Meadow Romance story. Robin sat down to answer our questions about this book, her inspiration and the secret to writing pulse-pounding romance!



**Your main character, Penny, is grieving over the loss of her brother. What was it like to write a character dealing with such a profound loss?**

Through the years, I have written about many types of profound loss. This story wasn't any more or less difficult to write, from the author's perspective. It helps, I suppose, that my writing process allows the characters to tell their own stories rather than me trying to force something to happen or force them to experience a certain emotion. The emotions they feel are theirs, not mine. While I empathize with my characters, I do not put myself in their places.

**Where did the inspiration for this plot come from?**

Some stories begin with a memorable spark. This wasn't one of those books. To be honest, it began with a desire for a change of seasons. My two previous novels in the Kings Meadow Romance series (*Love Without End* and *Whenever You Come Around*), plus my novella in the Year of Weddings series that is also

set in Kings Meadow (*I Hope You Dance*), all took place during the summer. It was time for this mountainous area to experience something other than sunny and warm weather. And since *Keeper of the Stars* was set to release in January, I chose winter and snow! Soon after that decision was made, I envisioned a cold, windy day in a cemetery (later that had to change to September for purposes of the story), and from there the premise for the novel began to unfurl in my mind. Finally, I stumbled upon the image of the couple that ultimately became the cover for this book, and Penny and Trevor came to life in my imagination.

I try not to analyze my creative process because much of it is a mystery, taking place deep inside of me.

**Penny's love interest in the book is also the person she blames for her brother's death. Yet, the two still have an attraction to one another. Is this what makes this love story so good?**

Yes, I believe that is true. Not every great romance begins with an



immediate and obvious attraction. Both Penny and Trevor needed to heal, to forgive and be forgiven, before they could open their hearts to love. Watching them go through the process is what keeps readers turning the pages, I believe.

All fans of romance fiction know that the hero and heroine will get together in the end. The pleasure in reading a romance (which can be a very different thing from a “love story”) comes from discovering how those characters overcome the problems thrown into their lives, problems that threaten to keep them apart. When an author does her job well, she can even make a reader wonder if there is any hope that the characters can overcome, even while being certain they will.

### **What's your secret to writing engaging romance plots that aren't overplayed?**

Harking back to one of my previous answers, it's all about my characters



**KEEPER OF THE STARS**  
A KINGS MEADOW ROMANCE  
*Robin Lee Hatcher*  
Thomas Nelson

and letting them tell me their stories. Even in books where I draw heavily on experiences in my own life the protagonists are not me. A Promise Kept was a very personal story, but Allison was not Robin. She was simply Allison. I allowed her to tell me her story. I allowed her to feel and think for herself. My novels are character-driven, not plot-driven, so the characters take me where they want to go. Because they are such real individuals in my mind and heart, I believe that makes even overplayed plots feel fresh.

### **How was this project different from your previous novels?**

I have written over 75 novels and novellas. Each is unique, yet the writing process is pretty much the same from book to book.

### **Will you be writing more books in your Kings Meadow Romance series?**

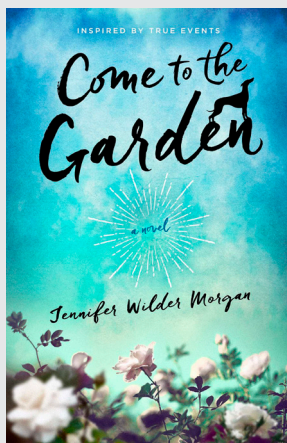
At this point, my answer is no, but an author never knows when inspiration might strike, taking her back to a former series or location. However, at present I'm writing a novel with a new setting, this time in a small town near the Snake River in southwestern Idaho. I hope readers will become as fond of this new setting and of those who live there as they were of Kings Meadow.

CLICK ON A BOOK COVER FOR MORE INFORMATION



**THE SECRET TO HUMMINGBIRD CAKE**

*Celeste Fletcher McHale*  
Thomas Nelson



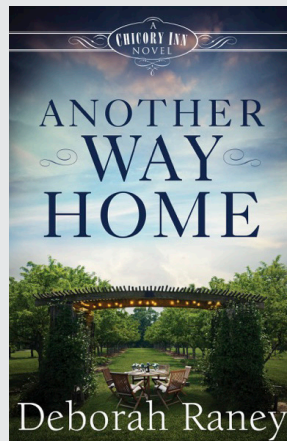
**COME TO THE GARDEN**

*Jennifer Wilder Morgan*  
Howard Books



**THE FEATHERED BONE**

*Julie Cantrell*  
Thomas Nelson



**ANOTHER WAY HOME**

CHICORY INN #3  
*Deborah Raney*  
Abingdon Press

## CONTEMPORARY

## NEW RELEASES

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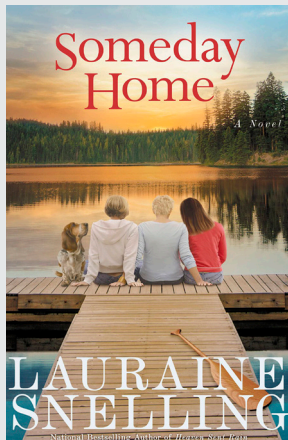
### **A REASON TO STAY**

