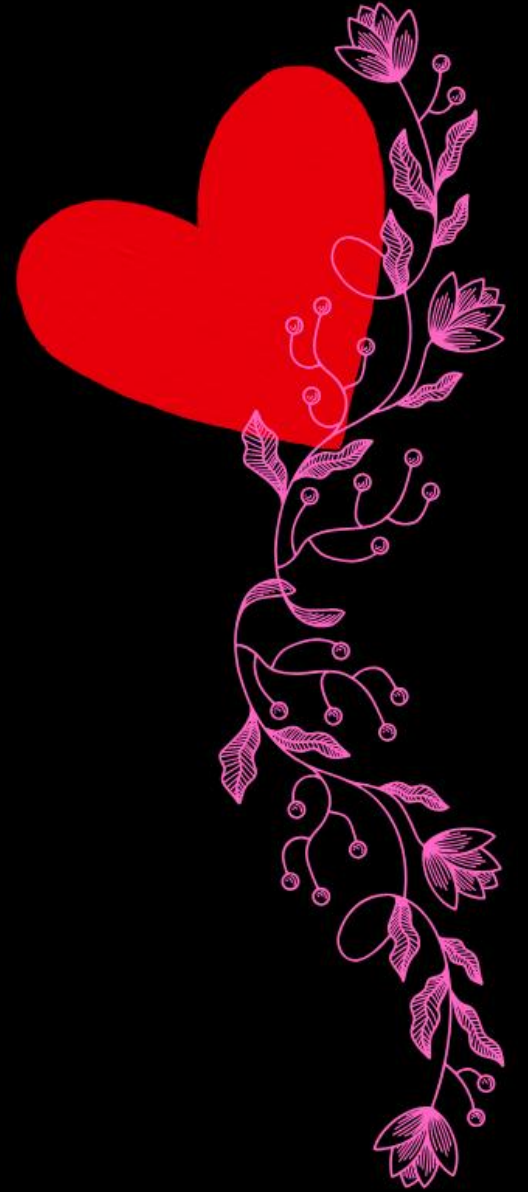


Happily Ever After
at DPL

Thursday, August 27, 2026



What is Romance?



Two basic elements comprise every romance novel:
a central love story and an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending.

- **A Central Love Story:** The main plot centers around individuals falling in love and struggling to make the relationship work. A writer can include as many subplots as they want as long as the love story is the main focus of the novel.
- **An Emotionally Satisfying and Optimistic Ending:** In a romance, the lovers who risk and struggle for each other and their relationship are rewarded with emotional justice and unconditional love.

Romance novels may have any tone or style, be set in any place or time, and have varying levels of sensuality—ranging from sweet to extremely hot.

These settings and distinctions of plot create specific subgenres within romance fiction.

per Romance Writers of America

Who is reading romance?

- **female:** 82%
 - **male:** 18%
 - **Average age:** 35-39 years old
-
- **Ethnicity:**
 - ♥ 73% White/Caucasian
 - ♥ 12% Black/African-American
 - ♥ 7% Latino/Hispanic
 - ♥ 4% Asian/Asian-American
 - **Sexual orientation:**
 - ♥ 86% heterosexual or straight
 - ♥ 9% bisexual, pansexual or other bi+ identity
 - ♥ 2% gay or lesbian

per Romance Writers of America

The future of romance is the younger, emerging readership.

These younger readers are:

- diverse in sexual orientation and in ethnicity
- more male
- frequent readers
- listening to audiobooks
- reading eBooks on smartphones
- consuming YA, erotic, and paranormal romance
- shopping at a greater number of online retailers.
- extremely engaged on social media and willing to experiment with new authors

per Romance Writers of America

Some of the most common Tropes:

