

BOOKISH MAGAZINE



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NOVEMBER 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

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NOVEMBER

Now that harvest is over
I feel the need to reflect
On all of my blessings
I, too often, neglect
I am grateful for friends
Who've remained through the years
Sharing my joy and laughter
Comforting away my sorrow and tears
I am grateful for new friends
Whom I've recently gained
Despite seeing all my flaws
You decided to remain
I am grateful for loved ones

Both nearby and far away
How much I treasure you
I can't begin to say
I am grateful for life
For each breath that I take
I am grateful for each morning
I am blessed to awake
Thanksgiving is much more
Than a holiday feast
It is a feeling inside
That brings comfort and peace

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Happy Thanksgiving



In 1621, the Plymouth colonists and Wampanoag Native Americans shared an autumn harvest feast that is acknowledged today as one of the first Thanksgiving celebrations in the colonies. For more than two centuries, days of thanksgiving were celebrated by individual colonies and states.

Thanksgiving became an annual custom throughout New England in the 17th century, and in 1777 the Continental Congress declared the first national American Thanksgiving following the Patriot victory at Saratoga. The House agreed to the amendment, and President Roosevelt signed the resolution on December 26, 1941, thus establishing the fourth Thursday in November as the **Federal Thanksgiving Day holiday**.

Why do we eat turkey on Thanksgiving?

For meat, the Wampanoag brought deer, and the Pilgrims provided wild “fowl.” Strictly speaking, that “fowl” could have been turkeys, which were native to the area, but historians think it was probably ducks or geese.

Fun Stories



My first, and Aunt Alice's last Thanksgiving dinner

By [Erika M Szabo](#)



We didn't celebrate Thanksgiving in Europe, and being a stupid teenager, I never really learn to cook from my mother. So, my very first Thanksgiving dinner in the US could have been a total disaster. We've invited friends and Uncle Joe and Aunt Alice from California had invited themselves because they couldn't attend our June wedding. Uncle Joe called and simply informed us that they'd be arriving the day before Thanksgiving and staying with us for five days.

I was petrified because I never cooked a holiday dinner, and my husband having been single for so many years, either. So, I asked my neighbor for advice and recipes. She was an extremely organized old lady; she kept a separate notebook with detailed recipes for every holiday dinner. She was going to stay at her son's house for the holiday, so she loaned me her Thanksgiving recipes notebook. Everything seemed to be going fine. The day before Thanksgiving, while hubby drove to the airport, I baked pumpkin and sweet potato pies, cooked cranberry sauce, and the turkey was half-thawed in the fridge.

When our guest arrived, Uncle Joe warned us about Aunt Alice's declining mental status, due to Alzheimer's. She seemed lucid when Uncle Joe was in the room and her long-term memory still functioned, but her short-term memory had been greatly affected. When she couldn't see Joe, Alice became nervous and agitated, and she asked where he was every two-three minutes.

On the morning of Thanksgiving, I decorated the dining room, set the dinner table, and did some last-minute cleaning, and then taking a deep breath, I armed myself with the recipes and started peeling the vegetables and preparing the turkey.

Aunt Alice wandered around the apartment, touching, and rearranging everything. She fluffed the throw pillows, straightened the pictures on the mantel and the walls, and constantly asked where she was. Uncle Joe, with a patience of a saint, answered the same question every three minutes. After half an hour or so, Alice seemed to be tiring and became agitated.

"Alice, why don't you help Erika in the kitchen?" Joe said to her.

Great! I thought. *It's not enough that I'm nervous about messing up dinner, now I'll have to watch the old lady too.* But I forced a smile, poured a cup of coffee, and invited her to sit by the kitchen table. Alice started chatting about her childhood and when she got married, and I caught myself enjoying her stories while I prepared the vegetables, assembled the green bean casserole, and peeled the potatoes for cooking and meshing.

Then I took the turkey out of the fridge, mixed the softened butter with spices, and started stuffing it under the skin of the turkey.

"Why aren't you mixing the stuffing first?" Alice asked, surprising me because I was sure that she was so absorbed in her memories that she didn't pay attention, or even comprehend what I was doing.

“I have the recipe, but I didn’t mix it because the bird came with the stuffing,” I replied. “It’s all wrapped in baking paper inside the turkey.”

Uncle Joe overhearing our conversation, rushed from the living room. “Did you just say the turkey came with the stuffing?” he asked.

“Yes, it’s wrapped in brown paper, and it’s inside the bird,” I replied, now feeling confused.

“That package contains the gizzards, you silly goose! Take them out of the paper and bake them with the bird.”

“Oh, my God! I thought it was the premade stuffing!” I mumbled, feeling embarrassed.

“I guess Alice just saved the day,” he said, smiling lovingly at his wife for fifty years with tears in his eyes. He wiped his eyes, kissed her forehead, and turned back to me. “Let’s make that stuffing and I’ll show you how Alice always baked it separately in the muffin pan. She hated it when the stuffing got mushy inside the turkey.”

We seasoned the turkey, stuffed the vegetables and gizzards inside the bird, and put it in the oven. When the rest of the guests arrived and dinner was served, everyone complimented the stuffing muffins.

After the delicious dinner, everyone relaxed in the living room, and when Alice followed me to the kitchen, I hugged her and thanked her for saving me from the embarrassment of serving the turkey with the brown paper package baked inside it. She pushed me away and with a worried expression she shouted,, “Where is Joe? Joe, where are you?”

“I’m here, sweetheart,” came Joe’s calming voice from the living room.

Alice’s face lit up with a smile and quickly shuffled toward the living room to join the only person who could keep her grounded and make her feel safe in her Alzheimer’s induced, confused mental state .



Women are sugar and spice...
True! But they use their brains too!

By Erika M Szabo

A woman gets a local call. She doesn't recognize the number, but it's local, so she picks it up.

"Hello," a pleasant male voice with a heavy Indian accent greets her. "Are you Mrs. (so and so)?"

"Who's calling?" she asks, knowing that the caller, if it's a scammer, might record a "yes" answer and could use it for money scams.

"Ma'am, this is Brian from (whatever company) refund center. Our records show that you've overpaid for an item you've recently ordered. Are you close to your computer, ma'am?"

The bell goes off in her mind but she's alone and has a lot of time on her hands, so she decides to play along. "Oh, my!" she pretends to be surprised. "I'm getting on my computer right now. How much are we talking about?"

"Great!" the man calls himself Brian but most likely called Babala or something replies. "I can tell you the exact amount in a minute, but first I have to verify a few things. In order to do that, you need to search for this address on your computer: www.xxxxx.com. Sign in with this email: xxx@gmail.com and enter the password 12345."

"Okay, give me a minute. I'm almost there. You said the password is 12345, right?"

"Yes, ma'am. No problem, ma'am, I'll wait."

The woman puts her phone on speaker, places the phone next to the keyboard and starts typing while mumbling to herself, "That's interesting. Oh, I see," she giggles.

"Ma'am! Are you there, ma'am?" he starts to sound impatient.

"Yeah, I'm here," she giggles.

"Ma'am! Did you sign in? I need you to download the app so I could refund you the money. Do you understand?"

"Oh, I understand. Say, are you the cute young man with that neatly trimmed dark beard, or the chubby one in the white t-shirt?"

"What? How?" he mumbles nervously.

"Oh, didn't I tell you? I just hacked into your surveillance system. I can see your entire office on my computer screen, and I see your building on Google map."

"What? Fuck!" comes the man's voice. She hears him shouting to someone in rapid Hindi, and then a lot of commotion and a few seconds later, the phone connection goes dead.

The moral of the story:

Of course, most of us have no clue how to hack into anything, but we're clever enough to fool a smart scammer nicely with wits and quick thinking.



Bonfire Night, on the
5th of November, is a
British holiday

By A.L. Butcher

*Remember, Remember,
The Fifth of November
Gunpowder Treason and Plot.*

*We see no reason why Gunpowder Treason
Should Ever Be Forgotten*

Guy Fawkes Night – A British Tradition Steeped in Blood and Conspiracy

Guy Fawkes Night, also known as Bonfire Night or Fireworks Night is a British tradition, this festival takes place on the 5th November (although often there are events either side of that date at the weekends). I have fond memories of huge bonfires, chilled fingers, fireworks and hot soup and potatoes in my parents' garden or the local cricket club grounds for the town event. Local kids would wheel a terrible effigy made from straw, rags and a football or pumpkin head around as beg a 'Penny for the Guy'. Usually, the local kids did quite well, everyone loves Guy Fawkes night and its good-humoured quirky traditions.

For those not familiar with this uniquely British celebration, you might be thinking it's a hangover from winter festivals, or something to do with Halloween. It's not. It's celebrating what would now be classed as a terrorist plot against the King and Government – that failed.

5th November 1605 – was the night a Catholic Zealot named Guido Fawkes was found in a cellar under the House of Lords, with 36 barrels (2500 kilograms) of gunpowder and the means to light it. Guido, or Guy Fawkes gained immortality (despite being tortured and executed as a traitor), as the man who also succeeded in levelling a goodly portion of London. New Scientist runs an article estimating everything for a 40 metre radius would have been razed to the ground, and buildings damaged over 900 metres away. Considering a lot of London was made of wood at this point the resulting firestorm would have likely caused significant further damage.

King James I (James Stuart, the first Stuart King) was Protestant. Keep in mind there had been bloodshed between the Catholics and Protestants since the reign of Henry VIII and his heirs. They really did NOT like each other, many people were executed, murdered, martyred, or whatever you want to call it, because they refused to give up their faith in a tumultuous time.

An anonymous letter was sent to Baron Monteagle and the plot was discovered, after Fawkes was arrested the other conspirators decided London was too hot (sorry) and made themselves scarce.

