

# THE (INDIE) AUTHOR'S GUIDE TO COVERS & BRANDING

KATIE GARLAND

Q: "SO WHAT, ARE YOU GOING TO TEACH ME HOW TO DIY MY COVERS?"

A: NOT EXACTLY...

*OK, THEN WHAT'S THE  
POINT OF THE CLASS?*

OK, THEN WHAT'S THE  
POINT OF THE CLASS?

I WANT YOU TO FEEL CONFIDENT  
IN YOUR PUBLISHING JOURNEY.  
WHETHER YOU ARE PUBLISHING YOUR FIRST  
BOOK OR YOUR HUNDREDTH; YOU'RE HIRING  
PROFESSIONALS OR DOING IT ALL YOURSELF,  
**THERE IS VALUABLE INFO FOR EVERYONE!**

# *WHAT WE'LL COVER*

- Graphic Design Basics
- Book Design Process (both DIY & Commissions)
- Popular Tools
- Developing a Brand
- Hiring Professionals

*GRAPHIC DESIGN 101  
FOR AUTHORS*

# 7 PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

- Emphasis
  - What is most important? Where are the eyes drawn?
- Contrast
  - Make it easy on the eyes, more accessible
- Balance
  - Don't be off-kilter; arrange elements in a pleasing manner that utilizes all available space - or use off-balance as a statement

# 7 PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

- Repetition
  - Cohesion is the goal - reuse elements in a design, use similar colors, fonts, and styles across all materials, use consistent formatting
- Mood
  - Choose elements wisely - they should convey the proper “vibe”
- White space
  - Let your designs BREATHE

# 7 PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

- Movement
  - Guide the viewer through the visuals!



*THE MAKINGS OF  
A GOOD COVER*

# THE MAKINGS OF A **GOOD** COVER

DISCLAIMER: THIS CAN BE VERY  
SUBJECTIVE, BUT IN GENERAL...  
KEEP THE FOLLOWING IN MIND:

# *THE MAKINGS OF A GOOD COVER*

- Strong composition
- Easy-to-read typography
- High contrast
- Consistency (within and across)
- Balance & breathing room
- “Fits the genre”
- Appeals to the target audience
- Personality
- Proper sizing
- Clear/unified message
- Ethically sourced assets
- Appropriate licensing

PERSONALITY MEANS  
MY COVER SHOULD LOOK  
SUPER UNIQUE AND LIKE  
NOTHING ELSE ON THE  
MARKET, RIGHT?

PERSONALITY MEANS MY COVER SHOULD  
LOOK SUPER UNIQUE AND LIKE NOTHING  
ELSE ON THE MARKET, RIGHT?

**WRONG!!!!**

I MEAN, TRENDS HAVE TO  
START SOMEWHERE, RIGHT?

BUT IF YOUR GOAL IS TO **CONSISTENTLY**  
MAKE MONEY, YOU GOTTA PLAY IT SMART:

YOUR COVER NEEDS TO COMMUNICATE TO  
READERS **EXACTLY** WHAT TO EXPECT  
WHEN THEY PICK UP YOUR BOOK!

HOW DO WE  
ACCOMPLISH THIS?

MARKET RESEARCH!

# MARKET RESEARCH!

HONESTLY, THIS IS YOUR  
**MOST IMPORTANT JOB**  
WHEN WRITING YOUR BOOK  
>> KNOW YOUR COMPS  
>> KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

WHAT SHOULD YOUR COVER LOOK LIKE?

REAL PEOPLE PHOTOS?

VECTOR/ILLUSTRATION?

LANDSCAPES?

OBJECTS?

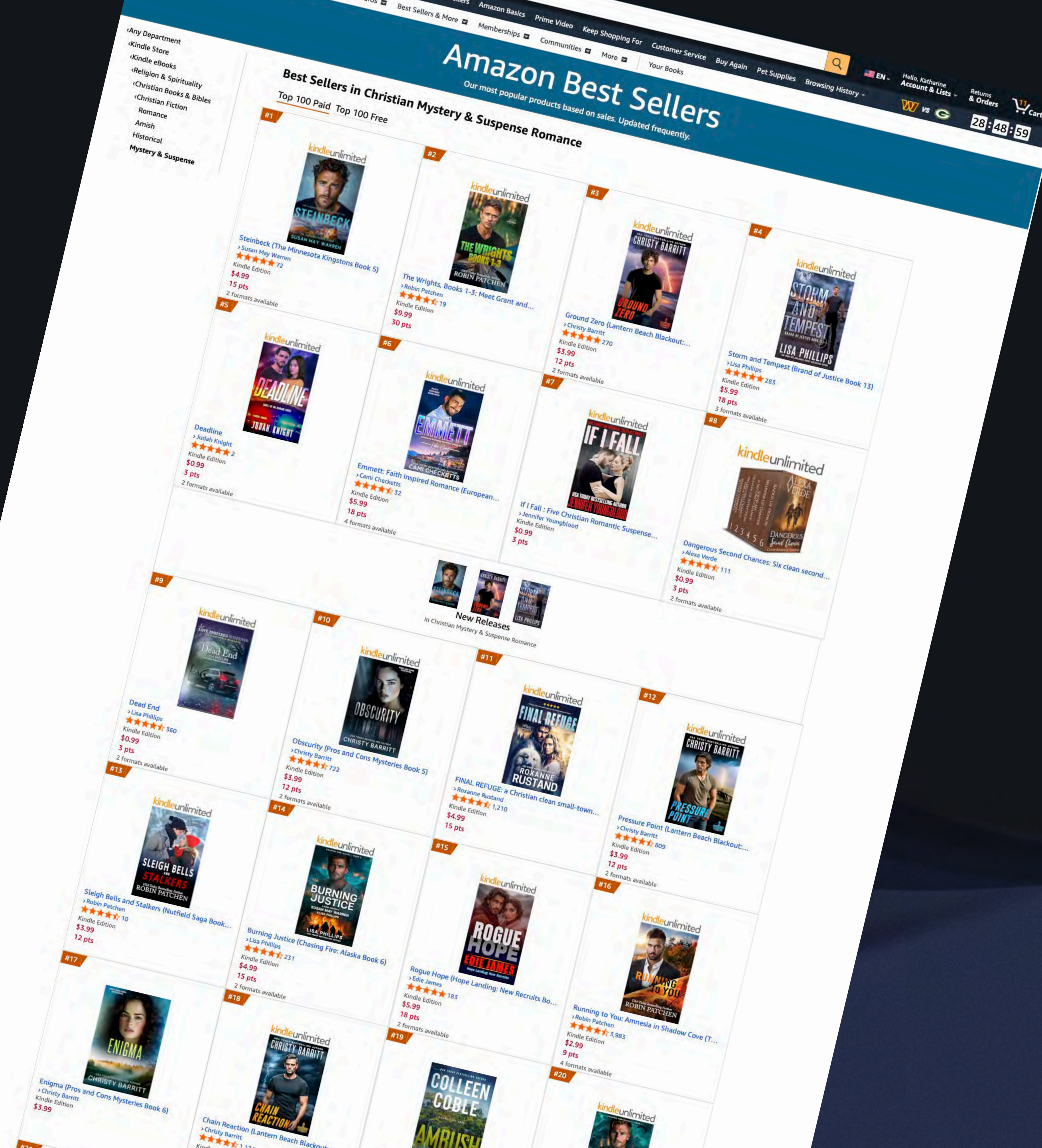
TYPOGRAPHY-ONLY?

HOW ARE ELEMENTS LAID OUT?

WHAT TYPES OF EFFECTS ARE USED?

THE EASIEST WAY TO CHECK FOR TRENDS?

LOOK AT THE BESTSELLER PAGES ON AMAZON.



# COVER DESIGN PROCESS

# *COVER DESIGN PROCESS*

- Market research
- Choose an art style
- Source assets
- Determine sizing
- Create the design
- Check design for grayscale & thumbnails size
- Export all formats needed
- Order proofs-recommended
- Publish!

# WHAT SHOULD I HAVE NAILED DOWN WHEN HIRING A DESIGNER

- Budget
- Exact Genre
- Comp titles
- Trim size
- Page color + cover finish
- Est. page count
- Character/location details
- Book synopsis
- Art style/vibe
- Examples of things you like

# TOOLS & RESOURCES FOR DIY

- For designing:

- Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe Illustrator
- Affinity
- Canva Pro
- Adobe Express
- Procreate
- YouTube: follow some tutorials
- Platform help pages/Templates

- For stock photos:

- Depositphotos
- Adobe Stock (can filter out AI)
- Arcangel (PREMIUM photography)
- Bookish Photography
- Period Images

- For fonts:

- Creative Market
- Creative Fabrica

# *PREMADE COVER SHOPPING TIPS*

- Consider your book title
- Test it for grayscale
- Vet the designer/company
- Make sure it's sold only once
- Reverse image search
- Check available formats
- Ask designer for stock images used/proof of licensing
- Pay attention to turnaround time
- Find out if there is series continuation potential
- Verify the deliverables
- Get appropriate licensing

# COVER DESIGNER SHOPPING TIPS

- Choose a designer who has the style you want in their portfolio (or evidence that they can do it if not)
- Watch turnaround times/ waitlists - you may need to hire them early on!
- Find out their process
- Be vigilant about contracts & payment methods
- Check their Gen AI policies
- Make sure in budget - or find out about payment plans

# *COVER DESIGNER SHOPPING TIPS*

- Check their portfolio against the tips given
- See what extra services they might provide
- Determine the deliverables they provide
- Confirm licensing options
- Ask about policies for changes and series continuations
- Find out where they source their assets / whether you need to provide them
- Look for potential add'tl fees

# ARTIST SHOPPING TIPS

- Choose someone in budget!
- Vet them for plagiarism/AI
- Make sure they do the style you want (DO NOT ask them to mimic another artist's style)
- Make sure they offer appropriate licensing now or that it's available to add on later
- Make sure you can have another designer add typography to the design (when applicable)
- Work with contracts and proper payment methods

CONSIDER YOUR  
PRINTING PROCESS

IF YOU USE POD: TEMPER  
YOUR EXPECTATIONS  
AND SET YOURSELF UP  
FOR SUCCESS!