Love Triangle

Friends to Lovers

Enemies to Lovers

Best Friend's Sibling or Ex

Second Chance

Fake Relationship

Fish Out of Water

Grumpy/Sunshine

Fairytale Retelling

Bodyguard/Protector

Secret Billionaire/Royal

Different social status/culture

Secret Identity

Stuck Together

Work Adversaries

Forbidden Love

Soul Mates

Secret Baby

Wrecked Wedding: runaway
bride/jilted groom

Holiday Romance

Amnesia/Mistaken Identity

Arranged Marriage

Beauty and the Beast

Marriage of Convenience

Road Trip Romance

Time Travel

Some of the most common Sub-Genres

Contemporary

Erotic

Historical

Paranormal

Inspirational

Romantic Suspense

Romantic Comedy

Gothic

Sports

Military

Romantasy

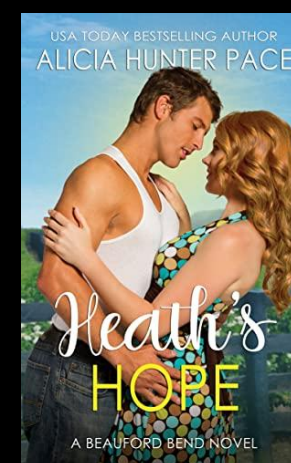
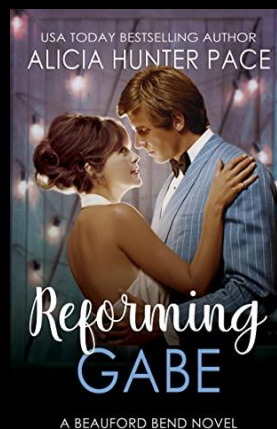
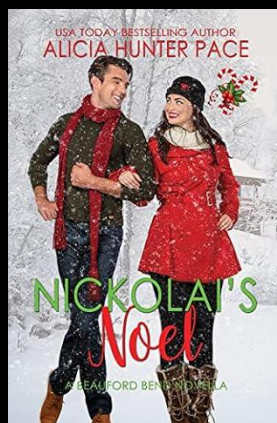
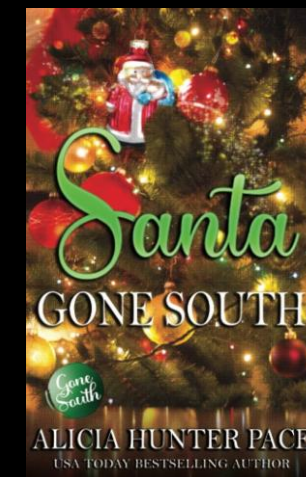
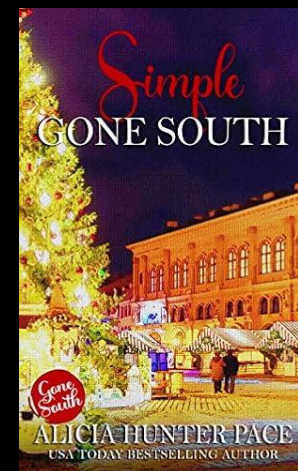
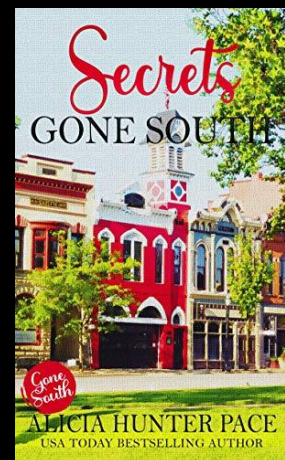
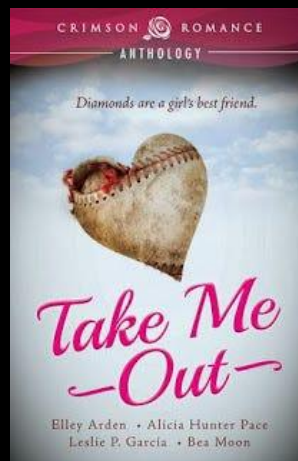
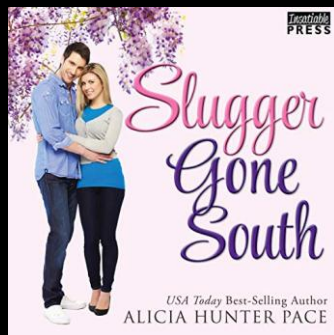
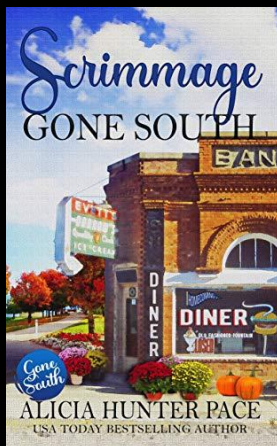
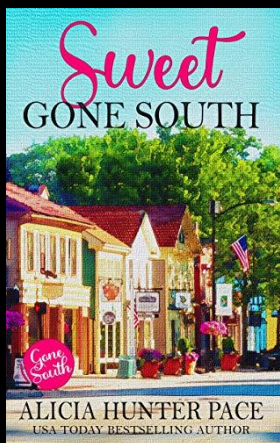
Dark Academia