Celebrating the fact that the King and his Government (and probably lots of other people) hadn't been blown sky high, people lit bonfires and celebrated, and the King decreed that it should be a national celebration day (and for a while a good excuse to whack some Catholics). For a long time there was anti-Catholic sentiment, and special Protestant prayers of thanksgiving were added to the Book of Common Prayer. Feasts, bonfires and various celebrations were continued, and it became a fire festival, effigies were burned (hence the Guy). Alcohol was involved (no surprise there) and sometimes riots ensued over whatever the local grievance was at the time and place. After the 1829 Roman Catholic Relief Act Catholics gained more rights, in some areas effigies of Catholic Bishops were burned on 5th November – so 200 years after the original plot the divisions were still running high.

The 19th Century saw the rise of organised events, and firework displays and by the 20th Century it was more commonly known as Fireworks Day (probably a marketing tool).

Catesby made a stand with a small force against 200 soldiers at Holbeche House in Staffordshire, and the conspirators had arrived with sodden supplies. Attempting to dry out their gun powder a spark ignited some and left Catesby and Percy and John Grant badly wounded. Catesby later died in the assault. His body was exhumed and beheaded (people often believed you couldn't enter heaven if you were incomplete) and his head shoved on a spike outside Parliament.

The Wintours tried to rouse a force but found far less support than they'd anticipated and joined Catesby at Holbeche. The Wright Brothers and Percy fell here too. Thomas Wintour was captured and ended up in the Tower of London, and much of the history we know is from his confession (but this may have been forged).

The rest died after a trial at the Tower of London – hanging, drawing and quartering – being the preferred method of dispatching traitors.

Modern times

Fortunately, these days the religious differences have been forgotten and it's far more a chance to ooh and ahh at fireworks (although dog owners like myself are not so keen when our doggies are trembling or barking in terror). Private firework displays are less common (probably due to fireworks being bloody dangerous) but they do still occur. There are many organised events (or there were until Covid) and most people don't know a lot of the history – they may vaguely know Guy Fawkes tried to blow up Parliament but most of the other names have been lost to myth and history. I bet people would be shocked to know the real history, the awful outcome had it succeeded and the terrible deaths of the perpetrators.

[Reference](#)

Stories from
The Author Gang

Published in October





Did I Just See a Ghost?

By [Erika M Szabo](#)

We lived in a city apartment, and the time of planning, packing, job searching, and organizing the move to a country house was stressful for everyone. Months before moving day, my young daughter had overheard our conversations and sensed the tension. We wanted to ease her anxiety, and because she'd been begging to have a cat, we adopted a silver-haired Main Coon. His name was Sir Lancelot on the adaption papers. It took quite a few days before the cat got used to his new home, but eventually he wandered out of his safe place, that being my daughter's closet, and discovered every room in the apartment. The shy, timid cat quickly turned into a playful, happy playmate, chasing mice made out of rabbit fur all over the apartment. A few weeks later, when he seemed to be feeling safe with all of us, we took him for his checkup.

Well, the visit didn't turn out quite as we'd expected. The doctor came out of the exam room with a wide grin on his face and told us, "Your Sir Lancelot is not a neutered male as you were told by the shelter, but in fact, a spayed female. I just spoke to the shelter, and they said that due to a clerical error, their vet never examined this cat, and the owner's family told them it was a male."

So, we took a "he" to the vet and went home with a "she". Sir Lancelot wouldn't have been a fitting name, so we changed her name to Fancy. At first, she didn't recognize her new name, so for a while, we called her *Sir Lancelot Fancy*, and eventually dropped *Sir Lancelot*.

The moving day to a quiet little town in the mountains arrived. It took some time for us to get used to the new house, and Fancy went through the same routine of hiding in the closet for a few days. But this time, she chose the bottom tier of the bookshelf in the living room as her safe place.

My daughter wanted the cat to sleep in her room, but every time we called her to follow us upstairs, she stopped at the bottom of the stairs, hissed, and refused to budge. When I picked her up to carry her up the steps, she'd wiggle out of my arms as soon as I put my foot on the first step, and was headed toward her safe place to hide.

So, Fancy became a downstairs only cat. We thought that she was afraid of the staircase because she always lived in apartments, and we hoped that eventually, she'd get used to it.

The first Halloween in our new home was exciting for all of us. We decorated the house, and my daughter dressed up as a black cat, getting ready to go Trick or Treating in town with her new friends.

After her friend's parents picked her up, I noticed that she'd left the lights on in the staircase. I looked up as I clicked the switch. The landing turned half dark, and I saw a dark, shadowy figure that looked like a cat, walking into the bathroom with tail standing straight up. "Good job, Fancy!" I murmured. "Finally, you've gathered the courage to venture upstairs." But then I heard loud hissing and felt a small body leaning on my leg. I jumped in fright and looked down to see Fancy staring up at the staircase landing. Mouth wide open, ears pulled back, and her hair standing up on her back, she kept hissing.

I looked up again, but the landing was empty. *It wasn't Fancy for sure, she's right here! But what did I see? Did I just see a ghost?* Picking up the cat I tried to find a reasonable explanation. Fancy stopped hissing as soon as I walked away from the steps. She wiggled in my arms to let her go and she went about her business of sharpening her claws on her scratching pole as if nothing had happened. My hubby was at work and being in the house alone made the little hairs stand up on the back of my neck.

As I turned the light back on and started walking upstairs. “Don’t be a scaredy-cat! Maybe one of the windows is open and the neighbor’s cat climbed in.” I scolded myself and hearing my own voice calmed my nerves. I checked every room and closet upstairs. The windows were all locked, and the cat I thought I saw, was nowhere to be found. Chills ran down my spine as I ran down the steps, leaving every light on upstairs. I thought about calling my husband but decided against it. *He’s a down-to-earth person, he’d just say I’m being silly if I told him I’d seen a ghost cat*, I thought, so I dialed my friend.

“Yup, sounds like you have a friendly ghost cat,” she told me. “I’m jealous!” “How do you know it’s friendly?”

“Because, as you said, it was walking with its tail straight up. I’m coming over. I want to see your ghost!” she announced and hung up. Abandoning her Trick or Treaters she drove over, and we sat on the bottom step for a long time, but the ghost cat never showed up.

Later I’d found out from the previous owner of the house that they had a cat for twenty years, his name was Midnight. She said the cat and their two dogs never got along, so the animals had divided the house between them. The dogs never went upstairs, and Midnight claimed the upstairs as his own territory. When I told the lady that I might have seen her cat’s ghost, tears flooded her eyes. “He was the most gentle, loving cat I’ve ever had. He had a long and happy life with us, and I guess she never wanted to leave the house.”

Years went by, and Fancy never once went upstairs. She’d crossed the rainbow bridge shortly after she turned eighteen. I forgot about my first Halloween in the new house experience, when one night, as usual, I looked up at the landing before I turned the light on. I saw my friendly ghost cat again, and this time it didn’t scare me. Ever since, I’ve been seeing the fleeting shadowy cat from time to time, always walking from the guestroom to the bathroom with tail standing straight up.



Where Does Your Creativity Come From?

By Slate R. Raven

What is Creativity?

Creativity is defined as the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others.

Three reasons why people are motivated to be creative: need for novel, varied, and complex stimulation

- need to communicate ideas and values
- need to solve problems

In order to be creative, you need to be able to view things in new ways or from a different perspective. Among other things, you need to be able to generate new possibilities or new alternatives.

Greek Mythology

In ancient times there were answers to that question. Despite many pantheons of beliefs, I found that the Greeks had the most prominent and well recognized to this very day. They were called The Muses. They totaled nine and were created to bring inspiration, knowledge, artistry, and music to the ancient world. Tasked with the embodiment of certain idealistic artistry. Muses inspired musicians, writers, and performers to reach even greater artistic and intellectual heights. You may recognize a name or two, but few who never studied the Greek pantheon would know all nine. Allow me to introduce them to you, as they may have whispered in your ear while you slept or while you were creating; thereby making your skills even more refined.

The Nine Muses

- 1.Calliope** – the most well-known among the sisters. She's the muse of epic poetry, and by extension she also became the muse of writers in general.
- 2.Clio** – she was once a very prominent figure as her influence was the writing of history. She had faded by the shadow of her other sisters.
- 3.Erato** – tasked with the giving lyrical poetry, which was rumored she felt subservient to her sister Calliope.
- 4.Euterpe** – this sister has contributed much to our world as she inspired music. Yet so few know her by name.
- 5.Melpomene** – she is the one to blame when you weep over the end of things, she was the muse of tragedies.
- 6.Polyhymnia** – another influencer of poetry, though her work was considered sacred.
- 7.Terpsichore** – with an ear for her sister Euterpe; gave inspiration to dance and of chorus. When you hit the dance floor give a nod to this muse or you may look as horrific as I do when attempting to dance.
- 8.Thalia** – if you have a sense of humor, it's said you owe her for comedy. She also worked with idyllic poetry.
- 9.Urania** – she poured all of her influence into astronomy.

Goddess of memory, Mnemosyne, was said to be the mother of the muses. Nowhere could this writer find a name of a father, which often indicates a mortal mate. It has been stated that the muses were meant to balance their mother to help mortals forget their troubles and suffering, if only for a little while. Hesiod, in his Theogony, claimed he spoke with the muses on Mount Helicon. His claim was they breathed into him their divine voice so he could proclaim the Gods and their descendants. Thus, he was transformed from a shepherd to one of the most prominent poets in antiquity. Whether you're a writer, musician, dancer, or any other type of creative person you may owe your inspiration to a muse. Many people still claim they must consult their muse, but how many of them know their muse by name? I hope that now if you call upon a muse to inspire you, that you will be able to thank them properly for their gift to you.