POD PROVIDERS HAVE  
GENEROUS PRINT  
ALLOWANCES

INGRAMSPARK: 1/16" (2MM)

AMAZON 1/8" (3.2MM)

# *BEST PRACTICES FOR POD COVERS:*

- Avoid borders in the design
- Use full-wrap images when possible
- Avoid hard lines along the spine edge
- Use provided templates
- Follow measurements exactly
- Choose colors/finish wisely
- Expect variances
- Plan for the barcode
- Don't forget the bleed
- Use generous margins
- Don't be lazy, keep it looking professional!

# *BOOK DESIGN 101*

# *CHOICES, CHOICES, CHOICES*

- Trim size: why largely your choice, consider staying on-market for your genre
- Page color: cream is often most-preferred for fiction novels; white for nonfiction
- Formats: paperback, hardcover, special
- Finishes/Paper type
- POD/Offset/Digital printers
- Interior Design layout

# *ELEMENTS OF YOUR BOOKS*

- Cover
- Half & Full Title Pages
- Reverse Title Page  
(copyright page)
- Story!
- Front Matter
- Back Matter
- When applicable: table of contents/index/references

# THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Audience

- Accessibility

- How will it be consumed?

- Print options

- Page count

- Print cost

- Use

- Will it need to uphold to rough use?

- Does it need to be compact?

- How will it be shelved?

- ISBNs

# AVAILABLE TOOLS FOR DIY

- Industry standard: InDesign
- More accessible:
  - Affinity (Adobe alternative)
  - Vellum
  - Atticus
  - Kindle Create
- Writing, less so formatting
  - Microsoft Word
  - Scrivener
- Less recommended:
  - Reedsy
  - Calibre

# DEVELOPING YOUR AUTHOR BRAND

**You Wrote the Book,  
Now Brand the Biz**

You Wrote the Book,  
Now BRAND the Biz



What do you mean, brand my biz?

If you think of yourself as

“JUST”

an author, think again!

# YOU'RE A FULL-BLOWN *BUSINESS OWNER!*



unless of course you never *\*want\**  
to make money from your books.

**The sooner you treat your  
writing as a business...**

*(EVEN IF YOU'RE IN THE PRE-PUB STAGE)*

**the sooner you set  
yourself up for success!**

\*notice how I'm not making any "get rich quick" or "guaranteed results" claims. . .

# So what does “branding” look like?

(for authors)



Clear Genre(s)

Connected Covers

Consistent Messaging

Clever Real Estate

Memorable Identity

# So what does “branding” look like?

(for authors)



Clear Genre(s)

Connected Covers

Consistent Messaging

Clever Real Estate

Memorable Identity

*HOW'S THAT FOR MEMORABLE?*



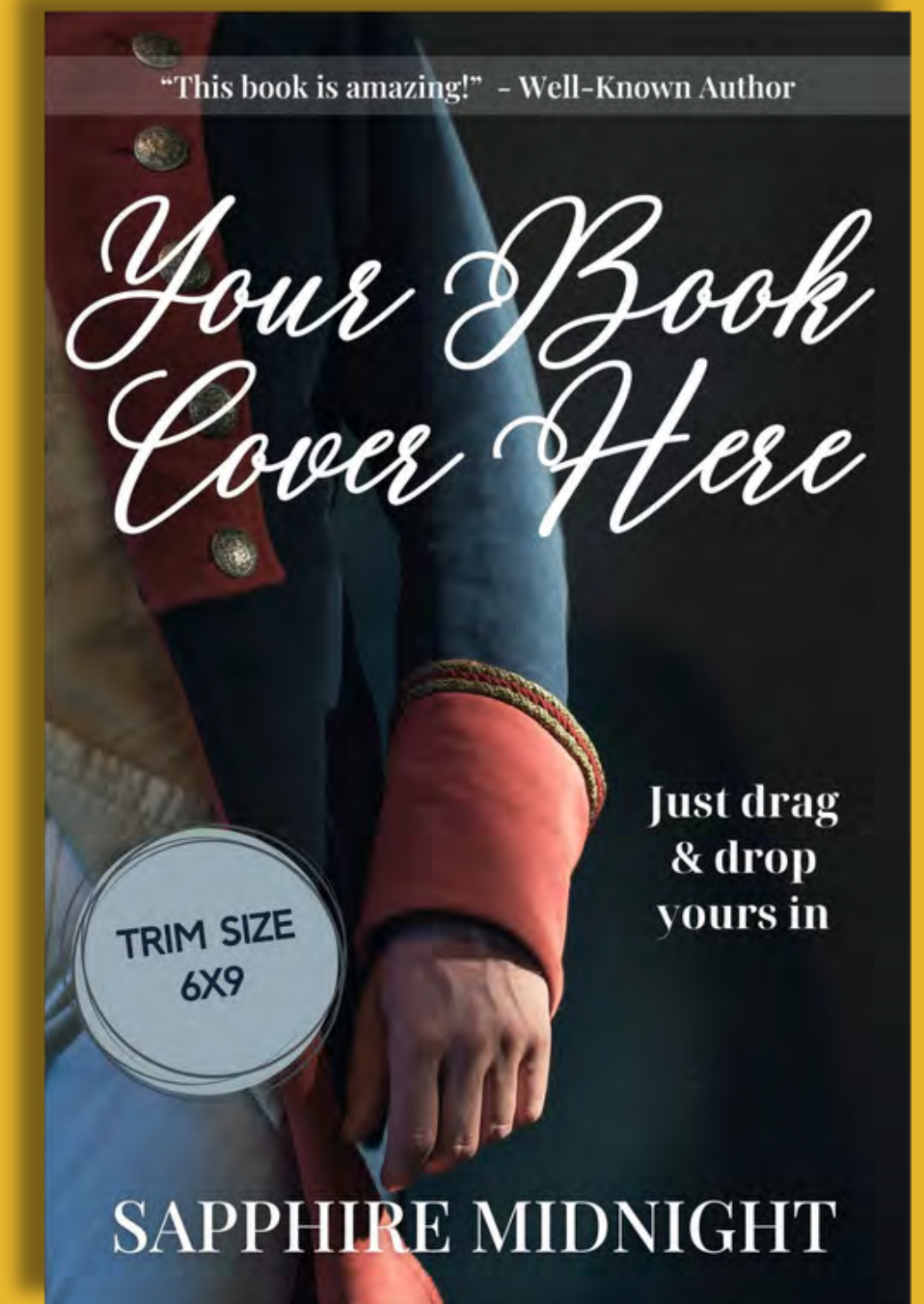
Women's Fiction



Contemporary Romance



Fantasy



Historical

CLEAR GENRE(S)