Time Travel

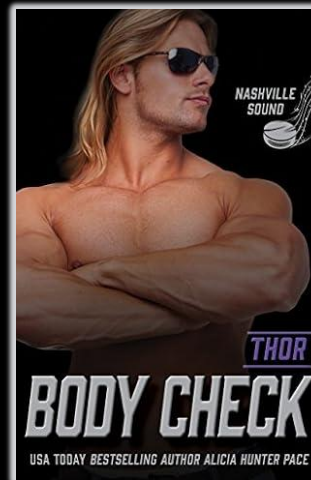
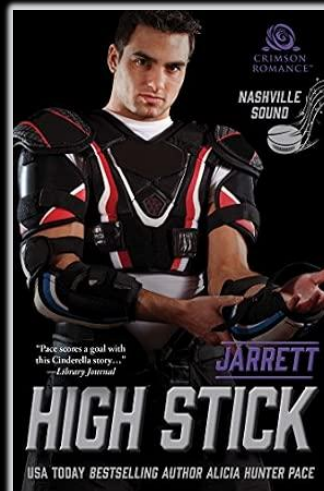
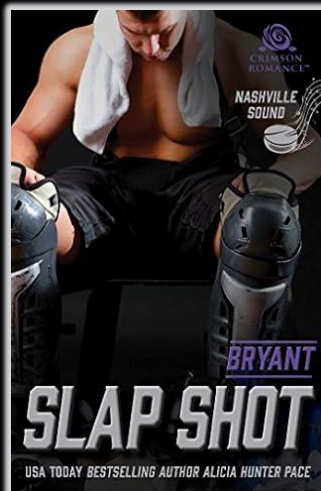
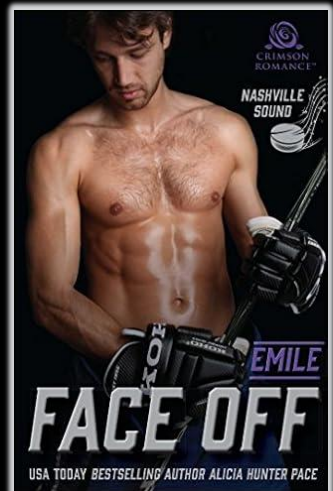
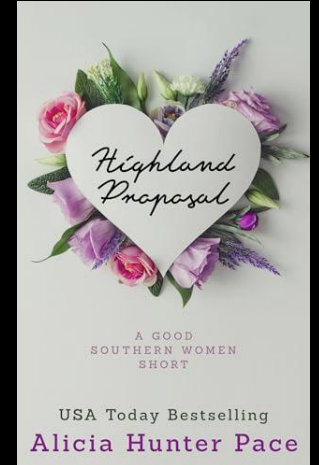
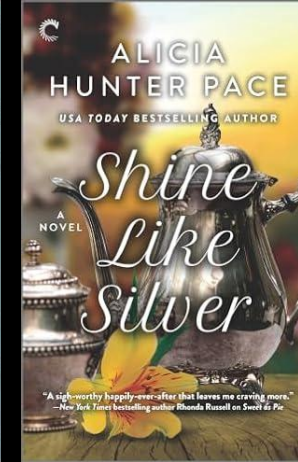
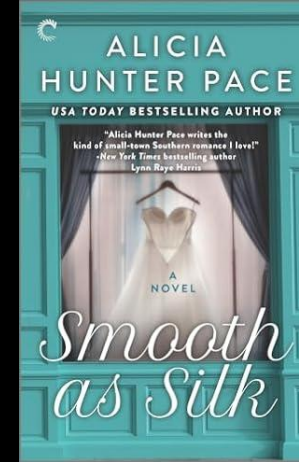
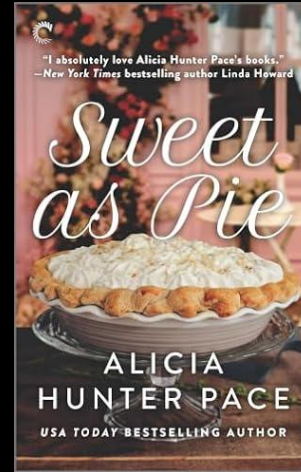
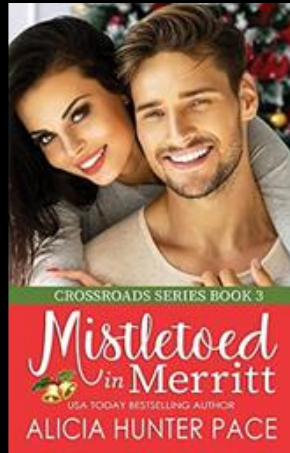
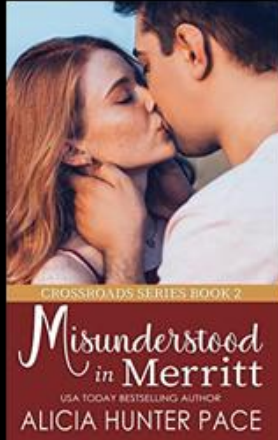
Cowboy/Western

Sci-Fi

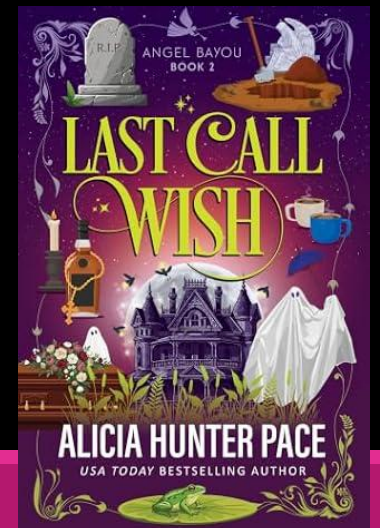
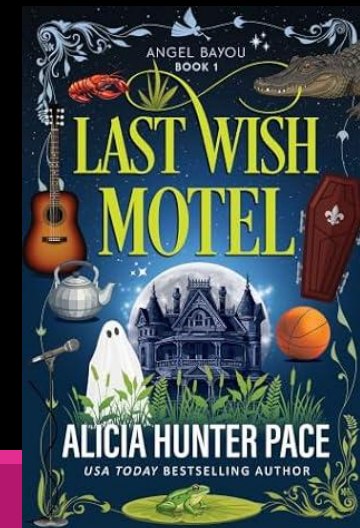
Alicia Hunter Pace (Jean Hovey)