[Source](#)



185 Days to Spring

By P.J. Mann

Countdown

Let the countdown begin. We're heading to the period most of the people here in Finland dread the most, Winter. This is not about being cozy under a blanket and watch the soft flurries falling from the sky. This is about a nightmare that repeats itself every year.

I'm talking about darkness, freezing temperatures, and of course, working outdoors. This has been one of those years when Summer lasted literally three weeks, as the first day of August marked the time to change the summer wardrobe with the winter one. The tomatoes I planted in Spring didn't even have the time to give a single fruit and are now rotting under the merciless temperatures under 10 C. Was it even worth it? I feel like I've wasted five good plants of tomatoes, sending them to a desperate kamikaze mission.

You might think I'm crazy, but I feel sorry for their too short life. Like a general, I watch my soldiers deadly wounded in a battle we didn't even win. The problem is that I already know next year, I will still try to plant them once again (will I ever learn?).

Nevertheless, longer summers are still possible, and I've experienced them. But they come very randomly, and it's like throwing the dice, crossing the fingers, and hoping to win.

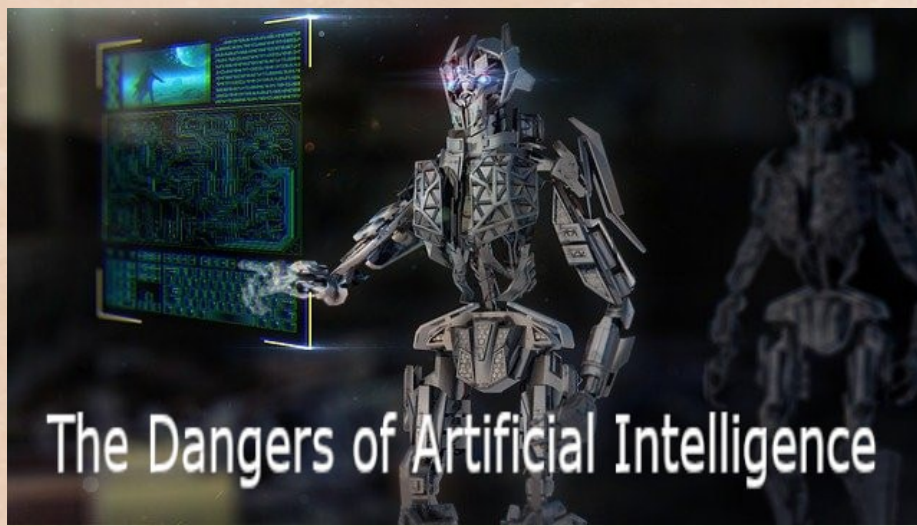
Now I know what you're thinking: can't I find anything nice to say about fall and Winter? Of course, there is something nice. The fall colors here in Finland are unique, particularly in Lapland:



I love the warm touch of the scarf worn for the first time (after a long summer). The smell of the first hot cereal soups, the days spent searching for mushrooms and berries. The fantastic pictures I get of birds preparing their flight formation to reach the Summer on the other side of the planet.

I also find it enticing when the snow finally falls and gifts us with a bit of light. As you can see, there are good parts to it. I'm just disappointed with the imbalance with which we receive those gifts. There's one old say about having too much of a good thing, and this is what I'm complaining about.

But, as my husband always says to console me. "Things will change one day, and good things are still waiting for us, so let's not get bitter for those little things." I simply love him!



R.A. "Doc" Correa

A Layman's Primer to the dangers of Artificial Intelligence, the Singularity, and some related very scary things.

First, I'd like to recommend Travis Borne's book Lenders, he is currently working in software development and, like me, has some serious concerns about where AI is headed. We do have some different ideas on the potential threat AI poses, but he is well versed on the issues that could arise and has written a wonderful story that is full of surprises.

So you know the person writing this 'rant' has some credibility on this topic the next two paragraphs are a brief bio. I first got interested in computers in the 1960s when my mother's boyfriend took me to CalTech and I saw their system. By today's standards it was quite primitive, but it made a strong impression on me. Shortly after that I read an article in Life magazine on robotic work being done there. What struck me was the declaration by one of the researchers that if conflict arose between humans and computers he would "have to side with the greater intelligence". That statement has stuck in my head.

I'm one of the few people that has achieved his "childhood dreams". I am a retired soldier (thanks John Wayne), worked in medicine (battlefield medic and surgical technologist), a 'mad scientist' (I have an AA in humanities, an AS and a BS in computer science and computer engineering and worked in that field for fourteen years), and now I am a published poet and author (I loved reading and my creative writing class in high school). For this work I am wearing my 'mad scientist' hat.

Having been retired for some time now I felt I should ‘brush up’ on the current thought on the subject. So, I looked up some recent papers on the topic, and I had to stop reading them because I was delving very deeply into AI, and would never have written this blog. Instead, I would have spewed out so much techno babble that you would quit reading before the end of this post or would have died of boredom halfway through.

The branch of computer science involved in the development of Artificial Intelligence can be defined as: the discipline of computer science that seeks to make machines seem as if they have human intelligence. In the field there are several ‘flavors’ of AI so for this article I will stick to the following areas of research, Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI), Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), and Artificial Super Intelligence (ASI). That will be followed by a brief discussion of the Singularity and the new religion that worships AI. Throughout the discussion I’ll add references to various ways that AI is, or will be, involved in your everyday life, and some military applications that are being used, under development or being discussed in military circles (yep, once a soldier always a soldier).

Artificial Narrow Intelligence

This is what we used to refer to as AI when I was in college. The system isn’t really intelligent as it doesn’t ‘think’ on its’ own, but instead follows a set of decision points (like If-then-else statements) to respond to a user’s requests. At this point ANI is advanced enough to convince users it does think, but that is just an illusion.

Examples of this kind of AI can be found everywhere these days. The most obvious AI systems people interact with are Alexa and Siri. When you encounter them give ‘em a try. After chatting with these entities, I’m sure you’ll believe they are sentient. The responses they give will be very lifelike.

Another form of ANI is autonomous vehicles. These self-driving cars and trucks are becoming more common. It is expected that by 2045 all commercial vehicles will be autonomous (driverless). More importantly it is expected over 50% of passenger cars will be driverless by then as well (many think sooner). [Continue reading...](#)



ROYAL VICTORIA MILITARY HOSPITAL, NETLEY NEAR SOUTHAMPTON.

The Grey Lady

By A.L. Butcher

Royal Victoria Hospital

The Royal Victoria Hospital was a military hospital in Netley, Hampshire in the UK, an imposing building from 1856 and demolished in 1966. During the Second World War it was 28th US General Hospital. There was some controversy about the design of the hospital when it was built and did not receive the approval of Florence Nightingale – the champion of the wounded soldier. It was the largest British military hospital of its day.

It was badly designed, badly ventilated and a grim place to be sectioned. In the early late 1950s my father was serving in the Royal Army Medical Corp at the hospital, after he was wounded in action and flown back to the UK. It was a grim place, foreboding and sombre. At that time, it was in use to treat Army and Navy personnel suffering from psychiatric problems, STDs (Dad didn't tell me that), and addictions. The rear of the old hospital was the psych unit.

My late father was a storyteller and imaginative - I'm certain some of the tales he told us had a little embellishment here and there. That said one story he'd tell us he swore was true – the time he saw the Grey Lady – the Ghost of Netley Hospital.

My father was not a man to particularly believe in an afterlife, or ghosts in general but he swore he's seen an apparition. There was, he said, a ledger in the hospital of sightings and strange occurrences. It was not just your average squaddie – higher ranking officers, medical staff and civilians had seen a ghost.

One night, when Dad was on patrol with another soldier they passed a corridor, containing a locked door. It was always locked. As they passed the door opened and a woman clad in an old-fashioned nurse's uniform walked past them... and disappeared. They had seen the Grey Lady. Dad told me he'd never run as fast in all his life.

So, who had she been? There are mixed rumours – a nurse who'd accidentally killed a patient and committed suicide from remorse, or, as my father believed, a nurse who'd fallen in love with a patient and went mad with grief when he returned to the war and then was killed in action. She walked the grounds, and some said her appearance heralded a death – but in a hospital that's not unlikely.

Another notion is the nurse's lover was also seeing another woman, and so she killed him and then herself.

Other people within RAMC and QARANC (Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps) had also seen her.

Since the building's demolition the ghosts have not been seen. Do I believe my father saw a ghost? I believe he thought so.

There's also the ghost of an old blind monk, said to guard some hidden treasure in the chapel (which still remains). The treasure is believed to be concealed at the end of a long tunnel – and an explorer was literally frightened to death by what he found there.

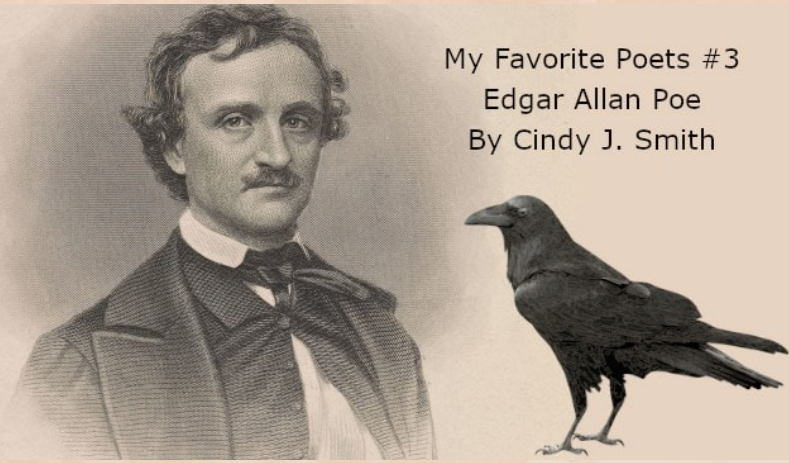
My Favorite Poets #3

Edgar Allan Poe

By Cindy J. Smith

My Favorite Poets #3

Cindy J. Smith



Edgar Allan Poe

The final poet in my favorite poet series is a perfect choice for this season of ghosts and goblins: the master of horror himself, Edgar Allan Poe. I am a lover of horror stories and his books have always been on my list of favorites in the genre. The movie rendition of his story "The Tell-Tale Heart" still gives me the heebie-jeebies, despite knowing the whole story before I ever watched it the first time.