**If you like to genre-hop...**

*PEN NAMES ARE*

*YOUR FRIENDS*

**but you can keep it simple**

*DAVID RANDALL PLUMB*

**D. R. Plumb**

**David Rand**

**Randy Plum**

**Randall Plum**

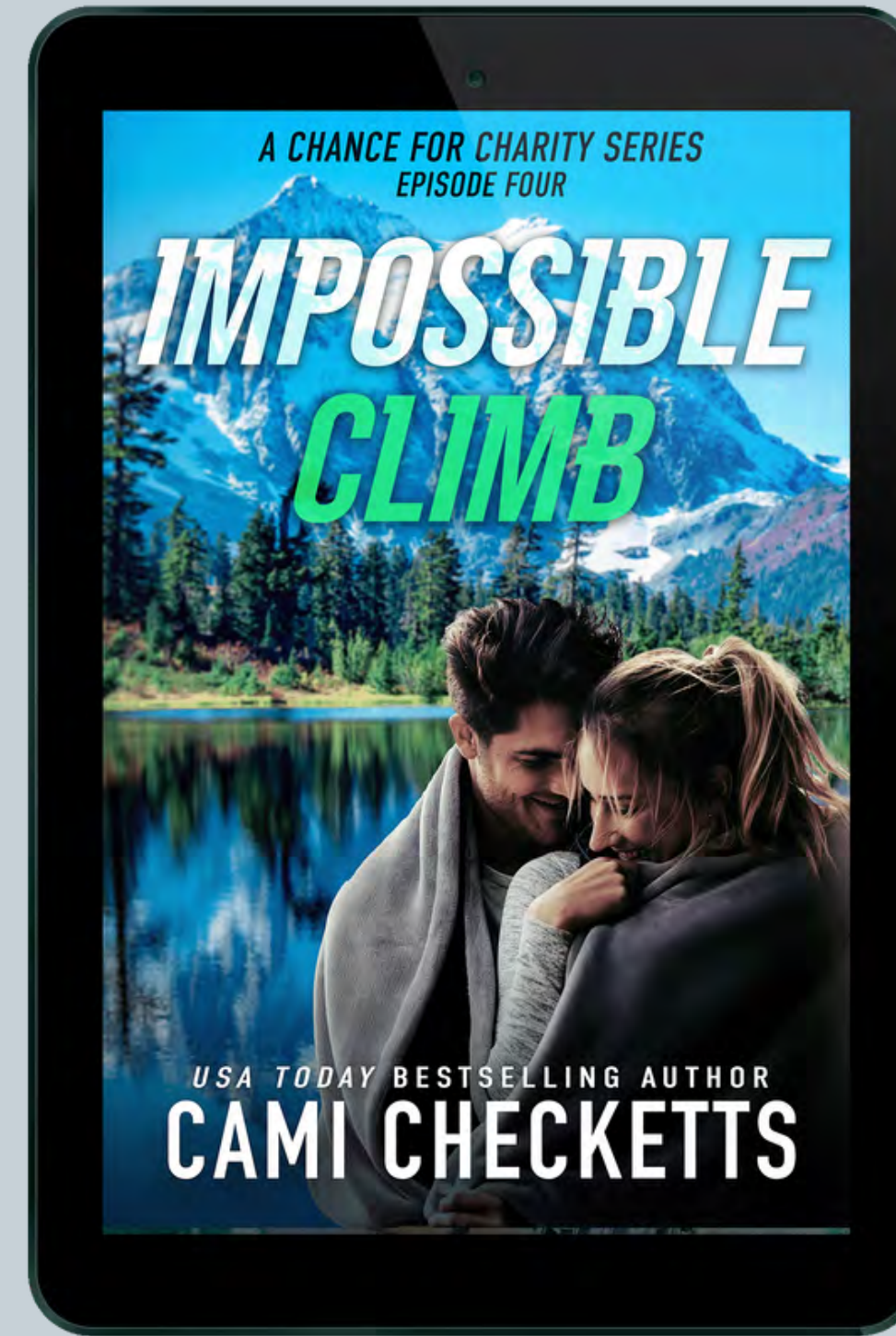
**David R. Plumb**

**But do I have to use a pen name?**

***NOPE!***

**You do YOU!  
Just know  
the pros/cons**





CONNECTED COVERS

**Show, not tell!**

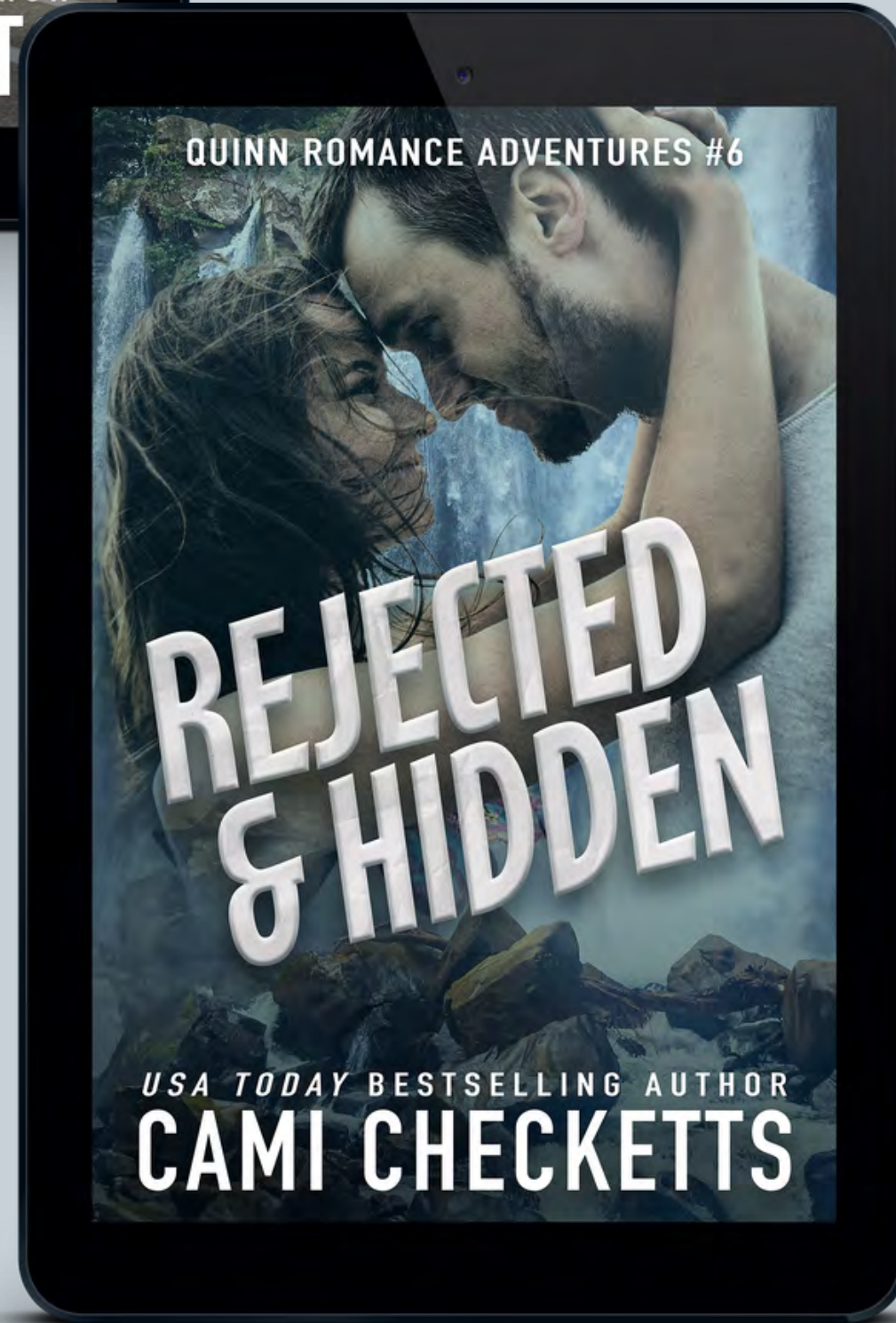
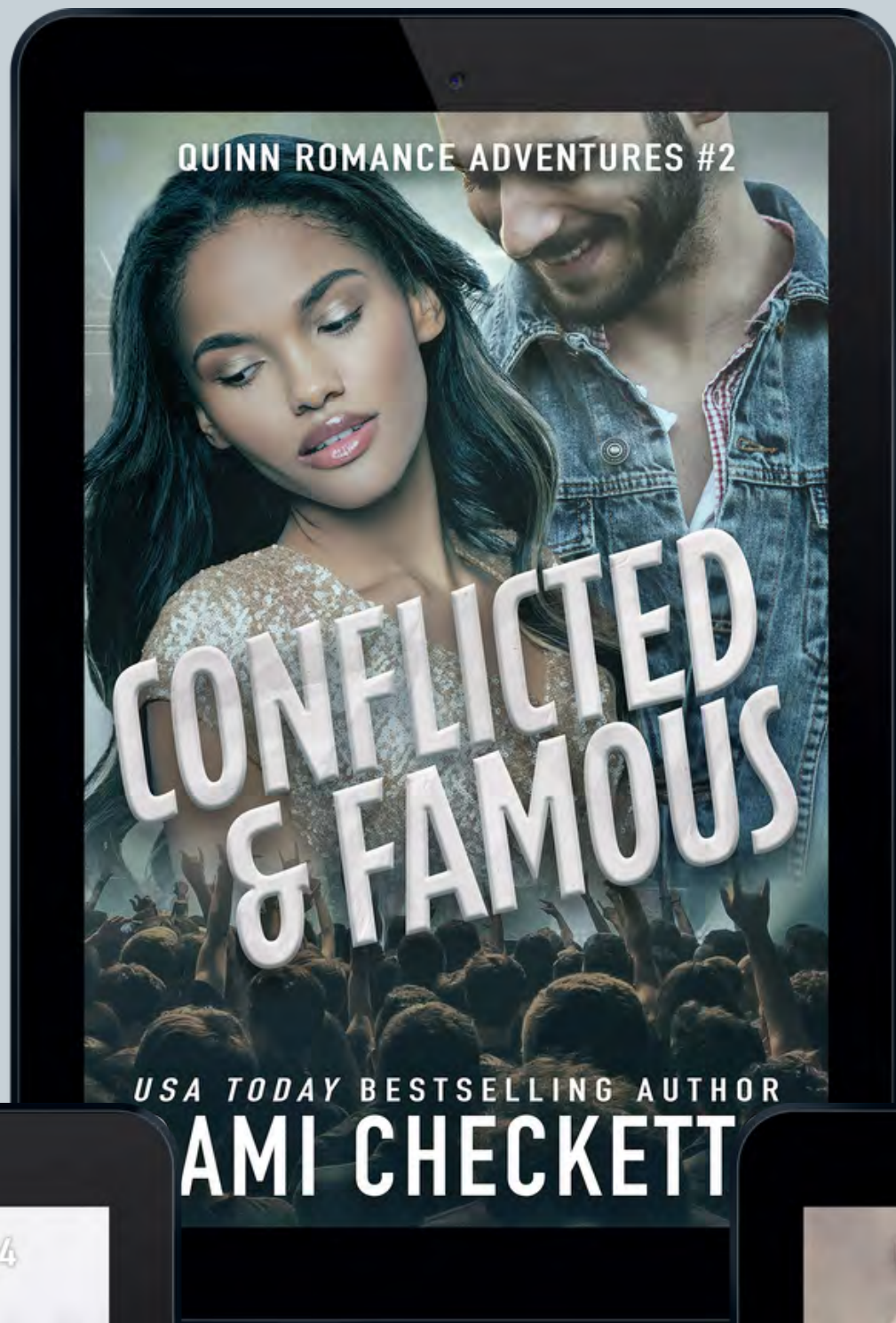
*COVERS SHOULD DEPICT*

