

# BOOKISH MAGAZINE

## In this issue:

December holidays

Holiday stories

Holiday themed books

Stocking stuffers

Book teasers

Toby's lame jokes

Stories from The Author Gang

Publishing news



# DECEMBER 2021

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# Bookish Magazines



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I write speculative alternate history fiction, romantic urban fantasy, historical suspense novels as well as fun, educational, and bilingual books for children ages 2-14

AUTHOR  
WEBSITE





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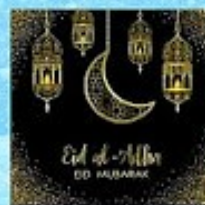




# Happy Holidays

December, the cold winter month is a popular time for parties and celebrations. While some are filled with solemn tradition, others focus on fun and frolic. All pose opportunities for an interesting view of different cultures, history, and religion. Some of the holidays celebrated in December around the world.

## December Holidays





# Christmas

This is a Christian holiday that's grown in popularity and celebrated by many non-Christians. Christmas is one of the paid holidays by employers in the U.S. Non-religious people celebrate this holiday with family, giving gifts, volunteering to help with charity events, or donate to good causes.

Religious people celebrate this Christian holiday by going to church, giving gifts, and sharing the day with their families. In some parts of Europe, “star singers” go caroling—singing special Christmas songs—as they walk behind a huge star on a pole.

The Christmas festivities in *Ireland* tend to be more religious in nature rather than being about gifts. Christmas celebrations last from Christmas Eve until January 6 (Epiphany). On December 26, known as St. Stephen’s Day, an Irish tradition that is known as the Wren Boys Procession takes place.

The Christmas Eve festivities in *Ukraine* are known as Sviata Vechera, which means “Holy Supper.” The celebration begins when the first evening star is sighted in the night sky. In farming communities, the household head brings in a sheaf of wheat, which symbolizes the wheat crops of Ukraine.

# Hanukkah

For eight days each November or December, Jews light a special candleholder called a menorah. They do it to remember an ancient miracle in which one day’s worth of oil burned for eight days in the temple. During Hanukkah, many Jews also eat special potato pancakes called latkes, sing songs, and spin a top called a dreidel to win chocolate coins, nuts, or raisins.



## **St. Nicholas Day**

A popular December holiday in many European countries, St. Nicholas Day, celebrates St. Nicholas of Myra, the man whose life inspired the tradition of Santa Claus and Father Christmas. He gave all of his money to the needy and was known for his compassion for children and all those in need. The holiday honors the man on the anniversary of his death, December 6, 343 A.D. Many celebrate with parades, feasts, gift giving, and festivals.

## **Our Lady of Guadalupe**

Also known as the Virgin of Guadalupe, is a Catholic title of the Blessed Virgin Mary associated with a Marian apparition and a venerated image enshrined within the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

## **Kwanzaa**

Kwanzaa, which means “First Fruits,” is based on ancient African harvest festivals and celebrates ideas such as family life and unity. During this spiritual holiday, celebrated from December 26 to January 1, millions of African Americans dress in special clothes, decorate their homes with fruits and vegetables, and light a candle holder called a kinara.

## **Three Kings Day**

At the end of the Twelve Days of Christmas comes a day called the Epiphany, or Three Kings Day. This holiday is celebrated as the day the three wise men first saw baby Jesus and brought him gifts. On this day in Spain, many children get their Christmas presents



## **Epiphany holiday**

Theophany, Denha, Little Christmas, or Three Kings' Day, is a Christian feast day that celebrates the revelation of God incarnate as Jesus Christ

## **Winter Solstice**

The Winter Solstice occurs around December 21. It is the shortest day of the year. People all over the world participate in festivals and celebrations. Long ago, people celebrated by lighting bonfires and candles to coax back the sun.

## **St. Lucia Day**

To honor this third-century saint on December 13, many girls in Sweden dress up as “Lucia brides” in long white gowns with red sashes and a wreath of burning candles on their heads. They wake up their families by singing songs and bringing them coffee and twisted saffron buns called “Lucia cats.”

## **New Year's Eve**

In the Gregorian calendar, New Year's Eve, the last day of the year, is on 31 December which is the seventh day of Christmastide. In many countries, New Year's Eve is celebrated at evening social gatherings, where many people dance, eat, drink alcoholic beverages, and watch or light fireworks to mark the new year.

In Ecuador, families dress a straw man in old clothes on December 31. The straw man represents the old year. The family members make a will for the straw man that lists all of their faults. At midnight, they burn the straw man, in hopes that their faults will disappear with him.



## Ōmisoka

New Year's Eve is considered the second-most important day in Japanese tradition as it is the final day of the old year and the eve of New Year's Day, the most important day of the year. Families gather on Ōmisoka for one last time in the old year to have a bowl of toshikoshi-soba or toshikoshi-udon, a tradition based on eating the long noodles to cross over from one year to the next.

## Chinese New Year

Children dress in new clothes to celebrate and people carry lanterns and join in a huge parade led by a silk dragon, the Chinese symbol of strength. According to legend, the dragon hibernates most of the year, so people throw firecrackers to keep the dragon awake.

## Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha

Eid Al-Fitr is celebrated at the end of Ramadan (a month of fasting during daylight hours), and Muslims usually give zakat (charity) on the occasion which begins after the new moon sighting for the beginning of the month of Shawal.

# Holiday Stories







In Hungary, where I grew up, Santa (Mikulás), visits the children on the eve of December fifth with Krampusz. I didn't know that people from the church dressed up as Santa to give presents to the "good" children and Krampusz to punish children on the "naughty" list by lightly beating them with a stick. In my mind, Mikulás and Krampusz were real.

I remember when I was about five years old, Krampusz hit my hand hard with the stick when I reached for the presents, and I swore that I would get back at him the following year.

**And I did.** When I heard the bells and singing that signaled Mikulás and Krampusz coming up to the door in the driveway, I stood behind my mother clutching a broomstick. When Krampusz walked through the door, I hit his shin with the broomstick as hard as I could. Krampusz screamed and cussed, mom was embarrassed, and Mikulás didn't give me a present that year. Well, I didn't mind not getting a present because I felt great satisfaction for getting back at Krampusz. © [Erika M Szabo](#)

## A sweet family tradition



Decorating the Christmas tree was a family night when I was young. We listened to Christmas music, I made strings from popcorn, glued shiny, colored paper, and cut out small snowflakes from white paper. My dad painted walnuts with gold and silver paint. Mom hung the special candy on the tree branches, that is made only for Christmas in Europe.

This candy is a small bon-bon filled with various flavored filling such as chocolate, vanilla, marzipan, chestnut, fruit flavored jelly or caramel.

I wasn't supposed to eat the Christmas candy until we opened the presents Christmas morning, but I was about four or five years old when I noticed my dad sneaking into the dining room on Christmas Eve while mom was taking a bath. I peeked and saw dad carefully sliding the candy out of the wrapping and smoothed the paper back, so it looked like the candy was still inside it.

After dad settled down to watch TV, I sneaked into the dining room and gorged on the delicious, chocolate covered candy. In my childish mind my actions were justified. *If dad can do it, so can I.*

Christmas morning came, and I felt so tired that I didn't even feel the usual excitement of opening the presents. I didn't sleep well, tossed, and turned most of the night. Dad was yawning and seemed tired as well.



After we had opened the presents, mom said, “Now we can eat some Christmas candy.” She reached up to take one, but when she touched it, the shiny wrapping paper flattened between her fingers. She touched the candy one by one and only found a few at the back of the tree that still had the bon-bon in it.

Mom looking at our guilty faces burst out laughing. “I guess you two didn't sleep much last night having a sugar high and now you can barely keep your eyes open! You learned your lesson, I hope, and next year leave some candy on the tree for me.”

From then on, it became a tradition to “steal” a few candies off the tree, but dad and I never again put ourselves into a sugar coma.

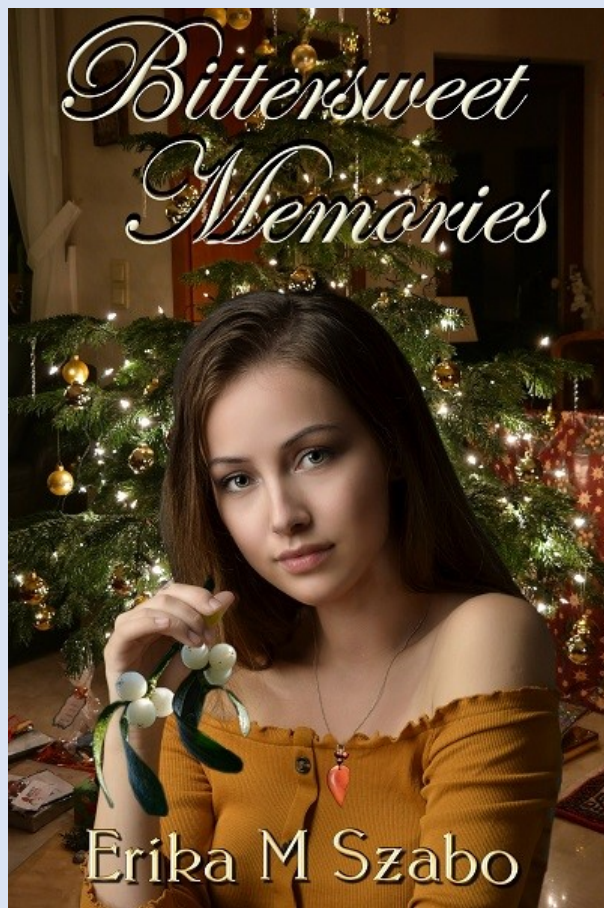
© [Erika M Szabo](#)



# Holiday themed Books for Grownups







## Christmas love story

Born to a drug addict mother and left on the church steps, Elana's life was revolving door of shattered hopes and disappointments. Until she met Luca. Allowing them only a short time of happiness, cruel fate tore them apart. All she had was hope and half of the rosewood heart pendant he carved to hold onto. Will they meet again?

English, Spanish and Hungarian eBook, as well as English audiobook.

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Elana spent the next several days before Christmas doing nothing. Aside from occasionally bathing and eating, she did little other than think about all those things that never were. For hours, she stared at that painting, letting the colors and brushstrokes burn tiny holes in the thick veil of her tortured psyche. Elana painfully counted down the days until she could put on her skates and go to the only place that made her feel somewhat happy. Only then could she find any kind of inner peace, even if only momentarily.

Finally, the day came. Elana woke up and, for the first time all week, smiled.

It was officially Christmas.

No matter the weather, Elana felt obligated to be at Rockefeller Plaza. So, after cleaning herself up and getting a bite to eat, she grabbed her ice skates out of the closet and left the apartment for the first time since winter vacation started.

“Rockefeller Center, please,” she said as she climbed into the back of the cab, worn out skates dangling by her side.

Without looking back or saying a word, the cabbie started the meter and merged into traffic.

\*\*\*

Skates strapped to her feet, Elana carefully tiptoed onto the ice. Surprisingly, only a few people were skating in the rink, giving Elana the entire space to move in any way she chose. Letting the inertia leave her body and glide her effortlessly on the polished sheet of ice, her thoughts once again became lost in the past. Back and forth, round and round, small tears leaked from her swollen eyes and mixed with melting snowflakes on her cheeks. Elana relived all those Christmas pasts, her mind racing and tears flowing. Wind blowing gentle kisses through her hair, she closed her eyes and let the pull of the ice lull her grieving mind. If only the wind could carry away her loneliness...

Suddenly, she felt her legs bumping into something soft and heard a painful yelp. Taken completely off guard, Elana let out a high-pitched scream as her legs became twisted, pitching her forward and slamming her onto the ice.



Wincing in pain, she looked up in time to see a large black dog skid its way across the ice and out the entrance. Shaken, Elana tried to stand, but when she put weight on her foot, immense pain in her leg pulled her back down to the ice. The sharp pain in her ankle and the numbness of her foot told her that her ankle might have broken in the fall. *Apparently, bad luck is not yet finished with me and rubbing its invisible hands with glee.*

“Oh my God! Are you okay?” a man’s voice emanated from over her shoulder. The stranger’s voice sounded familiar and sent a shockwave of déjà vu through Elana, but when she turned to look at the man skating across the ice towards her, she did not recognize him. He was a young man in his early twenties with short dark brown hair and narrow cheek bones balanced delicately on his clean-shaven face. His expression was one of intense worry as he shuffled towards her, trying not to fall and hurt himself as well.

Finally reaching Elana, the man knelt to her. “I’m so sorry. That stray dog got in the rink somehow. Are you okay?”

Elana rubbed her ankle, hissing in pain at her own touch. “No, I’m not alright. Pretty sure my ankle is broken.”

Scooping Elana up into his strong arms, the man carried her to a bench and carefully sat her down. Pulling out his phone, he quickly dialed 9-1-1 and arranged for an ambulance.

“Do you want me to call your family or...?” he asked, trailing the sentence.

“No, thanks. I’ll be fine on my own.” She bowed her head sadly and touched her eye, trying to stop a teardrop from sliding down her cheek.

“I’ll come with you to the hospital and keep you company.”

“You don’t need to... and I don’t have a family. Not anymore. I’m alone.” A painful sob broke free from deep inside her chest.

“I insist,” the young man said, touching her hand. His heart ached with sympathy and compassion, watching her crying. He slid closer to her and offered his shoulder to lean on.

Elana rested her head against his chest and couldn't stop herself. Letting all her repressed painful memories out in an inconsolable sob, she forgot about the physical pain. The pain in her tortured soul was stronger.

By the time the paramedics arrived and loaded her into the back of the ambulance, Elana's sobbing calmed. She recalled the summer day, so long ago in her childhood, when Luca was loaded into an ambulance, beaten and broken.

"You really don't have to come with me," Elana assured the young man. "Sorry you had to see me falling apart. I'll be fine. It's just... too many bad memories catching up with me."

The man smiled and took Elana's hand in his. "It's Christmas. My life hadn't been all sunshine either. I understand and I want to make sure you're okay."

At the hospital, Elana and the man waited in a tiny room for a doctor to examine her ankle. They made light small talk, mostly about the weather and the Yankees, while Elana filled out insurance forms.

She felt an unusual attraction to the man. Not only because of his good looks, fit physique, and charming aura, but there was something deeper that Elana couldn't quite explain. As she tried to focus her thoughts back on filling out forms, the doctor entered the room.