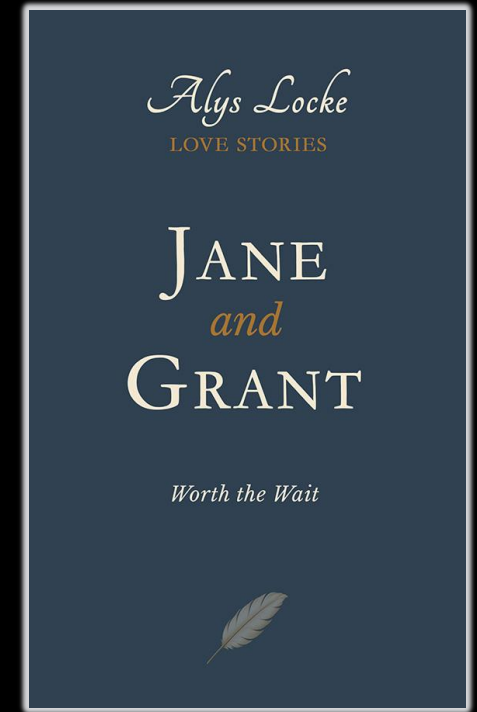
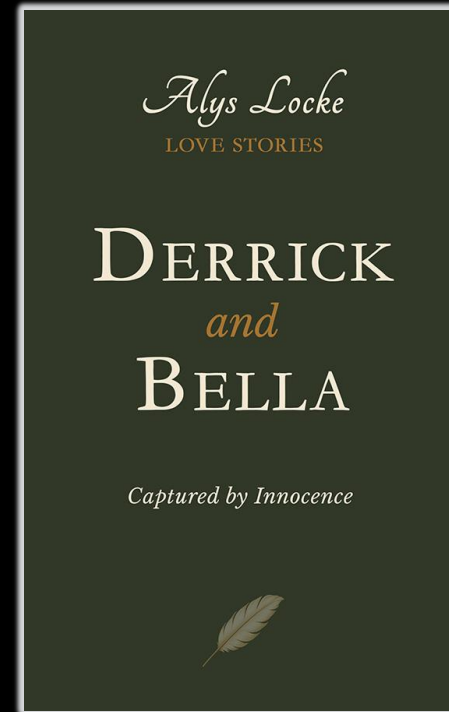
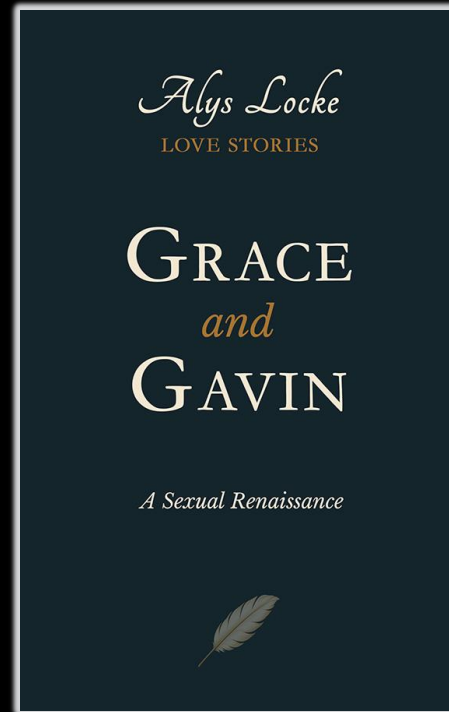
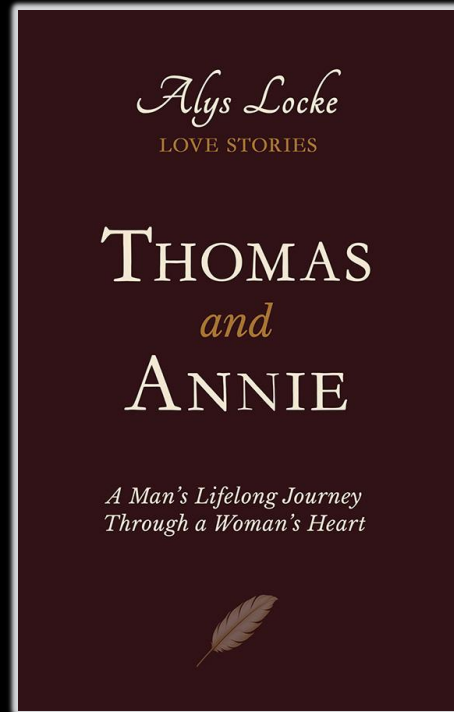
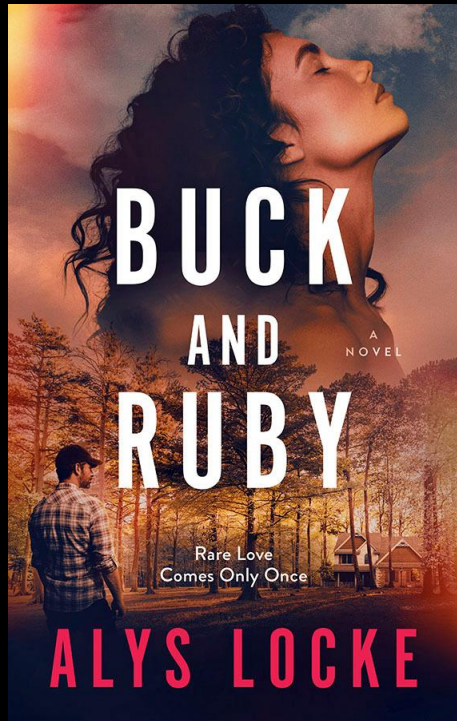
more Alicia Hunter Pace (Jean Hovey)