*FAMILIAL RESEMBLANCE*

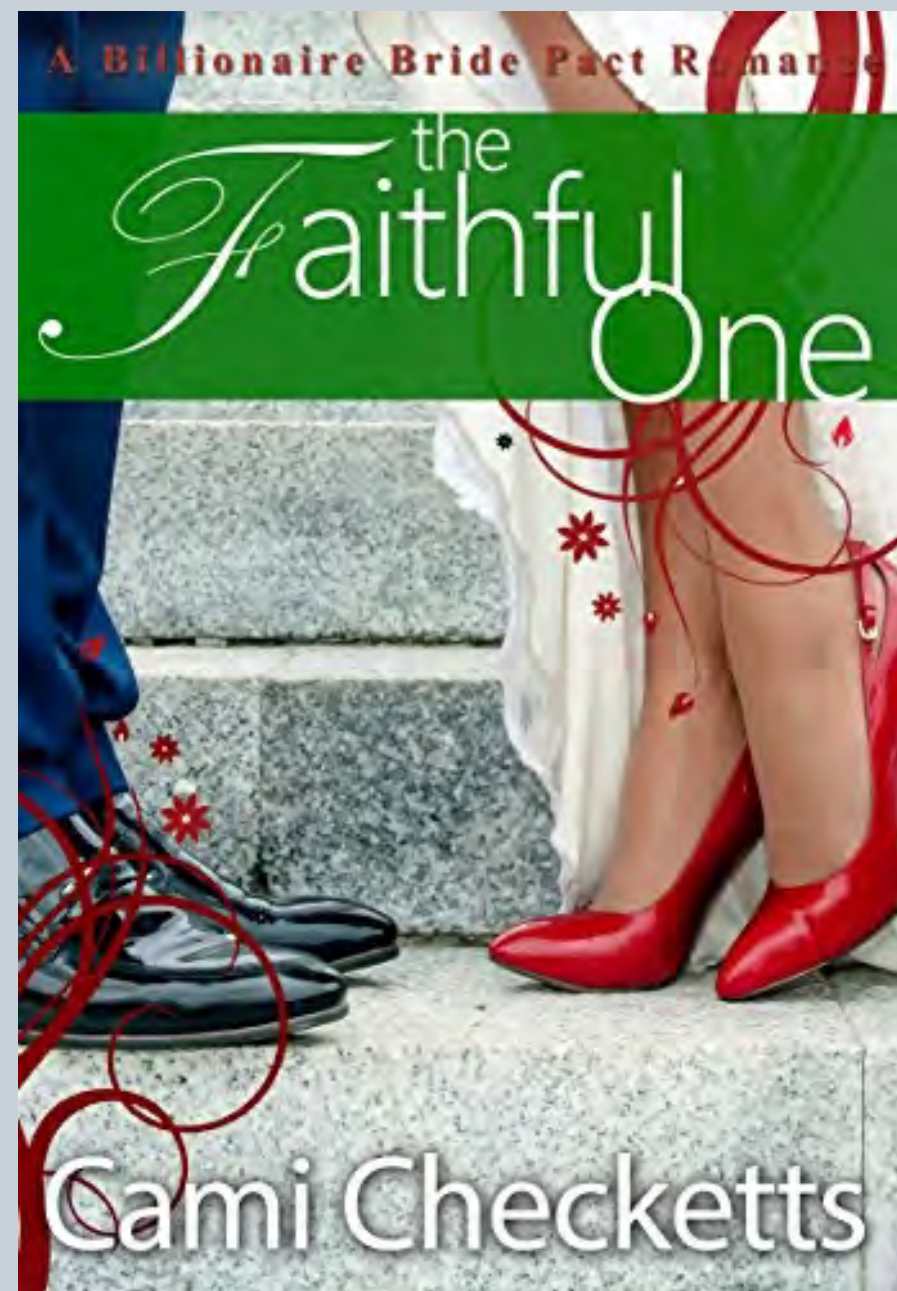
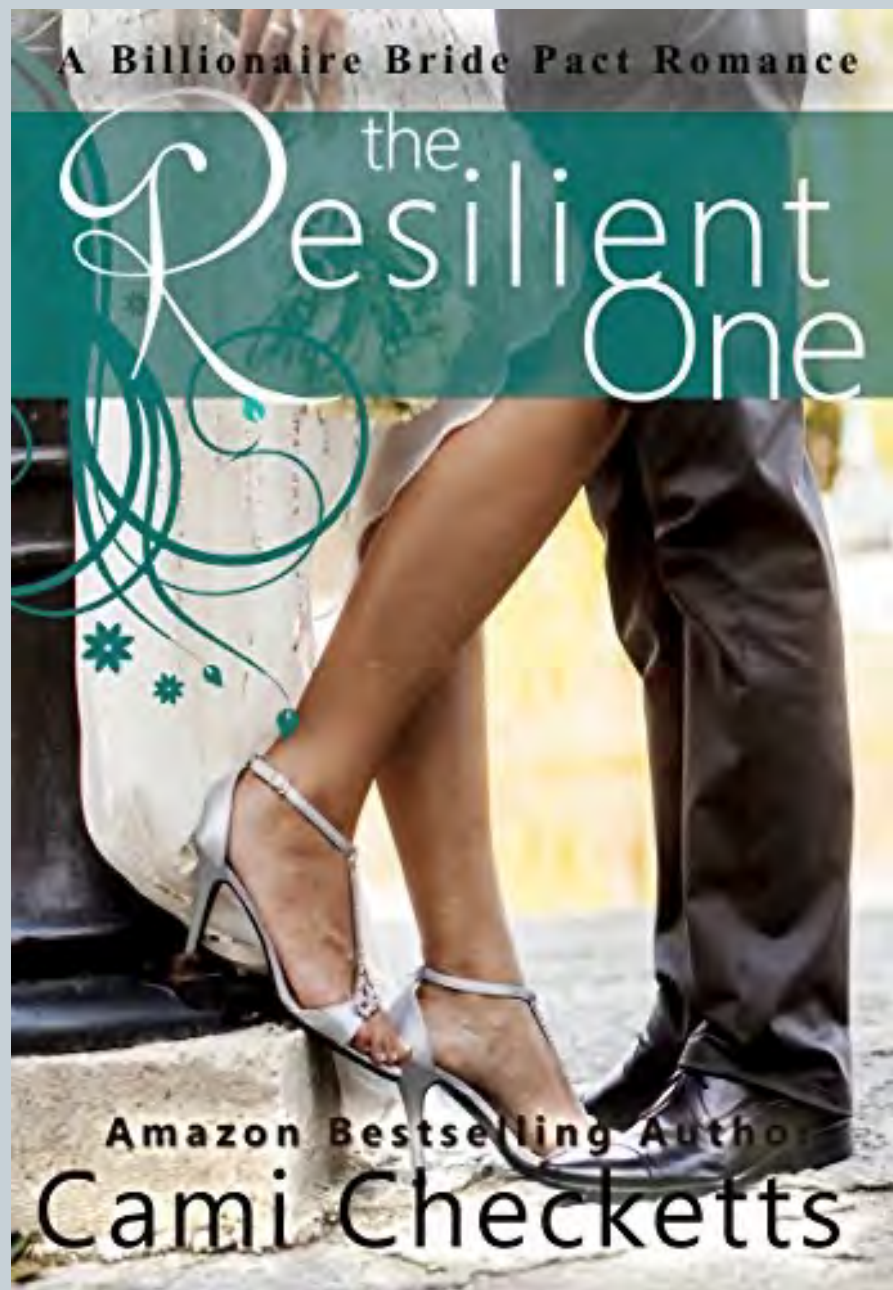
**genre/audience/series**