"I'm Dr. Nelson," the tall man in a short white coat said, checking the portable computer screen. Taking a seat on a stool by the bed, Dr. Nelson studied Elana's ankle. Swelling had begun to set in, and her skin was already starting to become puffy and bruised from the impact of the fall. "How did you fall?" he asked.

"I was skating at Rockefeller center and tripped over a dog. I closed my eyes for a moment and didn't see the dog until my legs bumped into it. I hope the poor animal is okay," Elana explained as she watched a stocky man in a housekeeper uniform pushing his cleaning cart into the room.

"Couldn't you wait until I'm finished?" Dr. Nelson looked up at the man from the stool, annoyed.



“X’suse me!” the stocky man grumbled. “Just doin’ me job,” he said indignantly with anger showing on his wide face.

“Never mind, I’m almost done, anyway.” He turned back to Elana. “Well, it looks like you hit the ice hard; you might have some broken bones. I’ll order an X-ray and we’ll go from there.”

“Hey, folks. Doctors, eye? They all mighty,” the cleaner cackled, watching the doctor hurrying out of the room. “Looks like clumsy skatin’.” He laughed heartily at his own lame joke while wiping the sink, but neither Elana nor the young man found it funny at all.

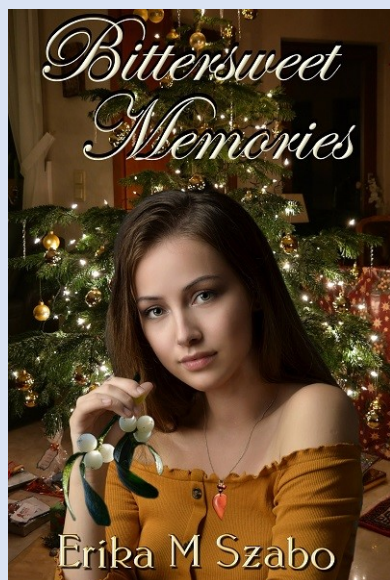
Sensing their coldness to his sense of humor, the housekeeper cleared his throat. “Well, that’ll be a first!” he cackled. “Trippin’ over a dog,” He again cackled, then looked at Elana with a smirk on his face. “Skatin’ with yer eyes closed is askin’ for it, I’d say.”

The phrase echoed in Elana’s mind. Something cruelly familiar tugged at the forefront of her memory at his words. *You were asking for it... were asking for it... asking for it...*

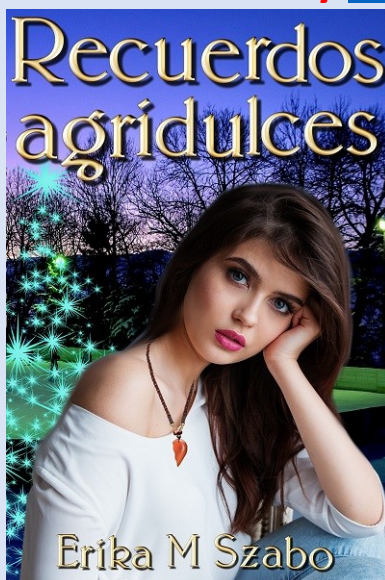
She stared at the ragged scar on his left cheek and realized what her unconscious mind was trying to tell her.

**If you’d like to continue reading the story,**

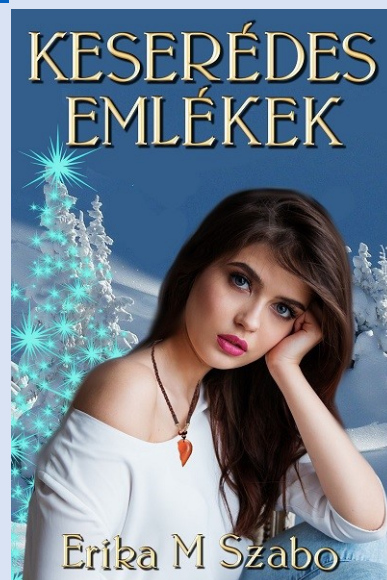
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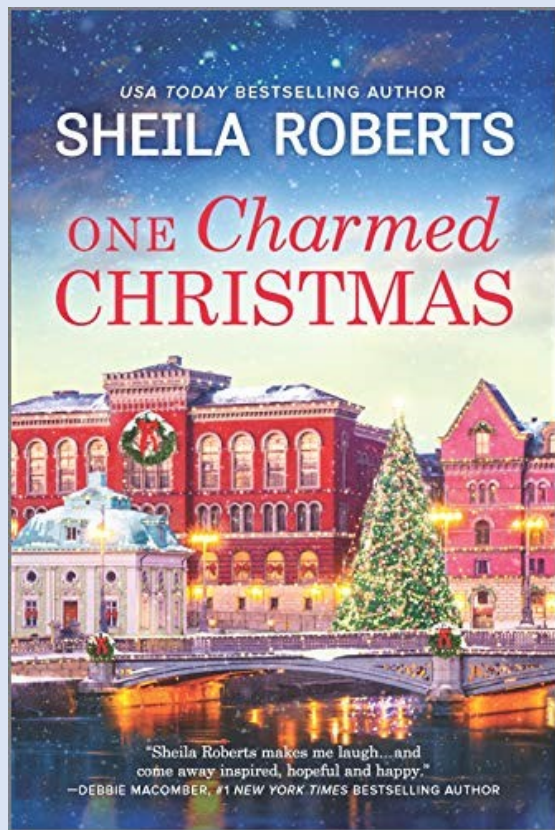
**[ENGLISH](#)**



**[SPANISH](#)**



**[HUNGARIAN](#)**



Catherine Pine is hoping her Christmas is a bit more jolly than last year's. That one was her first without her husband, and with her kids and their families absent this year, she's worried. But things change when her good friend invites her on a Christmas cruise to lift her spirits. Suddenly every day is an adventure and she's making a bunch of new friends, including the lovable Sophie Miles.

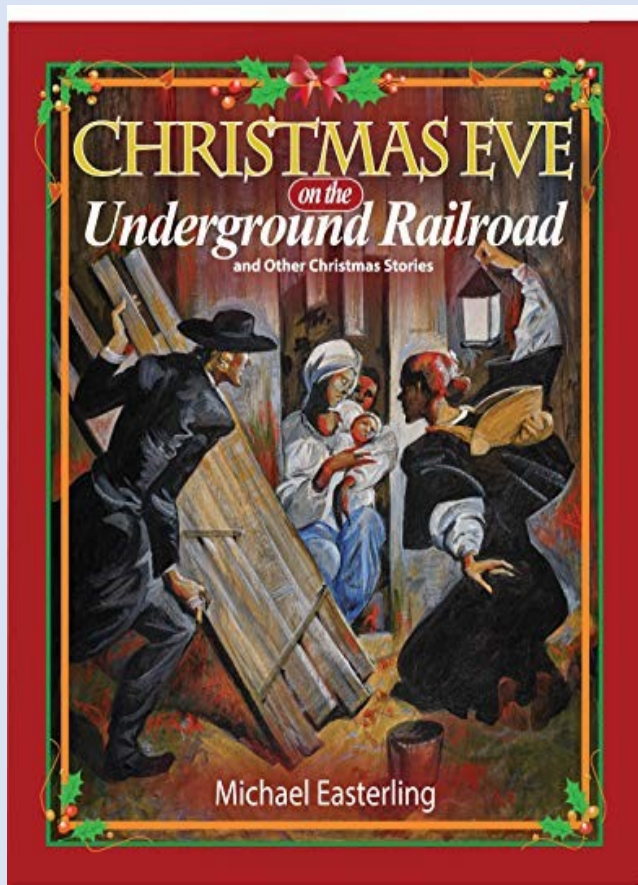
[ON AMAZON](#)



For sisters Samantha and Ella Mitchell, Christmas is their most precious time of the year. But this year, they'll be buying presents for the most unexpected guest of all—their mother. It's been five years since they last saw each other. But when their mom calls out of the blue, Samantha and Ella cautiously agree to spend Christmas all together in the beautiful Scottish Highlands...

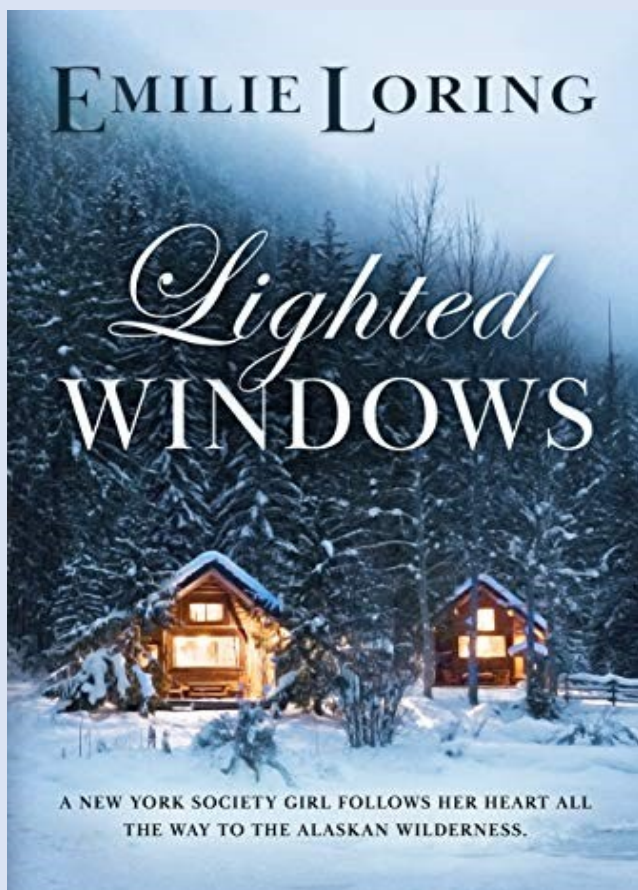
[ON AMAZON](#)





In these seven stories the meaning of Christmas is as varied as the time and circumstances in which they take place. A young Quaker recalls Christmas as a time when he received the courage to shelter fugitives. A Dutch fisherman is driven to despair by his own compulsive gift giving. An Amish housewife seeks resolution for a life haunted by the image of a Christmas tree.

[ON AMAZON](#)



Lovely Janice Trent fled New York on the eve of her wedding to a millionaire. Yet, in the rugged Alaskan mining camp where she took refuge, Janice soon blunders into a marriage that was not a marriage... A mysterious murder, a desperate rival, and above all, the danger and hardships of the untamed land show Janice the strength within herself, and the man she was truly meant to love.

[ON AMAZON](#)



### **YA holiday romance**

*Can you love someone without ever telling the truth?*

Christina is the picture-perfect daughter-except for one fatal flaw. All she wants for Christmas is a boyfriend. Easy to find, right? Not in the small town of Ouray, Colorado, where 20 girls and boys her age are perfectly matched. The only thing Luke Anson wants for Christmas is to be cured of his debilitating HIV diagnoses. He can't let himself close to anyone, or risk infecting their lives.

[ON AMAZON](#)



### **Western holiday romance**

She needs a holiday. He has a soft spot for feisty redheads. They're a perfect match...until he kisses her under the mistletoe...

Rona Collins has wanted Stone for too long, but the time has never been right to tell him how she feels. When her sister plans a Christmas wedding at a private resort, Rona feels the time has finally come to plan her secret reveal. She's single. He's single. What could get in the way?

[ON AMAZON](#)





### **Holiday fiction**

Welcome to Little Blessing, the charming seaside town in New England where preparations are underway for the annual holiday events. Despite a year of behaving badly, Elm has visions of sugarplums and a truckload of presents under the tree. The Brownie scout is also determined to earn her "Philanthropist" badge and solve the "mystery of the seaglass" before Christmas.

[ON AMAZON](#)



### **Sweet YA romance**

Forced to volunteer at the hospital is the last thing Chase Masters wants to do over the Winter Break.

He'd rather be spending his days on the snow with his friends.

After all, it was only a little trouble that he caused...

Christmas is Angelina Smith's favorite time of year. She loves the bustle of helping out at her family's Christmas Tree Farm.

It doesn't seem fair that she's scheduled for chemo treatment the week of Christmas.

[ON AMAZON](#)

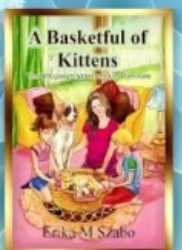
# Stocking stuffers for children

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MORE

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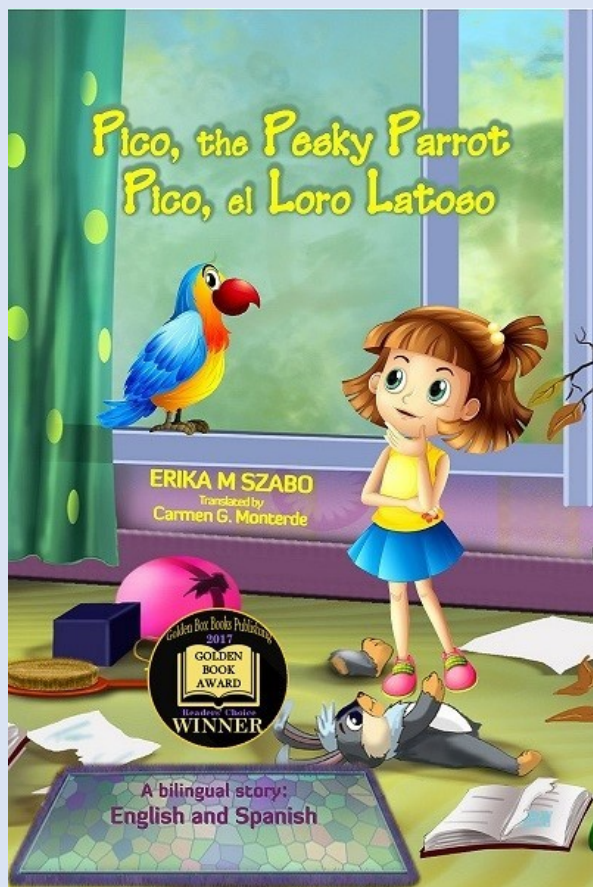




### **Picture book for children 2-7**

Hophop, the little bunny is sad because he can't read his book. Ollie, the wise owl, shows him the alphabet and teaches him to read the fun and easy way.

