

LOVE'S GREAT ADVENTURE

The exclusive magazine from Elizabeth Ellen Carter

JINGLE BELLES

VICTORIA VANE'S
FESTIVE FASHION



A LITTLE SEASONAL MAGIC

TOBIAS BLACK IS
JUST THE MAN TO
STEAL YOUR HEART

FATHER'S DAY AT CHRISTMAS?

THE BEST SEASON'S
GREETINGS ARE
THOSE WHICH
REUNITE FAMILY

LOVE AN ELIZABETH ELLEN CARTER CHRISTMAS

Interview

It's no easy LIFE AS AN EARL

WHEN YOU'RE THE HEIR TO A TITLE,
YOUR LIFE IS NOT YOUR OWN

ALSO INSIDE:

- FUN & GAMES:
CHRISTMAS CHEER!
- VOICES OF ANGELS:
SONGS FROM THE
BEST FEMALE SINGERS

LOVE'S GREAT
ADVENTURE

Issue 24 Dec 2023

AUTHOR'S DESK

DIVINE DECLUTTERING

Here we are at the end of another year. And what a year it has been. For me, a lot of time has been spent around home, as well as at work. One of the big tasks has been going through each room of the house and decluttering. My husband and I don't have *that* large a house, but I have to confess to underestimating how long it would take to go through every cupboard and drawer to clean and take stock.

We did get rid a lot of stuff, not that you'd notice as a casual observer - we're not exactly minimalists - and we also replaced some furniture dating back to our newlywed days that was well past its use-by date.

One of the things that brought me great joy was passing on good but unused household items - servingware, dishes, and platters alike to a couple of young colleagues who were in the process of setting up their own first homes together.

I've read that by decluttering, you gain not only more room, but also mental headspace, and I've discovered this to be completely true. While my days are no less busy, I'm beginning to find that I'm gaining more time and energy, something that has been somewhat lacking over the past little while.

I'm hoping that time off over the Christmas break - it's summer here in Australia - will help recharge my batteries, because I have some exciting plans for 2024.

A new series? *Check!*

A new full-length novel? *Check!*

A few novella releases? *Check!*

But first - relax...

I hope you have a chance to relax too. And, whatever your plans, I wish you and your family much love and joy for Christmas and the coming New Year.

Elizabeth Ellen Carter



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LOVE'S GREAT ADVENTURE

The exclusive magazine
from Elizabeth Ellen Carter

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LOVE'S GREAT ADVENTURE

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That there is drama in the most aristocratic circles is to say that the sky is blue and that water is wet. In other words, it is to say nothing at all, which is why it is all the more surprising that I was sent to cover the funeral of the late Duke of Denby.

It was a surprisingly modest affair considering that he was part of one of the oldest families in England.

Rumours abound that the Redthorpe family estate was struggling and that it was becoming difficult to keep up appearances. Meanwhile, another scandal threatens the family with rumours of a broken engagement between the late Duke's son, Anthony Redthorp, Earl of Taunton, and Lady Elizabeth Sheppard.

Through a business acquaintance I was later able to attend an interview with the new Duke of Denby and clear up a few things which will provide me with the opportunity to get to the heart of the matter.

by A Special Correspondent

I see that the Duke has elected to hold the meeting at his bachelor's residence in London.

We are admitted by a man servant and showed through to a nicely appointed study.

His Grace notices where my attention has been and offers me a wry smile.

"The apartment and the furnishings are not part of the Denby estate, what you see here is what I inherited from my grandmother," he said in a manner which was almost insouciant.

"Everything on the Denby estate which is not entailed is available for sale. I don't believe in beating around the bush, gentlemen. My father has neglected the estate for some years and had also taken great pains in hiding the fact from me. Now it is my sad and most urgent duty to rebuild."

Continued on page 7

“ I DON'T BELIEVE IN
BEATING AROUND THE
BUSH, GENTLEMEN.”

HE'S ON HIS UPPERS

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

When she emerged, Anthony stood alone in the hall.

He had not seen her yet, so she turned away before he noticed her presence. She only got a few paces before he called her name.

Sapphira squeezed her eyes shut a moment. Even after so long, his voice saying her name had the power to affect her – to recall his touch, his kisses.

She turned. Anthony was as handsome as when she last saw him six months ago. But he had also changed somehow.

Her gaze fell. It was too painful to look at him. To disguise her discomfort, she bobbed a curtsy and murmured, “My lord.”

“Is that where we are with one another, Sapphira?” There was an edge to his voice that verged on anger.

“It has to be this way,” she said. She wrapped fringes of her shawl around her fingers.

Anthony tipped his head with a moue of disgust. “If that’s the case, you’d better have my title. I’m now the Duke of Denby.”

Her eyes shot up to meet his.

Duke? That would mean his father...

Her heart softened immediately. “Oh Anthony, I’m sorry to hear your father has passed.”



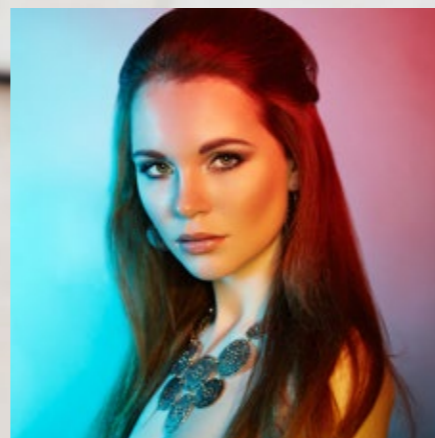
“Don’t...” she said. “You can’t say these things to me, not when...”

The sound of voices came up the stairs, “Oh, those boys have probably coerced her into playing one of their games,” said Lady Beatrice. “I’ll go rescue her.”

Sapphira withdrew her hand. Anthony released it with reluctance and walked away.

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“LADY SHEPPARD AND I WILL NOT BE GETTING MARRIED”



LADY SAPPHIRA GALBRAITH APPREHENDED BY ONE OF OUR PHOTOGRAPHERS

AN EMBARRASSING FAMILY SECRET

Continued from page 5

My companion, with whom I attended this meeting, wished to hear Redthorpe outline his plans to bring industry to a neglected part of his estate. He is seeking investors in the venture.

We both listened diligently, and I have to confess to being impressed by the young man’s thoroughness. He should have no trouble making his plan a success, but there was too much for one benefactor, he would need a syndicate.

Of course, he had thought of this also.

“What about Earl Sheppard?” I asked.

There was a slight change to Redthorpe’s expression for a moment, enough to make me think that the question was not a welcome one.

I could see no reason why this should be. After all, it had been announced by the late Duke that his son and heir would marry Sheppard’s daughter, Elizabeth.

“Lady Sheppard and I will not be getting married,” said Redthorpe in a very stern tone of voice which he then leavened by adding. “A lady is allowed to change her mind, after all...”

There is more to the broken engagement than one supposes, but it is never wise to dig too deeply in matters of the heart. Nonetheless, it does have to be said that Anthony Redthorpe looks far from brokenhearted.

While my friend concludes his business with the young Duke, I continue to look around the room, and my eye falls onto a small painting of a most arresting young woman.

She was most certainly not Lady Elizabeth Sheppard. The girl in this portrait had lustrous black hair. She was wearing a gown of cerulean blue, and it was her eyes that drew you in – quite fascinating.