But, his wonderful tales are not what I am here to discuss now. I want to relate to you how much his poetry influenced me.

Poe was an extraordinary wordsmith. His command of the English language leads his readers along a path he has chosen for them to follow. He forces us to see the truth behind our emotions, makes us face their influence over our daily lives.

There are very few people who do not immediately recognize the line: **"Once upon a midnight dreary while I pondered weak and weary"**. "The Raven" is definitely a signature poem written by Edgar. The main character's torturous journey of coping with his loss and grief is palpable.

Edgar Allan Poe's great love died young and is considered to be the major influence on most of his poetry. "Annabel Lee" is considered to be a tribute to her. What better way to honor the memory of lost love than to imply the reason for their passing was the Angels were jealous. I, for one, have often heard the statement, "God needed a new angel" when a loved one passed. I've even felt that way.

"A Dream Within A Dream" is the final poem I wish to mention. The lines I have found most thought-provoking are: "Is all that we see or seem But a dream within a dream?" They remind me of the lines from Shakespeare's play "As You Like It" : "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts".

For Poe, the words seem to impart to the reader that we are constantly shackled by our emotions and are simply being led down life's path without any chance we can alter our destiny.

Poe showed me, by his works, how to grasp the sentiments I was experiencing and put them into words. Not just the nice ones, the sparkly rainbow-colored gems, but the darkest ones. He helped me to realize everyone feels them...we are only different in how we express them...how we act on them. This freedom to accept everything has helped me to write so others might recognize their own impulses and begin to embrace them as a part of their whole.

I know that Poe rewrote many of his poems over the years. He was always trying to create the perfect piece. I too have revisited earlier works, but I find creating a new work based on the same theme to work better for me. I am a different person from when I originally wrote the poem and therefore the way I want it to sound now would not be the way I actually felt then, in my opinion. This is one area which he and I would never agree.

This concludes my series on poets. I hope you have enjoyed some of it and I have dispelled all your English teacher's rules on poetry. Everyone likes poetry, despite the fact most people deny it. You sing along with your favorite songs...poems put to music. You read every greeting card before choosing just the right one...poems celebrating daily life. A poem means exactly what YOU, the reader, think it means.

Go out and buy yourself a book of poetry, it does not need to be one of mine, although to be honest, I do wish it would be. Let your heart feel everything it is meant to feel, be all you are meant to be.

12 Words Story Writing Contest



A fun way to test your story writing skills. If you can write a story in 12 words that triggers the imagination of the reader, you can write anything!

Congrats to the writers of the most voted for stories!

A.L. BUTCHER

"What's the worst that can happen?" Pandora asked. She opened the box.

ERIKA M SZABO

Sign says: Eggs, duck! Methinks, *What? Dyslexic signmaker?* Then it hit me.

Lifting his cup, he cried out in pain. Darned spoon! Forgot, again.

DAVINA PURNELL

The trail to the top was hot , suddenly snowflakes swirled around her.

GINA LOBIONDO

High on a rise, overlooking a crystal lake, the stallion surveyed his domain.

**Laughter is the best
medicine**





The Hooded Bandit

When a nurse's visit turns into a crime story

By Erika M Szabo

When I was working for a Visiting Nurse Company, I visited 7-8 home-bound patients a day. One rainy day getting out of my car I put my black coat's hoodie on and walked up to the apartment building. A few seconds after I got out of the elevator on the third floor, the lights went out.

The hallway turned pitch dark, and I couldn't see anything. *Great! They forgot to change the battery in the emergency lights.* I fumed. *But at least, I didn't get stuck in the elevator.*

I took my small penlight out of my uniform pocket and made my way to apartment 3 C to visit Mrs. Jones who was recuperating after her knee replacement. A few seconds after I knocked on the door, I heard the shuffle of her walker and then the click of the peephole cover followed by a loud scream.

"Get the gun, Joe!" she yelled and screamed again. "There is a hooded bandit at the door!"

"No, no, no!" I tried to assure her. "Look!" And to make it sure she can see me; I shined the flashlight on my face.

Her scream coming through the locked door pierced my eardrum. "Joe! Get that f***ng gun, I tell you!"

My heart thumping in my throat, I didn't wait for Joe to get his gun. I raced down the hallway and found the staircase. Tumbling down the half-dark stairs I finally reached the main floor and ran to my car as fast as I could.

When I got back to the office, I called Mrs. Jones. "You're not gonna believe what happened!" she blurted it out before I could say anything. "A bandit in a hoodie and mask had tried to break into the apartment when the lights went out. You said you were coming, but you were lucky not to be here when that criminal tried to break down the door. I scared him away, though. I screamed and Joe got his gun, but by the time the police got here, he was gone."

While she was talking, I kept thinking. *She probably phoned all her friends and family members by now with her story, so if I told her I was the "hooded bandit" at her door, she'd be a laughingstock in her circle, for months.*

"I'm running a bit late today, Mrs. Jones. I'll be there after lunch." I told her, but I called the police station and confessed to the officer, and I told him not to look for the "bandit". The officer had a good laugh and promised he would tell Mrs. Jones only that they couldn't find the intruder.

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Cat Wearing A Crêpe by Erika M Szabo

When I was a kid, my mother often made crêpes (palacsinta in Hungarian) for dessert because it's easy to make and she could use any filling to make it a little different every time. Sometimes she filled the crêpes with cream cheese mixed with sugar and raisins, other times with chopped fruit, apricot or strawberry preserves, leftover pudding, or simply sprinkled them with cinnamon or cocoa powder and sugar. I've tried it with Nutella too; it's delish! When I'm not in the mood for sweets, I leave the sugar and vanilla out of the batter and fill the crêpes with sauteed vegetables and meat, fish, or cheese.

When I was a young teenager, I decided to make crepes when my parents weren't home. I'd seen my mom make crêpes hundreds of times, so I was sure I could cook them too. Everything went well. I mixed the batter, and the first few crêpes turned out beautifully cooked until...

I got a little over-confident and instead of turning the crêpes with the spatula, I decided to flip to turn them like my brother did. That didn't work so well. The first crêpe I tried to flip landed on Snowball's back like a blanket.

The cat got spooked and ran out of the kitchen to the backyard, trying to shake off the clinging pastry. She couldn't, because one side was still sticky, so she ran, and I ran after her.

The trouble started when the neighbors' cats got a whiff and started chasing Snowball through the garden and tearing bits of crêpe off her back.

Snowball had enough of running; she turned, and a fierce fight broke out with lots of posturing, hissing, and clawing.

Luckily, the fight ended quickly as soon as the crêpe was gone. Snowball tried to save some dignity and chased after the cats. She was exhausted by the time she chased the neighbors' cats home and went inside to eat her well-deserved crêpe filled with meat.

Publishing News



EVA PASCO

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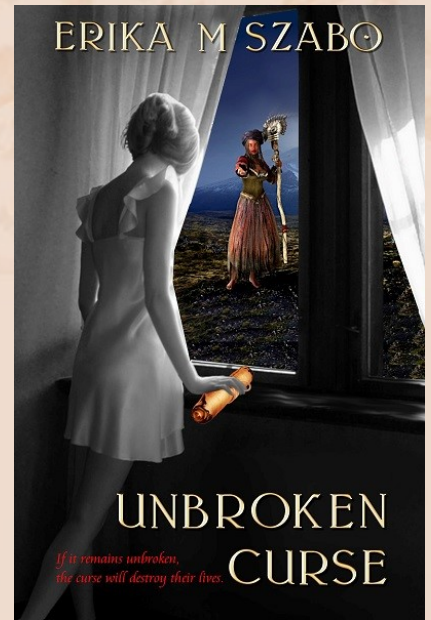
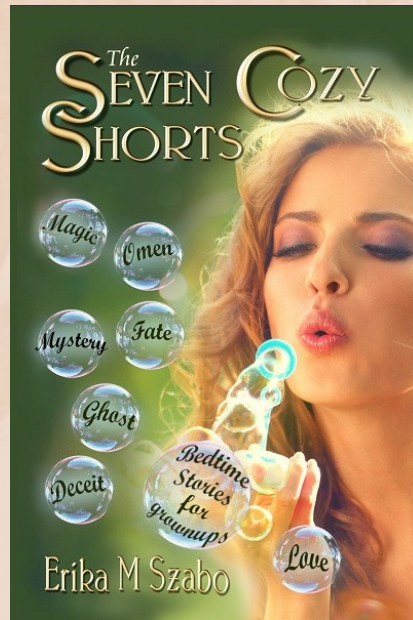
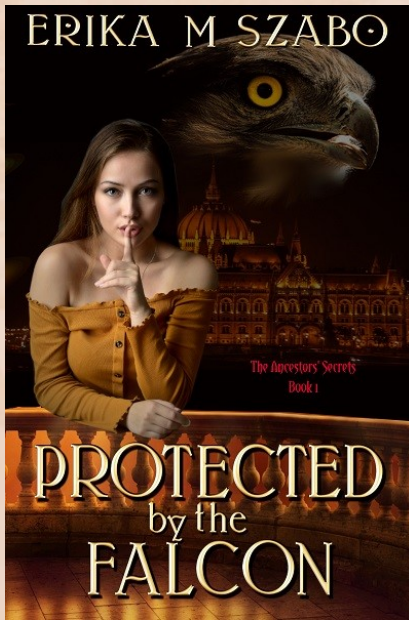
Just as a whirlwind courtship derailed Momma's beat-poet dream of hightailing it to North Beach in the Fifties, a badass drifter veers Etta away from seeking haven in the artists' hub of Greenwich Village during the Sixties. Etta makes the best of circumstances staying put in the rural enclave of Foster, Rhode Island, sketching the likes of its historic landmarks and scenic overlooks on her fishing ground.