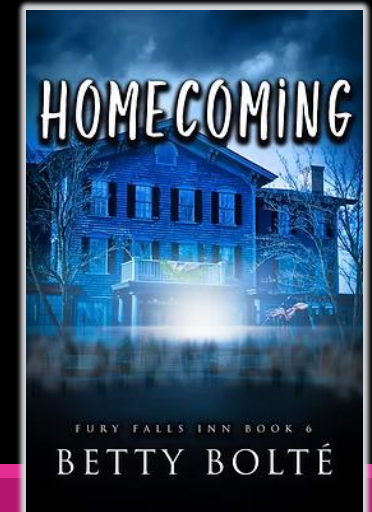
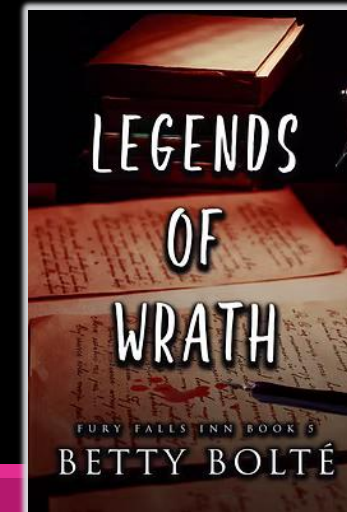
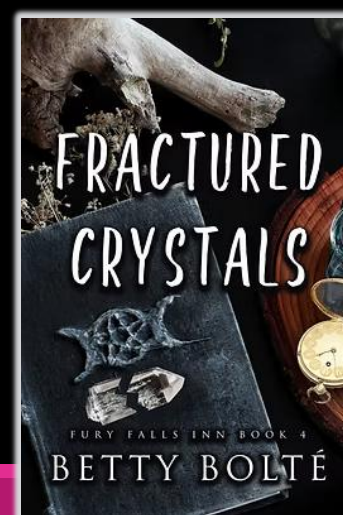
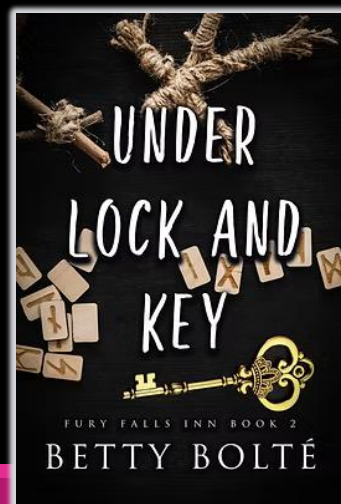
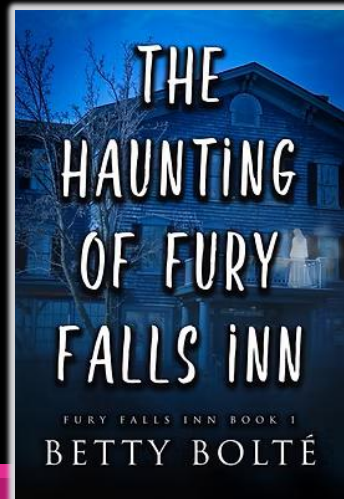
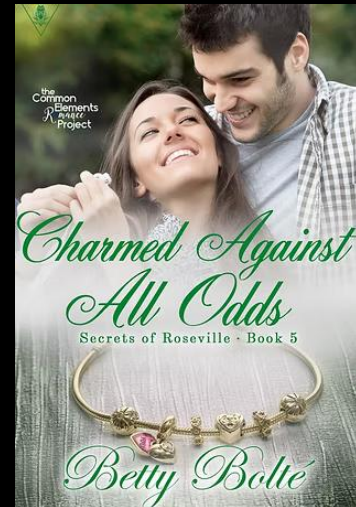
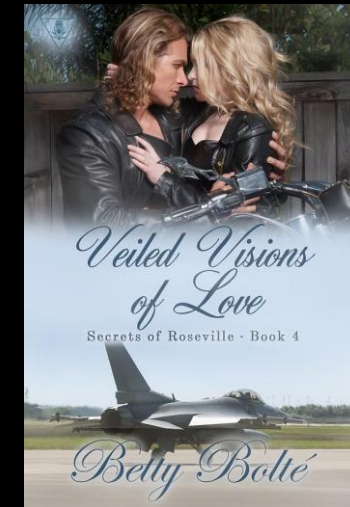
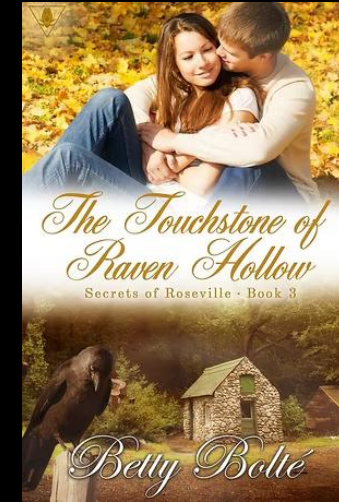