Once more Redthorpe caught the direction of my attention.

“A gift, gentlemen, from my new fiancée – Lady Sapphira Galbraith.”

The shock was evident on both our faces no doubt. Redthorpe laughed heartily at us.

“A complex matter has finally been resolved satisfactorily for all parties,” he said.

“After all, a gentleman is allowed to change his mind too...”

LGA

'TIS THE SEASON FOR ROMANCE READS

Loving Lysander by Charlotte Wren

"I know what I have. I would never do anything to jeopardize it."

Lysander Theodore Barton, Marquess of Hawes, makes that declaration on a bright, frosty morning on the twenty-second day of December, in the year 1827. He is one of the guests at Myddleton House, the magnificent Derbyshire seat of the Earl of Hutton. And the declaration is made while looking at the woman he loves; Lady Catherine Northcott, the Earl's daughter.

Catherine loves Lysander with equal ferocity. Theirs is a love eternal, a match surely made in Heaven. Yet, even as Lysander speaks the words, the hands of fate are busy molding and shaping a very different future to the one he has envisaged.

It begins, on that same day, with the unexpected arrival of the beautiful Miss Helena Elliot and her mysterious female companion, both recently returned from India. Lysander seems rather fixated with Helena. Does Catherine need to be worried?

But then his visit to Myddleton is cut short when he is urgently summoned back home. And it is during the days that follow when an unbelievable event takes place, leaving shock and disbelief in its wake. Hearts and trust are broken, and Lysander, with no explanation, retreats into the shadows. But life, as it will, goes on, and there comes a time when he returns to society, apparently hoping to resurrect what was lost.

Catherine, however, has long since embraced the life of spinsterhood, vowing never to trust a man again. Least of all, Lysander, who seems to think he can barge back into her life, asking forgiveness. All he's actually done is resurrect her pain and anguish, and she refuses to hear him.

In the end, it will take a mysterious midnight visitor to tell Catherine the truth of what actually happened all those years ago. A witness seeking absolution after carrying a burden of guilt for years. It casts a new light on the events of that time, and might just give Catherine enough courage to trust again.

Trust is all she needs. After all, her love for Lysander has never died.

[VIEW ON AMAZON](#)



If you missed the 2022 limited edition Dragonblade Publishing romance anthology *The Duke in Winter*, you're in luck. The stories from your favorite authors are now available as a series of standalone novellas. Here are just a few of them to whet your winter appetite for love and reading.

What the False Heart Doth Know by Elizabeth Ellen Carter

Lady Sapphira Galbraith's secret romance with Earl Anthony Redthorpe is over. He is engaged to another.

Now spending Christmas 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 a betrothal to Lady Elizabeth.

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

Against the backdrop of an amateur performance of *Macbeth*, the two lovers must work out how to prevent their love story from becoming a tragedy.

[VIEW ON AMAZON](#)



The Merry Wife of Wyndmere by CH Admirand

What happens after the Happily Ever After?

Persephone, Duchess of Wyndmere still has the weight she gained carrying her babes. She started to lose it and then a few months later she started gaining it back—worse still she's exhausted again! The terrifying kidnapping attempts on her precious babes, coupled with her weight and exhaustion, have her moods shifting from happy to dark.

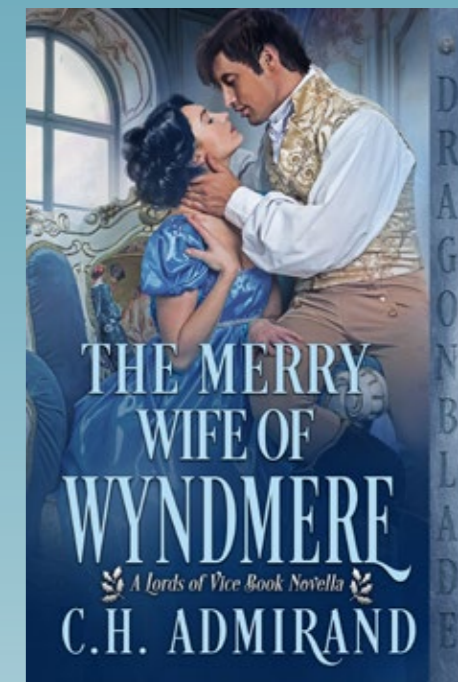
Jared, Duke of Wyndmere is still surly, preoccupied. Although he is concerned about his wife's health and that of their babes, he is more concerned with hiring extra guards in London to widen his web of protection around his family. When he announces his plans to hie off to London, her reaction has him keeping the reason for the trip from her.

Persephone is devastated when he leaves, believing she has pushed him to leave with her highly emotional state. She sends two urgent missives to him—one verbal, one written, to arrive in London before the duke.

While he is away, his staff decides to interfere. Persephone agrees with the staff's suggestions to invite the vicar and his wife to tea. She enjoys their company and agrees to host dinner which includes the squire's nephew and his friend—rumored rakehells.

The gentlemen with questionable reputations lavish her with compliments until she wonders if her fears are founded. She has yet to receive a response to the missives she sent to her husband. When rumors reach Wyndmere Hall that the duke

[VIEW ON AMAZON](#)

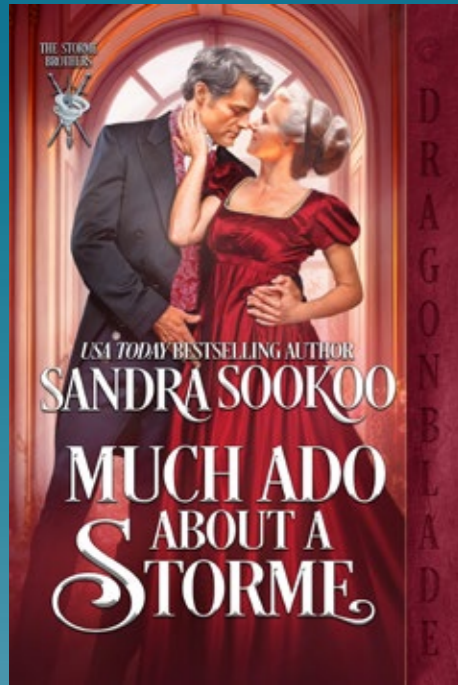


attended Lady Stenerson's ball and was seen waltzing with two widows and the lady herself, she cannot hide her unhappiness. Her staff urges her to invite the rakehells to tea, hoping the duke has received O'Malley's missive about the duchess' recent guests.

When the duke hears of her recent dinner guests, his concern for her reputation—and his own, have him fuming and ready to send off a missive to his wife...when he realizes he has forgotten to reply to her missives. He decides to return to Wyndmere Hall to settle matters between them in person.

Can the interference of the duke's guard, and their faithful staff, bring the duke and his duchess back together, or will their plans backfire and force them further apart?

Continued on next page

'TIS THE SEASON FOR **ROMANCE READS**
[VIEW ON AMAZON](#)

Much Ado About a Storme by Sandra Sookoo

Love is even sweeter when it's found later in life, and quite by accident.

Now that Lavinia Storme's—the Dowager Countess of Hadleigh—family is settled and content, she doesn't need to worry over them anymore, which leaves her a bit lost. When she meets a silver-haired duke and feelings she once thought dead awake, she wonders all the more.

