

# LOVE'S GREAT ADVENTURE

The exclusive magazine from Elizabeth Ellen Carter

## COSTUMED CAROLS

A VICTORIAN STYLE YULETIDE IN SOUTH CAROLINA

## LOVE TO ROMANCE A DUKE IN WINTER

*Interview*

## The Extent of HIS WICKEDNESS

THE DUCHESS OF PETRUSH REVEALS HOW SHE WENT FROM 'THE SPINSTER SHREW' TO THE WIFE OF THE MOST COMMITTED RAKE IN ENGLAND

## BELLES & BEAUX

THE BLUESTOCKING BELLES SLIP A TREAT INTO YOUR CHRISTMAS STOCKING

## NO HOLDS BARD

SCREEN ADAPTATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE THAT STRAYED OFF-SCRIPT

## GREAT CHRISTMAS READS

EXCERPTS FROM EMILY ROYAL, SUSANNE BELLAMY & ELIZABETH ELLEN CARTER

## ALSO INSIDE:

- FUN & GAMES: ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE
- AFTER THE FEAST: LEFTOVERS - THE SEQUEL!

LOVE'S GREAT ADVENTURE

Issue 20 Dec 2022



# AUTHOR'S DESK

## 2022 - WHAT YEAR IT 'S BEEN!

Have you ever had one of those years that didn't progress the way you expected? Yeah, I think we've all been having years like that recently. But we've made it through another one and here at Love's Great Adventure we have a wonderful edition for December.

We're featuring two historical romance anthologies - Belles & Beaux and A Duke in Winter. The first will get you in the mood for the festive season, and the second will carry you through into the New Year.

Belles & Beaux is from the wonderful authors of the Bluestocking Belles. It's a charming collection of sweet romantic tales which comes out before Christmas.

A Duke in Winter is from the amazing authors of Dragonblade Publishing, and it comes out on 29 December. It's an anthology inspired by William Shakespeare's plays.

One of those amazing Dragonblade authors is Emily Royal, and she treats us in this edition to an interview with the Duke of Petrush and his new duchess. They're quite a couple! We also have extracts from stories for you to read including Forgotten Secrets, a contemporary romantic thriller from bestselling Australian author Susanne Bellamy.

I hope no matter how you celebrate this time of year that you have a happy and joyous season surrounded by those you love. Let's raise a toast to a prosperous 2023 when we'll unveil exciting news about the future for Love's Great Adventure. Stay tuned!

*Elizabeth Ellen Carter*



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## LOVE'S GREAT ADVENTURE

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from Elizabeth Ellen Carter

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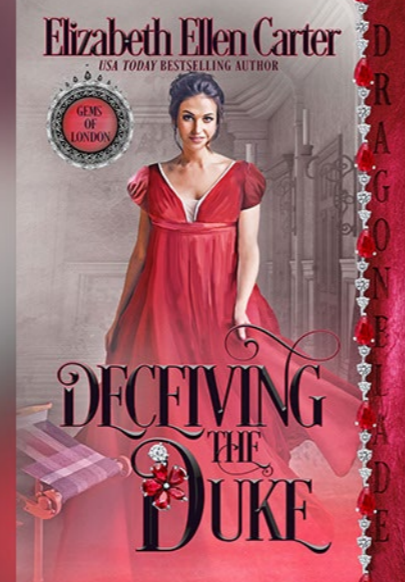
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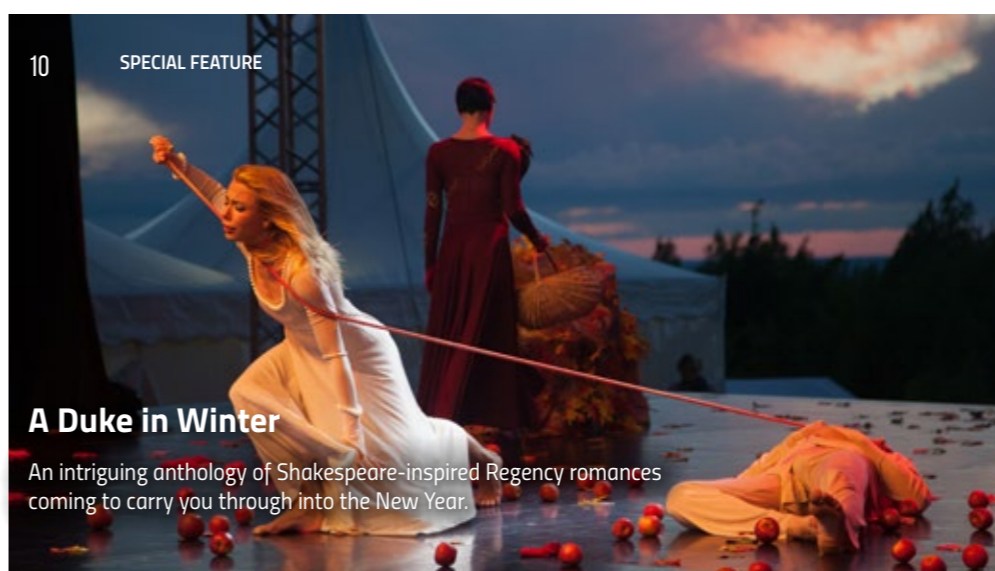


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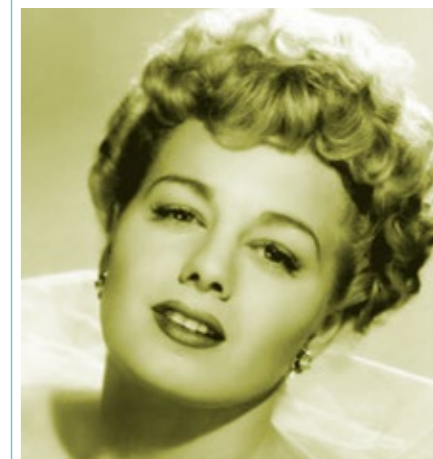


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# INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

## DID HER REPUTATION ORIGINATE FROM THE ENVY OF THOSE WHO RECOGNISED HER INTELLECT?

*I've heard tell that the best matches are forged in the fires of adversity. Or, as the gossip columnists say, 'opposites attract'.*

*While not particularly fond of trite, overused adages, there's no better phrase to describe the couple I had the good fortune to take tea with at Hardwick Hall during a winter house party.*

*I had to confess a degree of trepidation at the prospect of interviewing His Grace the fifth Duke of Petrush—and his new duchess, formerly the Honourable Miss Catherine Parville, eldest daughter of Lord Baptiste Parville.*

*With fiery red hair and a temper to match, Her Grace was known as The Spinster Shrew, due to her limitless repertoire of scathing put-downs. What could have persuaded His Grace, the most committed rake in England, to surrender his bachelor existence? Read on to find out!*



by Special Correspondent  
EMILY ROYAL

*The days immediately following Christmas are among the most peaceful of the year. After the celebrations, the gatherings by the log fire, exchanges of gifts, and children's squeals of delight, a hush descends over every party.*

*The Christmas house party at Hardwick Hall, to which I was invited courtesy of Lady Hardwick, is no different.*

*So, I now find myself taking tea with the new Duke and Duchess Petrush in Lady Hardwick's drawing room, which overlooks the snow-covered gardens outside. A fire crackles in the hearth, and the aroma of Christmas spices lingers in the air.*

*The duchess reaches for the teapot. "Tea? Or would you prefer brandy?"*

*Continued on page 7*

“HER GRACE WAS KNOWN AS THE SPINSTER SHREW, DUE TO HER LIMITLESS REPERTOIRE OF SCATHING PUT-DOWNS.”