TEXAS GOLD  
*Kellie Coates Gilbert*  
Revell



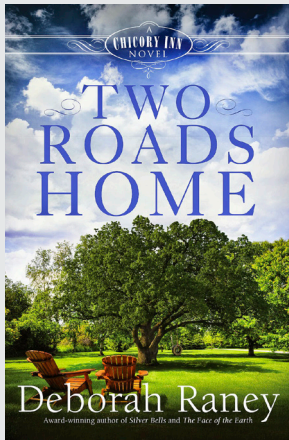
### **MIND OF HER OWN**

*Diana Lesire*  
*Brandmeyer*  
Tyndale House



### **SOMEDAY HOME**

*Lauraine Snelling*  
Faithwords

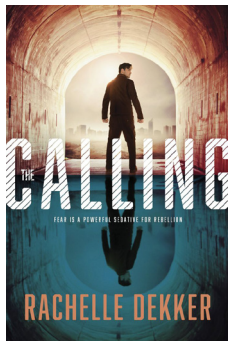


### **TWO ROADS HOME**

CHICORY INN #2  
*Deborah Raney*  
Abingdon Press

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## START READING NOW

### ***The Calling* by Rachelle Dekker**

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Damien Gold sat down beside Roth Reynard, better known as the Scientist, on the hard wooden bench. The sun was high, the wind soft, and the garden around them still. Things were already in motion and change was upon them all.

The Scientist didn't glance over as Damien sat. He kept his eyes forward, squinting through the sun's rays and clearly lost in his own thoughts. They had these meetings sometimes, out here in the Capitol gardens, because the Scientist enjoyed the sun from time to time, and the garden area itself provided isolation.

"Things have begun," the Scientist said.

"Yes, the compound is fully operational," Damien said. "Results should happen quickly then?"

"Ideally."

"And the rebels?"

"Aaron's movements are impossible to—" Damien started.

"I have told you before, Aaron is not our primary concern. Remko Brant is the one who steers that ship."

"I disagree; Aaron holds the power."

"Aaron is a delusional radical. But Remko possesses training and wit. He has managed to break through our security systems on numerous occasions."

"On Aaron's authority, though."

"Don't be a fool. If we break Remko, we break their will. Remko is the key."

Damien tried to hide his frustration at the man's clear disregard for Damien's insight. But now was not the time to engage in discourse. With so much happening, they needed to be on the same side.

"We are working on an inside man, as you suggested," Damien said.

"Good. How close are we?" "Close."

"Then the plan to change the world is functioning as we predicted."

Damien smiled and nodded. "You had doubts?"

"I'm a scientist. I always doubt until evidence is laid before me."

"Don't worry; you'll have all the evidence you need soon."

The Scientist turned to Damien and they shared a knowing look before Damien stood and left.



Remko sensed panic from the group behind him. It filled the air around his head and pressed against his skull. They were running out of time. He pushed away the pocket of dread threatening to knock his legs from under him. They couldn't afford to run out of time.

Carrington was on his heels, moving quickly as they maneuvered through the underground tunnel. Sam and his younger sister, Kate, followed alongside Wire, all of their faces focused yet terrified. They all knew time was against them, and they all knew what that meant.

Remko could hear Carrington's fear screaming at him, begging him to move faster, to be better, to save them. He was supposed to keep them alive, to lead them against the Authority, to be their hero, their protector. He was failing.

It had been the same song and dance for the last several months.

A ticking clock they were fighting against. Each of them hoping for a pause in its constant rhythm so they could stand still and breathe. Each of them desperately needing a moment in which it didn't feel like the world was crushing them from above, where they came out on top, victorious for once. Remko would settle for just a moment.

A large, round steel grate overhead occupied the majority of the tunnel's top surface. It operated on a mechanical lock system, like most of the exits within the tunnels. Wire easily disabled the lock using the handheld device that never left his side. He called the device Roxy, something Kate mocked him for constantly, which usually inspired a witty response, and the two of them would fill the space with banter. No one said anything today. Their fear kept them quiet and made the silence deafening.