Allan Montrosse, 4th Duke of Tattersham has been waylaid on a snowy lane near Hadleigh Hall when his traveling coach breaks an axle. It doesn't matter because his life has been much the same since he became a widower, and perhaps an adventure will liven things up. The moment he sets eyes on the dowager, he is immediately smitten.

In the days leading up to a masquerade ball on Christmas Eve, Lavinia and Tattersham are thrown together. An attraction springs between them—as does scandal—but when a contretemps at the ball worthy of Shakespeare himself threatens the budding romance, it will take charm and encouragement—Storme family style—to make certain the Christmastide match takes.

Her Tempestuous Duke by Elizabeth Keysian

She knows there's good in him somewhere. At least, she hopes there is...

Saved from drowning by a man as tempestuous as the midwinter storm that sank her boat, Miss Minerva Harte's future looks grim. Her rescuer, Parys Pendorran, lives like a hermit in a ruined castle, tormented by secrets and embittered by the past. Despite her fear of him, Minerva is fascinated by this sinfully attractive stranger. Surely such a man, despite his scars, is worth saving?

Parys wants Minerva to leave, but when her guardian and the wrecked boat's other occupants struggle ashore, he casts them into his dungeon. The sight of Minerva's protector, Lord Anthony, turns Parys into what local legend says he is; a terrifying warlock surrounded by ghosts and watched over by a monstrous hound. In a single night, the sea has given Parys both a tempting young beauty, and the man he has vowed to destroy.

How can Minerva, fresh from the genteel drawing rooms of High Society, save Anthony from destruction at Parys' hand? And why is a man with enough compassion to save her, intent on ruining her guardian?

Forced to make a desperate choice, Minerva knows that if she follows her head, it will break her heart. But if she can't keep control of her passions, catastrophe will follow.


[VIEW ON AMAZON](#)

The Earl's Brazen Bargain by Maggi Andersen

He could ruin her in the eyes of the ton. She could save him from a life of solitude.

Back on the London marriage mart at almost twenty-six and with no dowry, Laura Peyton holds little hope that a gentleman will want her for herself, when most seek affairs or youthful wives. When her brother makes a financial agreement with the Earl of Debnam to save his estate, Laura's reputation may be ruined once and for all. She finds herself staying at the estate of the rake the ton call "the Phantom Earl," where she is expected to fulfill his wishes for a month-long affair.

But she begins to suspect Lord Debnam is not simply the outrageous rake who danced with her in London. The mystery surrounding the elusive earl makes her determined to stay long enough to discover why he is the way he is. The more the attraction between them grows to fever pitch, the greater her need to get close to his true self.

Because of a family tragedy, Brendan Cowper, Earl of Debnam, is determined never to marry. In London, he indulges in unfulfilling short-lived affairs, but deep down, he longs for a woman's softness and her understanding. Is love always to remain beyond his reach?

Brendan wants Laura Peyton in his bed, but now regrets placing Laura, whose natural charm and honesty have maneuvered a way into his reluctant heart, in danger of far more than scandal.

The taint of murder hangs over Beechley Park. But sending her away—even to protect her—is far harder than he ever thought possible.

The Taming of the Duke by Emily Royal

Who will be tamed—the shrew, or the rake?

Lord Baptiste Parville longed for a male heir, but instead, his late wives burdened him with two daughters—Catherine and Blanche. Catherine, known as the Spinster Shrew, is of such a sour disposition, that Lord Parville, desperate to rid himself of her, declares that no man may court Blanche until Catherine is off his hands.

Lord Lucian Horton, Blanche's would-be suitor, is in despair. Until a wager is made. Enter Daxton Hawke, Duke of Petrush, committed bachelor and rake, who agrees to pretend to woo the waspish Catherine so Lucian can court the delightful Blanche.

Having had her heart broken, Catherine Parville resolves never to marry. But, out of loyalty to her younger sister, who has fallen in love with Lord Horton, she accepts the advances of the rakish duke. Catherine has no intention of making life easy for her suitor, but despite her increasingly acerbic comments, Daxton thrives on her shrewish nature, indulging in a few barbs of his own.

With the tenacity of a seasoned warrior, and a skilful touch that sends Catherine's senses ablaze, Daxton may yet emerge victorious. But Daxton soon learns that he's met his match—and it is the duke, not the shrew, who might perhaps be tamed.


[VIEW ON AMAZON](#)

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The Art of the Timeless Tale



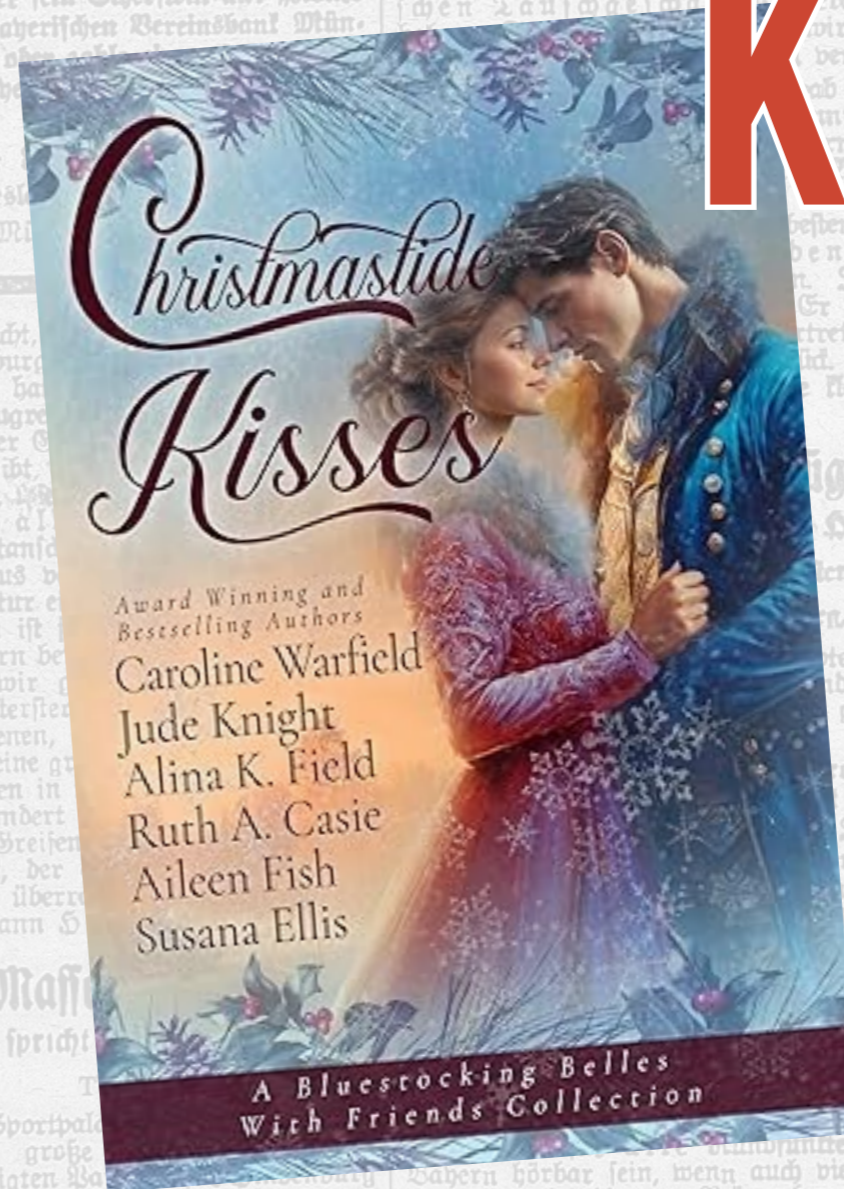
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The offices of The Teatime Tattler are closed for the holidays. However, members of the Bluestocking Belles have not been idle. Here's news of a seasonal romance anthology from six of the best!