However, deviant twists of fate with deaths resulting, arise from wild speculations and unwarranted suspicions when things aren't what they seem:

- *Chance encounters predispose a besotted admirer to figure things all wrong.
- *False impressions taunt Etta's husband, Keith, with uncertainty until his dying day.
- *Acting on a hunch, Etta's best friend shows up at her door to peddle Keith's infidelity, unbeknownst to either, in sync with his drowning while fishing. Blaze a trail to the point of no return where love and friendship shift ground to withstand the vagaries of life.

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I picked some of the best covers to include in the magazine.



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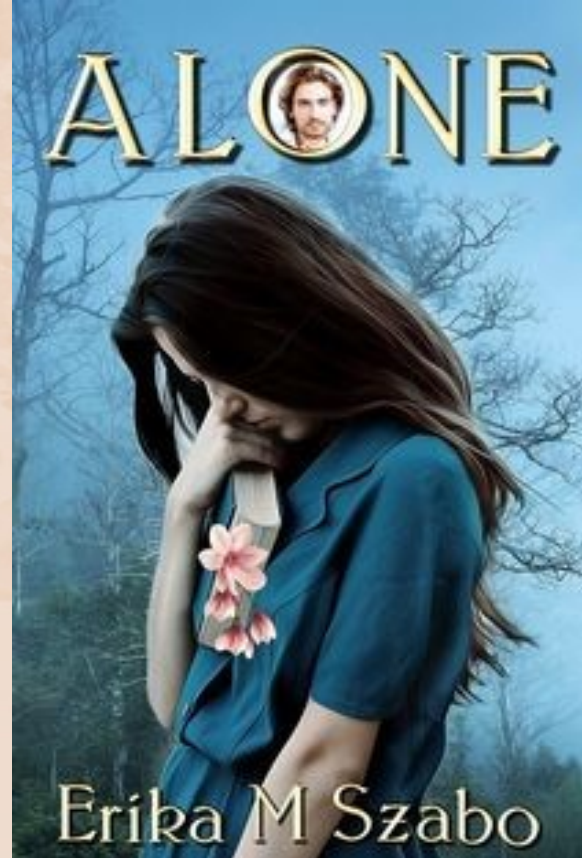
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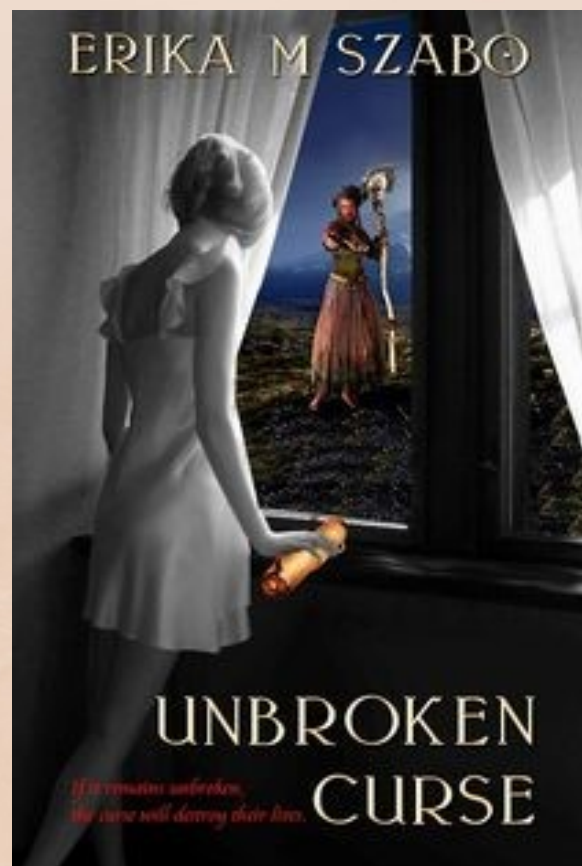
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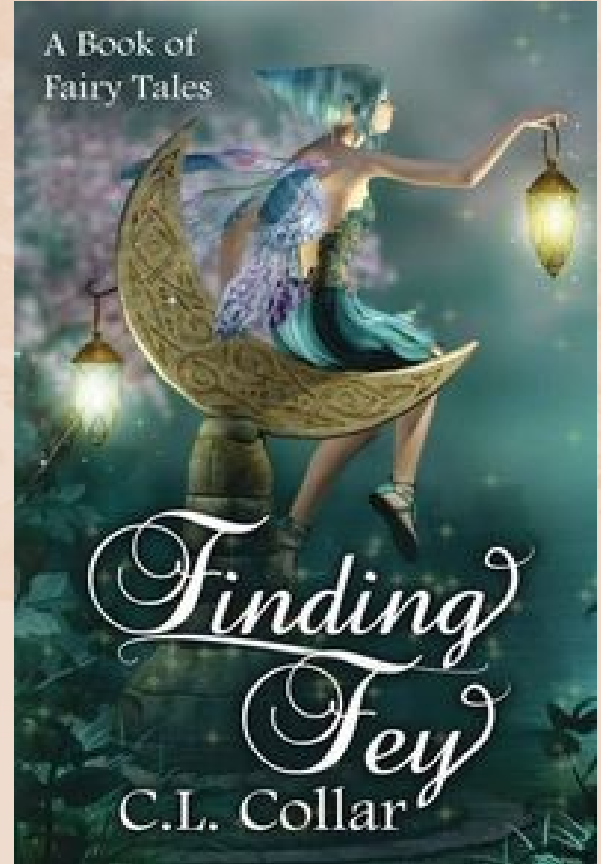
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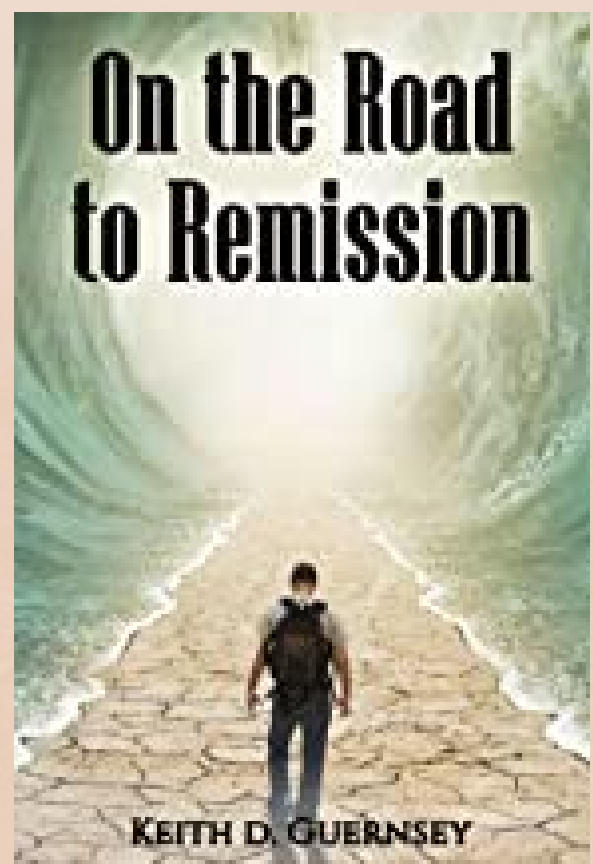
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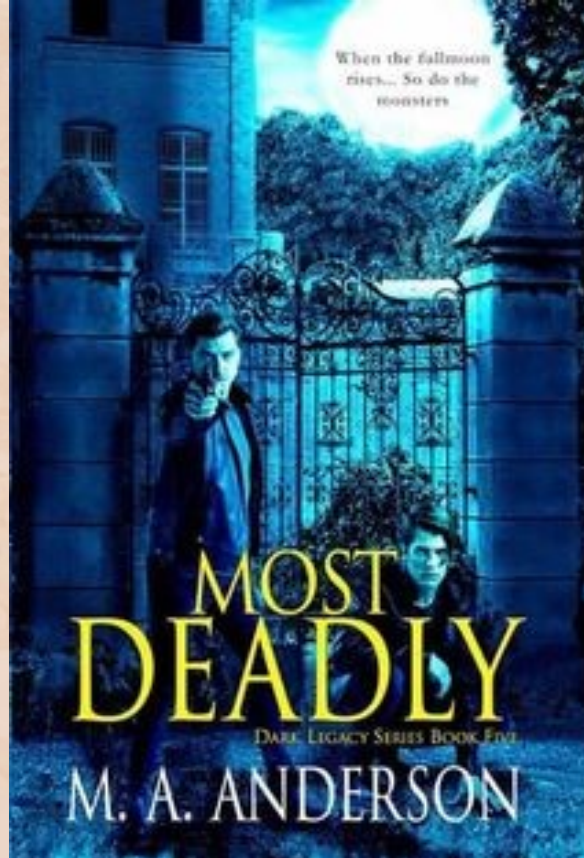
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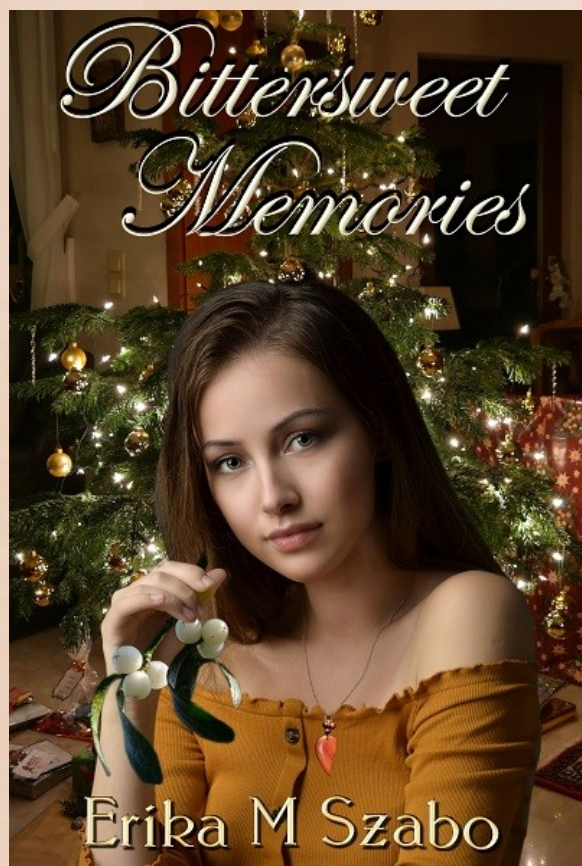
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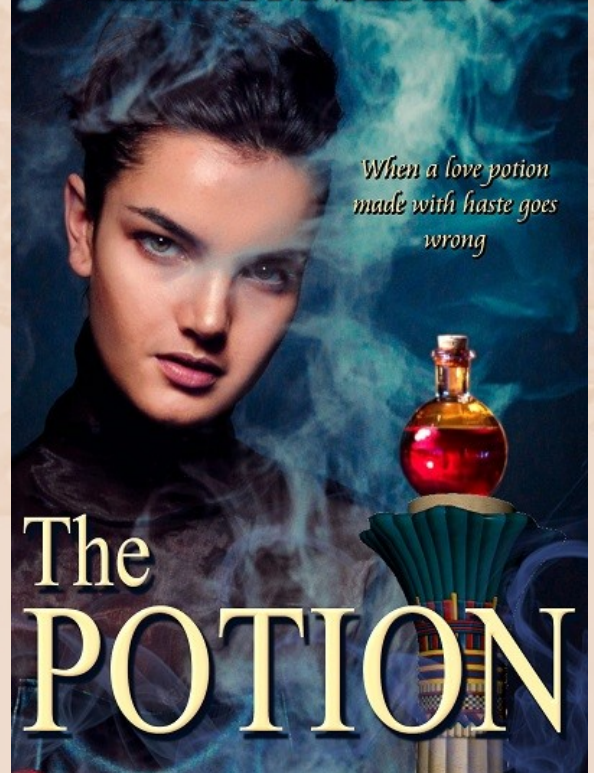
*Hugs - Love
and Great Karma*