SAPPHIRE  
MIDNIGHT  
DESIGN



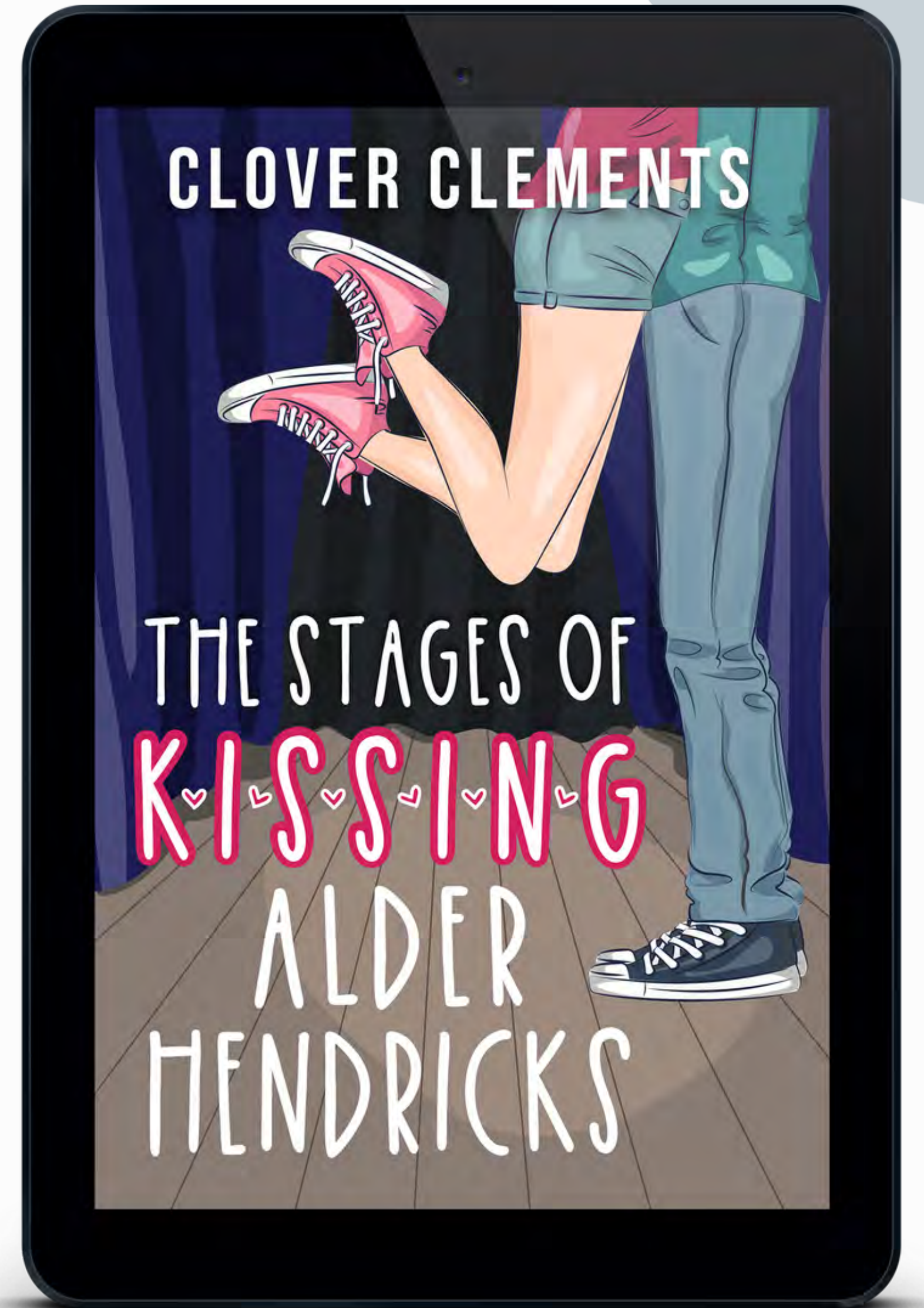
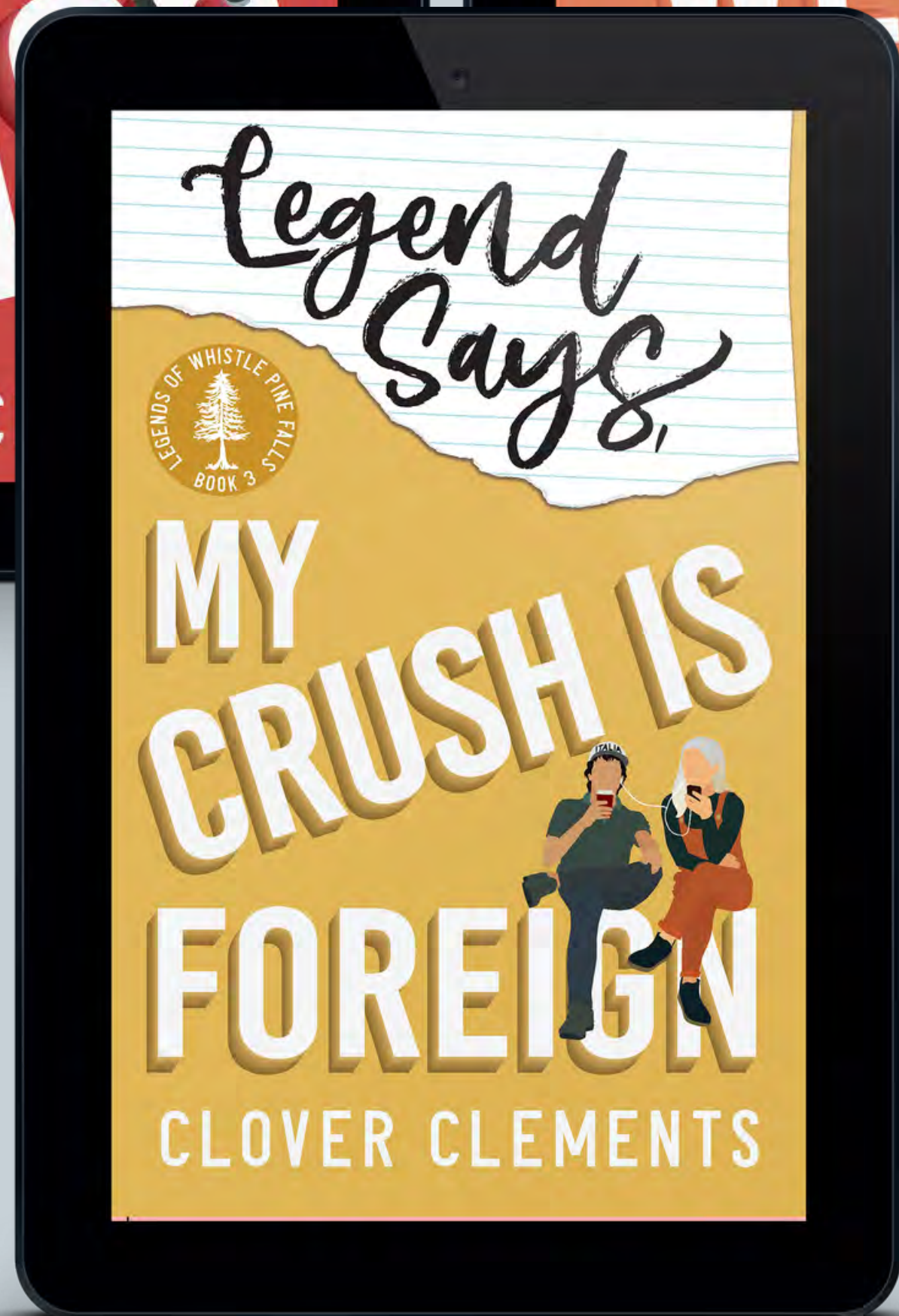
SAPPHIRE  
MIDNIGHT  
DESIGN



SAPPHIRE  
MIDNIGHT  
DESIGN



SAPPHIRE  
MIDNIGHT  
DESIGN



SHOWING THE NEW GUY AROUND?  
EASY. RESISTING HIS CHARM AND  
*NOT* KISSING HIM? NO COMMENT.

WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT:

- \*SMALL TOWN ROMANCE
- \*MYSTERY & SECRETS
- \*OVERCOMING LOSS
- \*DISCOVERING SELF
- \*SUPER SWOONY KISSES
- \*EMBARASSING MOMENTS
- \*UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIPS
- \*STUCK TOGETHER



I LOATHE HIM. HE IS A JERK TO ME. SO  
WHY DO I LOVE PRANKING HIM BACK?  
MAYBE I *DON'T* HATE HIM AFTER ALL.

WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT:

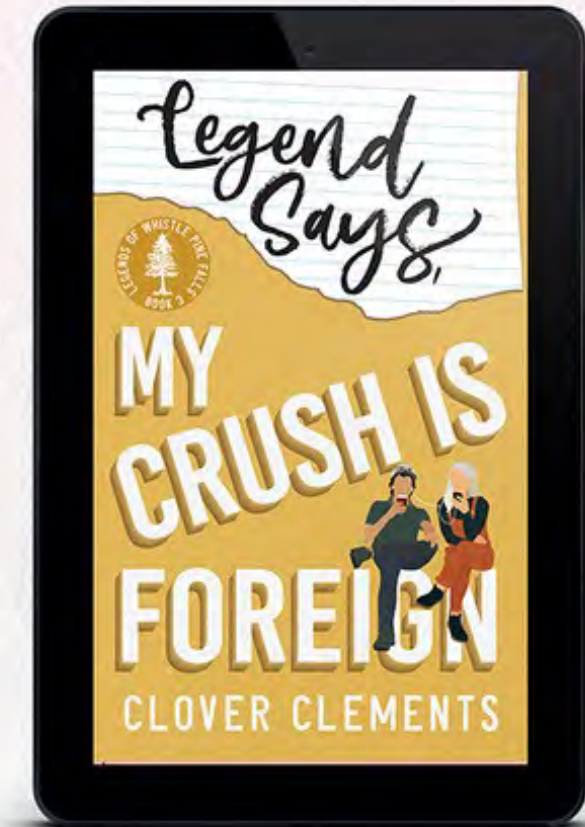
- \*ENEMIES TO LOVERS
- \*SMALL TOWN ROMANCE
- \*PRANKS GALORE
- \*HIDDEN CRUSH
- \*AVID RUNNERS
- \*CLEVER TRICKS
- \*SO. MUCH. TENSION.
- \*SWEET FIRE KISSES



WHAT'S WRONG WITH CRUSHING ON  
THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENT?  
OH YEA, HE *LIVES* WITH ME.