Sam stepped past Remko, the top of his six-foot-four-inch frame brushing the tunnel's ceiling, and yanked the grate open with a labored pull. They ascended one at a time, Sam leading to help pull the others up and Remko coming through last. Once aboveground, the group awaited Remko's lead. They were now at the end of a long alley deep within the Authority City. The walls of the surrounding buildings towered into the sky above. Dark clouds covered the sun and cast a shadow across the city. The smell of rain hung in the air, the street before them already soaked from the morning's storm.

The streets should be empty by now. People would have already gone inside for the viewing. It was mandatory that all executions of criminals be watched—a visual reminder of what happened to those who rebelled against the Authority. It didn't matter your age or status; even the youngest in the society were required to participate. Back when Remko had felt pride in being a part of the Authority's CityWatch Guard, he'd never felt comfortable with the idea of mandatory viewing of executions. But then, he'd only ever experienced one in person: Arianna Carson, eldest daughter of President Ian Carson and loyal follower of Aaron. Her death felt like a lifetime ago, even though only a year and a half had passed.

Now the executions happened monthly. Trials occurred less and less, people sometimes sentenced to death without a single



word of defense. All because they followed Aaron, a man Remko increasingly found himself questioning. Many believed he was their saving grace, but Remko couldn't help but wonder if his grand ideas for change were simply the naive ramblings of a madman. All the same, Aaron had called the woman Remko loved out of the city, and the woman had asked Remko to follow, and he had. He would have followed Carrington anywhere. He still would.

She placed her hand on his shoulder, shaking him from his thoughts. There was no time for thinking; they had to move. He caught her eye for a brief moment and her expression made him sick. Yes, there was plenty of worry and fear, but he could see the hope that lay beyond, hope that they could complete their mission, hope that they wouldn't fail, hope in him. Misplaced hope.

Executions were held in the Capitol Building, which stood a couple of blocks to their left and was always surrounded by a heavy CityWatch presence. They had never broken into the Capitol Building before. Usually they were helping people flee the city from their homes or workstations. People Aaron had called to join the Seers in the wreckage of earth that lay miles beyond the city walls. Called to a life that would consist of always looking over their shoulders and wondering how long they could actually survive before they were discovered. Before the Authority rained down terror and vengeance on their group for leading the charge against them. For igniting curiosity and inspiring hope.

Usually Remko and the other Seer scouts spirited people out under the cover of darkness, outwitting and outmaneuvering those chasing them. Like magicians using a curtain to disguise the illusion, pulling the white rabbit out of the hat at precisely the right moment, they employed quick sleights of hand and crafty distractions.

In the beginning it had thrilled Remko. It had thrilled them all—the way Wire broke down the Authority's internal programming at lightning speeds before anyone knew a breach in security had been made; the way Kate slithered into secure locations without detection, moving with speed and strength that seemed impossible for her small frame; the way Sam inflicted fear at just the sight of

his stature, the quiver you could see in the guards' expressions when they encountered him. And Remko, calling the shots, directing their perfectly assembled plans. Using the talents of his team to fool and confuse the enemy. It had been a rush. A rush that covered their fear and kept them stable.

Moving through the streets now, that rush was gone, replaced with a sense of shame that this had ever felt thrilling. Shame in believing that at some point they could actually win the game they were playing, that they could actually pull off the big end trick. But the real illusion was that they could ever be successful. Behind the curtain the Authority was pulling all the strings. The rest of them were still just puppets, convinced for a brief moment that they could be real boys and girls.

Remko clenched his molars and reset his focus. He could see the grand Capitol Building through the clouds ahead. As suspected, the streets were nearly empty, but the team still clung to the dark alleyways and moved like shadows toward their destination.

A loud mechanical grind echoed around them and sent a shiver through the ground beneath them. Remko knew the sound. They all did.

High above, large steel plates were sliding back to reveal plasma screens that stretched fifteen feet across and stood over nine feet in height. There were six main government buildings surrounding the Capitol Building. They stood twice as high as the Capitol, their walls reaching into the clouds, and every one of them had a large screen attached to its front. Screens easily seen throughout the Authority City and even into the outskirts of the Cattle and Farm Lands.

Remko could remember seeing those screens from the CityWatch barracks. They weren't used often back then—Remko could only remember a couple of times from his childhood—but they were being used more frequently of late. The Authority broadcast every execution; even with a plasma screen occupying a wall in each home throughout the city, these screens were still used. It was an extra twist of cruelty, another reminder that the Seers were losing. The revealing of the screens meant Remko's

time was up.