# THE RAKE & THE SHREW



## AN EXCERPT FROM **THE TAMING OF THE DUKE** BY EMILY ROYAL

### “Miss Parville.”

Catherine glanced up to see the duke of Petrush staring at her, holding a glass filled with an opaque liquid, a glint of mischief in his expression. While her future looked somewhat bleak, at least in the present, she could enjoy some sport with him.

She eyed the glass. “What’s that you’ve brought?” she asked. “It doesn’t look like punch.”

“Alas, I have sad news to share.” He gave her a pained expression, but the glint in his eye remained.

“Sad news?”

“The punch is of such poor quality, that I insisted a more suitable drink be made, especially for you.”

She took the proffered glass, and held it to her lips. His eyes widened, and his body stilled, as if he’d caught his breath. What mischief was he up to?

Them, she took a sip.

Ye gods—she’d never tasted anything so bitter! Lemonade, mixed with vinegar.

So—he wanted to toy with her, did he?

She took another sip, this time prepared for the acrid taste, and she had to concede that she preferred it to the sickly punch she’d been expecting.

His lip curled into a semblance of a smile, as if he fought to restrain his mirth. Returning the smile, she swallowed

a mouthful of the liquid, and his eyes widened.

“I wouldn’t drink it too quickly,” he warned. “It may not be suitable.”

“On the contrary,” she said. “It’s perfect—why else would you have brought it? It’s so clever of you to have made such an accurate judgement as to my preferences.”

He shook his head, a bewildered expression in his eyes. “I beg your pardon?”

“I loathe overly sweet foods—and drinks,” she said. “Too often at these parties, the men get to indulge in drinks that are infinitely more interesting, whereas the women must make do with syrupy substances that destroy the palate and rot the teeth. It’s as if mankind is of the opinion that womankind is in constant need of sweetening.”

“Do ladies not desire sweetness?” he asked.

“Good heavens, no!” she cried. “At least, those of us with any sense abhor sweetness, for with it comes a layer of deceit. I prefer the bitter to the sweet. Bitterness is honest, for it has no need for subterfuge.”

His smile slipped. “You have a somewhat bleak view of the world, Miss Parville.”

She took another mouthful, and he winced. “The world is not kind, Your Grace,” she said, “neither is it fair.”

“I WAS DETERMINED TO WARD HIM OFF. BUT, WITH EACH INSULT I FIRED IN HIS DIRECTION, HE DELIVERED A RETURNING SALVO.”

## **THE RAKE & THE SHREW**

Continued from page 5

“At this hour?” the duke’s eyes widen. His voice, deep and rich, is rumoured to send every woman into a swoon. But the duchess merely rolls her eyes and gives an exasperated little sigh.

“And why not?” she quips. “Or do you perhaps wish to offer us one of your special concoctions instead?”

The duke blushes in the manner of an errant schoolboy, but there’s no mistaking their love for each other. His Grace moves his hand until it touches his wife’s and they exchange a glance. Something tells me they have more than tea on their minds, and I feel as if I’m intruding.

“Forgive us,” the duchess says. “We’ve been married less than a month. There are none so uncivil as newlyweds, don’t you think? Once the first flush of romance has lessened, we’ll be more congenial company, I’m sure.” She pours a cup, drops a slice of lemon into it, then leans forward, handing it over.

“You take lemon, but no sugar.” It’s not a question.

won’t ask how Her Grace already knows how I take my tea. At close quarters, her eyes are an extraordinary shade of green, radiating a sharp intelligence. Which makes me wonder whether her reputation as a shrew originated from the envy of those who recognised her intellect. For, there’s nothing so fearful in society as a woman in possession of her wits.

I lean back and sip my tea. Just how I like it.

The duchess gives a satisfied smile, then takes her husband’s hand. It seems time to start the interview proper.

**ER: You seem very much in love. Could you tell me how the two of you met?**

*His Grace:* It was quite by chance at a party.

*Her Grace:* I bumped into him—literally! And, he made a rather disparaging comment about my appearance.

**So, it was hate at first sight?**

*Her Grace (laughing):* I suppose it was! I’m well aware of the fact that most men seeking to flatter a lady do so with wicked intentions.

*His Grace:* But I didn’t flatter you, my love—quite the opposite. And, you gave as good as you got.

*Her Grace:* I was determined to ward him off. But, with each insult I fired in his direction, he delivered a returning salvo. I could never be sure what he’d do next, and for the first time in years, I was intrigued. Little did I know the extent of his wickedness!

**Does this have something to do with the special concoctions you mentioned earlier? Could you tell me about that?**

His Grace remains tight-lipped. Fortunately his wife is more forthcoming.

*Her Grace:* During a dance—in this very building—he offered to fetch me a drink. Which he did. A cocktail of lemonade and vinegar.

*(His Grace blushes. I believe it’s the first time I’ve seen guilt in a duke’s expression.)*

**Good heavens! Were you attempting to make Her Grace unwell?**

*His Grace:* I never believed she’d actually drink the stuff!

*Her Grace:* To serve him right, I downed the entire glass. It was worth it to see the look of terror on his face! But, I believe, he suffered more than I did. Guilt can do more harm to the constitution than an excess of acid in the stomach.

*(She turns to him and pats his hand in the manner of an indulgent parent.)* We began courting not long after, so perhaps I should advocate poisoning as a strategy to secure a lady’s hand.

**Or wagers? I heard a rumour that Your Grace agreed to court Her Grace as part of a scheme to assist your friend with courting her sister?**

*Her Grace:* Yes, that’s right, isn’t it darling!

*His Grace:* Surely you’re not going to print that? The world will think me a cad as well as a poisoner.

*Her Grace:* I think that particular ship has already sailed, my love.

*His Grace:* Very well—I’m man enough to confess my crime. And Fate had the last laugh in the end. I didn’t realise how love would change me—or what the love of an extraordinary woman can do to a man.

**What’s next for you?**

*His Grace:* We return to Petcombe Hall in a fortnight. After that, I look forward to many years of wedded bliss.

*Her Grace:* With, of course, a little conflict. Life would be dull without a battle or two, would it not, my love?

*They share another glance. The renowned rake seems to have been thoroughly tamed, though I suspect, given the glint of wickedness in his eyes, the balance of power shifts constantly between them.*

As I continue to observe them, the duke sets his

teacup aside, takes his wife’s hand once more, and glances toward her belly, with an expression of love tender enough to make a stone statue weep.

Perhaps a certain happy event is to be announced in the near future? But, before I’m able to ask, our host and hostess join us, to announce that dinner will be served in an hour.

His Grace helps his wife up, and they take their leave ‘in order to indulge in a little rest in our chamber, before supper.’ But, if the secret smile on the duchess’s lips is anything to go by, I suspect the duke has something a little more energetic in mind.

While Her Grace referred to the eventual lessening of the first flush of romance, it is my suspicion that this is a couple whose love, though forged from their initial conflict, is all the stronger for it, and will endure for many years to come.



# BELLES &

An anthology of eight charming stories set in the festive season. Pour yourself a drink, find a favorite chair, and step into the romantic worlds of The Bluestocking Belles.