THE TEATIME TATTLER

A Bluestocking Belles with Friends Collection

CHRISTMASTIDE KISSES



Six charming holiday season romances from award-winning and best-selling authors.

The Bluestocking Belles and Friends brighten your holidays with:

- A beleaguered uncle whose wards have run off every governess. What he needs is a wife, if only he can persuade the latest applicant
- A country solicitor who becomes an earl and then finds a secret that changes everything
- A very proper clergyman battling very improper urges when he and a lady with a murky past find themselves snowbound
- A viscount whose search to unearth generations-old family secrets kindles the fire of love for his lovely search partner
- A former army captain who wonders if the best friend of his ex-fiancee is the woman he should have proposed to, and
- A vicar with a misspent youth and the duke's daughter who brings out the best in him.

Six gentlemen and the ladies with whom they discover the power of a **Christmastide Kiss**.

Find *Christmastide Kisses* on Amazon



THE ART OF MISDIRECTION

by Tobias Black, *magician*

Many people spend a lot of time and money on doing things to get themselves noticed. It might be the cut of their clothes or the talent they share with the world. I myself am a magician, well-versed in the art of stagecraft, and of holding an audience's attention until the final curtain.

Even for those whose occupation is not on the stage, the need to be noticed also comes naturally – after all, we human beings are social creatures, and we need the approbation of our fellow man.

However, there may be circumstances where swimming beneath the surface is preferable, to go about your business unnoticed or, if you do happen to find yourself followed, to evade your pursuer.

In the case of the charming Miss Caro Addison, it was as simple as wearing a luridly coloured scarf – one that made me stand out in the crowd. Why? Because I knew that – otherwise unremarkably dressed as I was – she would focus on the scarf and not *me*.

To lose the huntress, I simply had to 'lose' my scarf, and – voila! I could walk right past her unnoticed.

A most simple but satisfying illusion that calls not so much on 'misdirection' as on 'guided direction'. In this case, the brightly coloured scarf guided all her attention to that as I moved through a crowd.

Miss Addison's reason for following me is outside the scope of this article. Suffice to say that we managed to resolve our misunderstanding in the most delightful way possible.

However, this magician's trick can also be employed by members of the general public for their own personal safety.

Here is what I would recommend.

- Always be aware of your surroundings. Do not let yourself be distracted, lest you be caught unawares.
- Pay attention to your instincts. If you suspect you're being followed, you might well be right. Be sure to stay in a public place and do not lead them to your home or conveyance. Walking around a complete city block, or doubling back to see your suspect face-to-face might provide confirmation.
- Be sure to act naturally – after all, you do not want to tip off your pursuer.
- Have more than one escape route planned, so you can switch direction in a nimble fashion.

You could say these instructions are tricks for making unwelcome people disappear.

But if you're also interested in a little sleight of hand and magical misdirection to entertain your fellow partygoers this coming festive season, I can recommend checking out the misdirection techniques at the Conjuror Community: <https://conjuror.community/misdirection-techniques/>

The Frenchman Voltaire said 'Illusion is the first of all pleasures'. It's remarkable how, even when we know how a trick was done, we take delight in the skilled performance of deception.

Now that's magic!

Read more about The Thief of Hearts overleaf...



AN EXCERPT FROM **THE THIEF OF HEARTS** How far should she follow Tobias Black?

He proved himself to be charming and helpful this afternoon, but she knew nothing of him except the certainty he could be dangerous too if she was right that he was the master jewel thief The Phantom. What if he was meeting with his gang? What should she do then?

"First class single to Brighton," she heard him say.

That was miles away! How on earth did he expect to get there, conduct his business, and then get back for his London performance?

Caro watched the yellow slip of paper pass through the ticket window. Black turned left. Caro's heart pounded.

I'm losing him... No!

There - the bright green scarf!

She saw him descending the stairs down to the platform.

"One platform ticket please, the Brighton line," she said without looking at the man in the booth.

Caro passed over a halfpenny, grabbed the ticket and hurried after him.

The sounds were loud here, with passengers embarking and disembarking, the chuffing plumes of smoke and vapour, the piercing sound of the whistle as boilers on the monstrous locomotives built up a head of steam. A train had just arrived on the platform. She was pressed against a tide of humanity ascending the stairs. Between shoulders and hats she could see he was already on the platform. She *had* to reach him.

Caro finally obtained the last step and pushed her way through. Equal numbers of people were now embarking onto the train bound for Brighton. Caro stood on tip toes, looking for the distinctive scarf.

A loud sharp whistle sounded to her left.

Caro winced putting a hand to her ear. The ringing stopped, replaced by the sound of the train screeching and huffing its way from the station. As it picked up speed, Caro wondered whether she'd caught a flash of green on one of the passengers on board or whether it was simply the light from the signal box reflected in the carriage window.

She walked from one end of the platform to the other and felt the crushing disappointment of defeat. She had lost him. The one clue she had, and she lost it. Her sympathy with her uncle grew exponentially. Sleuthing was a lot more exhausting than the detective novels made it out to be.

By now, the platform was nearly deserted. Porters rested against their trolleys, smoking cigarettes and enjoying a few minutes respite before the madness started all over again with the arrival of the next train.

There was nothing more for it. Caro would have to go back home and explain her strange behaviour to Margaret -- and potentially worse still, her parents. The clock on the platform showed twenty minutes to four and Caro had the niggling feeling there was somewhere she had to be at that hour but for the life of her she couldn't remember what it was.

Rather than trudging the two miles back in dark, dank conditions on the street, she decided the wisest thing to do would be to take the train back to Charing Cross. Feeling somewhat dispirited after her adventure, she turned to trudge up the stairs when something at the foot of the stairs beside a rubbish bin caught her eye.

She looked about to ensure she was unobserved before dipping down and picking it up.

It was a chartreuse coloured scarf.

Get The Thief of Hearts FREE from December 16 to December 20
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*Ebook edition free from December 16 to December 20, 2023.

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IT'S AN ELIZABETH ELLEN CARTER CHRISTMAS

I've six Christmas tales told - so far! Here they are for your festive entertainment. Merry Christmas!

Elizabeth Ellen Carter

Tidings of Comfort

Not all who are lost have gone astray.

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.

Excerpt

"Have you ever imagined who they were?" his wife had asked earlier.

"A scullery maid and a second footman." It was a joke, but not quite. He had laughed at Sophia's not-quite amused expression. "I'm being serious. I'm not from the upper classes. You know that."

"But someone thought well enough of your mother to have her come here for her lying-in, and to then have you sent to the Foundling Hospital."