**EBOOK and PAPERBACK**

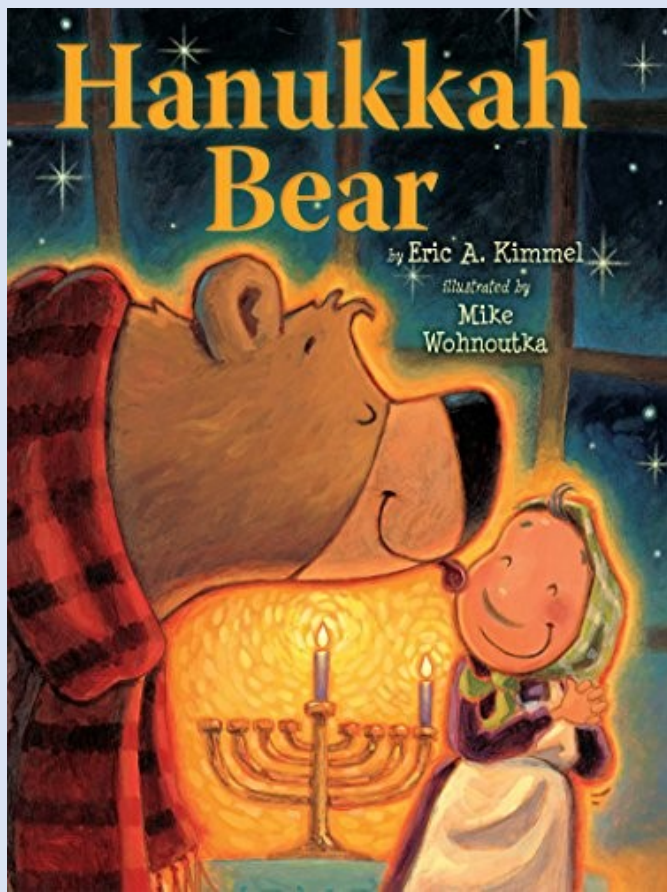


### **Bilingual Storybook for children 4-10**

Pico, the parrot, is sad and frustrated. He screeches and squawks all day but because he speaks only Spanish, he annoys everyone because nobody understands him.

The story delivers a message that when we don't take the time to listen to each other, we tend to judge others quickly before we get to know them.

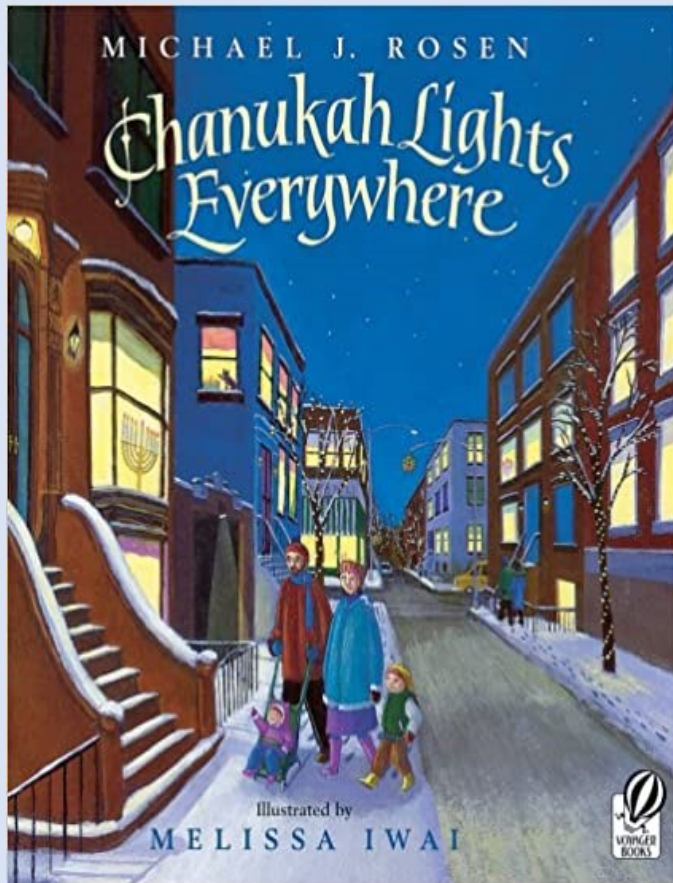
**ON AMAZON**



### **Children's Chanukah story**

Bubba Brayna makes the best latkes in the village, and on the first night of Hanukkah, the scent of her cooking wakes a hungry, adorable bear from his hibernation. He lumbers into town to investigate, and Bubba Brayna—who does not see or hear very well—mistakes him for her rabbi. She welcomes the bear inside to play the dreidel game, light the menorah, and enjoy a scrumptious meal.

[ON AMAZON](#)



### **Children's Jewish holiday book**

One crescent moon glows in the sky. Two headlights shine through the window. . . . On each magical night of Chanukah, a young boy and his sister count more lights shining all around them! Join them as they discover what it means to celebrate Chanukah in a world filled with so many other lights.

[ON AMAZON](#)





## Storybook for children 4-12

A little girl teaches her family and her friends how to relate to someone who is hearing impaired.

When Grandma Rosa lost her hearing, Sandra finds a website for hearing impaired people that explains how deaf people communicate. They start learning sign language and to “talk” with their fingers.

[ON AMAZON](#)

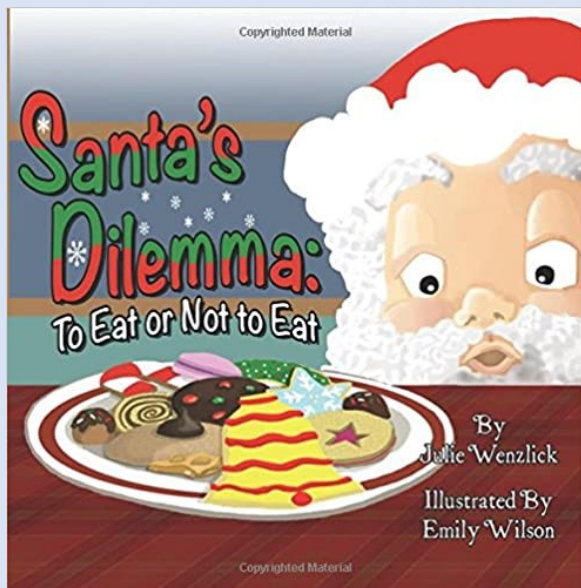


## Libro de cuentos para niños 4-10

Cuando la abuela Rosa perdió la audición, la comunicación con ella se convirtió en una lucha diaria para la familia.

Sandra encontró un sitio web para personas con discapacidad auditiva que explicaba cómo se comunican las personas sordas. Empezaron a aprender el lenguaje de señas ya "hablar" con los dedos.

[ON AMAZON](#)



## Children's Christmas book

Watch out Santa! Mrs. Claus is on a health kick—no cookies allowed! Santa's pants barely fit because he has been gaining weight, and Mrs. Claus is on a new health kick, wanting Santa to lose weight right away. She insists he start a diet on the worst possible day of the year---Christmas Eve. As Santa heads out to deliver the toys, he is accompanied by an elf with a baggie full of veggies.

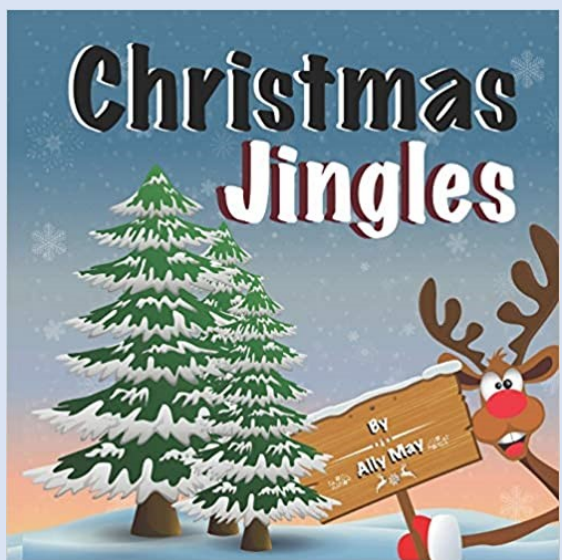
[ON AMAZON](#)



## Children's Christmas story

Snow is falling, the decorations are up, treats are prepared, gifts are wrapped, there is fun to be had. But not before the chores get done! Our favorite Cowgirl and Duchess along with friends and family come together to bring cheer to their community.

[ON AMAZON](#)

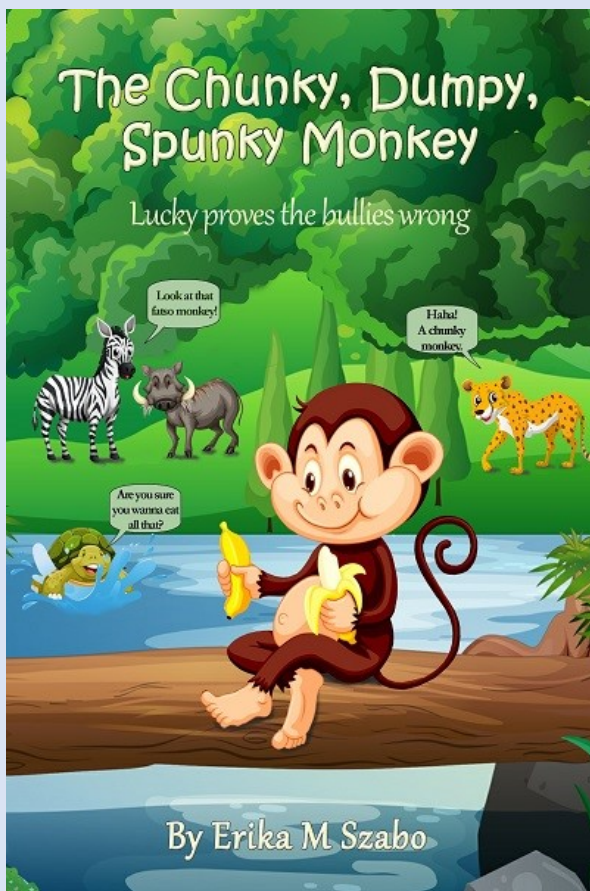


## Great for baby's to young inspiring readers.

Everyone loves a little jingle. This Christmas Jingles book has cute Christmas characters with little jingles for the kids to sing along and maybe do a little dance. Bright artwork and sweet rhyming makes this book a perfect gift or stocking stuffer. The last few pages have mazes for the children to use their finger to get to the other side.

[ON AMAZON](#)





## Storybook for children 4-10

Lucky, the sweet-natured little monkey was bullied by the animals who didn't take time to get to know her.

They said she was a dumpy, chunky, silly, scaredy, grumpy, clumsy monkey.

Lucky was sad but instead of feeling miserable, she chose to listen to her friend who knew her and said that Lucky was a lovely, cuddly, bubbly, spunky monkey.”

[ON AMAZON](#)



## Storybook for children 4-10

According to the hundred-year-old legend, children disappeared in Seven Pines every year to never be found again.

Albert accepted the dare and although Timmy had his doubts, he went along with his best friend.

What will they find in the old bakery? Is the legend true and they will disappear forever as many children did who had entered the building?

[ON AMAZON](#)



## Children's Christmas story

This is a charming Christmas tale about an elephant. An elephant named Felix who, against his parents advice, is determined to find a place for himself within the magical, wonderful world of Christmas. After a great deal of planning he sets out on a long and lonely journey up to the North Pole. He struggles against traffic, water, snow, mountains, and the cold with minimal food or supplies. But his determination to meet Santa Claus remains unwavering.

[ON AMAZON](#)



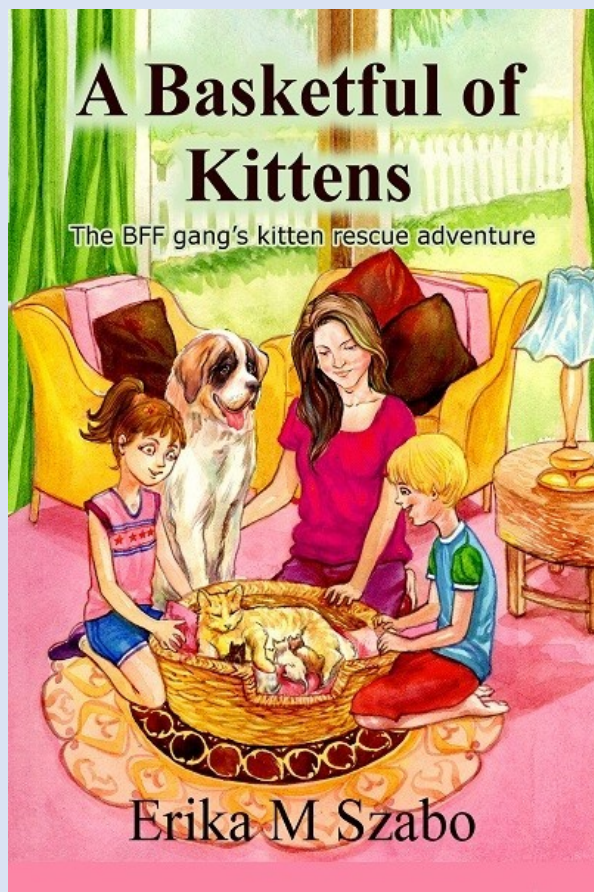
## For children 3-6

*Just 5 more sleeps 'til Christmas!  
Can you believe it's here?  
I know that Santa's coming soon  
'cause I've been good all year.*

Everyone who grew up celebrating Christmas remembers the excitement that built up to the most magical day of the year. But why not make the last week until Christmas more fun by counting how many sleeps until the arrival of Santa and his reindeer?

[ON AMAZON](#)



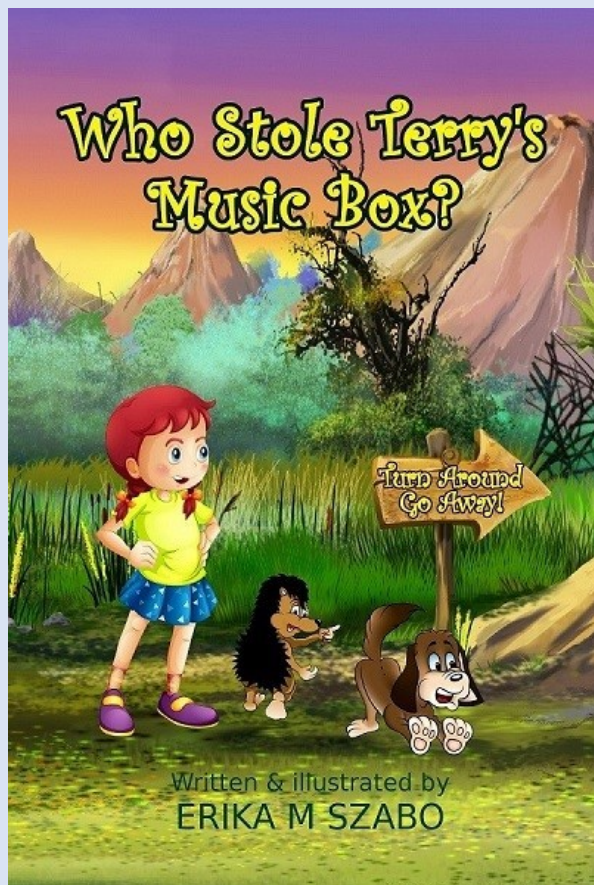


## Storybook for children 4-12

In memory of Little Johnny.

