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*2012*





# Mix and Matchmake

BY ROSE FOX



Romance authors are always looking for the perfect match, not just between their protagonists but also among romance's many subgenres. This spring sees a continued emphasis on crossing and blending different types of romance.

The romantic suspense novel continues to enjoy popularity, buoyed by the talents of standout authors who know how to balance the very different elements of love and fear. In Lori Foster's *A Perfect Storm* (HQN), a survivor of human trafficking and a widowed mercenary overcome their past sorrows to find love as they battle modern-day flesh-peddlers. Mary Burton breathes new life into the serial killer romantic suspense novel with *Before She Dies* (Kensington/Zebra), including the killer's narration as a counterpoint to the growing passion between a detective and a woman running from her past. Both Foster and Burton are at the top of their game, showing both readers and other authors how to keep things fresh in an increasingly crowded field.

Another suspense element, espionage, has found a very comfortable home in the historical romance field. In Anna Randol's debut, *A Secret in Her Kiss* (Avon), set in 1815 Constantinople, the daughter of a freedom fighter hides crucial information in sketches she sends to England. To her surprise, she falls in love with an English soldier sent to help her complete a final mission. Mary Jo Putney's *No Longer a Gentleman* (Kensington/Zebra) flips around the rescue-the-princess formula and sends a female spy to retrieve a fellow agent trapped in France during the Napoleonic Wars. Spying gives these romance heroines a historically accurate way to have active careers and demonstrate their intelligence and grace under pressure, and the drama of war and skullduggery keeps readers turning the pages.

Psychic powers are popping up all over. Mia Marlowe's *Touch of a Rogue* (Kensington/Brava) introduces a 19th-century investigator who can see the history of any metal object he touches, pairing him with a widow whose husband was killed while collecting magical objects.

Kristen Callihan debuts powerfully with *Firelight* (Grand Central/Forever), a deliciously gothic Victorian paranormal that pairs a wealthy but disfigured lord and an impoverished but supernaturally talented woman. Elisabeth Naughton's *Enraptured* (Sourcebooks Casablanca) brings Orpheus and Eurydice into the modern day as a half-daemon and a Siren who must decide how best to use their powers.

Suzanne Brockmann, whose military suspense novels are consistently acclaimed, takes a new direction with *Born to Darkness* (Ballantine), a near-future thriller featuring psychically talented "Greater-Thans" who battle a nefarious cartel that makes drugs from the hormones of preteen girls. Apparently there's no time or place that can't be improved with a little bit of oracular mystique.

Readers who prefer purity of subgenre need not despair; romance is bigger than ever, and there's room for everyone. Samantha Grace's *Miss Hillary Schools a Scoundrel* (Sourcebooks Casablanca) is a classic Regency that mixes humor and passion against the backdrop of high society. Donna Kauffman's *Sweet Stuff* (Kensington/Brava), her second Cupcake Club romance, is a lighthearted contemporary with all the tasty fluffiness of buttercream frosting and a surprisingly rich emotional center. After the excitement of early spring blossoms and storms, these feel-good novels will be perfect for late spring's lazy afternoons, getting romance fans ready for those big beach reads just around the corner.

## ROMANCE



## PW's Top 10: Romance

### A Perfect Storm

Lori Foster. HQN, Apr.

### Before She Dies

Mary Burton. Kensington/Zebra, Feb.

### A Secret in Her Kiss

Anna Randol. Avon, Feb.

### No Longer a Gentleman

Mary Jo Putney. Kensington/Zebra, May.

### Touch of a Rogue

Mia Marlowe. Kensington/Brava, Mar.

### Firelight

Kristen Callihan. Grand Central/Forever, Feb.

### Enraptured

Elisabeth Naughton. Sourcebooks Casablanca, Apr.

### Born to Darkness

Suzanne Brockmann. Ballantine, Mar.

### Miss Hillary Schools a Scoundrel

Samantha Grace. Sourcebooks Casablanca, Feb.

### Sweet Stuff

Donna Kauffman. Kensington/Brava, Feb.