"I know you keep hoping for some romantic tale." He'd clutched a hand to his breast in theatrical fashion. "The ill-fated romance between a second son of a Duke and the daughter of a poor but honest family who has a secret inheritance waiting, but - alas! - if only if the true heir can be found!"

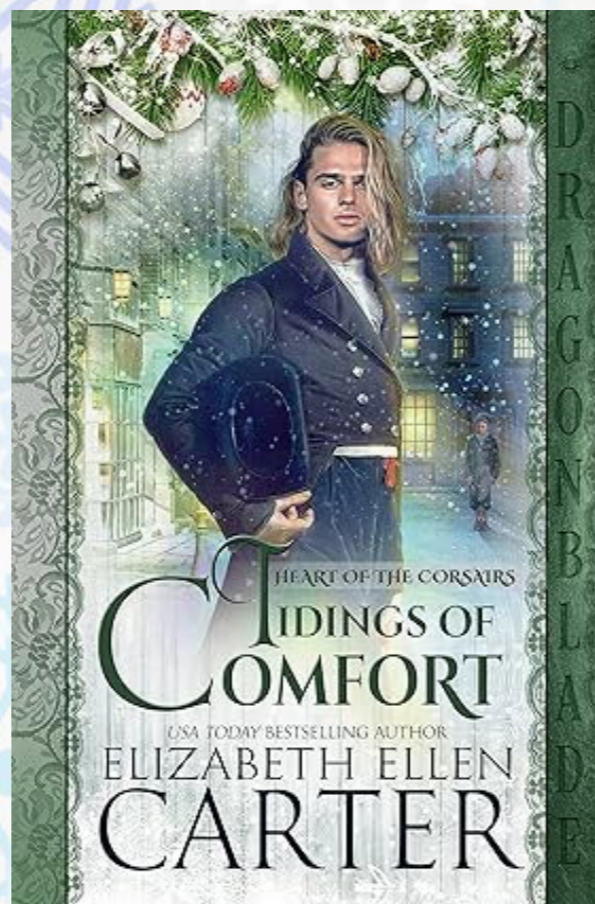
Sophia had laughed at his performance. And he

was glad because it stopped her from demanding he take the subject seriously. It suited him to think he was different, a man without a past. He could be anything he wanted to be then. A chameleon, a changeling.

To know who his mother and father were would anchor him to a past he could not change. Kit wasn't sure how he felt about that. He tried to tell himself he was ambivalent, only going along with Sophia's search for his parentage because it seemed to matter more to her than it did to him.

Why? He suspected it was because, like him, she too was orphaned. But she was ten when they died. At least she had known her parents. She loved them and they loved her.

Kit wasn't sure he could feel the same about his own mother and father.



Warming Winter's Heart

A touch a kindness is all it takes to warm the coldest heart.

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 is frosty indeed until he meets fellow guest Caroline, a widow with a young son.

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



Continued on next page



The Thief of Hearts

December 1890. London, England.

Some seriously clever sleight of hand is needed if aspiring lawyer Caro Addison is ever going to enjoy this Christmas. To avoid an unwanted marriage proposal, she 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 desires.

Excerpt

He was under orders to never speak to another soul about the events that had taken place in the little mining village of Stannum, Cornwall, nearly six months prior.

There had been a reward for his silence, however. It was an invitation to a winter ball which the Prince of Wales would attend. It would be at the Mayfair home of the new Viscount and Viscountess Carmarthen and jointly hosted by Sir Daniel and Lady Abigail Ridgeway, personal friends of the Prince.

That news he couldn't keep to himself, nor was he expected to. The gilt trimmed and embossed invitation had arrived at his Somerset home shortly after Allie and David's wedding.

Aunt Harriet had been quick to attach Margaret to it.

After all, it was a golden opportunity to cast a glittering net wider than Bath in the search for more eligible marriage prospects for her daughter.

Julian would never begrudge his cousin such an opportunity. But where Margaret went, Lydia was never far behind.

And that was his problem.

For the past two years, Lydia had determined he was the catch she wanted to land. And despite the unsuitability that was obvious to him at their very first meeting, the girl would not be dissuaded. Unfortunately, neither would his Aunt, the only member of his family

with whom he had any cordial relations. She actively encouraged Lydia's pursuit of him in the mistaken belief he was attracted to her but was too diffident to advance the situation.

Julian himself had erroneously thought that his work as a geologist, digging in the dirt, would serve to put Lydia off her interest. After a year, it was clear his occupation did not matter as long as his income was good.

Conspiring with Allie to create a fake attachment worked for nearly six whole months. Then nursing a 'broken heart' when she had become engaged to David had given him another three months' reprieve.

Now, however, it would appear Lydia had decided his mourning should come to an end.

IT'S AN ELIZABETH ELLEN CARTER CHRISTMAS

Continued from previous page



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 stronger than the love between father and son.

Excerpt

"Adam? What's the matter?"

"Can I see you in the study?"

She followed in silence, as grave as his own mood.

"I got a letter from Daniel today."

"Has something happened? I was so looking forward to spending Christmas with them. I hope they're not unwell."

Adam's throat threatened to close up. He wasn't sure what to say other than motion to his desk. Olivia's look of concern increased. She went to the desk and picked up the open letter.

"Read," he said. "We'll talk when I get back from putting the girls to bed."

Adam loved his daughters. But Charlotte, with her hair turning blonde in some lights, and with her friendly mischievousness, had him wonder on occasion what the son conceived in his youth might have been like.

He listened to his youngest daughter read from the book stumbling bravely over some of the words she did not know, until yawns rounded out her speech and she conceded defeat.

Next door, Adam walked quietly into the semi-darkened room. Julia was buried under the covers with

only the top half of her face in view. She was eleven, about a year older than Christopher was when the corsairs raided and sank the Pendragon.

A fierce tenderness clutched his breast. He would never, never abandon his family. He would ride through the flames of Hell itself to protect his wife and children. And yet there was one he had failed – the consequence of a summer love thirty-four years ago between himself, a young carpenter's son, and the daughter of a local squire.

In his defense, he hadn't even known of his son's existence until fourteen years ago. He would not have learned about Christopher at all had the tragic story not been pieced together by Olivia who had been governess to the Squire's daughter by his second wife.

And just three months after learning he had a son in the first place, Adam was devastated by the news that the boy was presumed dead. Even the considerable connections of Lord Daniel and Lady Abigail did not bring any further information.

And now, to learn he is possibly alive...

A Sweet Tale of Blessing

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 Auchin, Roddy heads north.

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?

Excerpt

"Do ye ken the name of the father?" one of the women asked.

Aileen shook her head.

"She wouldnae confide that in me."

Mairead pursed her lips once more, looking over from where she tended Catriona. "'Twould be better if she does now."

A wave of dread rushed over her.

"Why?" Aileen demanded.

"The baby is nae sitting right for birth."

"A breech."

The woman nodded. Aileen had aided a ewe so afflicted during the last lambing, so she knew the dangers.

"'Twill be hard on yer sister."

And so it proved.

Aileen woke to the sound of her sister's labored breathing. She sat up in the chair on which she'd fallen asleep.

"The bairn?" Catriona whispered.

"He sleeps with a belly full of warm milk."

"Call him Iain. Promise me?"

Aileen leaned forward and patted her sister's hand.