When Bianca, Daniel, and Peanut, the St. Bernard, are confronted by Mark and his cronies, the children stand up to the brute bullies with the help of Peanut. Their adventure continues when they see a woman throwing four tiny, meowing kittens into the river. Can the BFFs save them? Find out what happens to the kittens.

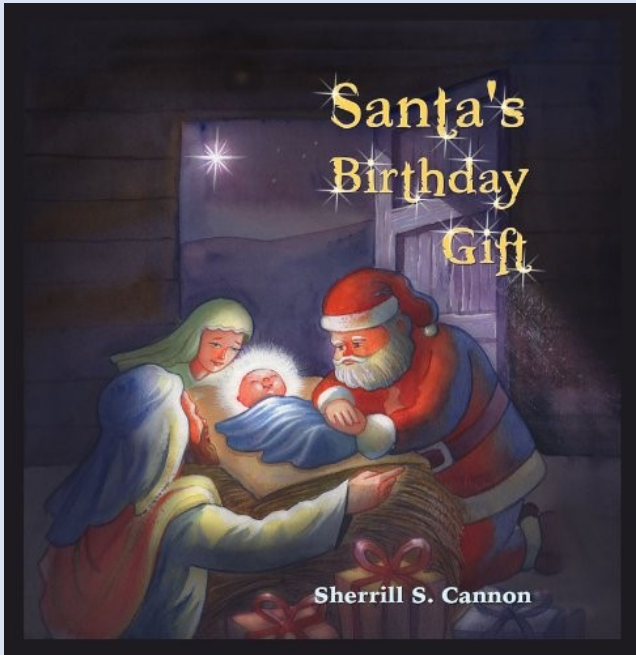
[ON AMAZON](#)



## Storybook for children 4-10

Terry is sad because she can't find her precious music box that was a gift from her Grandmother. With the help of her dog, Pansy, and the wise hedgehog, Oliver, they cross the portal to the magical world and Pansy leads them to Wolfgang's cave. Terry finds out why she has the ability to talk to animals and why the good witch enchanted her music box so long ago.

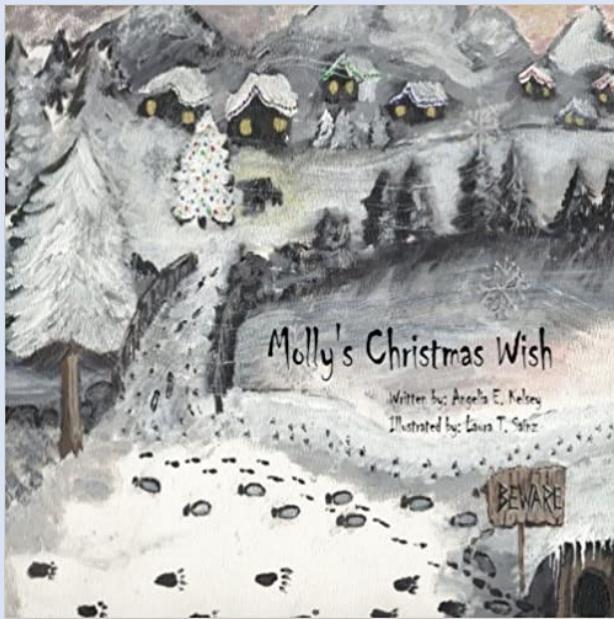
[ON AMAZON](#)



### **Christian children's book**

Santa brings gifts to baby Jesus. The cleverly-written, rhyming book reveals Santa's adventure from toymaker to star follower -- right into the heart of Bethlehem where he meets Baby Jesus in the manger. Delivering toys to a king is a touching experience for both Santa and readers alike, as they discover where the tradition began -- Santa makes a promise to Jesus to bring gifts to good boys and girls each year on Jesus' birthday.

[ON AMAZON](#)

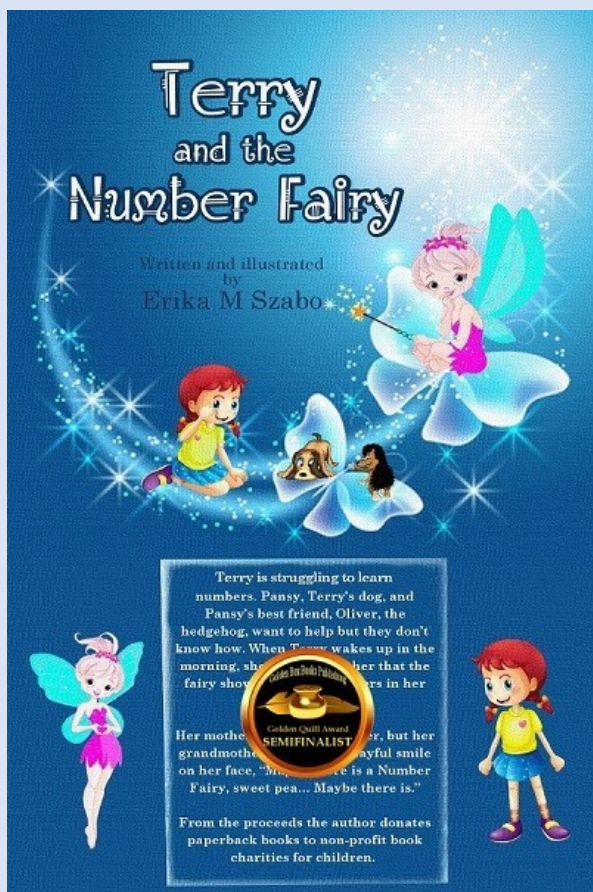


### **Children's Christmas story**

Oh no! Mister Paws has run away on Christmas Eve. Join Molly and Santa on their Christmas Adventure to find her lost puppy. Along the way they meet Mister Grumpy Bear and Santa teaches Molly that by showing him kindness he's not so grumpy and mean after all. Thus, children learn a valuable lesson about why it's not nice to judge others.

[ON AMAZON](#)

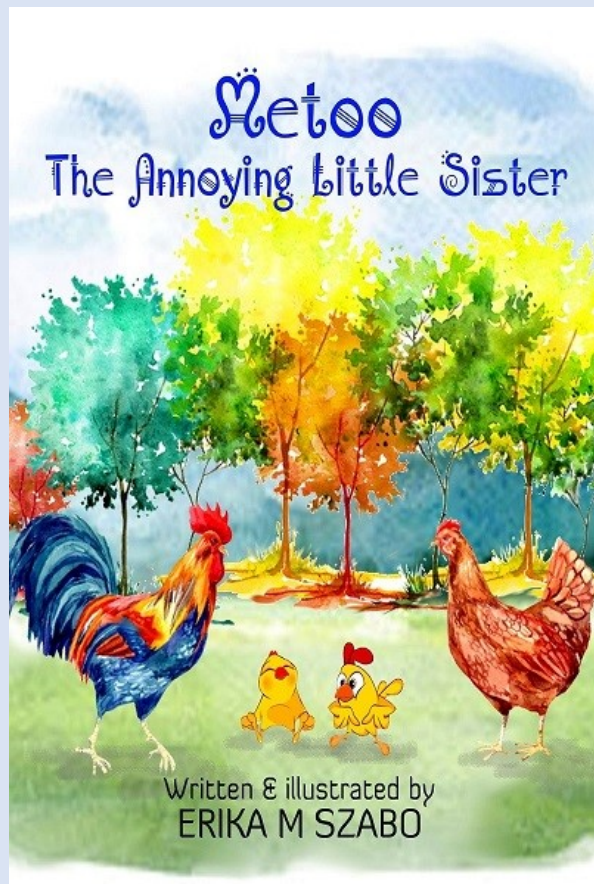




## Children's picture book for ages 2-6

Terry is struggling to learn numbers. Pansy, Terry's dog, and Pansy's best friend, Oliver, the hedgehog, want to help but they don't know how. In the morning, Terry tells her mother that the fairy showed her the numbers in her dream. Her mother doesn't believe her, but Grandma says, "Maybe there is a Number Fairy, Sweet Pea... Maybe there is."

[ON AMAZON](#)



## Children's picture book for ages 2-6

Penny always wants to do what her big brother does. She imitates his every move and constantly tweets, "Me, too." Spike is angry at his sister and threatens to name her Metoo, but when the two young chickens face danger, Spike realizes how important family is and happy to have a sometimes annoying, but loving and brave little sister.

[ON AMAZON](#)



# Stocking stuffers For grownups





Watch the video: <https://interactrapp.com/share/619ad62e76c92>



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Watch the video: <https://interactrapp.com/share/619c1adaafbae>



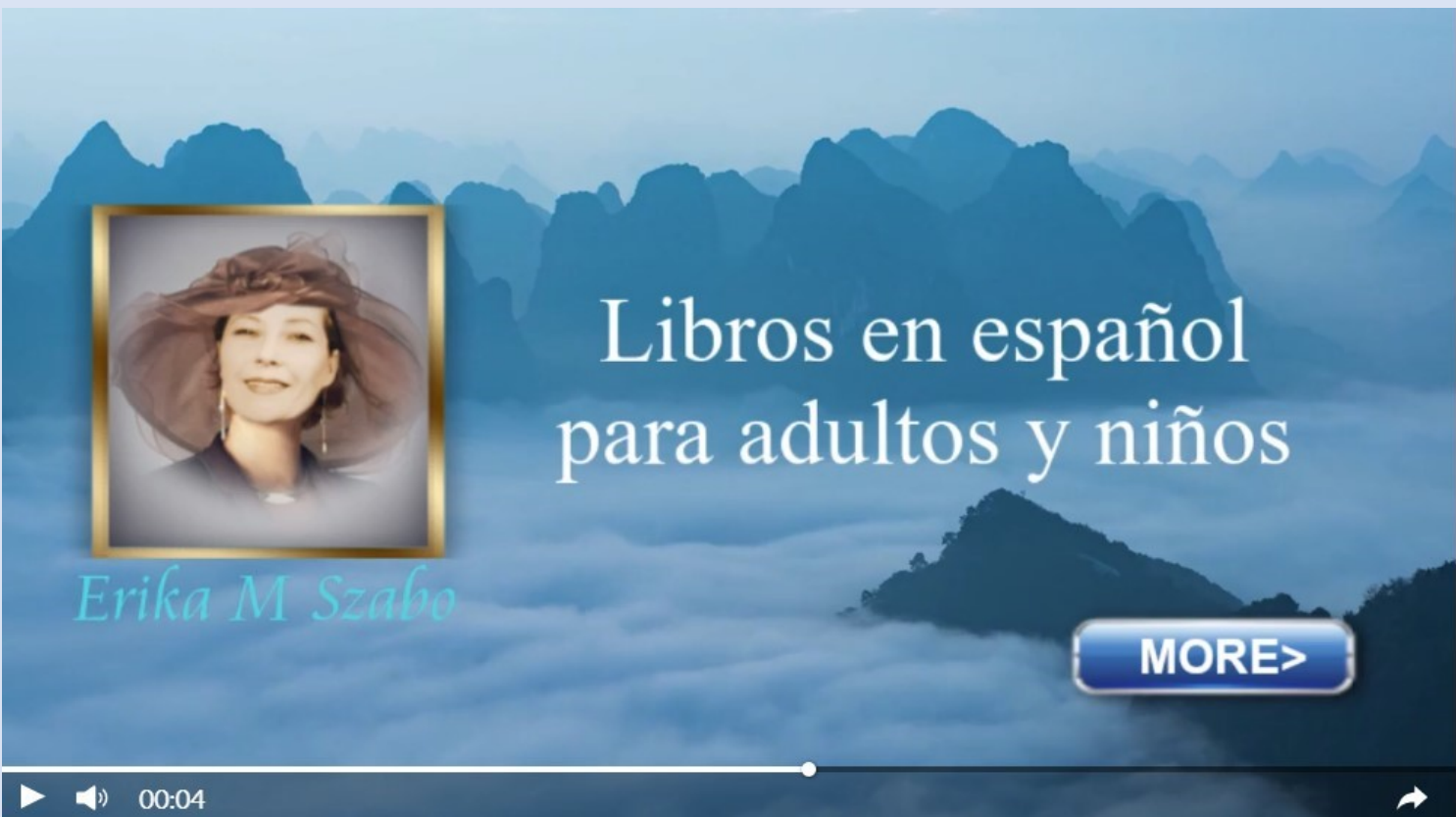
A video player interface with a dark background. In the center, a woman with long dark hair is looking towards the camera. Overlaid on the video are three book covers by Lorraine Carey, each with a power button icon in a circle above it. The covers are for 'The Good Teacher' (Book 1), 'On Borrowed Time' (Book 2), and 'Last Rites' (Book 3). The text 'Click on the books' is written in a light blue font at the bottom left. A 'MORE>' button is at the bottom right. The video player controls at the bottom show a play button, a speaker icon, and the time '00:04'.

Click on the books

MORE>

00:04

Watch the video: <https://interactrapp.com/share/61a55346ed8b2>



A video player interface with a blue-toned background of misty mountains. On the left is a framed portrait of a woman wearing a large, ornate hat. To the right of the portrait, the text 'Libros en español para adultos y niños' is written in a white serif font. Below the portrait, the name 'Erika M Szabo' is written in a light blue script font. A 'MORE>' button is at the bottom right. The video player controls at the bottom show a play button, a speaker icon, and the time '00:04'.