## ROMANCE

### ALLEN & UNWIN

(DIST. BY IPC)

**Things Without a Name** by Joanne Fedler (June, trade paper, \$18.95, ISBN 978-1-74237-587-8). Faith Roberts, a 34-year-old counselor at a women's crisis center, has given up on love—until she learns that love hasn't given up on her.

### ATRIA/STREBOR

**Oh, Gad: A Novel** by Joanne C. Hillhouse (Apr., trade paper, \$15, ISBN 978-1-59309-391-4). A woman facing cross-cultural odds must redefine everything she understands about her family, herself, and the country she's never really been able to call home.

### AVON

**A Night Like This** by Julia Quinn (May, mass market, \$7.99, ISBN 978-0-06-207290-0). Quinn's fans will be delighted to rejoin the hapless musicians of the Smythe-Smith family in their second Regency-era outing.

**A Rogue by Any Other Name: The First Rule of Scoundrels** by Sarah MacLean (Feb., mass market, \$7.99, ISBN 978-0-06-206852-1). MacLean launches a

Regency series about noble men driven to desperate measures with this tale of treachery, vengeance, and unexpected romance.

**A Secret in Her Kiss** by Anna Randol (Feb., mass market, \$7.99, ISBN 978-0-06-202580-7). Randol's masterful debut visits 1815 Constantinople, where a soldier finds love with a spirited spy.

**The Cowboy Takes a Bride** by Lori Wilde (Mar., mass market, \$7.99, ISBN 978-0-06-204775-5). Wilde starts a new series set in Jubilee, Tex., a town full of horses, cowboys, and more romance than you can shake a stick at.

**Scandal Wears Satin** by Loretta Chase (June, mass market, \$7.99, ISBN 978-0-06-210031-3). Chase follows the superlative *Silk Is for Seduction* with another tale of aristocrats turned seamstresses who find passion and love as sumptuous as the gowns they create.

### BALLANTINE

**A Simple Spring: A Seasons of Lancaster Novel** by Rosalind Lauer (Apr., trade paper, \$15, ISBN 978-0-345-52673-1). Readers looking for a chaste and cozy fireside read will enjoy the leisurely pace of Lauer's debut, a quiet and gentle contemporary in which a reporter exploits her friendship with an Amish man to get the scoop on the

unsolved murder of his parents.

**Born to Darkness** by Suzanne Brockmann (Mar., hardcover, \$26, ISBN 978-0-345-52127-9). Bestseller Brockmann, known for military suspense, takes readers on a pulse-pounding ride with her first futuristic paranormal romance, in which superpowered "Greater-Thans" take on a cartel that makes drugs from the hormones of preteen girls.

### BANTAM

**Caught in the Act** by Jill Sorenson (Mar., mass market, \$7.99, ISBN 978-0-553-59264-1). Sorenson develops an unusual romance between a border protection officer and a woman who's blackmailed into smuggling packages for a drug lord.

### BERKLEY

**The Last Boyfriend: Book Two of the Inn Boonsboro Trilogy** by Nora Roberts (May, trade paper, \$16, ISBN 978-0-425-24603-0). Superstar Roberts continues the contemporary series modeled after her own adventures running a smalltown inn.

**Oracle's Moon** by Thea Harrison (Mar., mass market, \$7.99, ISBN 978-0-425-24659-7). A college student unexpectedly inherits her sister's magical powers—and custody of her sister's young children. Fortunately, there's a handsome djinn willing to help her juggle her new responsibilities.

**Sweet Addiction** by Maya Banks (Apr., trade paper, \$15, ISBN 978-0-425-24565-1). Banks pens a smoking erotic romance with unabashed steam elements that will leave readers breathless.

**Tangle of Need** by Nalini Singh (May, hardcover, \$25.95, ISBN 978-0-425-24756-3). Singh's latest *Psy-Changeling* paranormal ramps up the heat against the backdrop of psychic warfare.

### BETHANY HOUSE

**Blue Moon Bay** by Lisa Wingate (Feb., trade paper, \$14.99, ISBN 978-0-7642-0822-5). An architect is torn between her fiancé, who's brokered the sale of a farm that will be replaced by an industrial plant, and the smalltown banker who opposes the deal. 25,000-copy announced first printing.