Cindy J. Smith

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ERIKA M SZABO



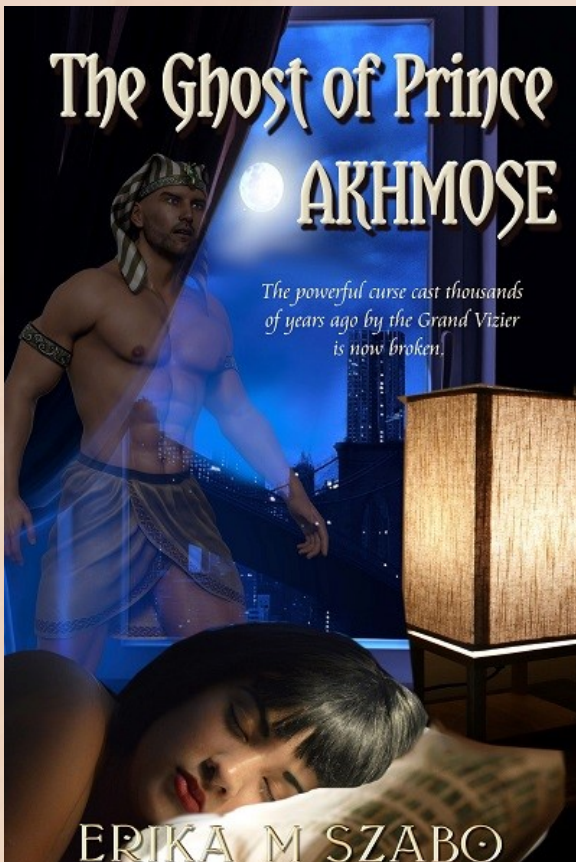
*When a love potion
made with haste goes
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destiny!*

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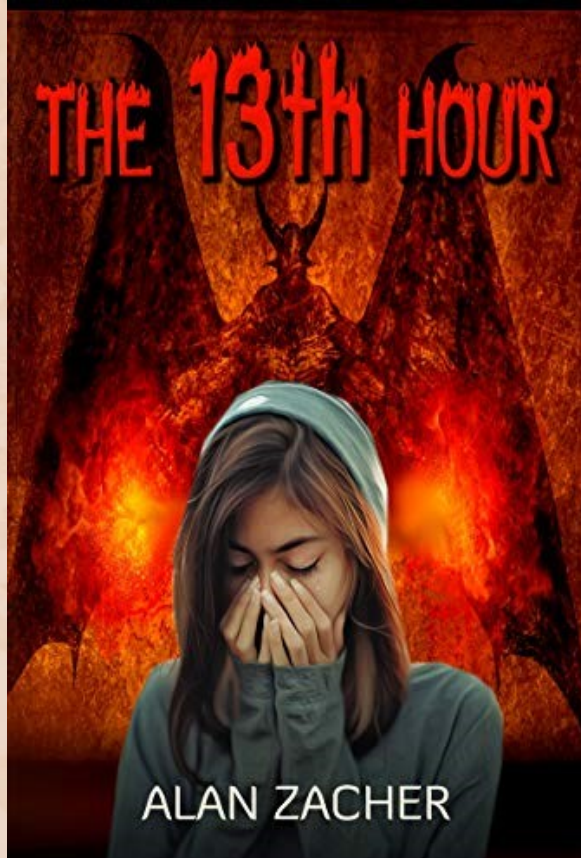


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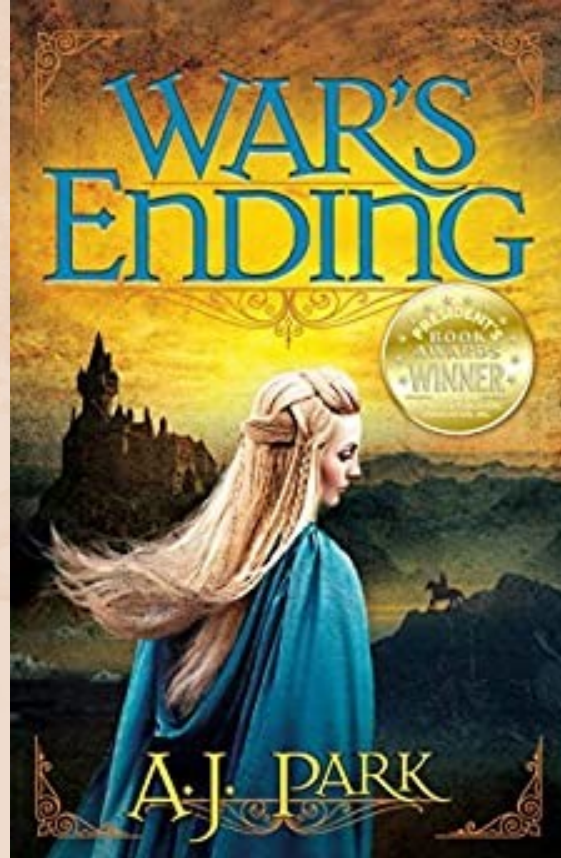
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David W. Sherwood