Libros en español  
para adultos y niños

Erika M Szabo

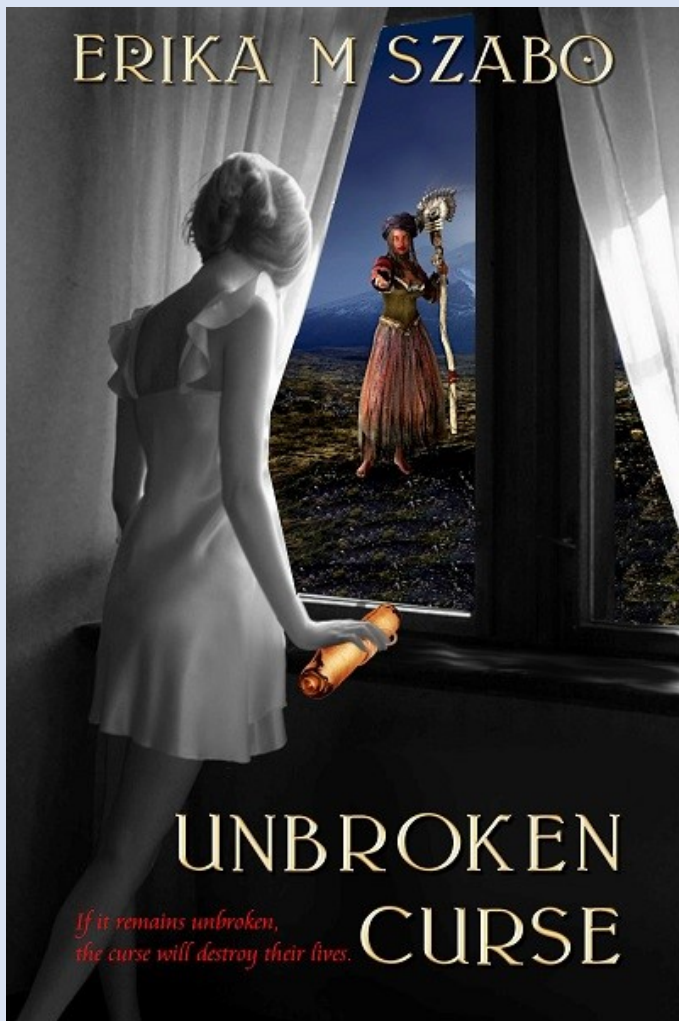
MORE>

00:04



# Book Teasers





**Alternative history  
suspense**

**Available in:**

**EBOOK &  
PAPERBACK**

**A curse of evil deed incites an unbroken chain of evil.**

A powerful curse cast sixteen hundred years ago destroyed the lives of their ancestors for centuries. If it remains unbroken, the curse will ruin the lives of future generations as well.

**Jayden's life is in danger.** When he finds a crude leather book in his grandmother's secret room that was written in 426 by a Shaman, his sister, Sofia, deciphers the ancient runes.

They learn about their **family curse** and dark memories of their childhood start to surface.

Is it possible to break the ancient curse and save Jayden?



Jayden hurried toward the parking garage, pulling Sofia's luggage. "Slow down, Jay," Sofia cried out as she lagged behind him with her carry-on bag. "I can't keep up if you're running like that."

"Sorry." Jayden looked back and slowed down a little, "I'm just so eager to show you what I've found. You're not going to believe it. You'll see!"

"What is it?" Sofia tried to catch her breath.

"It's a rudimentary book made of leather sheets sewn together. It's written with ancient Hun runes. I think the letters were burned into the leather. I should've learned from Grandma to read it as you did."

"That sounds exciting." Sofia started walking faster. "You didn't bring it with you, did you?"

"Yes, it's in the car. I've been angry with myself that I didn't learn the ancient language from grandma. But because I can hardly wait to find out what the writing is about, I'll bring it with me and hoped you could start translating it on the ride home. Here's my car in this row."

They reached the old Porsche that was their grandma's car and Jayden quickly packed Sofia's luggage into the trunk. He opened the door, they got into the car and Jayden pulled a duffel bag from under the seat. Pulling the zipper, he took out a package wrapped in old-looking leather sheets. When Jayden unwrapped it, inside was the book made of leather sheets sewn together. He handed it to Sofia. "Well, what do you think?"

She fingered the soft leather, "It's old and still so pliable," she mused. "Look, the Sacred Turul is burned into the cover!"

"May the Sacred Turul protect you on your journey," they chanted the ancient line that every Hun whispered when they saw a falcon, alive or in a picture. The spirit of the falcon called Turul in ancient Hun mythology is believed to be the protector of the Huns.

Sofia opened the book and scanned the pages. Jayden started the engine and pulled out of the parking space. The traffic was heavy close to the airport, but soon they were driving northeast on the smooth highway.

“This is incredible!” Sofia exclaimed. “Every page is clear as if it were written yesterday. The runes are written from right to left, which will take some getting used to reading, and there are words I don’t know, but it seems like a story of a girl named Elana, written by a shaman called Zoan.”

“Awesome!” Jayden called out, nodding. “I can’t wait to hear it.”

“You were busy playing soccer and chasing girls when Grandma gave me lessons,” Elana laughed as she turned to the first page and started translating.

“Yeah, I didn’t care much for learning during my summer vacation, that’s for sure.”

“Nope,” Sofia laughed while turned to the first page of the book. “Okay, let me read it.”



I am Zoan, the humble Shaman of the Roaring Falcon tribe. I’m writing down what happened to Elana in detail with the hope that the descendants of Elana could read this and break the powerful curse. The events that led to Tuana’s curse happened on the third moon of the 426<sup>th</sup> year, the day Elana was forced to leave her happy childhood behind and face the reality and responsibilities of adulthood.

\*\*\*

Sofia lowered the book to her lap and turned to her brother, “Jay, could this be written so long ago?”

“I think so, or rather hope so. Please read on.”

Sofia lifted the book and added, “I’m winging it here because I’m not familiar with this word *átokja*, but I think it is the old version of *átok*, which means curse. Also, there’s another phrase—*akarata erösségje*. I think it means powerful.”



“Just do your best and you can do a more detailed translation later.”

“Okay, here it goes.” Sofia lowered her eyes to the pages and ran her finger over the ancient runes. After she translated the sentences in her mind, she told the meaning in English to her eagerly waiting brother.

Elana, unaware of her fate gave her <sup>\*\*\*</sup>horse a gentle squeeze with her knees to run faster. Willow zigzagged between the jurtas that were lined up in a semicircle, leaving a broad plaza in the middle. Elana glanced up at the tall wooden pole that stood in the center of the square. It had intricate designs carved into it and was painted with brilliant colors. On top of the pole stood a giant carved falcon, standing with wings open wide, as if it were getting ready to take flight. *Oh, I'm so late; my mother is going to kill me*, she thought and prompted her horse to run faster. An old woman carrying firewood stopped and shook her head in disapproval. “These youngsters are riding like demons,” she mumbled, looking after her.

Elana finally reached her home. Sliding off the mare's back in a hurry, she fastened the horse's rein to a thick wooden pole. Her breaths came in short puffs, and her rosy cheeks glistened with perspiration. She patted the horse's neck, gave her an armful of hay, and poured fresh water into a clay bowl from a leather bag that hung on the pole. “I have to hurry, but I'll be back soon to rub you down, Willow. I promise,” she whispered.

She hurried up to the entrance of the tent-like building, called Jurta, with a few long strides. Parting her kaftan-like dark blue overcoat, she pulled up her baggy trousers and smoothed her tunic that her mother had adorned with delicate flower designs. Pulling the leather entrance cover aside with a heavy sigh, she braced herself mentally for the long lecture from her mother that she knew she must endure.

As usual, she was late for her herbal lessons with her mother, a beautiful, statuesque, dark-haired woman who slowly rose from a curved sofa-like piece of furniture. Soft light coming from the opening at the ceiling shone on her green, delicately decorated calf-length tunic that she wore with loose black trousers.

Elana took off her boots and placed them by the entrance. She winced when Mara's high-pitched, angry voice hit her like a whip. "You are late, again, young lady! Didn't I tell you to be home by the time the sun reaches the head of the Falcon? Look!" she pointed at the pole through the door.

Elana quickly let the leather curtain slide back to cover the door, dutifully bowed, and whispered, "Yes, Mother. Sorry, Mother."

She always wanted to please her mother, she truly did, but she could rarely live up to her expectations. Luckily, Mara's anger and lectures were as brief as summer storms, so Elana obediently stood by the entrance and lowered her eyelids to hide the playful twinkle in her eyes. Her long, black hair, which was braided in thin rows, slid off her shoulders as she bowed her head, and she adjusted her delicately woven horsetail headband that kept the stray hairs out of her face. Elana took a hesitant step forward on the thick, wool carpet that covered the dirt floor of the Jurta.

"Where were you?"

"We were... *I was... I was* collecting herbs. Look!" Elana hoped that her mother didn't notice the slip of her tongue and she could divert her mother's attention. She quickly opened the leather pouch that contained some flowers that she had collected. Lying wasn't in her nature but concealing the truth a little by trailing the conversation away from the sensitive subject was widely used in her tribe, especially by teenagers.

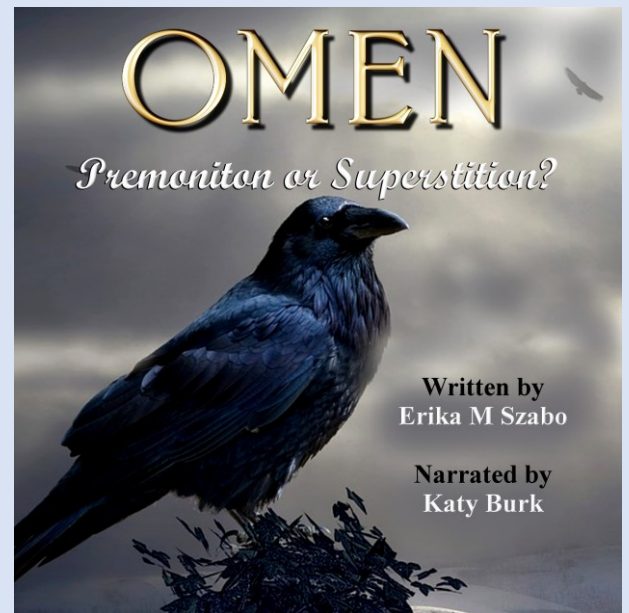
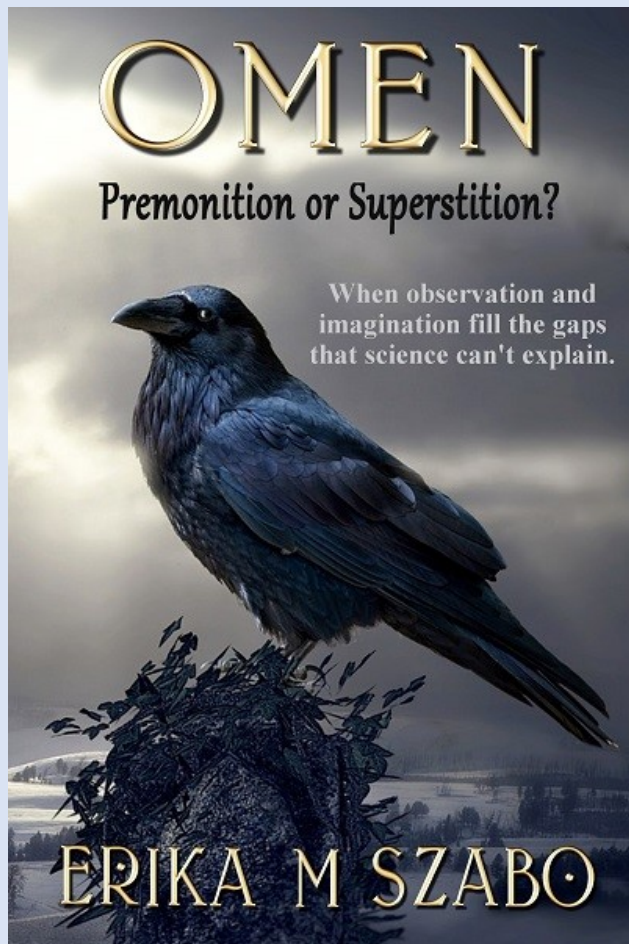
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Sofia lowered the book to her lap and asked her brother, "Jay, where did you find this book? Did you find it at the dig site?"

"No, I've found it by accident in a secret room in grandma's house, two days ago. It was wrapped up and hidden in an old wooden trunk with a bunch of other books and stuff. When I opened it, I saw it was Hun writing and it made me furious that I couldn't read it."

"A secret room?" Sofia mused. "I thought I knew every nook and cranny of grandma's house. How did you find it?"





When observation and imagination fill the gaps that science can't explain. Most of the perceived omens remain unexplainable myths, but others... you decide.

It's believed that crows are a symbol of bad luck and death. In this short journal, I reveal some of my observations about knowing a crow family for decades, and I also share a great memory of watching and raising a litter of orphaned fox pups.

**Available in [EBOOK, PRINT, and AUDIOBOOK](#)**

*“When you don’t listen, you don’t hear.*

*When you don’t look, you don’t see.”*

When observation and imagination fill the gaps that science can't explain. Science might erode the pillars of superstition, but sometimes, close observation, proves things to be true.

It's believed by many, that crows are a symbol of bad luck and death, but by others, crows are the symbol of life, magic, and mysteries. They also symbolize intelligence, flexibility, and destiny.

Grandma was deeply superstitious and often warned us about bad omens. “I saw a single crow this morning, be careful!” she would say with great concern.

“Mother stop this nonsense!” my dad would dismiss her worries.

“Listen to me, son! When you see crow alone, your day will be a muss. You’ll see!”

Dad would go about his daily business as usual, but when he climbed the stepladder to clean the gutter, it slipped. Dad was hanging onto dear life until Mom and Grandma straitened the stepladder so he could let go of the edge of the roof and safely descend.

“Told you, son, didn’t I? One crow is a bad omen.”

Had the appearance of the crow been really an omen? Was it a coincidence or the slip caused by dad’s clumsiness? We may never find out.

Another time when I was getting ready for school, I put my sweater on inside out. Mom told me to take it off and turn it, but Grandma shrieked, “Don’t touch it! Once you put it on and notice, it’s a bad omen to take it off and put it back again the right way. Wear it like that all day.”

Mom was tired of arguing, so she let me leave the sweater on, but when I got home, I complained to my grandmother, “The inside out sweater was the bad luck, Grandma! The kids made fun of me all day.”