"Ye can name him when ye get him baptized."

Her sister managed a weak smile. "I may as well confess to ye as a priest. His father is Callum Kerr."

It took Aileen a moment to realize the import of the name.

"The laird's son? Him who died, thrown from his horse?"

Her sister nodded. "Please dinnae think he played me false. We loved dearly. We spoke to a priest to be married. The first of the banns were to be read on the Sunday, and he'd died just two days before."

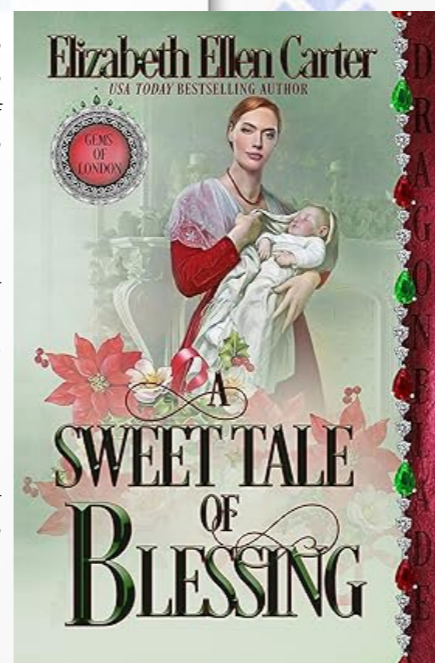
Aileen squeezed her eyes tight shut.

"Does the laird ken?"

Tears welled in Catriona's eyes. "Aye, about his plans to wed me. Nae about the babe. I dinnae ken myself until he... Callum...was a month in the ground."

Aileen's hand was gripped painfully tight. "Look after Iain. Promise me, Aileen. He ought to be laird. He could grow up to see this place prosper, as his da wanted."

They were the last words her sister spoke. By the time the sun peeked over the trees, she was dead.



The sixth title is, of course, *What the False Heart Doth Know*, which is out today, December 16.

I do hope you enjoy it.

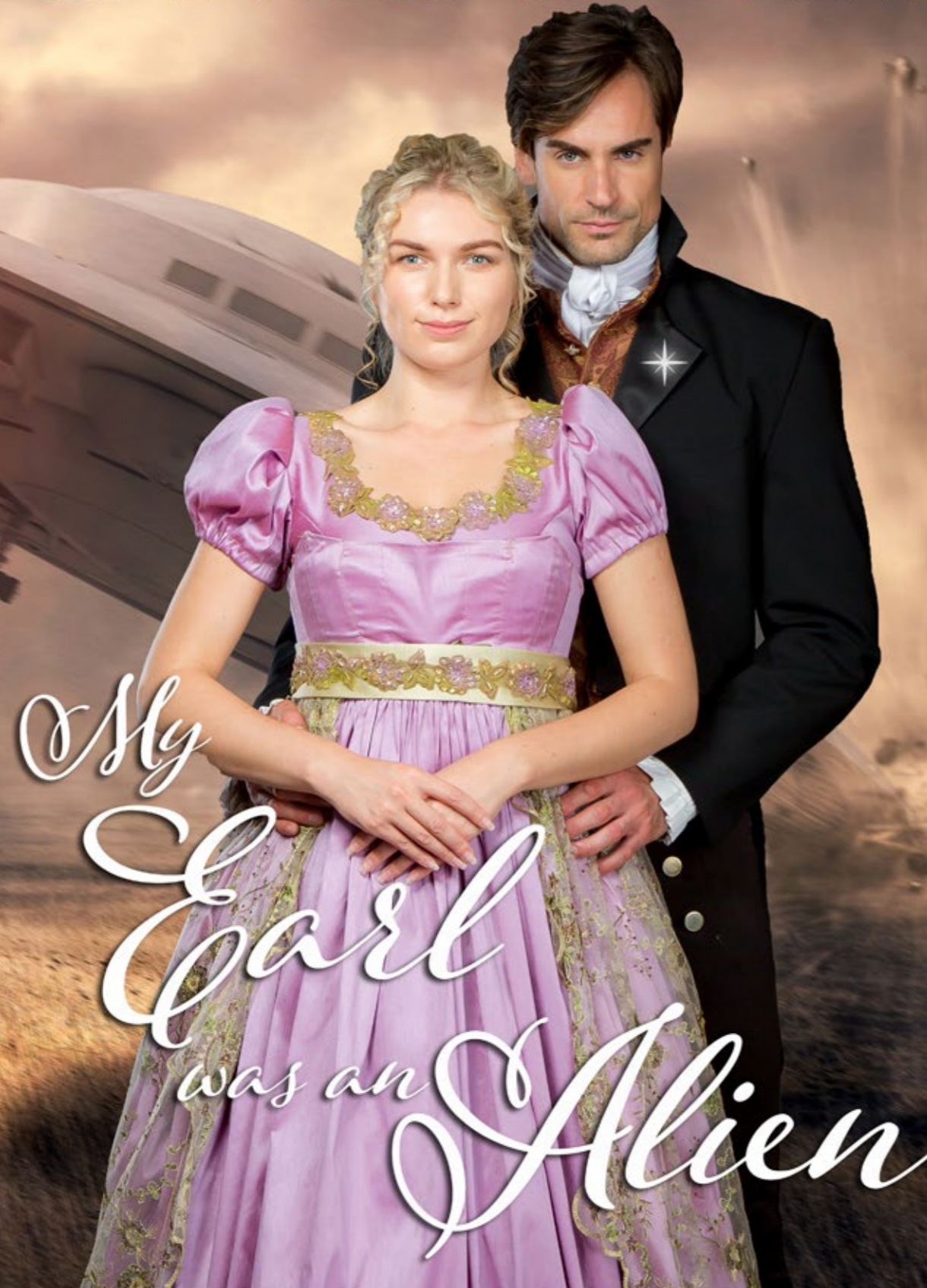
And no matter what you read this Christmas, make it exciting and romantic!

Elizabeth Ellen Carter

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Having a grand old time
in Gettysburg

LOVE FASHION



**HISTORICAL
ACCURACY**

HISTORICAL ACCURACY

by Fashion Correspondent
VICTORIA VANE



I HAD the good fortune to travel to Gettysburg recently and attend not one, but two balls. The first was the Gettysburg Ball then the Gettysburg President's Ball the following night.

Both were held to commemorate the dedication of the battlefield cemetery following the American Civil War, with the dress and entertainment 1860s-era.

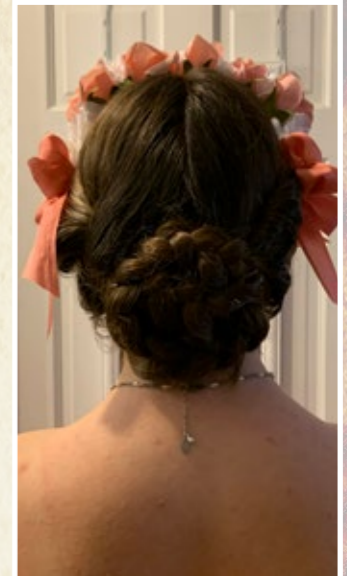
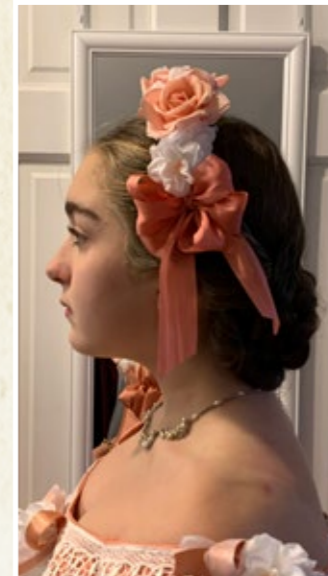
My travelling companions were my husband, and my niece, the lovely Miss Hayden, who was the belle of both balls!