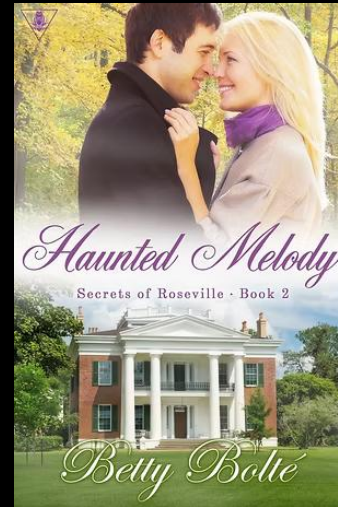
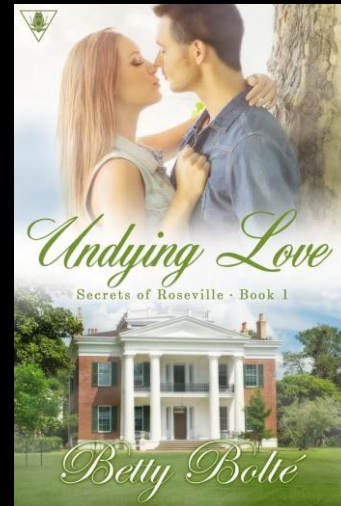
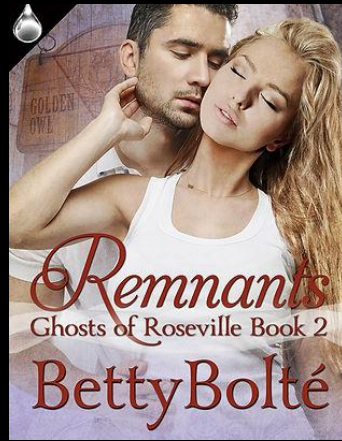
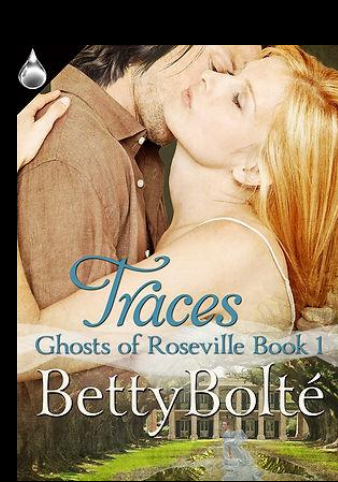
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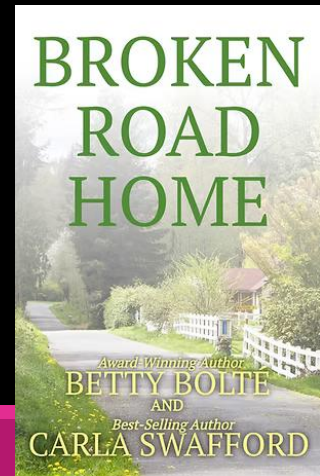
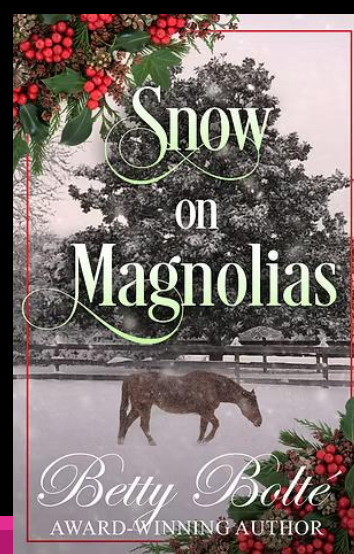
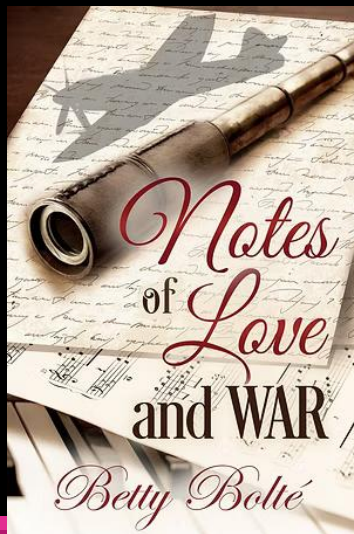