# BEAUX



## A Mistletoe Kiss by Sherry Ewing

*Sophie Templeton's Christmas wish is a kiss beneath the mistletoe from the man who holds her heart.*



## The Magic Christmas Stew by Susana Ellis

*Retired Captain Daniel Winthrop needs a wealthy bride, but the governess is the woman he could love.*

## An Angel's Promise by Rue Allyn

*Not a blizzard, wolves, or a deadly enemy can stop Artis MacKai from saving the foal her mother promised her.*



## Flowers for His Lady by Alina K Field

*Just when she needs to decide whether to leave her home village, Eleanor Gumwood's past rides into her village on a white horse.*



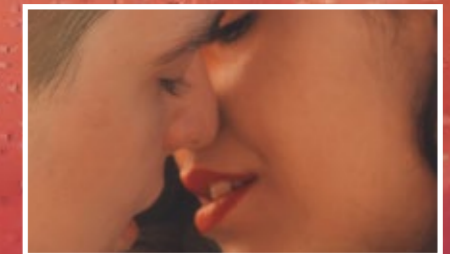
## The Beau of Christmas Past by Cerise DeLand

*Parted years ago and exiled for a stolen kiss, Alyssa and Gabe are together again. Is the past to be overcome? Or fulfilled?*



## Room at the Inn by Caroline Warfield

*Declan Alworth Steps up to make room in his heart and his home for a fatherless child, and wins the heart of the vicar's daughter.*



## Zara's Locket by Jude Knight

*Dismissed from her post on Christmas Eve, Zara MacLaren finds trouble, imprisonment, and the love of her life.*

## Three Ships by Elizabeth Ellen Carter

*A violent storm brings lighthouse dweller Laura Winter a clutch of pirates bent on mischief, but also a handsome lieutenant.*



*Belles & Beaux - A Bluestocking Belles Collection will be out on 15 December 2022*  
[Click or tap here to pre-order now on Amazon.](#)



# THE TIMELESS APPEAL OF WILL SHAKESPEARE



Elizabeth Ellen Carter asks what is it about the works of William Shakespeare that resonate with us more than 400 years after his death?

**T**his was a question I had to sit down and think about when writing *What the False Heart Doth Know*, my story in *The Duke in Winter* anthology. There were a couple of answers that sprang to mind. The first was the way Shakespeare managed to distill important historical events down to human dramas.

It would be all too tempting to go for large grandeur and spectacle on pivotal historical figures such as Richard III, Henry V, and Julius Caesar. But Shakespeare went for the personal touch, finding the man behind the title and those who interacted with them, stripping back the layers of pomp and circumstance to get into their minds, to make them human, to make them real.

And it is that very humanity that makes them relatable. To quote Thucydides: "Human nature is the one constant through human history. It is always there."

The ability to take a look at events in history and identify those primary human drivers – love, hate, jealousy, vaulting ambition – that might have governed the decisions of these important people and reveal it in a way that is compelling and relatable to modern audiences is truly outstanding.

Take Scottish King Macbeth, for instance. He died 600 years before the audience at The Globe came to hear his name. King Richard III's cry, 'My horse, my horse, my kingdom for a horse!' rings out just as poignantly today, centuries later.

Of course, something that mitigated against Shakespeare's plays being staged as grand spectacles was money and, to a lesser extent, technology.

Those paying the bills couldn't afford big budgets and stage technology was pretty limited.

But the second thing that occurred to me was that Shakespeare wasn't writing for the cashed-up elite.

He wrote for an audience that straddled the cultural and class lines of the day. It

wasn't just the great and the good who went to The Globe – it was the street vendor, the coalman, the flower seller too, and Shakespeare's talent was in producing for them characters with whom they could identify.

I think generations of university lecturers, theatre impresarios, and movie auteurs have done us all a disservice in trying to make Shakespeare highbrow. Their stiff, pontificating performances enervate the power of his works. They ought to be seen simply as raw and unflinchingly honest insight into human nature for us to relate to... and learn from.

When Dragonblade Publishing offered their authors the opportunity to put their own spin on Shakespeare, I was keen to jump in.

*What the False Heart Doth Know*, the title of my story, is a line from *Macbeth*, and I decided to 'go meta' with it.

Rather than restage *Macbeth* as a Regency Romance (hardly!), I decided to have a production of 'the Scottish play' as the background to a drama playing out between my hero and heroine.

However, unlike *Macbeth*, my characters get a happily ever after and the ability to say, 'all's well that ends well!'

In *A Duke in Winter*, the authors have put their twist on Shakespeare's tales to come up with something unique and special to read at this time of year. I hope you enjoy them.

You've already seen one excerpt on Page Six beside this edition's character interview. You'll find three more excerpts on the next page.



## Loving Lysander

by Charlotte Wren

Lady Catherine Northcott has loved Lord Lysander Theodore Barton, Marquess of Hawes, since childhood.

Her secret longing to be his wife is realized when Lysander asks for her hand in marriage. Her future – their future – looms as bright as the sun!

Then her brother turns up at the New Year's Day party with his new fiancée on his arm.

Miss Helena Elliott has only recently returned from India along with her mysterious Indian nurse.

Her arrival triggers a subtle change in Lysander's behavior and Catherine begins to question her faith in him. She could never have foreseen, however, the treacherous nightmare of betrayal that was about to unfold, or how it would change her life.

But then, life is about second chances. Perhaps the wrong that was done can be put right, and her dream of love can become real once more.

### AN EXCERPT FROM LOVING LYSANDER

"Miss Elliot's family is landed gentry, but have been in India for years," Henry said, later that evening after dinner. Catherine listened with interest, and cast a surreptitious glance at Lysander. He stood beside her, nursing a glass of brandy in his hand, his focus on Henry. But a moment later, his gaze switched to Miss Elliot, who stood with Philip by the pianoforte. They, and the guests, had gathered in the music room, where the lady in question was about to show off her prowess on the instrument.

Catherine told herself she was being foolish. Lysander's interest in the lovely Helena was probably nothing more than simple curiosity. He'd never had a wandering eye, nor was he given to frivolity. Yet, it seemed something about Miss Elliot had garnered his attention.

"Charles Elliot was a highly respected official by all accounts," Henry went



OBERON, TITANIA AND PUCK WITH FAIRIES DANCING. WILLIAM BLAKE. C1786

on. "He and his wife both succumbed to a cholera outbreak several months ago, leaving Miss Elliot, who is an only child, on her own. She is no longer officially in mourning, but is not yet comfortable discarding all semblance of it, apparently."

"Understandable," Catherine said. "It must have been terribly difficult for her."

"Yes, it was all rather tragic," Henry replied. "Of course, she had little choice but to return to England. She arrived back at the end of September, along with her Indian nurse, and they've been lodging with friends near Bath since

# A DUKE IN

Excerpts from three of the stories in Dragonblade Publishing's Shakespeare-inspired Regency romance anthology.

# WINTER

### Inspired by 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'

*This is my favorite Shakespeare play. We studied it in High School and even put on a showing of it. Years later, I saw it performed outdoors in High Park, Toronto. The setting among the trees was fantastic! Gave it a whole new dimension.*



LEFT: MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING. ALFRED ELMORE, 1846

## Much Ado About a Storme

by Sandra Sookoo

Lavinia Storme – the Dowager Countess of Hadleigh – has time on her hands now that her family is settled and content.

When she meets Allan Montrousse – 4th Duke of Tattersham – after a carriage malfunction brings him to her door, unexpected sparks fly.

Scandal brews between them in the days leading up to a masquerade ball, but in true Storme family style, love is found at the end.