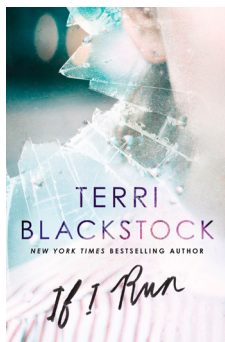
He increased his speed and the others followed. The plan was to drop into an old water main that was out of commission and traverse its length under the Capitol Building and up through an unused service entrance that would pop them out on the eastern side of the structure. The execution room was on the second floor. Wire knew the guards' rotation schedules, so maneuvering through the side hallways and up an ancient staircase would be all about timing. From there it would be a combination of software and electrical distractions so that they could slide into the room, obtain the objective, and leave.

Even running through the plan now in his mind, Remko knew the chances of success were less than favorable, but they couldn't just sit and watch one of their own die without trying a rescue.

They reached the street grate that led them back underground. Remko yanked it open and one by one they dropped below. They didn't pause to collect themselves; they didn't have time for that. Sam was up front now, crouching but still moving quickly. Kate and Wire were right behind him, and Carrington was inches ahead of Remko. He tried not to think about what must be going through her head right now. Would she blame him if they failed? Was she already? How many times would he have to let her down before she stopped believing in him altogether? Could he survive if she did? Like blows from a hammer—pound, pound, pound—the questions rocked his stability and threatened his resolve. He swallowed the fear and pressure as they reached the end of the tunnel.







## START READING NOW

### ***If I Run* by Terri Blackstock**

*Published with Permission by Zondervan*

## CASEY

There's blood on the bottom of my shoes. I rinse the soles, knowing the police will trace the impression of the rubber pattern and determine that they're Skechers. They'll find the charge for the shoe store on my credit card, proving they're mine.

Blood runs down the drain. My heart races as though it's my own draining away, but it's not mine. My throat constricts as tears fill my eyes, but I push them away. There's no time to feel.

When the shoes seem clean enough, I blot them on a towel and slip them into my bag.

They'll see the traces of blood on the sink, in the footsteps at the door where I took the shoes off, on the towel. They'll shine that luminol stuff all through my apartment and add it to the evidence list against me. There's no point in wasting time cleaning it up. I just have to get out of here.

It's not easy to pack your life into a duffel bag, but I have no other options. I pack what I think I'll need—a skirt, two pairs of jeans, some shirts, a pair of scissors for cutting my hair as soon as I'm in a safe place, underwear, mascara, toothpaste and toothbrush, contacts case and glasses. I go to my dresser and

slide out the drawer, dig past my socks to the cigar box at the back. I open it. The stacks of hundred-dollar bills are still there. This is my rainy day, the emergency I need the cash for. I stuff the stacks into my bag's pockets, then hurry into my tiny living room/kitchen combo and grab the framed pictures of my family from a shelf. I stuff them into the bag too.

Quickly, I write a check for my rent, tear it out, and leave it on the counter with a note to the landlord that he can rent my apartment and donate what I've left to Goodwill. I don't want him left holding the bag. I think of calling work and telling them I won't be back in, but it's better if I don't.

I slip my purse strap over my shoulder and carry the duffel out, then lock my apartment behind me, though I don't know why.

I see the blood on my car door handle as I get in. Ignoring it, I drive to a parking garage at a hotel downtown, leave it without looking back, and ride the elevator down to the hotel's first floor. I slip into the ladies' room and pull my hair up in a ponytail, then tie a bandana around my head. I take out my contacts, wash off my eye makeup, and shove on my glasses. Then I carry my purse and duffel bag through the hotel's glass doors to the driveway, where cabs are waiting. I tip the bellman as he signals to one for me.

I get in and tell the driver to take me to the bus station.

They're probably not looking for me yet. It will be a while before they discover Brent's body. I give in to the temptation to pray, though I don't know if anyone will hear. I have trouble believing in God, but when I'm in a mess, my mind often formulates quiet pleas. I don't know what to ask for. Time? Distance? An escape path?

Justice? Yeah, right.

I ask for help in general, trusting that if there's someone on the other end of those prayers, he'll know what I need. Loneliness falls over me like a fog as we drive through my town, and I wonder what I'll do without my friends. I love people. Always have. I don't like being alone.

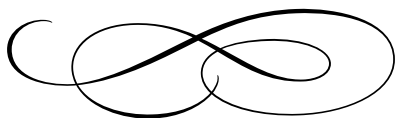
And my family. My six-month-old niece who adds a new trick to her baby repertoire every week ... will I ever see her again? The

thought of never rocking her to sleep again is almost as brutal as the image of my best friend lying dead on the floor.

I let my eyes linger on the town I've grown to love. Funny, I didn't know I loved it until now.

I struggle to keep my mind from going back to what happened earlier. An hour ago? Two hours? I force my thoughts from the terror of it.

One step at a time. Get to the bus station. Then I can cry.





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