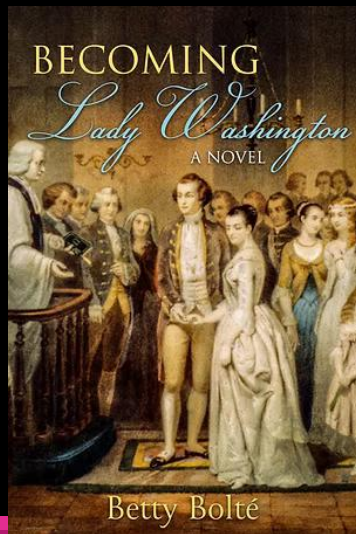
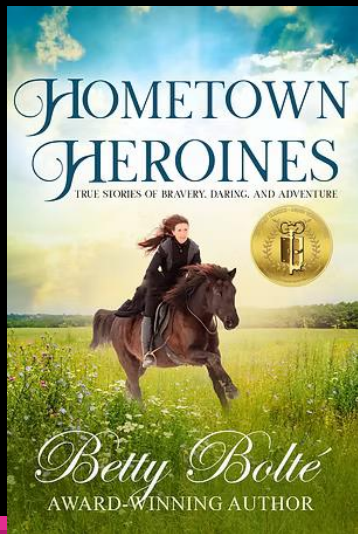
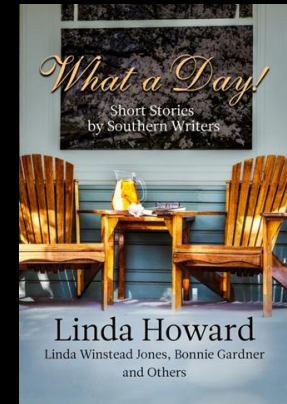
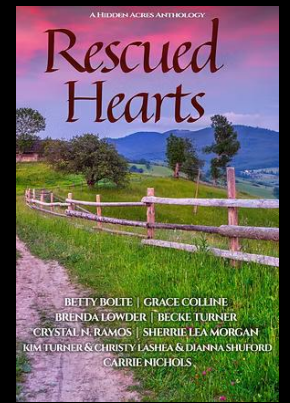
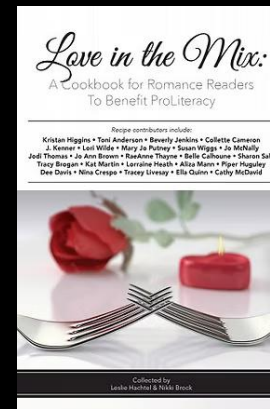
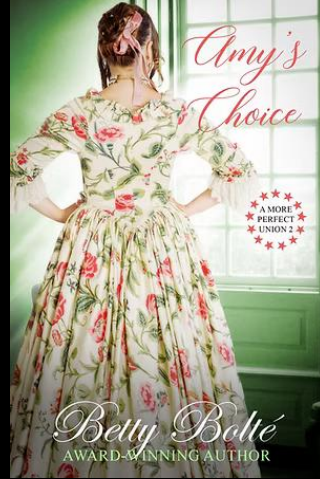
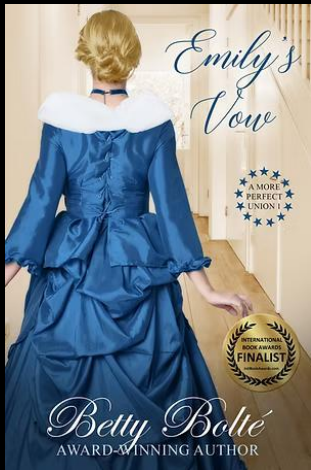
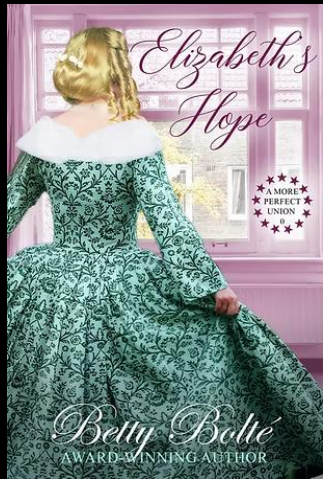
Alys Locke