### Inspired by 'Much Ado About Nothing'

*I chose this play because it's a fun piece with confusion and mischief and misplaced feelings. It seemed to fit the vibe of the Storme family perfectly. My story is very loosely based on it.*

## AN EXCERPT FROM MUCH ADO ABOUT A STORME

"Are you happy, Mother?"

"Of course I am. How could I not be?"

He uttered a quick huff. "I don't mean because we've all settled and are giving you grandchildren." An intensity rolled from him in waves. Andrew never did things by half. "Are you living a life fulfilled? I mean, surely your existence isn't to be of service to the rest of us."

"What are you trying to get at, Andrew?" Lavinia narrowed her eyes.

He waved a hand in dismissal. "I mean romantically. Now that we don't require supervision—much—perhaps it's time for you to marry again, so you'll have a companion with whom to live out the remainder of your years."

*As if I'm a doddering old woman about to lose my faculties?*

"Oh, pish posh. I am doing perfectly well without such things." She hadn't given thought to marrying again, for she'd remained loyal to her husband's memory, but he'd died over four years ago. She missed him, of course—he'd

been the love of her life—but his heart had attacked him, and that had been that. "I rather think romance is best left to the younger generations."

"Nonsense." Andrew strummed the fingers of one hand on his thigh. "You are still quite vital and beautiful."

Was she, though? Lavinia shook her head. "I am older, Andrew. Why can I not live out the rest of my days in peace and by dandling grandchildren on my knee?"

"You can, of course, but don't you miss the closeness a romance can bring?" Mischief sparkled in his eyes, and that couldn't bode well. "You and Father were thick as thieves most of the time. I find it odd you don't want that again."

"I am content. There is nothing wrong with that."

"No, but what about kissing? Women always like that. Surely, you'd wish to experience that again? Have a man court you?"

Oddly enough, heat infused her cheeks. "I did adore kissing your father..." Could women feel that rush of heated excitement again at her age?

## What the False Heart Doth Know

by Elizabeth Ellen Carter

Lady Sapphira Galbraith's secret romance with Earl Anthony Redthorpe is over and he is engaged to another. Spending Christmas and the New Year with cousins in storm-battered Norfolk, she puts on a false face of happiness.

The only one who seems to understand the depth of her heartache is cousin Innes who suggests a marriage of convenience to him. As she considers his proposal, the storm blows in unexpected guests - Anthony, his fiancée Elizabeth, and her family.

Sapphira learns that Anthony's father has died and he is now Duke. What's more, he has discovered the depth of his father's deceit in forcing him into betrothal to Lady Elizabeth.

Is it enough for hope to grow in Sapphira's broken heart?

### AN EXCERPT FROM WHAT THE FALSE HEART DOTH KNOW

Sapphira rubbed her hands together before removing her cashmere-lined leather gloves to pick up her knitting. So far she had gone four hours without thinking of him. *Anthony.*

But once the vision was conjured in her mind's eye, it was there and couldn't be forgotten.

She shifted in her seat and busied her hands with the knitting needles, using them to distract herself from falling into tears again.

In a few short weeks, Anthony would marry. And it wouldn't be to her.

Still, she vowed to be of good cheer. She made that promise to her family who had worried about her ever since they'd received word of Anthony's engagement. Her father had suggested another season in London to

get over her disappointment. But how could she justify her father's expense and joyfully attend balls and soirees knowing the man she loved – would always love – would soon be married to someone else?

If it had been her heart alone that had been broken, she might have borne it, but it wasn't.

Anthony loved her too.

Oh yes, Sapphira knew how that sounded. She wasn't so much of a goose to not know there were men who vowed to be in love and played women false.

How could she possibly explain any of this to her parents and not have them think worse of the man?

So, she said nothing of Anthony's private vows to her. Let them think the disappointment was hers alone.

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# OUT NOW FROM USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR ELIZABETH ELLEN CARTER

## AN EXCERPT FROM **FORGOTTEN SECRETS** BY SUSANNE BELLAMY

She was perhaps in her late twenties, slim, with fair skin that looked as though she spent more time indoors than outside

and her clothes looked expensive, though what did Seth know?

'Hello, can you hear me?' He checked her pulse. It was stronger than before, better than he'd expected after her ditching in the river. Tapping her cheek lightly, he repeated the question.

Blonde hair lay plastered to her scalp and her skin was cool, but her breathing was regular. If only she would wake, he'd feel better.

His phone was on the kitchen bench, alongside his first aid kit. He grabbed both, thumbing the phone on and punching in 000 as he headed towards the lounge room door. Lightning flashed, making the kitchen brighter than day, and thunder cracked overhead. Then the kitchen light flickered and went out, plunging the room behind him into thick greyness. The lightning must have made a direct hit on the power lines and the emergency number failed to connect.

Seth entered the lounge room and dropped the phone onto the arm of the sofa. First things first. He put on the headlamp he'd added as a standard item to his first aid kit and set about examining the woman's head wound.

Two deep, thin, parallel cuts on her temple seeped blood into her hair, and the beginning of a large bruise discoloured the surrounding skin. He cleaned and dressed the wound while considering what could have caused such cuts. Deep and straight, he thought possibly contact with a metal door frame.

One thing he was certain of; the wound wasn't from her dunking in the river, so it must have happened either before or as she jumped.

Only one plane had passed overhead before he spotted her chute.

Focusing on that memory, he sifted through what he recalled. It had a white and blue fuselage and was possibly a Cessna 208. His glimpse had been brief, but combined with the sound of the engine, he thought that most likely. Perhaps it would be enough to reunite her with friends or family, whoever she'd been flying with before her jump. When the power returned and he had mobile service, a call to CASA might find planes that had logged a flight plan over Bindarra Creek around . . . He checked the time. After four p.m., so the plane must have been overhead no later than a quarter to the hour.

He glanced through the window. Despite the fact it was early summer, and barely after four o'clock, the room was dark, but the hail was lessening. Once he'd cleaned then taped a surgical pad in place over the woman's head wound, Seth ran his hands over her arms and then her legs. As he reached her right ankle, his hands stilled.

*She's wearing one stiletto shoe.*

He knelt beside her, fixated on the oddity. Nobody went parachuting wearing stilettos. He lifted the

blanket and frowned. He needed to remove her wet clothes, which were what his cousin, Sonya would have called 'upmarket office chic.'

Gently, he slipped an arm under the woman's neck and removed the slim-fitting cream jacket from her shoulders. Even to his untrained eye, more used to farmer's beige or army green, the jacket looked expensive, and her blouse was . . . Given it had been soaked in brown river water, his best guess was pale lemon silk. He bet not even a city drycleaner could bring it back after its encounter with the Akuna River.

Before he removed her blouse and a pair of black leather trousers that fit her like a second skin, he pulled the blanket over her then slipped into his bedroom and rummaged through his chest of drawers.



Dragging out an old T-shirt, soft after many washes, and his flannelette PJs, he figured she would be warm, if swamped by his clothes.

He stripped off his sodden T-shirt and jeans and pulled on a grey sweatshirt and trackpants. Slipping his feet into his Ugg boots, he returned to the woman, grabbing a towel and another blanket from the linen cupboard on his way.

She hadn't moved.

Unbuttoning the many pearl buttons tried his patience, but finally her shirt slid open, and he peeled it off, revealing an ivory lace bra.