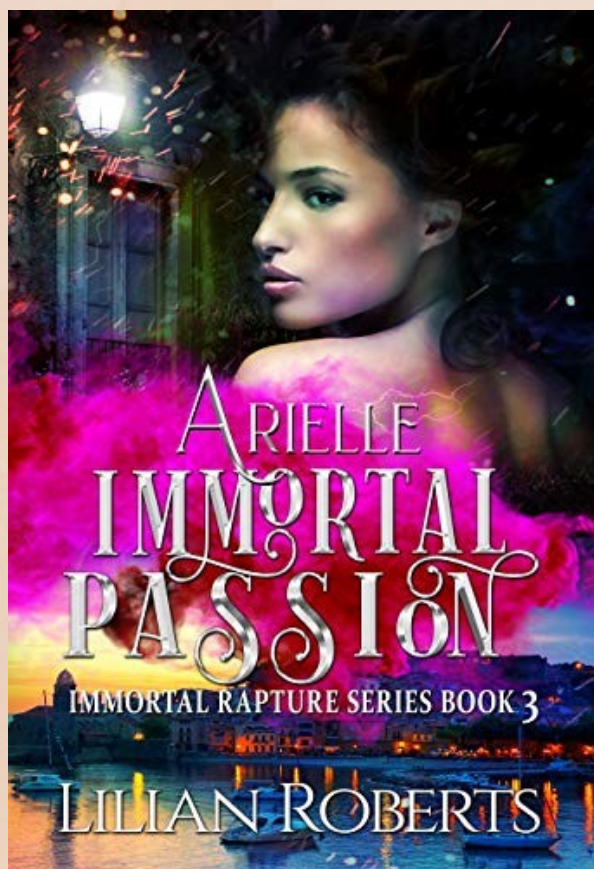
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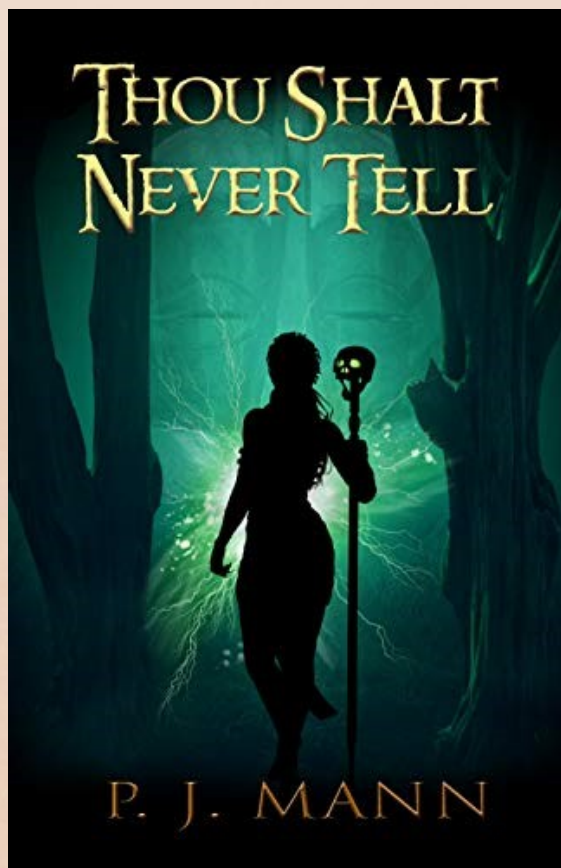
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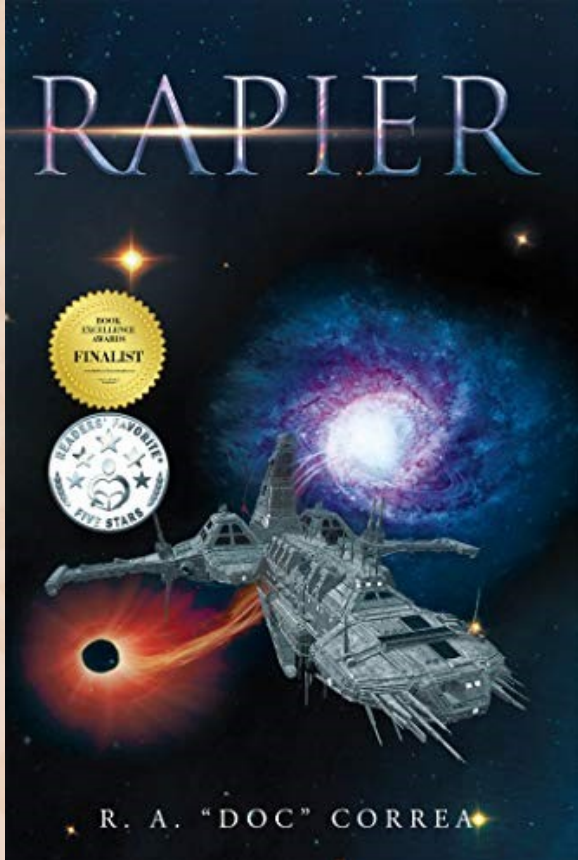
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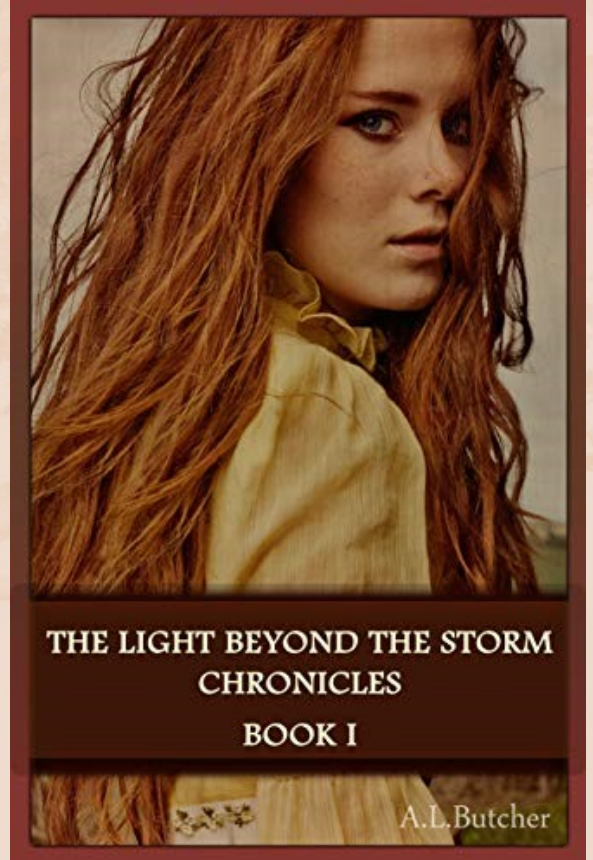
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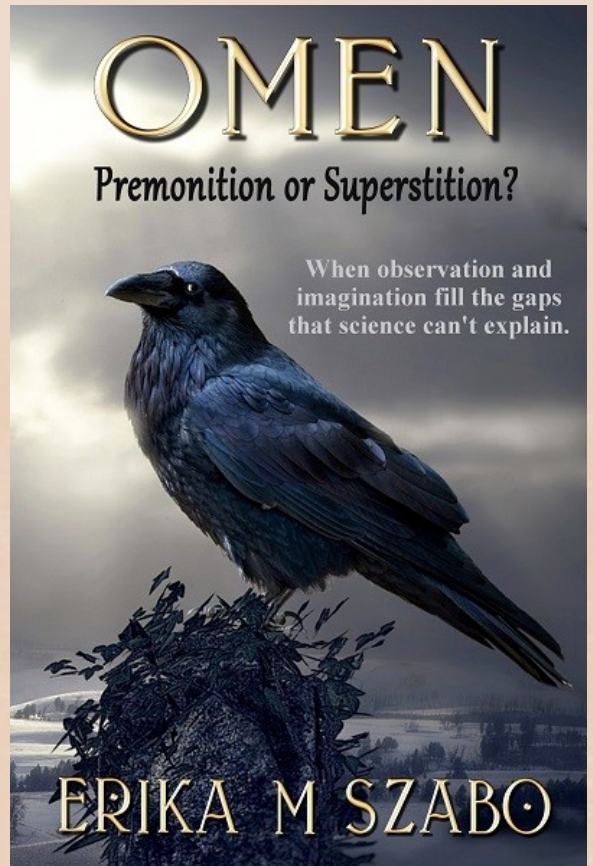
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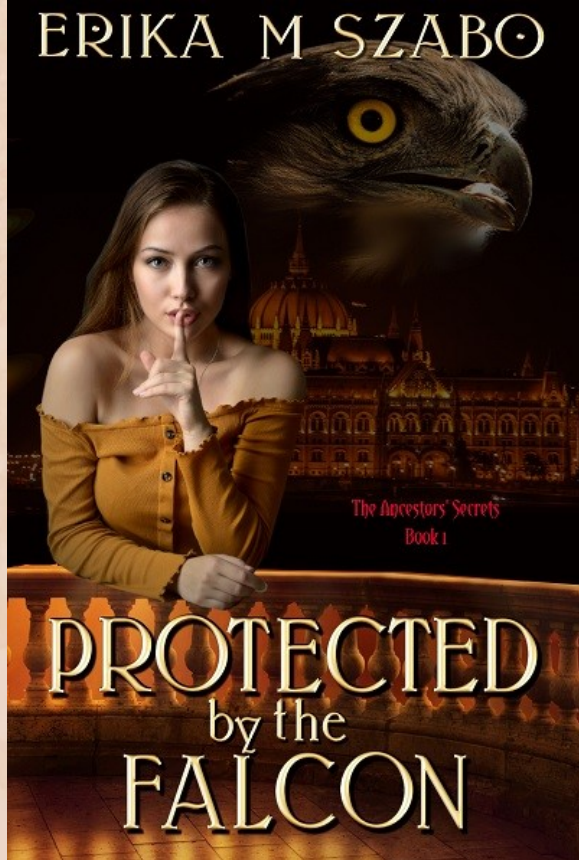
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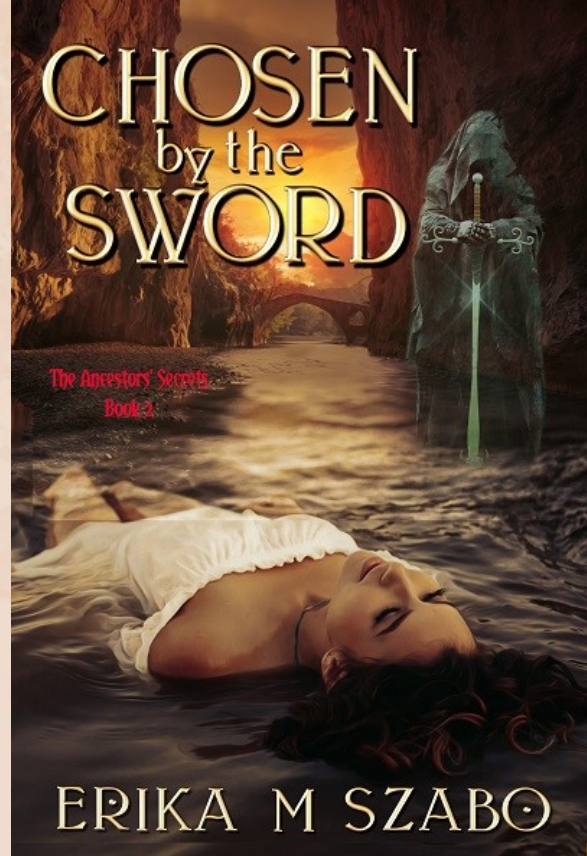
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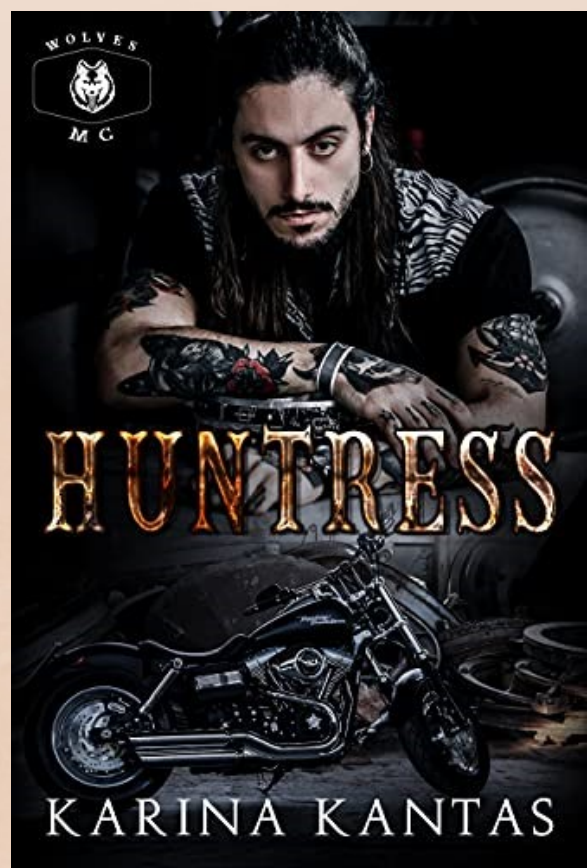