I purchased an antique garnet necklace on the trip, authenticated as being from the mid-19th century. You can see me wearing it with my burgundy gown. I also took along an authentic 19th century Paisley shawl that I wore with my orange dress. The items certainly lent some historical accuracy to our appearance.



Turn the page
for more
photos

HISTORICAL ACCURACY



VOICES OF ANGELS

A celebration of heavenly vocalists

by LGA Associate Editor
DUNCAN CARLING-RODGERS

On the playlist

- Karen Carpenter
- The Moir Sisters
- Judith Durham
- Olivia Newton-John
- Shirley Bassey
- Annie Lennox
- Whitney Houston
- Florence Welch
- Maggie Bell
- Sia
- Kate Bush
- Cleo Laine



The Moir Sisters - Good Morning How Are You (1974)

Jean, Margot and Lesley Moir were Scottish-Australian sisters who formed a pop and folk vocal trio 'as a bit of a joke' in 1970.

They entered a Melbourne television talent show, New Faces, in 1974, won their heat, and progressed through to the final.

Signed to a recording contract off the back of their national TV exposure, their self-written debut single, Good

Morning (How Are You?) rose to the top ten in Australia and stayed in the top fifty for nearly four months.

Their bright and tight high-pitched harmonies are breathtaking, and the song evokes much nostalgia for Australians of certain ages. The video clip also hits a few nostalgic notes, featuring footage and advertising visuals from the era, sandwiched around what remains of a recording of the Moir Sisters performing. Just ignore the dopey DJ in the opening seconds...

Enjoy the playlist.



Tap/Click Here

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMwRm2zP11a3b6G12z07FVWtrkph>



Olivia Newton-John - Xanadu (1980)

Olivia Newton-John – when it comes to voices, does anything more need to be said? Possibly the most perfect singing voice of the recorded era. Pair her with the songwriting and rock orchestral arrangements of ELO's Jeff Lynne, and you're truly in heaven.

Image: © Universal Pictures | Fair Use US Copyright Act 1976

Karen Carpenter - Ticket to Ride (The Carpenters, 2000)



A soulful version of The Beatles' hit that really captures the broken-heartedness of the song.

Karen Carpenter's gorgeous contralto voice and the highly polished harmonies over a country-toned arrangement wrings out the poignancy of the lyrics in a way that the original artists

and songwriters couldn't manage with their trademark nasal Liverpudlian vocals and jangly guitars.

Carpenter is back in the news this year with a fresh look at her life and tragically early death in the documentary *Starving for Perfection*.

Continued on next page

VOICES OF ANGELS

Enjoy the playlist.



YouTube

Tap/Click Here

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMhFmLz4P1LafbaG2H2a0T9v40rhqg>

Whitney Houston - I Will Always Love You (1992)



The achingly beautiful voice of Whitney Houston was never better than on this iconic track from the film *The Bodyguard*.

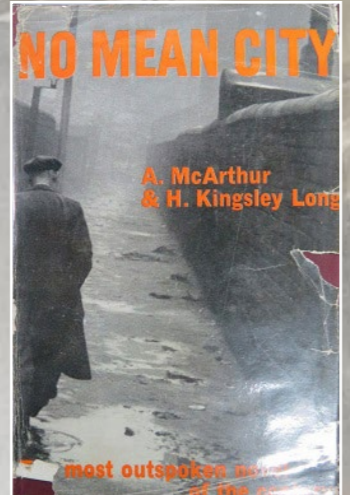
The song was written by Dolly Parton, and Houston is quoted as having been worried what Parton would think of her performance. She needn't have. It was perfect.

Maggie Bell - No Mean City (1985)

Scottish singer Maggie Bell has the voice of an angel who's been to hell and back. Listen to her sing the theme song from the Scottish Television detective series *Taggart*, and you'll know why.

The song by Mike Moran is about the city of Glasgow.

The title was used for a 1935 novel about the squalor and crime of the city's Gorbals district, and stuck as a nickname that Glasgow has tried to shake off in more recent years.



Annie Lennox - Who's That Girl? (Eurythmics, 1983)



Another Scottish singer, Annie Lennox can soar like an angel and get gritty as well.

Who's That Girl? was recorded for the Eurythmics' 1983 album *Touch*.

Lennox has won multiple awards for her performances.

She and Eurythmics co-founder Dave Stewart met as members of a UK pop outfit that split up in the middle of an Australian tour.

Florence Welch - You Got the Love (Florence and the Machine, 2009)

Florence Welch is the English-American lead singer and primary songwriter of the indie rock band Florence and the Machine.

Listen to her let rip in the band's fabulous cover of British songwriting team the Source's soul/disco/gospel track *You Got the Love*.



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Beetroot, rocket, and walnut salad



A super simple salad featuring all the colours of the festive season – red, green and white. This is perfect served alongside either hot or cold dishes.

INGREDIENTS

- 500g beetroot
- 140g rocket leaves, washed and drained
- 150g Danish feta, diced
- 1/2 cup lightly chopped walnuts

Vinaigrette

- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 tbsp honey
- Salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

Place the rocket in a serving bowl layering with beetroot, feta and walnuts. Mix the honey balsamic vinaigrette ingredients together, and pour on just before serving.

White Christmas

An easy no-bake sweet dessert that can be made by children with a little assistance melting the chocolate.

INGREDIENTS

- 250g white cooking chocolate
- 250ml sweetened condensed milk

METHOD

Mix the dried ingredients together using a wooden spoon or spatula. Melt the white chocolate using a DIY double boiler and add the melted chocolate to the condensed milk. Combine with the dry ingredients. Spoon the mixture into patty cases or pour onto a lined slice tray and flatten by hand.

Refrigerate for at least 90 minutes. If you've used the slice tray, use a knife to cut into slices.

- 2 ½ cups Rice Bubbles
- 1 cup desiccated coconut (I like mine lightly toasted)
- 150g of mixed fruit (or glace cherries and pistachios to the same weight)



FAVORITE FESTIVE FARE

Whether you're sweltering in a southern hemisphere summer, or freezing in colder climes of the north, Christmas is time to spend with family and friends over a table of good food with lots of love and laughter.

Here are a few of my favourite dishes.

Elizabeth Ellen Carter

Shrimp on the Barbie

Whether you call them shrimps or prawns, fresh king prawns cooked on a hot barbecue says Christmas for many Australians. Give them a go and you'll see why.

You'll get between 20 to 30 king prawns in a kilo.

If using medium prawns, shell and de-vein prawns leaving tails intact. If using large prawns, butterfly by cutting through the body, just after the head, stopping just before the tail. Then remove the vein.

They only need 1 minute each side on a hot barbecue.