## Upcoming Good Luck

“But you will never know what could have happen if you had taken it off,” she warned. “You could’ve broken your leg or worse... You must take the omens seriously.”

Most of Grandma’s superstitious omens remained unexplainable myths, but she always insisted that if we didn’t pay attention, who knows what would’ve happened. I didn’t become deeply superstitious like my grandma was, but I always kept my mind open for possibilities and for things I simply couldn’t explain by rational thinking.

In this short journal I reveal some of my observations and experiences with having the privilege to know a crow family for decades, and I also share a great memory of watching and raising a litter of orphaned fox pups. They were our guests for one summer, but they stayed in our hearts forever. Watching them using their instincts and developing their skills to become mighty hunters of the night had been an invaluable experience.

My parents taught me that every single human, animal, and plant has a purpose and place on this beautiful Earth, and to respect every single life.

## Upcoming good luck



We lived in a noisy city that never sleeps, when my friend, Marie, had moved to a small town in the mountains. Every time we spoke, she was singing odes about the beauty of country life. We visited them a few times, and we fell in love with the small town in the mountains, too. Growing up in a small town, I never really adapted to life in the crowded city. I loved to be close to nature and craved the quiet life in the mountains.

After a long deliberation and weighing all our options, we decided to contact a real-estate agent to find a home for us. I was excited and a little anxious when the moving day finally arrived, which didn't go as smoothly as we planned. My husband, Zoltan, was the manager of the co-op building and as the movers loaded the truck, the water pipe broke on the 14th floor, flooding the apartments below. He couldn't make the over 100-mile drive with us, thus having to stay to make sure that everyone in the building was safe, the pipes fixed, and the water damage cleaned up. My young daughter and I had to drive behind the moving truck and supervise the moving of furniture and countless boxes into our new home.

The three hours' drive was tiring but pleasant, and when we pulled into the driveway and opened the doors, the driver and two helpers stretched their legs, and then sat on the patio for a few minutes before starting to unload the furniture and boxes.

"Can you smell that?" Pedro, the plump, friendly driver of the moving truck leaned back on the chair and asked, looking at the two younger men.

"I smell nothing." The taller man in uniform sniffed the air.

"That's what I'm talkin' about, man!" Pedro exclaimed. "No smell of rotten garbage, exhaust fumes, nothing. Just clean air."

"Yeah," the young man replied with a dreamy expression on his face. "I wish I could live in a house like this."

"Me too, my friend, me too," Pedro replied, with a heavy sigh. "Maybe one day. But, let's get cracking if we want to get home before sundown."

I called my friend, Marie, who lived close by, and she arrived soon. "I'm so glad you're finally here." She hugged my daughter and me. "I've missed you guys, every day." She scanned the loaded truck and the men carrying boxes inside. "Let's get this stuff organized."

My young daughter seemed lost and exhausted after the long drive and all the commotion of moving, so I asked Pedro to first carry her furniture up to her new room. While the movers were working, our long haired, silver cat, Fancy, started panicking in the pet carrier.



When everything was upstairs, I let the cat out of the carrier in my daughter's room. Marie hooked up the TV and I got the snacks I packed for my daughter and the cat. They both calmed down quickly, the cat curled up on Eszter's lap, and they settled in to watch cartoons.

We had a lot more furniture and boxes in the truck, so we got to work. "What a noisy bunch you got back there," Marie said pointing toward the back of the property as I picked up a small box.

I was too busy before to notice, but when she pointed out, I saw two crows and a pair of Blue Jays squabbling in the clearing between the tall pine trees. They made quite a ruckus as the crows chased the beautiful, blue birds toward the thick bushes.

Pedro seemed to be annoyed by the noise, and I detected a bit of fear in his eyes. "Crows are a bad omen," he huffed as he was sliding the sofa from the truck toward his helpers.

Marie looked at me with worry in her eyes. "Yeah, I've heard that too."

I remembered what my superstitious grandma told me about crows. Her words came back so clearly. "When crows live by and a single crow visits you, it's considered an omen of bad luck, indeed. But look!" I pointed to the clearing where two crows now stood on a tree stump, quietly watching us. "There are two of them, which means good luck. It's a good omen, don't worry."

"Really?" Marie asked, surprised. "Tell me more. Yesterday there were seven of them noisy birds in my backyard. They creeped me out, so I shooed them away."

"Oh! You shouldn't have done that! According to my grandma, seven crows showing up in your yard herald travel or a major, positive change in your life."

"Rats!" Marie exclaimed. "Then I shouldn't have shooed them away! You think something bad is going to happen?" she asked and let out a short, nervous laugh, still eyeing the crows.

“Oh, come on, Marie, it’s just silly superstition. You don’t think crows can predict the future, do you?”

“I do!” Pedro offered with worry in his voice as he jumped off the truck and came closer to us whipping his forehead with a handkerchief. “My mother was born in Mexico, and she always warns me about omens and signs. What if there are three crows? Yesterday morning there were three of them in my yard. I hate them creepy birds!”

“Well, my Hungarian grandmother had a rhyme or saying for just about anything, let me try to give you a rough translation of the verse she used to tell me about crows.”

\*\*\*

*See a crow alone, and your day will be a muss.  
Two announce the arrival of upcoming good luck.  
Three brings news of happiness and good health.  
Four crows will predict imminent wealth.  
Five foretells of sickness for a period of time.  
Six warns of disaster, theft or pinching of dime.  
Seven suggests travel and positive changes in time.  
Eight crows rarely appear but predict grief in one’s life.*

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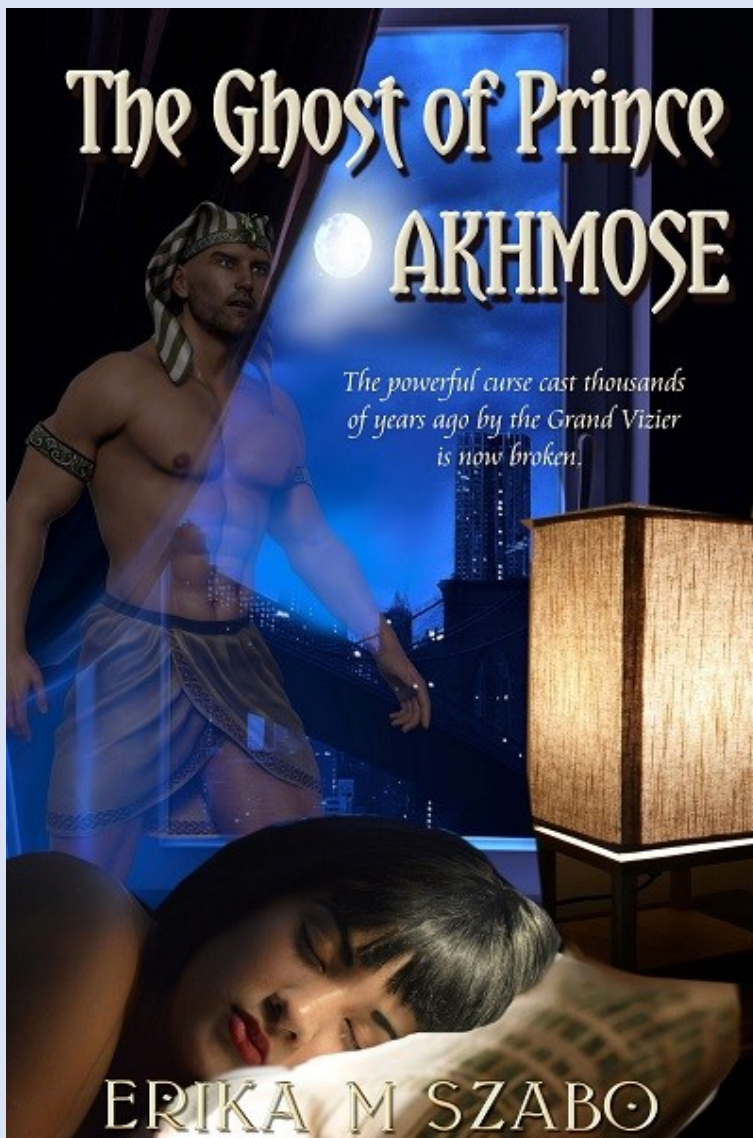
“Dios mío!” Pedro cried out. “I have to write this down and show it to my mother.”

“I’ll write it down for you, but take it with a grain of salt, Pedro.” I laughed. “Grandma wasn’t a supernatural expert, she just recited what she had learned from her superstitious parents.”

“The old people knew! They had time to listen to nature.”

Marie and I continued unpacking boxes in the kitchen, and once in a while, I looked out the window. I saw the crows flying up a pine tree and later standing on the tree stump. It was quite clear that they were watching the house.





[ENGLISH](#)

[SPANISH](#)

[ITALIAN](#)

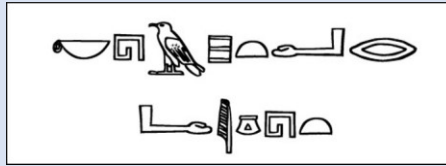
### **A supernatural fantasy**

A powerful curse cast thousands of years ago by the Grand Vizier. Tanakhmet cursed Prince Akhmoose to never enter the Field of Reeds, the heavenly paradise. Why did he want him to linger as a restless ghost among the living, forever?

By reading the hieroglyphs, Layla, a young Egyptologist, inadvertently breaks the curse and frees the ghosts of both Prince Akhmoose and the Grand Vizier whose thirst for revenge is stronger than ever.

With Layla's help, can Prince Akhmoose finally cross into the afterlife? Or perhaps, because of the charms of the mortal woman, he doesn't want to...

## Chapter Eight



### Present time

Akhmose tore his eyes away from the woman who looked so much like his beloved Anakhmun. Rapid thoughts ran through his mind. What had become of his brother? Of his nephew? Of his beloved? Was she cursed as he was? Did she spend the rest of her days tortured by him? Or was she killed for her transgressions? Why had the Grand Vizier gotten so mad? Did he love her in his own sick way? Akhmose loved Anakhmun, and even though she was a slave, it wasn't like he could make her his wife. He knew that he had an obligation to his country, or at least until his brother's son would be old enough to take the throne. He would not give up on his country when they needed him most, and even Anakhmun understood that.

Layla shifted in her sleep, and her eyes shot open. Her gaze locked on the man sitting in her chair, and her scream echoed through the small room.

Akhmose startled by her ear-piercing scream and stood up. "You can see me? How's that possible?"

The second scream froze in Layla's throat and curiosity took over fear when she realized that the man was speaking the language that hadn't been spoken for thousands of years.

They heard running footsteps and Mara burst through the door with a baseball bat in her hand. "What? What's wrong?" she shouted looking around the room like a madwoman.

Layla pointed in the direction where Akhmose stood. "There's a man in my room!"

"Where?" Mara turned around, bat raised, ready to hit the intruder.

"Don't you see? He's standing right there!"



Mara stared at the empty chair Layla was pointing at, but then she looked back at her in confusion. “There’s nobody there.”

“Are you blind? There’s a man standing by the chair dressed in... What bloody hell is this...” She stood up and stared at the man. “He’s dressed in a tunic and he has the headdress of the Princes of Egypt on his head!”

Akhmose stood still with his hands up, trying to back away from Mara. His eyes glanced back and forth between them. Although the place didn’t look at all like a palace, he was sure by the self-assured, authoritative manner of the two young women that they were definitely no servants.

Mara lowered her bat assured that nobody was in the room besides Layla and her. She stared at her friend and asked, “What’s wrong? Are you okay? You’re scaring me!”

Layla ignored Mara whose face displayed worry and confusion, clearly not impressed that her best friend had woken her up in the middle of the night with a blood-curdling scream and was claiming to see a man that was not there.

Layla knew that she sounded crazy, but not in a million years could she have imagined the sound that had passed through the man’s lips. It was a language that she never thought she would be able to hear with such fluidity.

He shivered when she took a few steps toward him and touched his bare arm. Her touch made his skin tighten into goosebumps. “I can feel your touch,” he whispered.

“Why wouldn’t you?” Layla spoke the words of the ancient language.

He touched her hand rejoicing. “You understand me. Anakhmun, is that you? Did the Gods grant us to be together in the afterlife?” His voice was smooth and while she didn’t understand every word he spoke; she got the gist of it. The strange man in front of her that only she could see thought she was someone else. Someone who he probably loved. She backed away toward Mara, “My name is Layla, and as far as I know, this is no afterlife. Who are you?”

Mara wrapped her arms around Layla's shoulders and helped her to sit down on the bed. "You're scaring me. What's going on? Who are you talking to?" she asked while frantic thoughts ran through her mind. *Schizophrenia usually manifests in the early twenties, but it can start in the late twenties as well. I know she speaks Arabic but sees a man in the room. I must find a way to talk her into going to the hospital and be admitted to get a proper diagnosis.*

Layla stared at the man. "Who are you and why are you here?"

"My name is Akhmose, son of Takhat and brother of Pharaoh Amenmesse," he answered.

"Are you a ghost? Is that why my friend can't see you? But why can I see you and touch you?"

"Yes, it seems like I'm a ghost. I remember my life now. Tanakhmet killed me and cursed me to walk the Earth as a restless ghost forever." He bowed his head, but after he recalled the curse he read on the jar, he looked into Layla's eyes. "You must be the one who broke the curse. The one who was born at midnight."

Mara touched Layla's chin and turned her head. "Stop looking at that chair, look at me! We need to go to the hospital. You're having auditory and visual hallucinations. Let's get dressed and go."

Layla yanked Mara's hand away. "I'm not crazy! Have you ever heard that anyone who hallucinates seeing a man could touch his body too?"

"No, but..." Mara hesitated.

"He's the ghost of Akhmose. I think his heart is in the jar that has the curse carved into it. I don't know why, but for some reason, I can see and hear him, and I've touched his arm. He feels like a flesh and blood person to me."

"Wait just a minute! This is a nightmare. It can't be true," Mara stuttered.

Akhmose looked back and forth between the women. He didn't understand the strange language and the woman with the curly red hair seemed to doubt what Layla was telling her.



“Could you please tell her who I am?” he spoke to Layla.

“I’m trying! She thinks I’m crazy,” she snapped.

Mara looked at her wide-eyed, shaking her head. “I can’t believe this! You’re talking to a ghost whom I can’t see, but you can.”

“Please, just bear with me. We’ll figure this out.” Layla begged.

Akhmose raised his hand to get Layla’s attention. “I see your friend has doubts. I have an idea of how we can make her believe that I’m here.”