He called up the instructor's voice from his early training sessions after he joined the Army Reserve

Field Hospital: *Treat the patient with respect and dignity, but don't get hung up if you have to undress them. Got it?*

*Got it, he reminded himself.*

Rubbing her chilled skin vigorously with the towel until colour returned, it was easier to then slip dry clothing on than removing her wet things had been.

Soon, he had dressed her in warm clothing and covered her with both blankets. When he'd done all he could to make her comfortable, he sat in the armchair and leaned his head against the high back. Set at a right angle between the sofa and the fire, he watched her for signs of regaining consciousness.

Minutes passed as three questions buzzed in his brain: Why was his patient dressed in city clothing, in *stilettos* even, for a parachute jump? What had caused her head injury? Why had she jumped from a plane during a storm?

Shaking his head, he gathered her wet clothes and headed to the laundry to hang them to drip dry. As he lifted the hangers onto the drying railing, his shoulder muscles twinged. Maybe a shot of whisky was in order to warm the cockles of his heart, as Gran used to say. Just one though. The night could be long if the woman didn't wake.

He set a dram of whisky in a cut-glass tumbler on the inlaid table beside his armchair, but the mystery of the woman's arrival nagged at him. He drank half his drink, relishing the warmth sliding down his throat.

Seth didn't like mysteries.

Tossing back the rest of his whisky, he went out the back and hauled her parachute onto the veranda.

The lines were a mess, but that could be attributed to the action of the water and his dragging the whole lot up the back paddock, so he set about examining the chute itself. Metres and metres of sodden fabric passed through his hands.

Just what he was looking for he wasn't sure. As he was about to give up and call himself all kinds of fool, his finger slipped through a hole. A hole that, to his army-trained eye, was familiar.

A perfectly round hole that had no business being where it was.

A bullet hole.

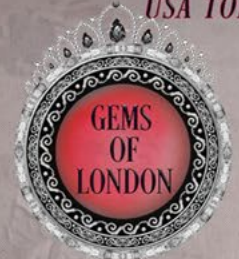
*Forgotten Secrets*  
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HATE BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER. WILL LOVE TEAR THEM APART?

Elizabeth Ellen Carter

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

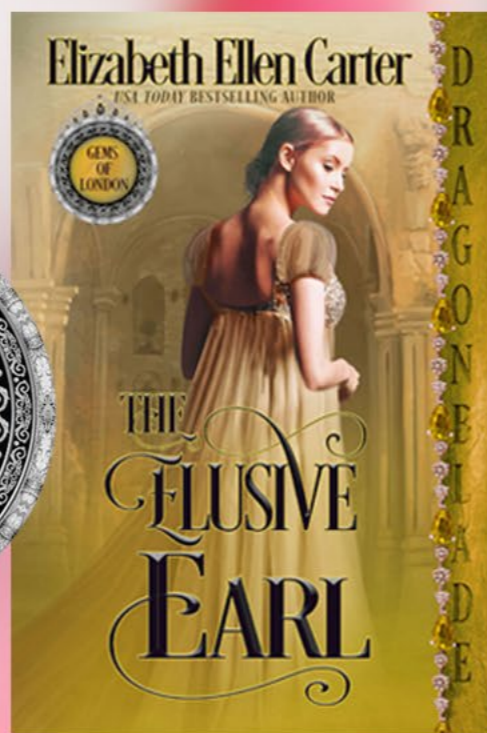
OUT NOW  
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DECEIVING  
THE  
DUKE



COMING SOON IN 2023





# MY SEVEN CHRISTMAS TREATS

I didn't realise until I counted them up that I've written seven Christmas stories over the years. Here they are. Merry Christmas!  
*Elizabeth Ellen Carter*



## A Sweet Tale of Blessing

Scotland, 1818: Roddy McClane is returning home to the Scottish Highlands for Christmas. Feeling nostalgic for his past and inspired by his friend, Seth Musgrave, the new Duke of Auchen, Roddy heads north.

Unexpectedly, he finds himself protector of a young woman and a baby boy fleeing the aftermath of the Clearances which have destroyed their home. Soon Roddy feels more than protective – he's falling in love with the brave young woman who finds it so hard to trust.

Can she trust him enough to keep safe her infant nephew as well as her heart?

*The character of Roddy McClane appears in Deceiving the Duke, the first of my Gems of London novels.*

[TAP OR CLICK HERE TO FIND THE NOVELLA ON AMAZON](#)

[TAP OR CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO AN EXTRACT ON YOUTUBE](#)



## The Thief of Hearts

December 1890. London, England.

To avoid an unwanted marriage proposal, Caro Addison needs a distraction as neat as the tricks used by The Phantom, the audacious diamond thief who has left Scotland Yard clueless.

While her detective inspector uncle methodically hunts the villain, Caro decides to investigate a suspect of her own – the handsome Tobias Black, a magician extraordinaire known as The Dark Duke.

He's the only one with the means, motive, and opportunity – but the art of illusion means not everything is as it seems, in both crime and affairs of the heart.

As Christmas Day draws near, Caro must decide whether it is worth risking reputations and friendships in order to follow her heart.

*A tale for younger readers – and older ones too who like their romances sweet. The Thief of Hearts is seriously good fun!*

[TAP OR CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE BOOK TRAILER ON YOUTUBE](#)

[TAP OR CLICK HERE TO FIND THE THIEF OF HEARTS ON AMAZON](#)

## Tidings of Comfort

Heroic Kit Hardacre is feeling sorry for himself this Christmas. While he contemplates his feelings about being abandoned by his birth parents, he discovers what family really means when he is asked to help find a missing little boy.

But who really finds who?

Kit discovers that not all who are lost have gone astray, and it is he who experiences tidings of comfort and joy.

*Kit Hardacre from my Hearts of the Corsairs series is perhaps my favorite of all the characters I've created!*

[TAP OR CLICK HERE TO FIND TIDINGS OF COMFORT ON AMAZON](#)



## Warming Winter's Heart

Julian Winter has had his heart broken a time or two. And he's tired of his well-meaning family trying to set him up with yet another vapid debutante.

His attitude to attending a winter house party at the home of Lord Daniel and Lady Abigail Ridgeway is frosty indeed until he learns that a fellow guest will be Caroline Lavene, a widow with a young son who he has encountered serving the homeless at St Luke's Mission in the City.

As Christmas draws near, Julian finds there is warmth in Winter's heart after all.

*The character of Roddy McClane appears in Spy Another Day, one of the novels from my series The King's Rogues.*

[TAP OR CLICK HERE TO FIND WARMING WINTER'S HEART ON AMAZON](#)

## Father's Day

Long believing himself an orphan, Privateer Captain Kit Hardacre is persuaded by his wife to learn more about his family. At the same time, Naval veteran and retired spy Adam Hardacre learns he has an adult son he never knew existed.

Thrown together one Christmas, by circumstances beyond their control, father and son must find mutual ground on which to come to terms with the past. Life is too short to hold on to regret, and a greater regret awaits if the two men cannot work together to save a life. Love comes in many forms... and none more strongly than the love from father to son.

*This novella is linked to characters from my Hearts of the Corsairs and The King's Rogues series, and chronologically follows on from Tidings of Comfort.*

[TAP OR CLICK HERE TO FIND FATHER'S DAY ON AMAZON](#)



## Three Ships

I've already shared this one with you in the Belles & Beaux feature. It's been around for a little while and was used at one time as an extra feature in one of my print novellas.

If you haven't already read it, why not enjoy it this Christmas with seven other tales from the Bluestocking Belles?