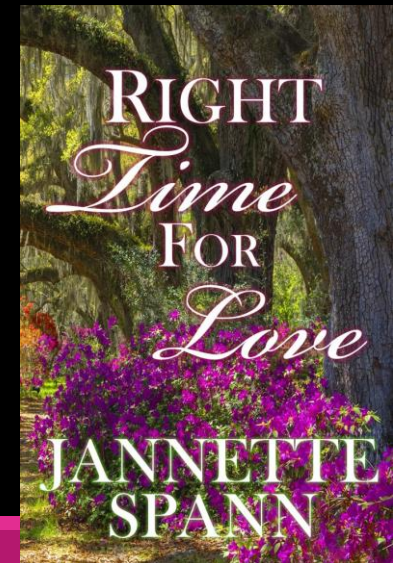
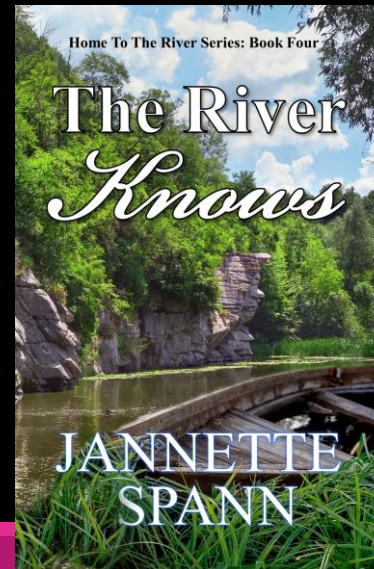
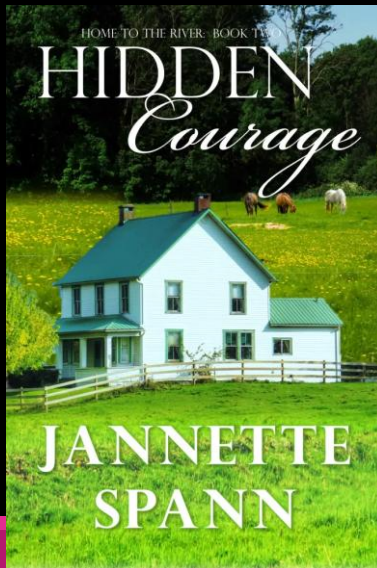
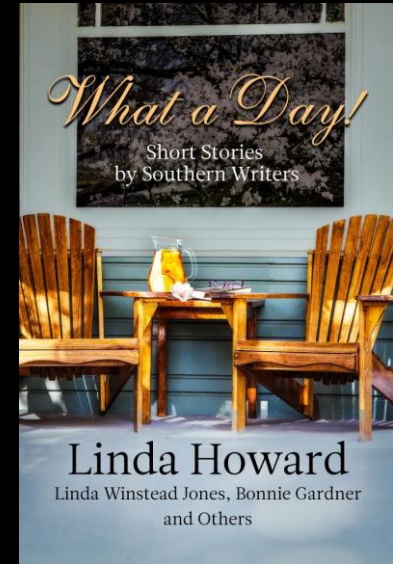
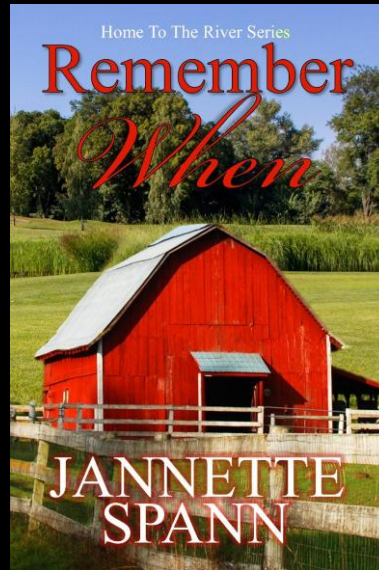
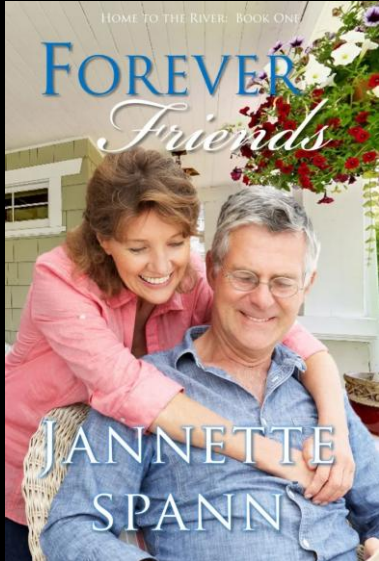
Betty Bolté



more Betty Bolté



Jannette Spann



The Chili Pepper Scale

- 1 Chili Pepper (🌶️): "Sweet" or "Clean." Think Hallmark movie. Hand-holding, maybe a fade-to-black kiss.
- 2 Chili Peppers (🌶️ 🌶️): "Mild." Some heavy petting or suggestive dialogue, but the "act" happens off-page.
- 3 Chili Peppers (🌶️ 🌶️ 🌶️): "Open Door." The scene is on the page. It's descriptive. This is the baseline for most "spicy" romance.
- 4 Chili Peppers (🌶️ 🌶️ 🌶️ 🌶️): "Steamy/Explicit." Multiple scenes, high detail, often a primary focus of the book.
- 5 Chili Peppers (🌶️ 🌶️ 🌶️ 🌶️ 🌶️): Erotica. The plot is often secondary to the sexual content.

This version of the
Chili Pepper Scale
comes from
**“A Parent's Guide
to 'Spicy' Romance
Marketing”**
at screenwiseapp.com

Thank you for joining us!

This presentation, the link to the screenwise app guide for parents (containing the chili pepper guide and more), and links to all the authors' information is available at

www.myDPL.org/HEA