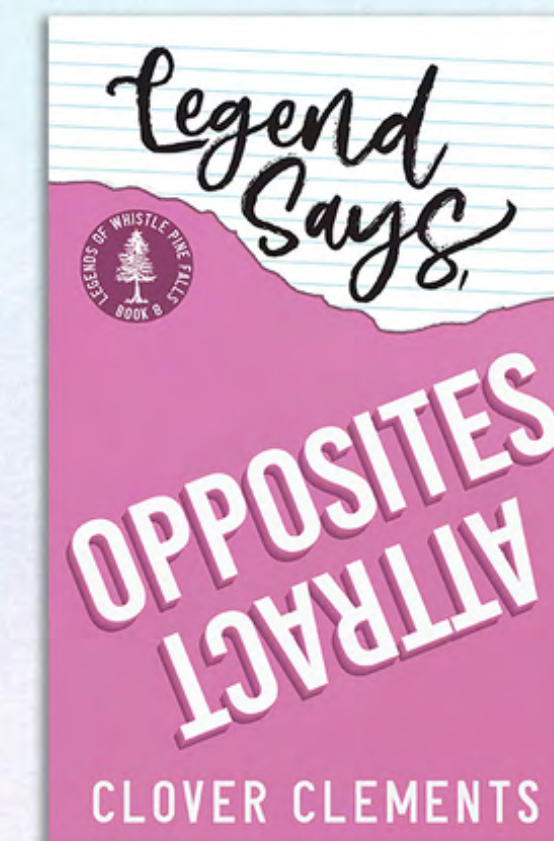
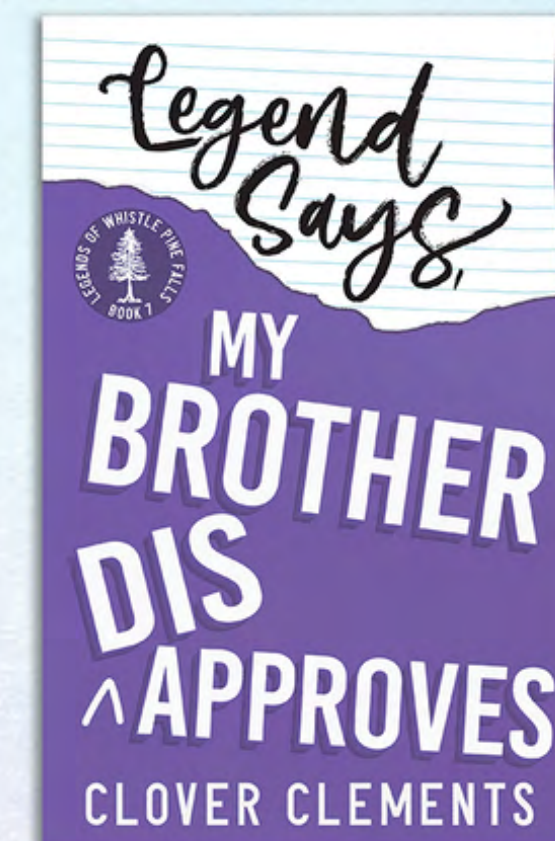
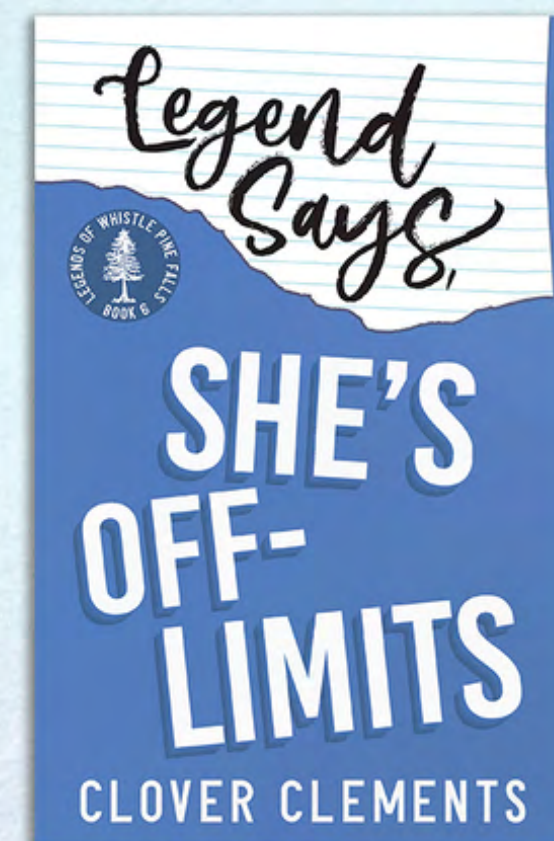
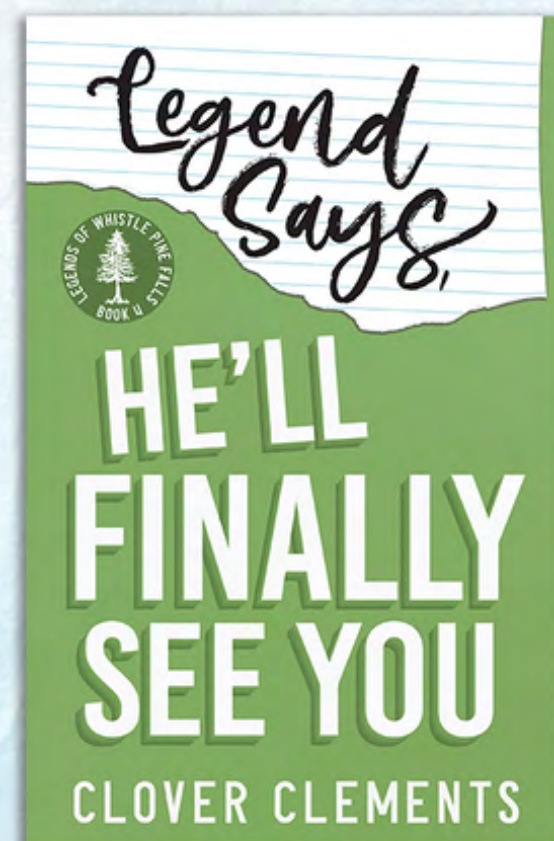
WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT:

- \*FORCED PROXIMITY
- \*LONG DISTANCE LOVE
- \*SMALL TOWN ROMANCE
- \*PRANKS GALORE
- \*SPUNKY ARTIST
- \*ITALIAN BOOKWORM
- \*WITTY BANTER
- \*EVEN BETTER KISSES



Keep coming back to the falls:

UPCOMING RELEASES





CONSISTENT MESSAGING



CONSISTENT MESSAGING

If you cover a lot of topics...

*DON'T CONFUSE*

*YOUR AUDIENCE*

segment wherever possible

*YOUR READERS  
SHOULD KNOW  
WHAT TO EXPECT  
WHEN THEY LOOK  
YOU UP ONLINE.*

*IF YOU HAVE DIFFERENT  
AUDIENCES, EITHER MAKE IT  
EASY TO IDENTIFY THE TOPIC AT  
HAND, OR KEEP THEM SEPARATE!*



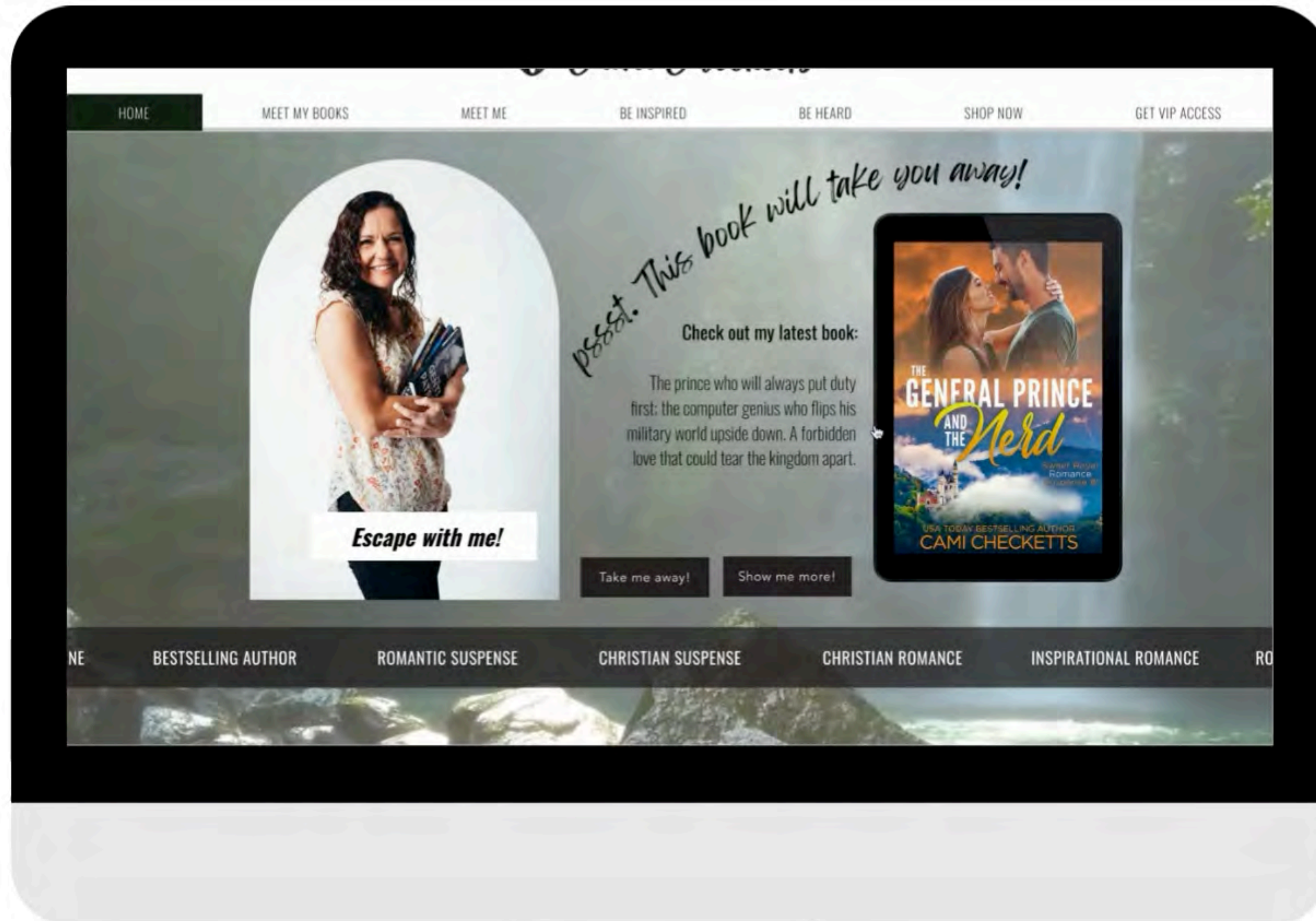
*CLEVER REAL ESTATE*

# Why would I need more property?

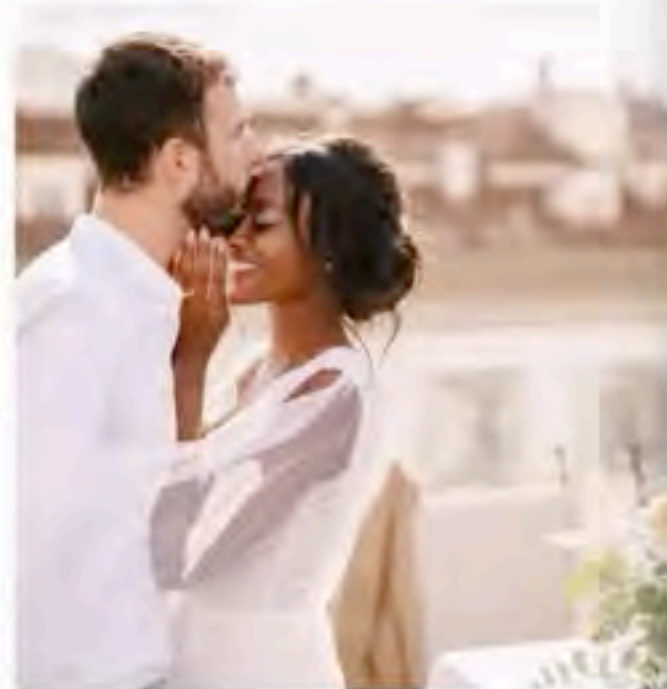
**We're talking DIGITAL real estate here: think social media, blogs, websites, newsletters, stores, advertisements, and more!**