[TAP OR CLICK HERE](#)

## What the False Heart Doth Know

Another I've already shared - this one in the A Duke in Winter anthology feature. Enjoy it this Christmas with stories from eight other best-selling authors.

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Victoria Vane goes Yuletide merry-making in the quaint town of Newberry.

LOVE FASHION



A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS  
**CELEBRATION**





For the third year running, I have been blessed with the delightful opportunity to step back in time and celebrate a Victorian Style Yuletide in the quaint little town of Newberry, South Carolina. Once more a group of twenty historical re-enactors gathered in our finest period attire for a traditional tree-lighting and caroling in the town square. It's a truly magical experience.

Having worn my green wool tartan 1860s gown two years running, I decided it was time to make something new. I elected to go back in time two decades to the pre-hoop 1840s era but still stayed with a tartan. This time I chose a very festive red silk and made a matching coal-scuttle bonnet. Although the fabric was

much thinner than wool, I wore multiple petticoats rather than a hoop crinoline which added both warmth and fullness to my skirt.

Following the ceremonies, our little costumed troupe paraded through town back to the beautifully decorated Antebellum home of John and Rose Marie Favors for an old-fashioned holiday house party.

The merry-making consisted of traditional southern dishes such as pulled pork and spiced cider as well as several sweets. Following the food, we rolled back the carpets and moved the furniture for several sets of lively country dances such as the Virginia reel and the Gothic. The evening closed with more singing around the piano and many fond memories!



# A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

by Fashion Correspondent  
VICTORIA VANE





# A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION



## If she's found, she's dead...

As a severe storm breaks over his farm, Seth Gordon watches in horror as a parachutist falls into the river. He rushes to rescue the terrified woman with a head wound.

Injured and with no memory of who she is or her past, 'Angel' has no option but to accept her rescuer's help. The bullet holes in her parachute warn she's on borrowed time and Seth vows to keep her safe. But as their attraction flares, she wonders can she really trust this stranger with her life?

### FORGOTTEN SECRETS

*A Bindarra Creek Mystery*

A Bindarra Creek Mystery  
Romance - out 14 December  
Pre-order now - [tap/click here](#)

## SUSANNE BELLAMY



# NO HOLDS

Different takes on Shakespeare in movies and on television.

# BARD

## Maqbool (2004)

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* depicts a general who, told by three witches he will be king of Scotland and encouraged by his ambitious wife, murders King Duncan and takes the throne. But, wracked by guilt and paranoia, he has to commit more and more killings to ward off suspicion.

Director Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* is *Macbeth* set in the Mumbai underworld of the early 2000s. It wasn't a hit, but it was widely acclaimed and has grown in reputation since. A knowledge of the original tragedy is needed to appreciate some of the nuances in Bhardwaj and Abbas Tyrewala's screenplay.

*Maqbool* can be found on Amazon Prime.



by LGA Associate Editor  
DUNCAN CARLING-RODGERS

## The Dresser (1983)

A powerful and moving British drama set during World War Two about the co-dependent relationship between a great Shakespearean stage actor who is slowly succumbing to the loss of his mental capacity, and the efforts of his long-time dresser to ensure the show goes on. The two leads were nominated for multiple awards for their performances.

Albert Finney plays the bombastic actor (referred to only as 'Sir') who alternately bullies and cajoles his dresser, the effeminate Norman, played by Tom Courtenay, who is spiteful and obsequious by turns. Their performances are simply superb, rendering the 2015 TV movie remake completely needless except perhaps for an excuse for Anthony Hopkins and Ian McKellen to strut their stuff as Sir and Norman. Edward Fox appears in both films (but in different roles).

Ronald Harwood's 1980 stage play was the basis for the movies and was based on his experiences as dresser to English Shakespearean actor-manager Sir Donald Wolfitt.

The only trailer available was produced for the US home video release with frankly awful '80s corporate background music that has nothing to do with the film and a voiceover that completely misrepresents the characters. So, instead, enjoy a scene in which Norman attempts to delay departure of a train so the travelling company can catch up.

[CLICK/TAP HERE FOR A SCENE FROM THE DRESSER.](#)



## A Double Life (1947)

Shakespeare's *Othello* is a man driven mad by suspicion and sexual jealousy who murders his wife, believing she has been unfaithful. In this 1947 drama, Ronald Colman plays popular stage actor Tony whose actress wife Brita divorced him because whenever he played a role on stage, he 'became' the role off-stage. They still work together though and get on well – until he plays *Othello* and she his wife *Desdemona*.

Swedish-born Signe Hasso puts in a top showing as Brita (she said the role was her favourite). Colman won an Oscar for his performance though there's a stark difference in quality between Colman as Tony and Tony as *Othello*.

A young Shelley Winters (right) is beautifully blowsy in her breakout role as a would-be model working as a waitress who makes the mistake of picking up Tony.

Husband and wife writing team Garson Kanin and Ruth Gordon (herself an Oscar winning actress) penned the screenplay, and the great George Cukor directed.

The film spends perhaps too much time on stage with Tony chewing the scenery and not enough developing the relationship between Tony and waitress Pat. Nonetheless, it's well worth seeking out.



[CLICK/TAP HERE TO VIEW THE ORIGINAL TRAILER.](#)

## 10 Things I Hate About You (1999)

In Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, the courtship of Petruchio and the headstrong Katherina is the central issue. A subplot features competition between suitors for Katherina's 'more desirable' younger sister.

In *10 Things I Hate About You*, the setting is changed to a '90s US high school and the subplot is the main event - a father's strict rules on dating mean a teenage girl can't date until her bad-tempered older sister does.

The movie was adapted into a TV series of the same name a decade later, managing a run of 20 eps.

Julia Stiles and Heath Ledger enjoyed breakout roles as Kat and Patrick. Kate Hudson, daughter of Goldie Hawn, was offered the part of Kat, but mom didn't like the script and made her pass.

The film got generally positive reviews - Rotten Tomatoes deemed it 'unexpectedly clever' - and it finished second behind *The Matrix* on its opening weekend.

[CLICK/TAP TO WATCH TRAILER ON YOUTUBE.](#)



## Atomic Shakespeare (1986)

*The Taming of the Shrew* gets an outing as an amusingly absurd episode of the comedy detective series *Moonlighting*.

It begins with a boy about to watch *Moonlighting* when his mother turns off the TV and banishes him to his room to complete his homework assignment. As he begins to read *The Taming of the Shrew*, the characters from the TV show enact the play.

Full of deliberate anachronisms and asides direct to camera, *Atomic Shakespeare* owes more to the English 'Carry On' film tradition than old *Will S*. Naturally, Bruce Willis and Cybill Shepherd take on the roles of Petruchio and Katherina.

[TAP/CLICK TO WATCH THE ENTIRE EPISODE ON YOUTUBE.](#)



## Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (1990)

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are two relatively minor characters who enter into corrupt King Claudius' machinations. They unwittingly carry a letter on a voyage to England with Hamlet which instructs the king of England to execute Hamlet. Suspicious, Hamlet reads the letter and rewrites it, instructing the king to execute Rosencrantz and Guildenstern instead.

Tom Stoppard adapted his superb absurdist stage play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* for the screen in 1990. In it, the doomed duo wander about, questioning the meaning of life, blissfully unaware theirs are scripted and deviation from whatever fate awaits them is impossible.

Gary Oldman and Tim Roth play the title characters. Sadly, the play with its stripped-down and impressionistic scenery and settings works better than the movie with its naturalistic backdrops.



ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN WITH HAMLET.  
A LITHOGRAPH BY EUGÈNE DELACROIX.

[CLICK/TAP HERE TO WATCH THE TRAILER.](#)

## Shakespeare in Love (1998)

Not a movie about a Shakespeare play, but a romantic comedy about Shakespeare with a bad case of writer's block that's cured by falling in love.

A highly entertaining romp for anyone familiar with the Bard's work and featuring an utterly stellar cast including Joseph Fiennes, Gwyneth Paltrow,

Geoffrey Rush, Colin Firth, Ben Affleck, Judi Dench, Martin Clunes, and Rupert Everett.

The screenplay was co-written by Tom Stoppard (see *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*).

[CLICK/TAP HERE TO WATCH THE TRAILER ON IMDB](#)



# AFTER THE FEAST

Especially when you're catering to a crowd, there's always leftovers, right? It's the inevitable aftermath of family Christmas lunches and dinners, and always poses the question of what to do with what's left.

The number one rule of making the most of things after the feast is over is 'Don't bin anything that's not spoiled or potentially been pawed at or sneezed on'. That means not scraping leftover potatoes off your guests' plates back into the Tupperware container with the spuds that never made it to the table.

Use your good judgement about what goes back in the fridge and what's on a one-way trip to the garbage. There was a time not so

long ago when we wouldn't think twice about saving a half-full serving platter of meats or cheeses that had been put out but simply not been fully consumed at the table.

Today, you might like to think twice. It's your call. Better still, make your decision to keep tabled leftovers easier by using food covers for platters while the meal is in progress. But remember - once it's hit a guest's plate, it's off tomorrow's menu!

It's a no-brainer to rustle up a leftover ham or turkey sandwich at the end of the big day, but there's no reason why you can't make Boxing Day (26 December) and even a few days afterwards special with these leftover recipes.

## Leftovers Toasties

### WHAT LEFTOVERS HAVE YOU GOT?

- Cooked turkey, ham or chicken?
- Stuffing?
- Cream cheese?
- Bread?
- Brie or other cheese?
- Rocket?
- Cranberry sauce?

Heat up the sandwich press. If you don't already have one, ask for one for Christmas!

Dice or thin slice your meat. Plaster cranberry sauce on one slice of bread and cream cheese on another.

Add the meat and whatever else you have to, say, the cranberry slice then top it off with the cream cheese slice. Butter the outsides of the bread and toast for four to five minutes.

Honestly, this one works great just with meat and brie!



## Bubble & Squeak

### WHAT LEFTOVERS HAVE YOU GOT?

- Cooked turkey, ham or chicken?
- Roast potatoes?
- Cooked vegetables (especially brussel sprouts)?

Drop a tablespoon of olive oil and approx 30g/1oz butter into a non-stick frying pan over a low-medium heat, then add whatever herbs you have to hand along with the potatoes and vegies, and mash them in the pan with a potato masher.

Make a flat layer, season with salt and black pepper, and cook for 3 to 4 minutes until a crust starts forming on the bottom.

Use a spatula to fold the crispy bits back into the mash, and flatten everything down again. Let it crisp again and repeat the process over and over again.

You can do this for 10 to 15 minutes, in fact the longer the better, then serve.

If it looks like being too plain for your taste, leave on low heat while you fry an egg to go on top or even garnish with a rasher of bacon.

Makes a good hangover cure too!



## Skillet-baked fruitcake bread pudding

### WHAT LEFTOVERS HAVE YOU GOT?

- Leftover fruitcake?
- Thickened Cream?
- Walnuts?
- Chocolate (white or dark)?
- An orange?

### YOU'LL ALSO NEED

- vanilla extract
- milk
- eggs

I couldn't make this one myself because there's never any leftover fruitcake at my place! However, a friend made this a few years ago out of some leftover week-old fruitcake and gave me her recipe, so here it is. It's also a little more complicated than the other leftovers recipes so you've been warned...

You will need an approximately 25cm/10in cast-iron skillet for this, and one that either has a plain iron handle (that will fit in your oven) or the wooden-handled type from which you can remove the handle. Don't go putting a non-oven-safe handled skillet in the oven!

Do a rough estimate of how much fruitcake you have left. If it's 4 to 5 cups, you're good to go.

Just to be perfectly clear, you'll need the following ingredients:

- fruitcake
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/3 cup thickened cream
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon zest of one orange
- 60g/2oz chocolate (white or dark)
- 1/3 cup rough chopped walnuts

Here we go:

Pre-heat your oven to 180C/350F.

Grease the skillet, dice up the fruitcake into cubes. Dump them in the skillet.

Whisk the milk, eggs, thickened cream, vanilla and zest in a bowl to combine, then pour the mix over the fruit cake.

Squish it down so it absorbs some of the mix. Sprinkle the chocolate over the top and bake for 30 minutes.

Garnish with the chopped walnuts. Done!



LGA

## Fried ham slices

### WHAT LEFTOVERS HAVE YOU GOT?

- Ham?

This one is kind of obvious if you've over-catered to the max which can sometimes happen with ham. In Australia, it's probably more popular than turkey at Christmas. People have been known to look in the fridge on the morning of New Year's Eve and groan because there's still tasty, delicious ham sitting there. It's toward the back of a shelf by now, wrapped in a damp towel or dressed seductively in its ham bag, seemingly calling "Eat me! Eat me!" - but the taste buds are getting jaded after a week of ham sandwiches and salads. What to do?