“I’m listening. Her name is Mara,” Layla said. She looked at Mara who was shaking her head and looked worried.

Akhmose sat down on the chair and explained his idea, “Tell Mara to stand behind you in the corner, over there, so you can’t see what she’s doing.” He pointed. “Tell her to show me something with her hand, make a face, or pick up any object, and then I’ll tell you what she’s doing.”

Layla’s eyes lit up. “That’s a great idea!” Feeling excited, Layla told Mara what the prince said.

“Okay, let’s do it.” Mara agreed and thought, *she’s going to see that she has a psychological problem and will let me take her to the hospital*. She stood up and reached the corner behind Layla with a few short steps. “What do you want me to do?” she asked.

“Do whatever you want, but make sure I don’t see you.” Layla slid on the bed facing Akhmose.

Mara raised her arms. “What am I doing?”

“She’d raised both her arms,” Akhmose told Layla.

“The prince says you’re raising both your arms,” Layla said to Mara in English.

Mara’s jaw dropped. “Okay, what am I doing now?” she asked and picked up Layla’s phone from the charger on the nightstand.

“She picked up something from that stand and holding it in her hand,” Akhmose hesitated.

“I don’t know what it is, but it’s a small, white, shiny box and on one side, it seems like a bright, blue light coming from it.”

“He said you’ve picked up my phone. Well, he didn’t say exactly like that, he doesn’t know what a cellphone is. He described it as a small, white, shiny box with a bright blue light.”

Mara almost dropped the phone and opened her mouth to say something but closed it again. *What the bloody hell is going on here?*

“Well, did he get it right?” Layla questioned.

“Um... yeah, he did. One more time to make sure. You might have just guessed or heard the click when I picked up your phone. What am I doing now?” Mara lifted her pajama top to her chin.

Akhmose looked at her and averted his gaze with a shy smile. “She showed me her beautiful, ample breasts,” he told Layla.

“Maraa!” Layla shouted turning toward Mara who just let her pajama fall to cover her chest. “Have you no decency?”

“I can’t believe this! I mean, I believe you now, but I can’t believe this. There is a ghost of an Egyptian prince in your room, in the middle of the night.”

Layla sighed in relief. “See? I’m not crazy.”

Mara pinched her arm and cried out in pain. “It’s really true! I’m not dreaming, for sure.”

**Read the story in:**

**[ENGLISH](#)**

**[SPANISH](#)**

**[ITALIAN](#)**

**Just for fun  
Toby's lame jokes**





#BooksByErika

Where do  
snowmen keep  
their savings?

**In the snowbank.**



#BooksByErika

What washes up  
on very small  
beaches?

**Micro-waves.**



#BooksByErika

What What kind  
of shorts do  
clouds wear?

**Thunderpants.**



#BooksByErika

How do you  
measure a snake?

In inches—they  
don't have feet.



#BooksByErika

Why are frogs  
always so happy?

They eat whatever  
bugs them.



#BooksByErika

What did one  
elevator say to the  
other?

I think I'm coming down  
with something.





**November Stories  
from  
The Author Gang**







## Psychic vision or revenge?

Written by

Erika M Szabo



**My mom often warned me about the old saying, "Words cut deeper than knives."**

While developing a dialog between the main character of my new book and the bitter, jealous, old woman who tries with all her might to stop her, I remembered the encounter I witnessed when I was a young child.

My mom was browsing at the flea market with me in tow. I wasn't interested in the porcelain teacups and plates, so to occupy myself, I was watching the people around me. I spotted an old woman by the next table. Her deformed fingers caught my eyes because I've never seen a person crippled by advanced arthritis before. As she stood holding onto her cane in front of the table, she picked up rings and necklaces with trembling fingers, but some of the smaller pieces slipped from her fingers, and she dropped them. The saleswoman, who looked to be about my mom's age, didn't say anything but with angry, annoyed expression on her face, she kept adjusting the jewelry pieces in the display cases that the old woman dropped.

Customers kept coming and going. They had to walk around the old woman and reach in front of her to pick up the jewelry they wanted to buy. After the old lady picked up and dropped ten or so pieces, the saleswoman asked her hardly containing her annoyance, "Are you going to buy anything or just messing up my table and holding up my customers?"

The old woman didn't say anything just quietly dropped the ring she was holding.

"Move over already!" a young woman standing next to her snapped turning toward the saleswoman giving her a conspirator's wink and said in a hushed voice, "Being old is just a burden on everyone. I don't want to grow too old. You can't do anything or enjoy anything when you're old and sick."

The old woman looked at her, and then raised her head staring into space. She blinked, shook her head and turned her eyes back the young woman. "You don't need to worry about growing old, dear," she said in a sweet tone with a smile.

"What?" the young woman looked at her, surprised. "What are you talking about?"

The old woman turning away slowly said to her, "You won't live to celebrate your fortieth birthday."

I'll never forget the shocked expression on the young woman's face. She turned to the saleswoman and let out a nervous laugh. "Crazy old bat!" she exclaimed.

The saleswoman stared at the old woman's back, as she walked away, deep in thoughts. "Yeah, maybe... but maybe not."

### **What do you think?**

Did the old woman scare the young one on purpose?

Was she a psychic and had a vision?

Was the old woman cruel and revengeful?

Imagine the young woman's feelings getting close to her fortieth birthday.

Would you tell anyone something like that?

Let me know in the comments of this page:

<https://www.authorerikamszabo.com/bookish-magazines/bookish-magazine-december-2021>



## SUPERSTITIONS

Written by:  
© Lorraine Carey



Stevie Wonder had a hit song back in the early seventies called Superstition and it was a huge hit!

A few of the lyrics included:

*When you believe in things you don't understand*

*Then you suffer*

*Superstition ain't the way.*

Well, it may not be the way for most folks, but many still are superstitious and have superstitions which they may have inherited from their ancestors or a certain culture.

**A superstition is a belief** considered by non -practitioners to be of irrational behavior or that of the supernatural, attributed to magic or fear of the unknown. And these date back to thousands of years. Be it a defense mechanism to ward off bad luck or a practice to draw better luck, many cultures still practice varied forms of their own superstitions. In this post I will be focusing on some of the superstitions common with the Italian culture.

Most of us are familiar with

- Birds in the house signal death in the family
- Crows circling the house signal bad luck
- Signs of a cardinal means angels are near
- Red sky at night-sailors delight, Red sky at morning-sailor take warning
- Horseshoes hung with the open end upwards to ensure that luck doesn't fall out.
- Finding and keeping a four-leaf clover will bring hope, faith, love and luck.



- A key is one of the oldest lucky charms. If a lover gives a key to another person it is said they are to be 'lucky in love'.
- If a black cat crosses your path, it is bad luck
- To break a mirror is seven years bad luck.

\*The list goes on and on.

I grew up in a wonderful environment enriched by my mother's Italian heritage and my father's Croatian heritage. I can't say I remember any superstitions on my father's side, but the Italian influence has been well-remembered and ingrained in my brain. I can honestly say I still practice some of these beliefs to this day.

### **Superstitions Italian Style**

Ever since I was a baby, I wore a small solid gold lucky horn to guard off the "Malocchio" or Evil Eye. The Malocchio is the look of jealousy by others and can do some real damage, such as debilitating headaches or other physical ailments. One can also make the shape of horns with your hand to ward off this curse.

The Olive oil method is well-known among most Italians, but the procedure can be varied depending upon the region you are from in Italy.

As far back as I can remember I can still see myself receiving the Olive Oil Treatment. Anytime I had a bad headache my grandma would have me sit with a bowl on my head as she poured drops of oil into the water and carefully observing how many turned into eye shapes. Those were said to be the sign that one or more people had sent the curse. She'd say a few prayers over the bowl then have me repeat this with her.

The prayers had to be repeated three times. I always wondered what my friends would think if they could see me now. Well anyway for the most part, I have to say it worked. Grandma was taught this method in her small village over in Italy by the village Strega, which is a witch in Italian.

And it wasn't just me who got the old bowl treatment, but other members of the family. I used to wonder why so many people were giving us this curse?

As I grew older those headaches seemed to disappear, and I wondered if I was no longer a victim of the Evil Eye. After grandma passed, I was sorry I hadn't learned how to perform this method. It was a tradition. But then again, I didn't think my children would believe in such a thing. Seems this was regarded by the older generation.

My mother was extremely superstitious, and I remember some of the methods she used to ward off bad spirits. I still carry out some of these traditions to this day.

Some of them were: to salt the perimeter of the house and the front door, wearing a small sachet of herbs pinned to her bra, and placing a brush above the doors. Placing a bush above the doors was said to ward off the witches, as they have to count the bristles and by the time they were done, the witching hour was well over. And anytime you even spoke of witches, you had to cross your legs. And just for the record, my legs are crossed right now writing this post.

I mention the Olive Oil treatment and the Strega in one of my books, *Beloved Sacrifice*, which is based on true facts my grandma told me about her family while living in the village in Italy.

Those stories stuck with me till this day along with the superstitions. I still have my golden horn but have lost my special sachet of herbs a while back, which I had worn for many years as my mother did. I am researching more about what may have been in those sachets and would love to make a few again. I mean, who couldn't use better luck?



Written by:

© P.J. Mann



I haven't ever in my life planted any bulb in the garden, preferring to them the easy-to-care perennial flowers. This year has been an exception, and I started to consider that my yard, although has a nice variety of flowers, doesn't see any blooming before the end of May.

For this reason, in September I decided to buy some bulbs, plant them in pots and have them, protected from the winter in the greenhouse. The plan seemed to have no flaws. The bulbs would have the time to develop during the winter in a semi-protected climate and in an environment that wouldn't have attracted any birds, wild cats, rabbits or so.

At the end of October, I went to the greenhouse to clear the ground from the dead tomatoes and cucumber plants and check that the soil of the bulbs was still keeping moisture. You can certainly imagine my surprise when I noticed very neatly dug holes in the pots where the bulbs were planted. All the bulbs disappeared: "A thief!" I exclaimed, and I started to search for who could have been responsible. The suspects were: mole, squirrel, or ants.

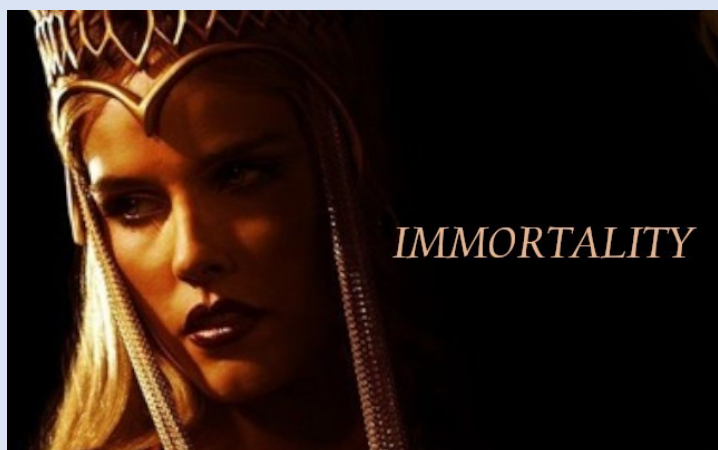
Now, I must tell you that in my garden live three colonies of ants (red, yellow, and black) so the possibility of having them disintegrate the bulbs and bring them into their storage was maybe possible.

What I couldn't consider possible was the action of a mole. There wasn't any hole in the ground, and it would have not been easy for them to reach the surface, climb the pots dig the holes, and take the bulbs.



The third was the most accredited suspect: The squirrel.

The way the holes were dug, would require a couple of little hands, a thing that only a squirrel had. I was more amused than angry, after all the wild animals needed those bulbs more than I could ever need. Nevertheless, the second batch of bulbs I planted had been protected by nets, a sprinkle of garlic, and chili pepper. So far, no thief has dared to trespass, but I also left some food for the winter to compensate for the fact that the squirrels won't get access to my garden. I hope they're satisfied with the arrangement.



Written by:  
[© Lilian Roberts](#)



**I started to write when I was very young.** It was more like role playing. I wrote stories and pretended that I was one of the characters. In my wildest dreams I never thought that one day I will become an actual author and see my books in print. It is the most extraordinary feeling in the world. I was fascinated with the possibility of human immortality. As an engineer I always wondered about the probability of longevity. What if? That is a big question that still keeps the scientist looking for answers. I am not going to see that possibility in my lifetime, so I decided to make it happen in my books. This may be a long and boring subject for many but not for those that love to see immortality happen at some point in time.

**How will our world end?** "Not with a bang but with a whimper," wrote the American poet T.S. Eliot regarding the end of the world. But if you want a more definite response, you'll find that physicists have spent countless hours turning this question over in their minds and have neatly fit the most plausible hypotheses into a few categories.

What if Immortality could be achieved? Then the end of the universe would mean absolutely nothing to the ones with eternal life. They will move on to another world.

**The love of life and the fear of death.** These are the two primary motivations that fuel humanity's quest for immortality. Since time immemorial, countless generations have sought to understand the secret to long life and by extension, immortality. Ancient alchemists were obsessed with finding the elixir of life. Spanish explorer Ponce de León set out to Florida in the 16th century to discover the "Fountain of Youth."

**Fast forward to today,** massive advancements in science and technology have enabled scientists to understand life to its core; the cellular, and genetic levels. Consequently, life expectancy has progressed steadily indicating that scientific interventions are significantly capable of prolonging human life. As science continues to unravel the mysteries of human life, one important question arises: Futurists have widely popularized the notion that we don't need a body to exist.

The plan is to develop a brain-computer interface to counter the limitations of our physical bodies. A BCI having the contents of your brain and your personality can operate from a robotic body. This will prolong the human lifespan by hundreds of years if not indefinitely. It sure sounds crazy not something that most people would like to do. If you are human, you are going to die. This isn't the most comforting thought, but death is the inevitable price we must pay for being alive. Humans are, however, getting better at pushing back our expiration date, as our medicines and technologies advance.

**If the human life span continues to stretch,** could we one day become immortal? The answer depends on what you think it means to be an immortal human.

"I don't think when people are even asking about immortality they really mean true immortality, unless they believe in something like a soul," Susan Schneider, a philosopher and founding director of the Center for the Future Mind at Florida Atlantic University, told Live Science. "If someone was, say, to upgrade their brain and body to live a really long time, they would still not be able to live beyond the end of the universe."