# SHOW OFF YOUR NEW RELEASE



# SECURE SUBSCRIBERS

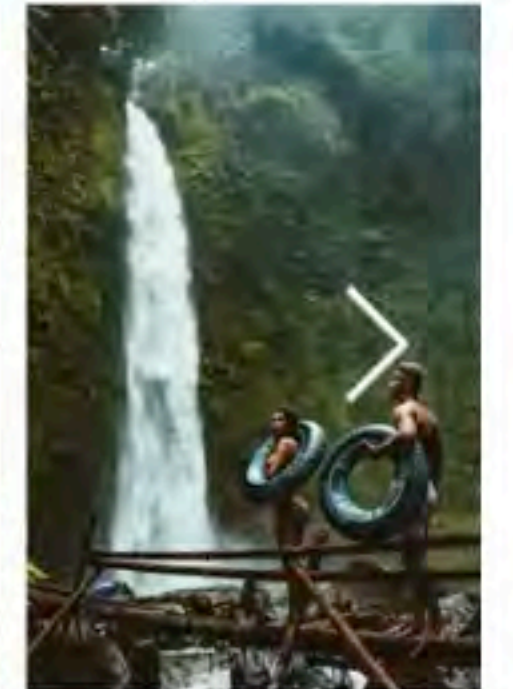


BECOME A VAP

*(Very Awesome Person)*

JOIN MY NEWSLETTER TO GET  
EXCLUSIVE ACCESS & UPDATES:

Plus, get a FREE book when you subscribe!



# SHOW WHAT IS COMING

## Upcoming Adventures



The Brave Prince and the Teacher

Sweet Royal Romance Suspense



The Doctor Prince and the Outsider

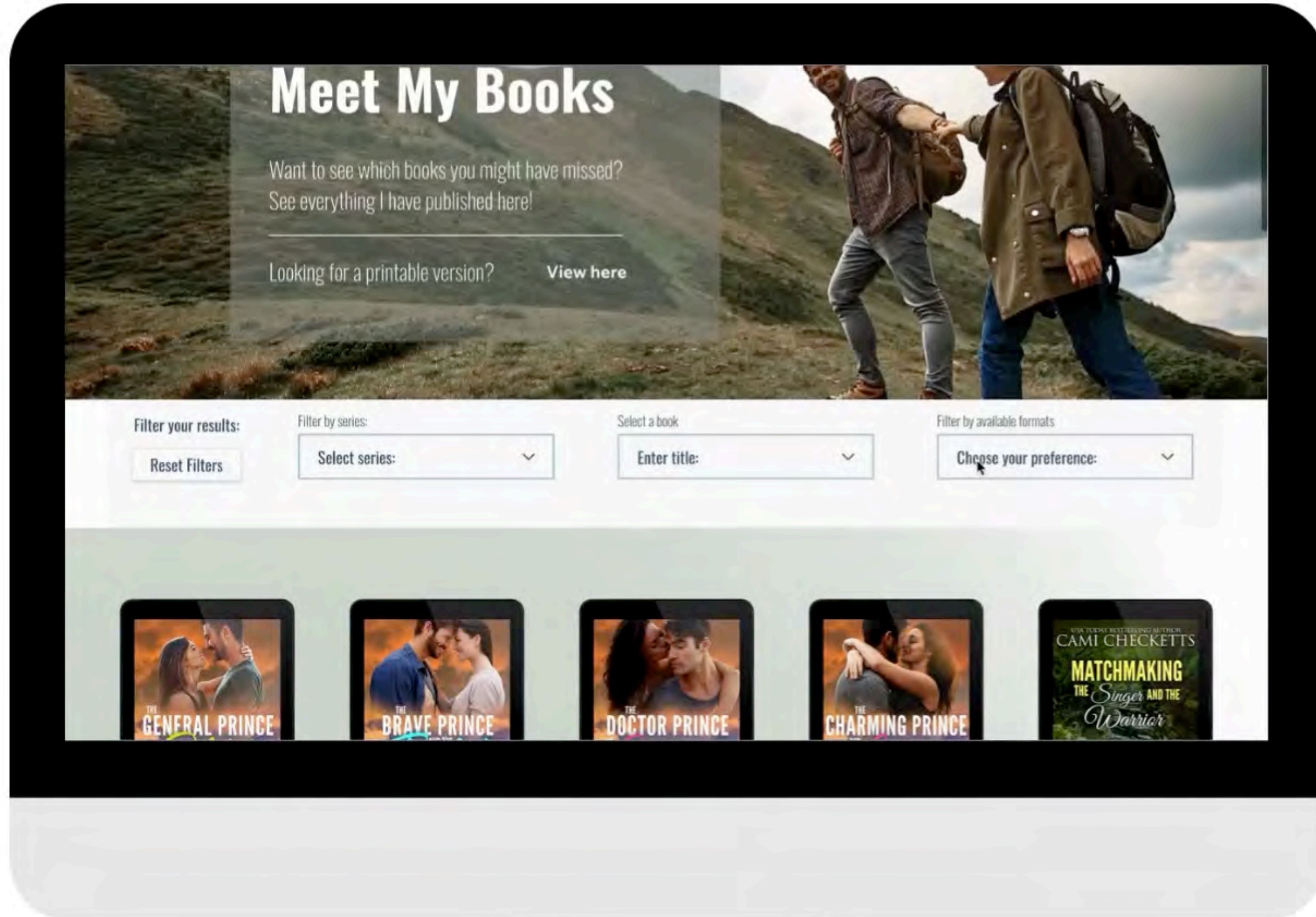
Sweet Royal Romance Suspense



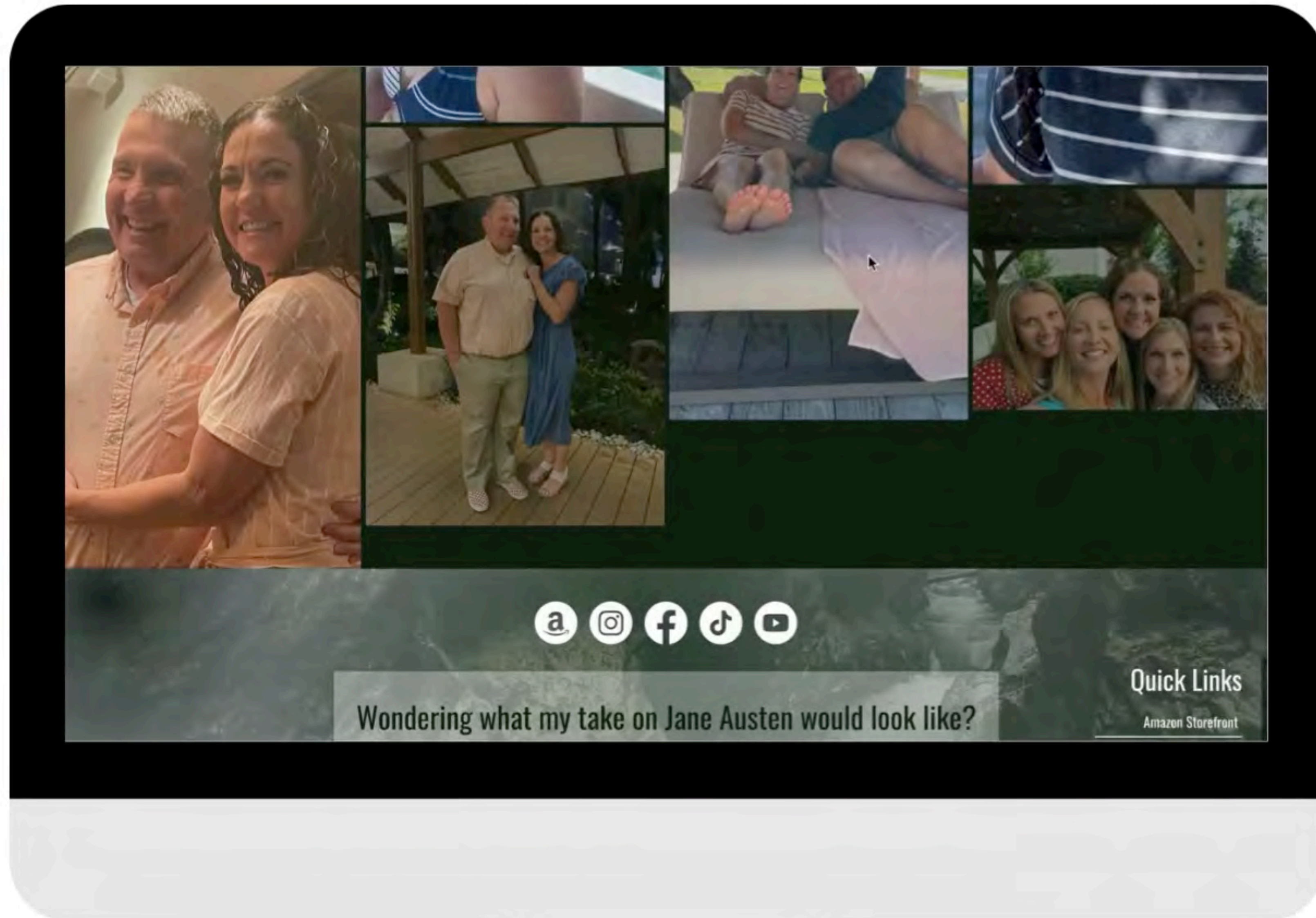
The Charming Prince and the Chef

Sweet Royal Romance Suspense

# IMPROVE YOUR SEO W/ BOOKS!



# && WITH YOUR BIO & PRESS KIT



Wondering what my take on Jane Austen would look like?