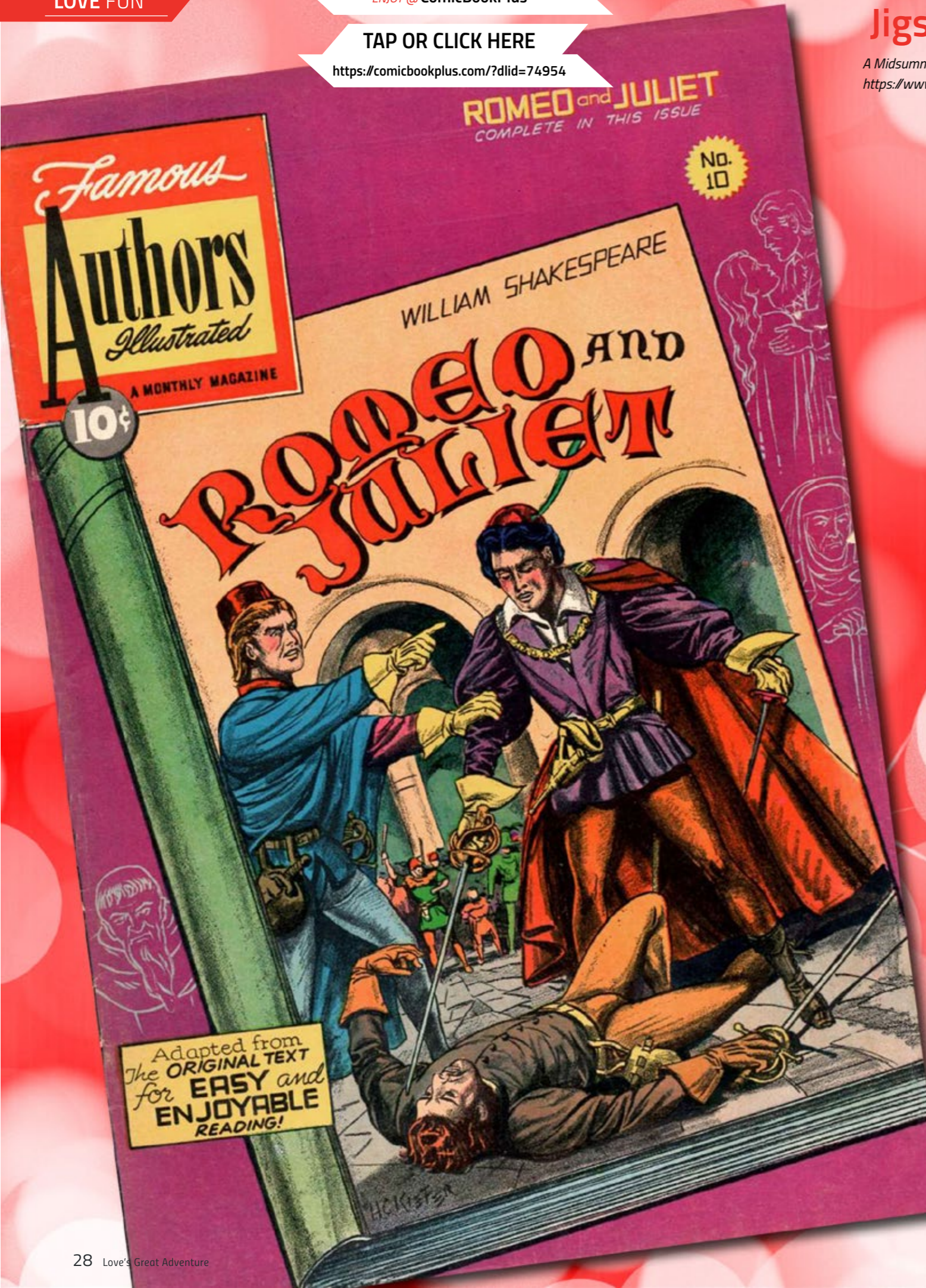
Hack off a slab and fry it. Serve with a fried egg or two for breakfast. That'll set you up for the day and maybe even past midnight into 2023...





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<https://comicbookplus.com/?dclid=74954>



## Jigsaw Time

A Midsummer Night's Dream for you to enjoy at Jigsaw Planet:  
<https://www.jigsawplanet.com/?rc=play&pid=367779887e76>



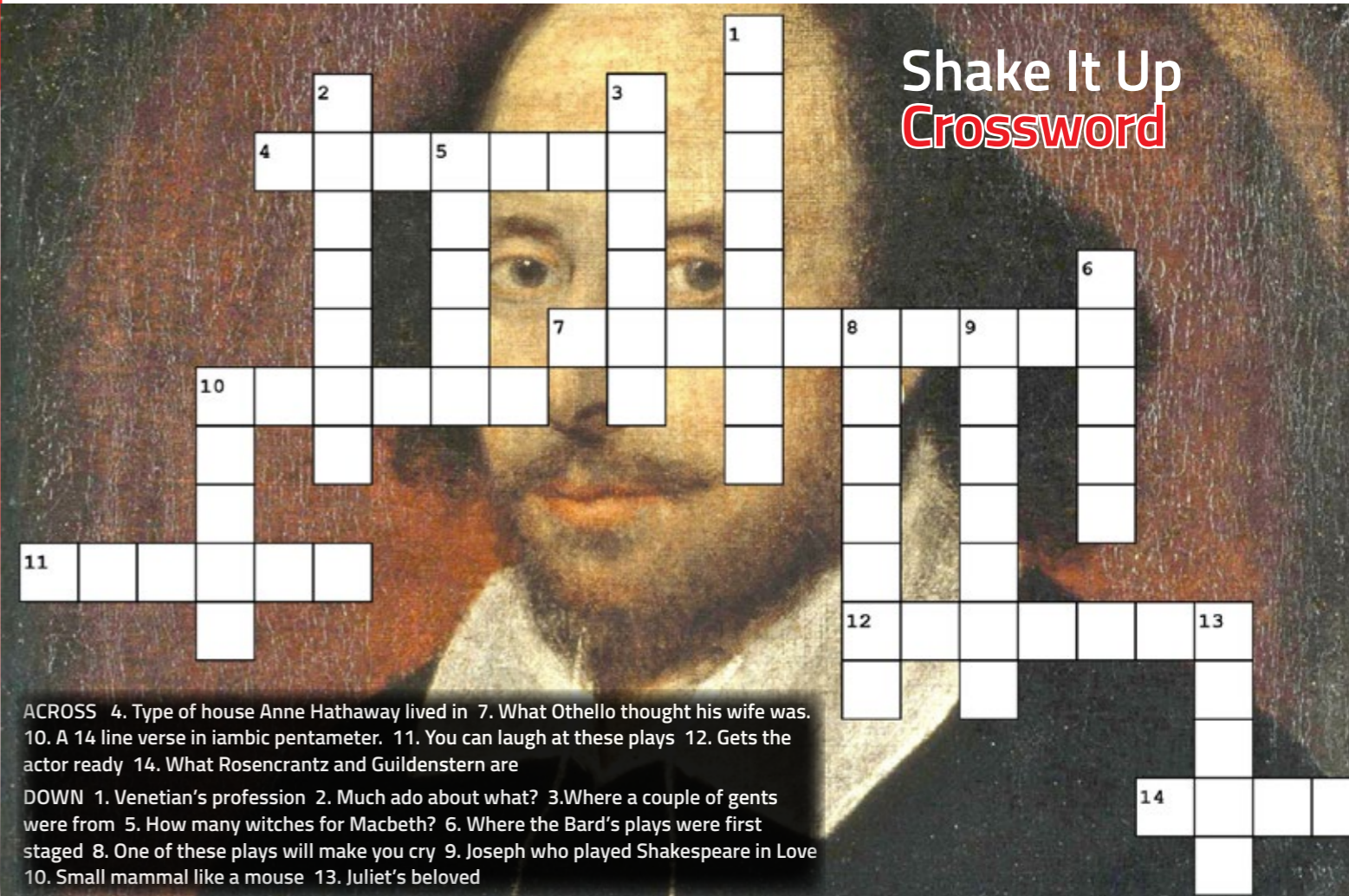
# GAME PLAY ▶

## Deck the Halls WORD SEARCH



ANGEL BAUBLE BELLS CANDLE HOLLY IVY MISTLETOE NATIVITY  
 SNOWGLOBE STOCKING TINSEL TREE WREATH

## Shake It Up Crossword



ACROSS 4. Type of house Anne Hathaway lived in 7. What Othello thought his wife was.  
 10. A 14 line verse in iambic pentameter. 11. You can laugh at these plays 12. Gets the actor ready 14. What Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are

DOWN 1. Venetian's profession 2. Much ado about what? 3. Where a couple of gents were from 5. How many witches for Macbeth? 6. Where the Bard's plays were first staged 8. One of these plays will make you cry 9. Joseph who played Shakespeare in Love 10. Small mammal like a mouse 13. Juliet's beloved

ANSWERS ACROSS 4. COTTAGE 7. UNFAITHFUL 10. SONNET 11. COMEDY 12. DRESSER 14. DEAD  
 DOWN 1. MERCHANT 2. NOTHING 3. VERONA 5. THREE 6. GLOBE 8. TRAGEDY 9. FIENNES 10. SHREW 13. ROMEO



20 MERRY 22  
CHRISTMAS

Happy

New Year!  
2023

LOVE'S GREAT  
ADVENTURE