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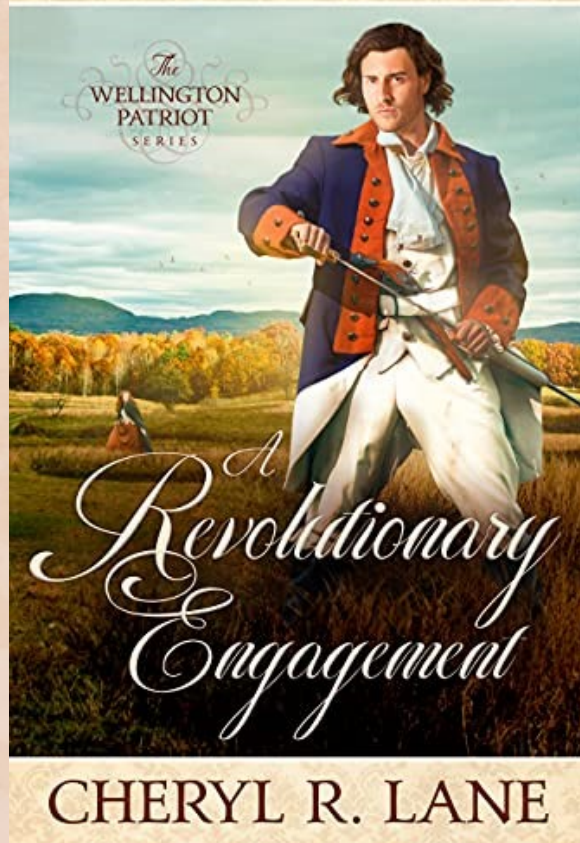
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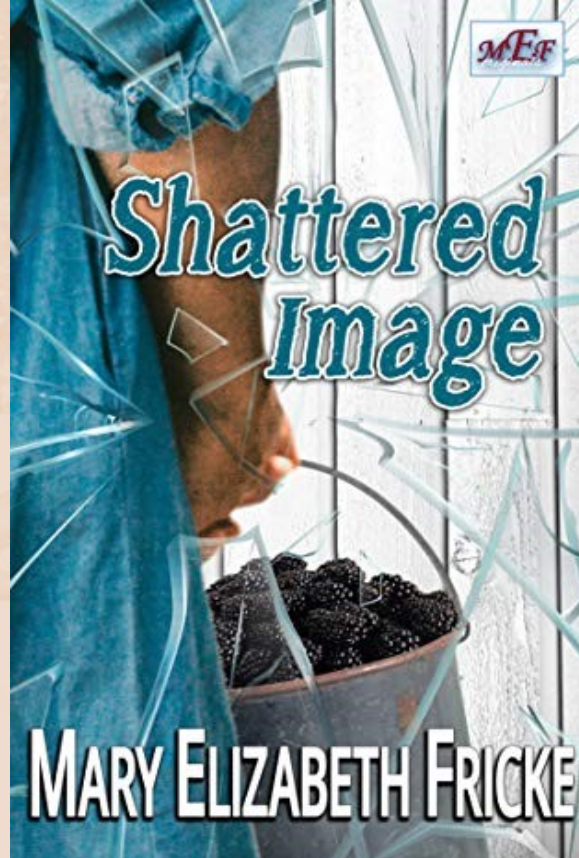
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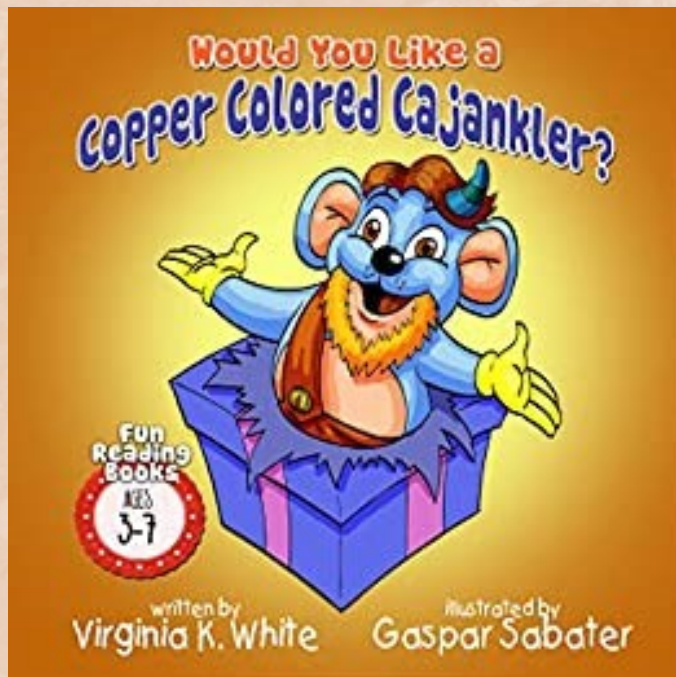
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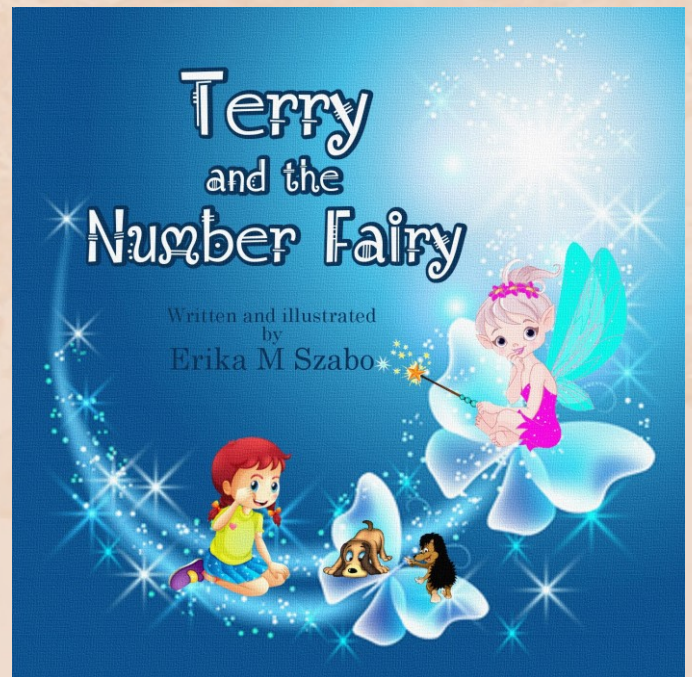
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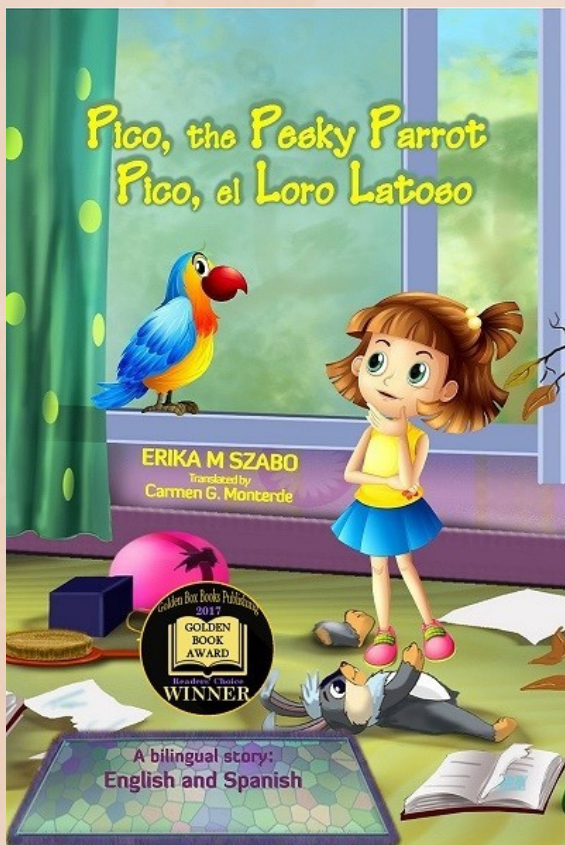
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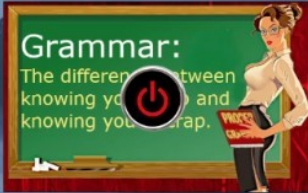
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