**Certain scientist, futurists, and philosophers** have theorized about the immortality of the human body, with some suggesting that human immortality may be achievable in the first few decades of the 21st century. Other advocates believe that life extension is a more achievable goal in the short term, with immortality awaiting further research breakthroughs. The absence of aging would provide humans with biological immortality, but not invulnerability to death by disease or injury. Whether the process of internal immortality is delivered within the upcoming years depends chiefly on research (and in neuron research in the case of internal immortality through an immortalized cell line) in the former view and perhaps is an awaited goal in the latter case.

**Physical immortality is a state of life** that allows a person to avoid death and maintain conscious thought. It can mean the unending existence of a person from a physical source other than organic life, such as a computer. Life defined as biologically immortal is still susceptible to causes of death besides aging.

**If human beings were to achieve immortality**, there would most likely be a change in the world's social structures. Sociologists argue that human beings' awareness of their own mortality shapes their behavior.[78] With the advancements in medical technology in extending human life, there may need to be serious considerations made about future social structures. The world is already experiencing a global demographic shift of increasingly ageing populations with lower replacement rates. The social changes that are made to accommodate this new population shift may be able to offer insight on the possibility of an immortal society.



# Publishing News



# Hophop's Alphabet Tree



## My New children's book

### Picture book for children 2-7

Hophop, the little bunny is sad because he can't read his book. Ollie, the wise owl, shows him the alphabet and teaches him to read the fun and easy way.

### EBOOK and PAPERBACK

### The best compliments:

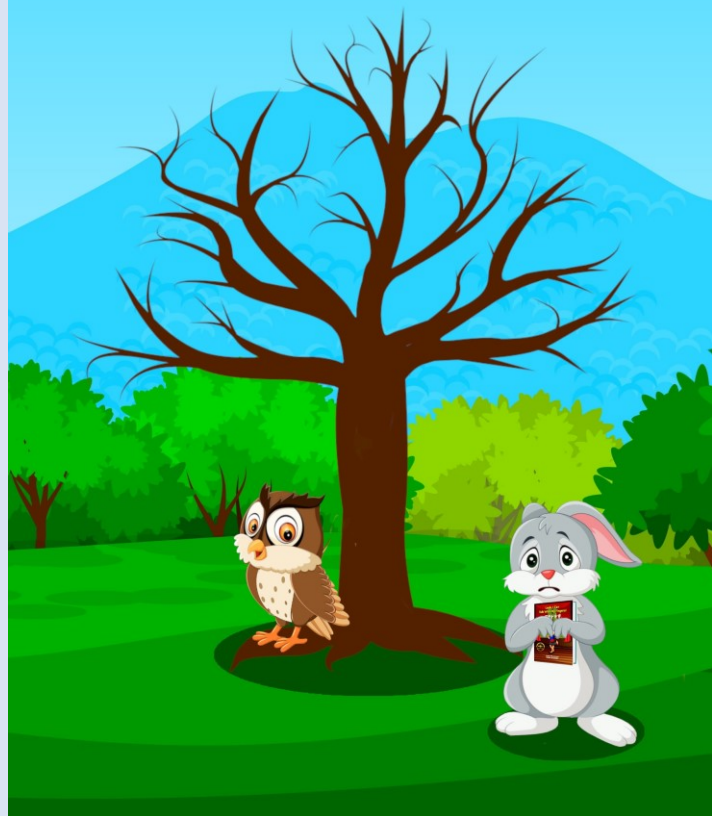
A friend who bought the book for his 14-month-old granddaughter said, "I was amazed at her reaction to the book. Her attention span that being normal for her age, usually last only for a few pages when we read picture books to her. But reading this book, she paid attention until the letter N and excitedly pointed out the animals on the pages. She loves the bunny's name, but her favorite is Ollie, the owl."

Another friend's five-year-old son loved the rhyming lines, and according to his mom, he successfully completed the exercise pages at the end of the book by connecting the animals with their names.

### A few pages from the book:



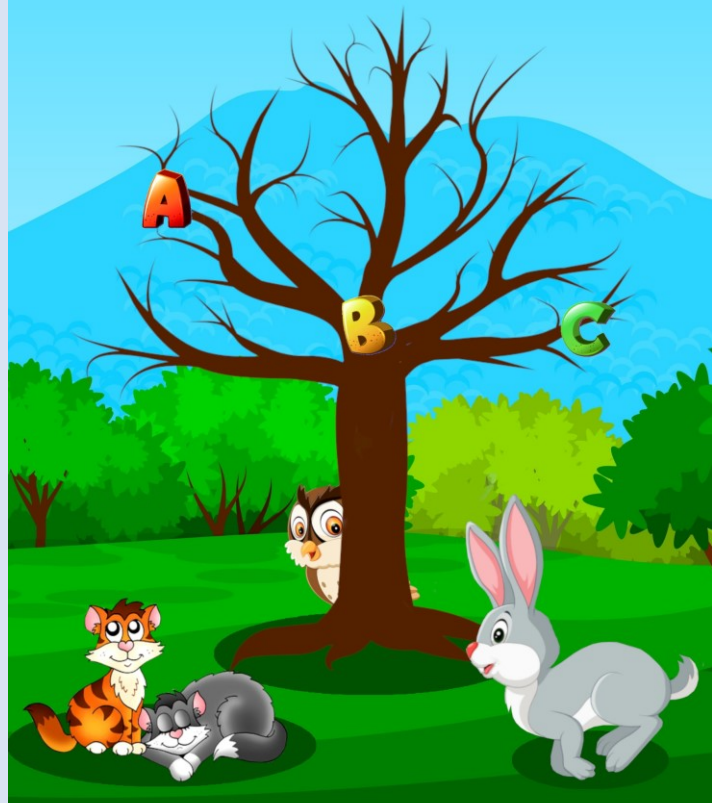
"Did you like the book?" Ollie asked Hophop.  
"I never learned to read." He sadly sobbed.



Ollie drew an "A" then flew up in the tree.  
She hung it up high for Hophop to see.



**C**ats have fun playing hide and seek games.



**D**ragons blow steam and sneeze hot flames.





**K**angaroo babies sleep in their mom's pockets.



**L**adybugs can't fly as fast as rockets.

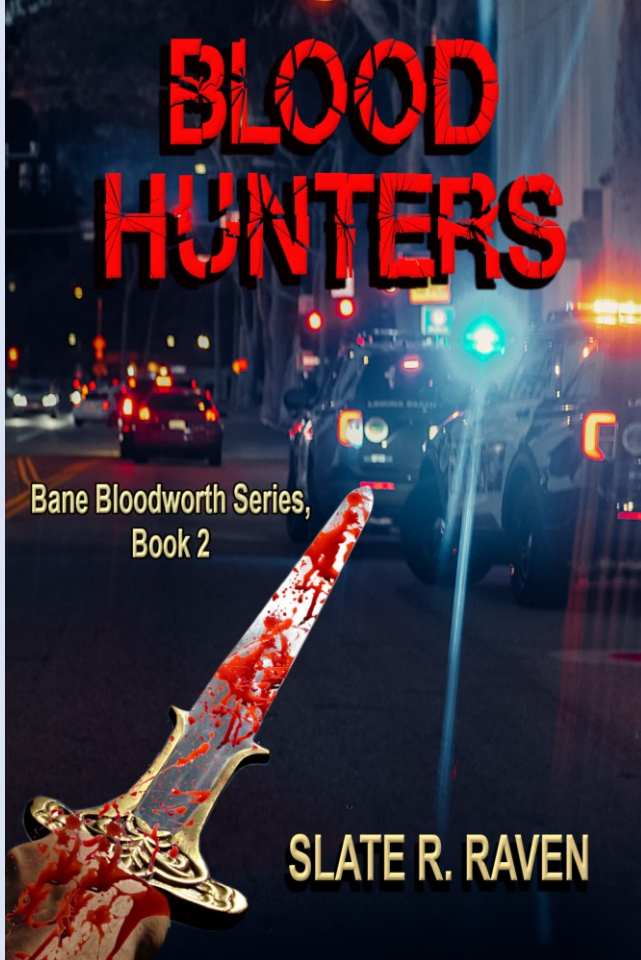


**O**tters will hold hands when they go to sleep.



**P**arrots can imitate a car or phone beep.





## Book cover reveal

**I designed the cover** and edited the blurb for Slate R. Raven's upcoming book.

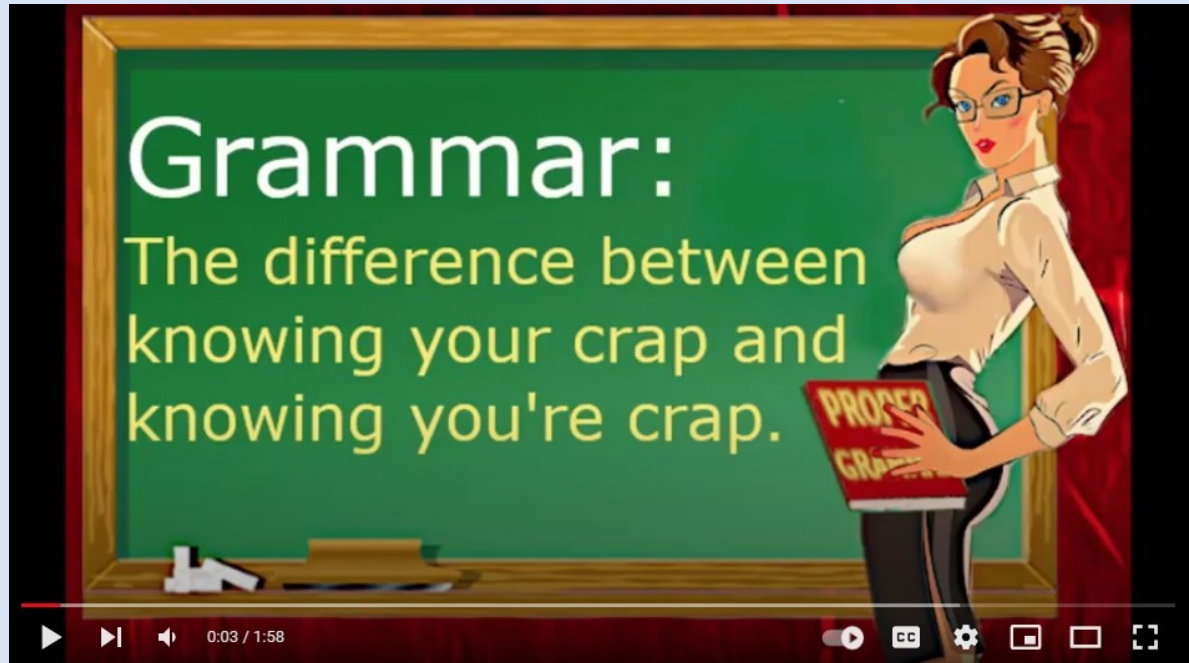
Check out his published books on [AMAZON](#)

Bane Bloodworth is back! Once again, something has unleashed the beast within—vengeance. When his blood rage takes over, who dares to stand in the path of the hurricane? Calling on old friends to join the battle for his honor-bound need to avenge, Bane slowly learns that things are not what they appear to be on the surface. A deep-rooted romantic interest becomes the key to keeping Bane grounded. The question remains. Will she be able to peer into the darkness he carries within and still remain by his side?

Despite the help he has at hand, Bane understands he needs to recruit street soldiers to even the odds against this formidable enemy. It may be too late to realize the full scope of this mission. Working as one, can the team hope to survive the insane mission that Bane has set before them? With danger ahead and bridges burned behind him, there is only one path back home—through victory. When things go tragically wrong due to miscalculations, can Bane hold the team together? His previous battle against the paranormal had left many bodies in its wake. How many will die now? Will one of them be Bane himself?



# The importance of editing



Watch this fun video: [https://youtu.be/qbq\\_7Gulr5w](https://youtu.be/qbq_7Gulr5w)

**Lately I read more and more opinions from readers such as:**

"The story sounded promising but it was painful to read because of all the grammar mistakes and inconsistencies. I stopped reading after the second chapter."

"There were so many mistakes in the book that I stopped reading it because it was distracting me from the story and just made me angry. The author should know there is a huge difference between 'He peeked' and 'He peaked'. That book needs serious editing."

**I also read many opinions from writers such as:**

"I edit my own books; I don't need an editor."

"It's too expensive, my manuscript is fine as it is."

"I use beta readers, that's good enough."



**It's a major achievement to write a book.** But sometimes an author is just too close to the material to be objective. After many rewrites and even more readings, your brain “fills in the blanks” and sees what it expects to see. Thus, the importance of editing. You may know what you mean to say, but the text may be less clear to someone reading it for the first time. The fresh eyes of an editor can be a real benefit.

**Unfortunately, there is a limit to self-editing.** Try as they might, writers can never see their own manuscripts with the type of clarity that others, including editors and readers, can. Using beta readers and critique groups is great, but they are only as good as their level of experience. Everyone has opinions, but you want to make sure you're soliciting worthwhile feedback that you'll be able to trust.

**Hiring an experienced editor,** rather than a friend or relative who happens to be an English teacher, is very important. A good editor does much more than fix your grammar. He or she improves a book's content and structure in a way that preserves the author's style. Just as important, he or she finds and corrects both major and minor errors.

**Read about our editing team at Golden Box Books Publishing:**

<https://www.goldenboxbooks.com/editing.html>



We're a group of authors writing interesting posts weekly and interacting with readers.

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A group of multi-genre authors blogging together

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Is chocolate good for you?  
Does it make you happy?




Blood in the syringe.  
Is it dangerous?




How do you create a mental picture of book characters?

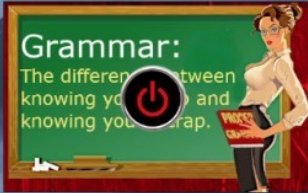
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Common and uncommon phobias, part 1



What made it my favorite?

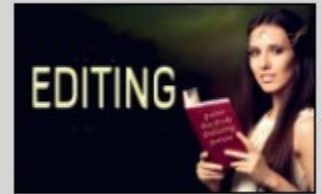


**Grammar:**  
The difference between knowing your grammar and knowing you're crap.  
You are judged by your grammar

▶ 🔊 📶

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# Bookish Magazines



## **Erika M Szabo**

I write speculative alternate history fiction, romantic urban fantasy, historical suspense novels as well as fun, educational, and bilingual books for children ages 2-14

**AUTHOR  
WEBSITE**