Roast pork with apple sauce

Roast pork looks and tastes spectacular, especially when it comes with delicious, crispy crackling.

INGREDIENTS

- 2.2kg rack of pork, rind scored
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp coarse cooking salt

Apple sauce

- 3 large granny smith apples, peeled, cored, sliced thickly
- 1 tsp sugar
- ground cinnamon

METHOD

Preheat oven to 250°C (230°C fan-forced).

Pat the pork rind dry with paper towel. Place the pork on a rack in a baking dish. Rub the rind with oil, then salt.

Roast for about 40 minutes, or until skin blisters. Reduce oven temperature to 180°C (160°C fan-forced) and roast for a further 40 minutes or until pork is just cooked.

Meanwhile, to make apple sauce, place apples and 1/2 cup (125ml) water in a medium saucepan; simmer, uncovered, for about 15 minutes or until apple is soft. Stir in sugar and cinnamon.

Serve pork with apple sauce.



GAME PLAY ▶

Jigsaw Time

Piece this picture together at Jigsaw Planet. Tap or click:
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WORD SEARCH

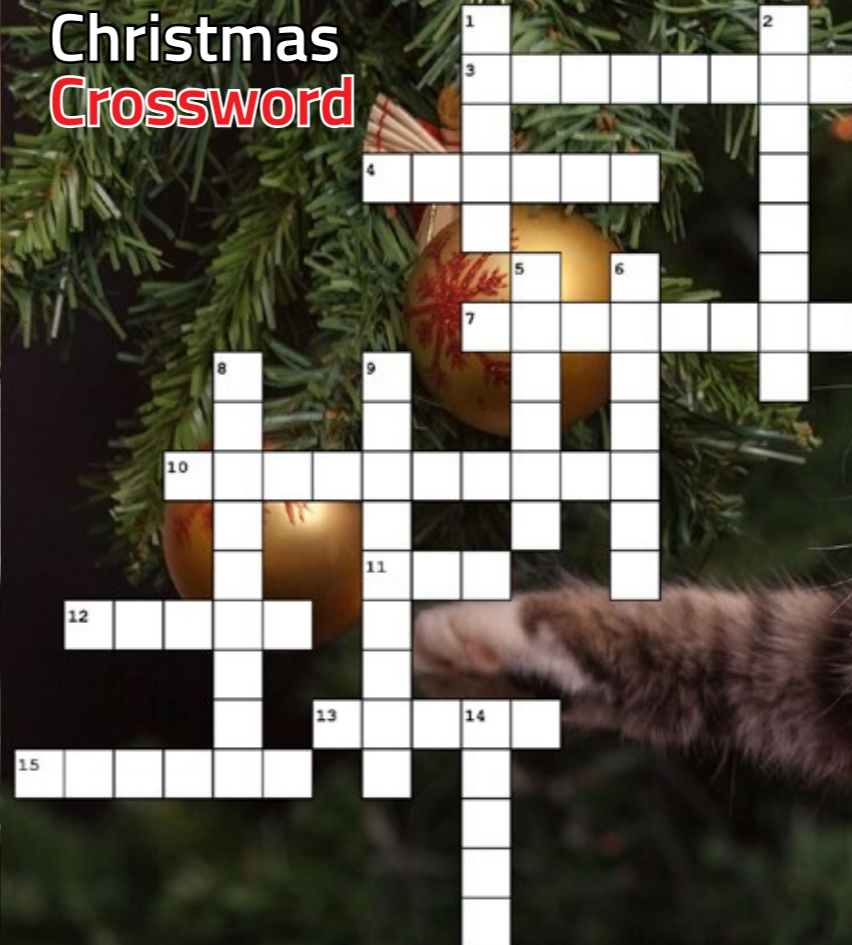
On Location

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B	O	S	C	A	F	F	O	L	D	G	D	W	O
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L	Y	G	A	N	R	H	R	G	R	D	E	L	C
L	N	G	L	S	L	A	O	I	O	E	O	O	R
S	O	T	L	R	S	P	H	L	A	F	A	O	C

LIGHTHOUSE
 SCAFFOLD
 THEATRE
 CORNWALL
 ARCADE
 TUNBRIDGENELLS
 LONDON
 HOUSEPARTY
 NORFOLK
 HOTEL

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/6415163/>

Christmas Crossword



Decoratons and Traditions

- ACROSS**
- 3. Religious ornament
 - 4. Hang this on the door
 - 7. Pinetree decoration
 - 10. Native plant of Mexico
 - 11. This Yule tradition burns in the hearth
 - 12. Deck the halls with this
 - 13. Large tree branch
 - 15. Drape it round the tree
- DOWN**
- 1. She tops the tree
 - 2. Hang it from the mantelpiece
 - 5. These make your house stand out
 - 6. Glass tree ornaments originated in this country
 - 8. Self-contained winter blizzard
 - 9. Perfect for kissing under
 - 14. For giving to each other

Let the Spirit of Christmas
sweep you away!

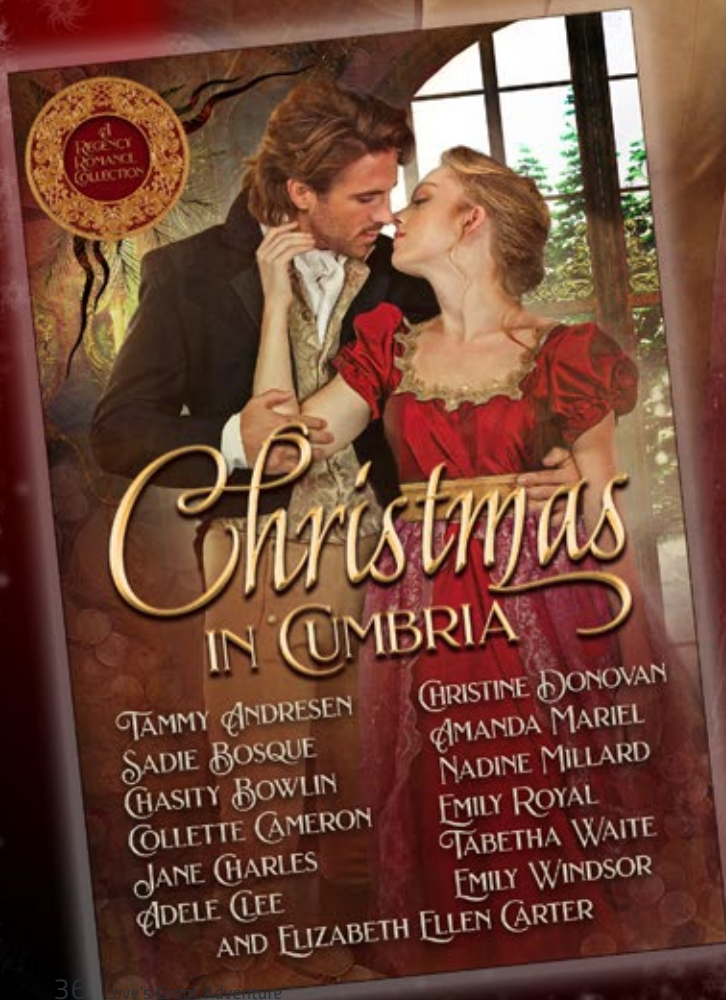


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