Quick Links

Amazon Storefront

**OVERCOMING SCARS AND HEARTACHE TO TRUST IN  
A GENTLE GIANT WHO REFUSES TO LET HER DOWN**

A simple every-book image works great too!

**Cami Checketts** A USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF 150+  
INSPIRATIONAL ROMANTIC SUSPENSE NOVELS

CAMI LOVES HER SAVIOR, HER HUSBAND, THEIR  
FOUR BOYS, AND BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

SOME OF HER FAVORITE ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:  
TRAVELING, READING, AND RUNNING

♡ *Escape with Cami*

FAN FAVORITES

MARRIAGE PACT

QUINN ROMANCE ADVENTURES

MATCHMAKING

**MEET THE CHARACTERS:**

**GRIFF QUINN:**  
TOUGH. SELFLESS.  
BATTLE-TESTED.

**SCARLETT LILY:**  
ANGELIC. TALENTED.  
GENEROUS SWEETHEART.

**MEET THE TROPES:**

- ALPHA MALE
- STUCK TOGETHER
- IMPOSSIBLE ROMANCE
- MILITARY ROMANCE
- FAMOUS ACTRESS

**JOIN ALL THE QUINN SIBLINGS IN THEIR ROMANCE ADVENTURES**

DEVOTED & DESERTED

CONFLICTED & FAMOUS

GENTLE'S BROKEN

RUGGED & AT-RISK

TOO-PERFECT & STRANDED

REJECTED & HIDDEN

**Utilizing your  
A+ Content is  
a great way  
to support  
your brand  
identity!**

A simple every-book image works great too!



# Cami Checketts

A USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF 150+  
INSPIRATIONAL ROMANTIC SUSPENSE NOVELS

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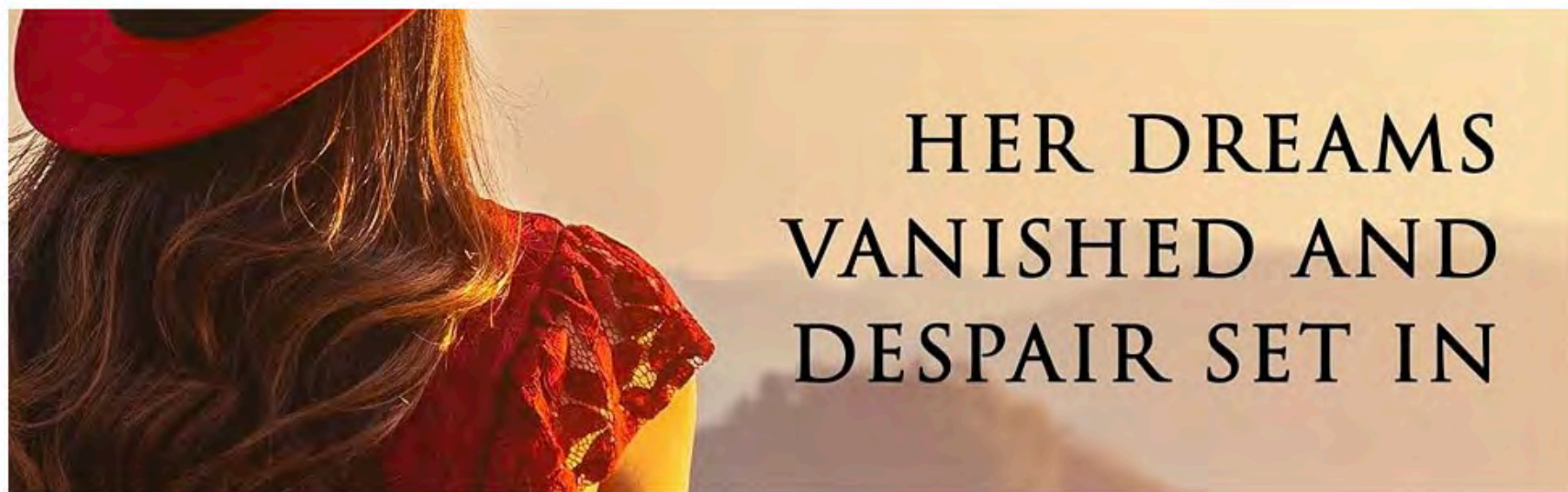
*Escape with Cami* →

FAN FAVORITES





SHE THOUGHT  
SHE'D LOST IT ALL



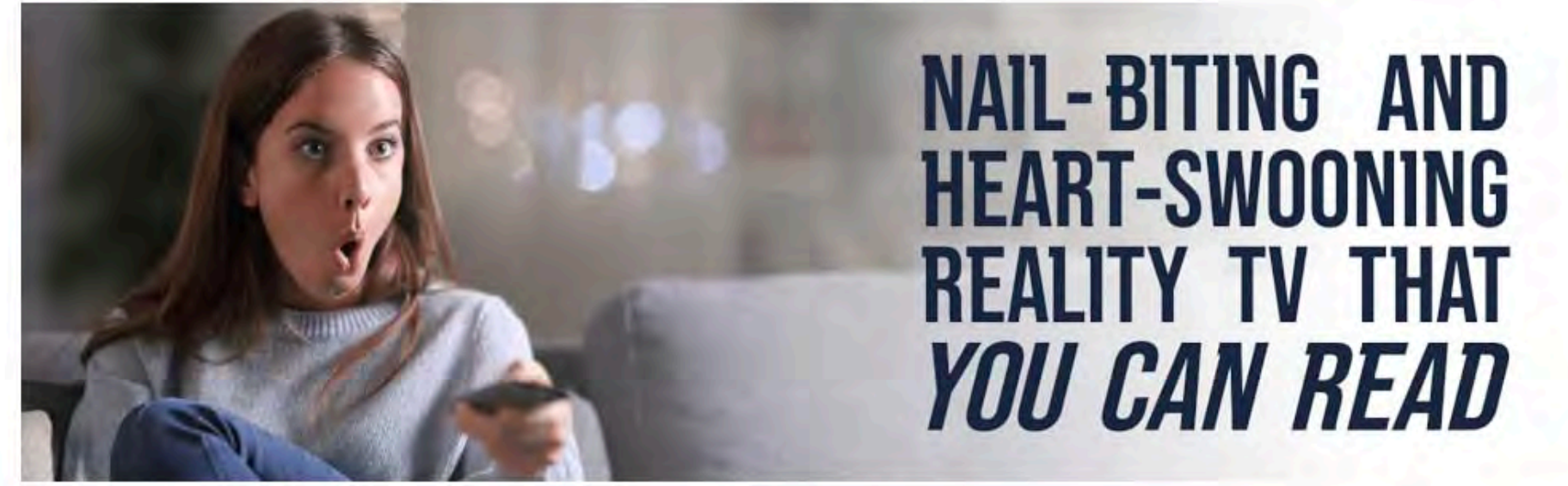
HER DREAMS  
VANISHED AND  
DESPAIR SET IN



BUT THEN  
ANOTHER  
CHANCE...



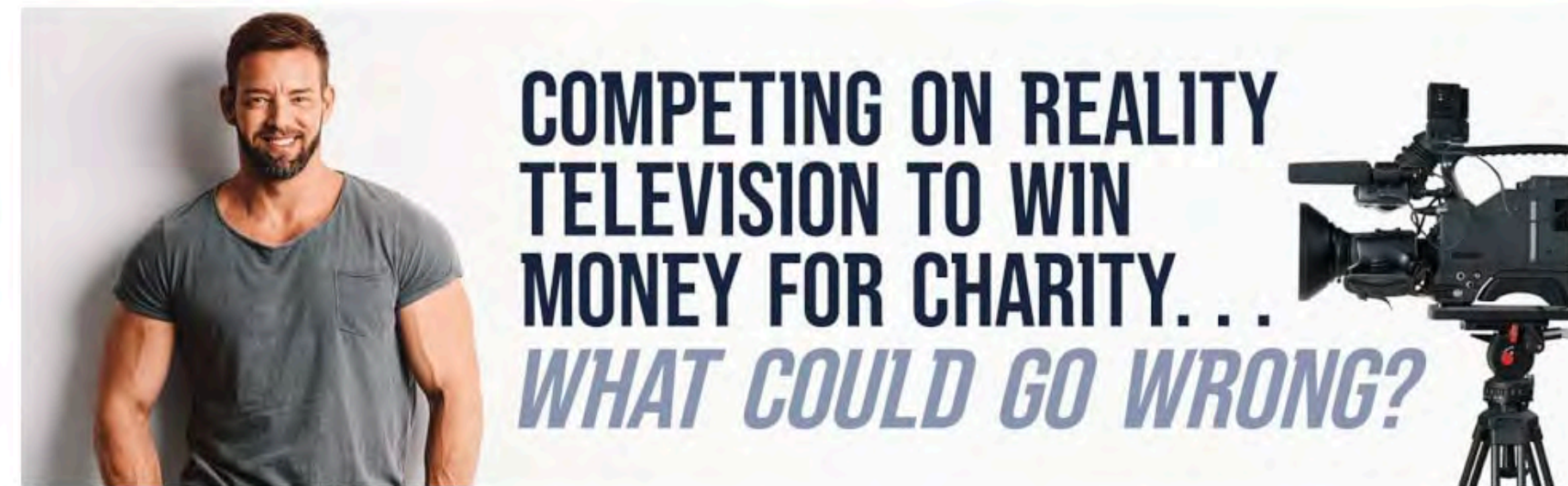
FOR A LIFE  
SHE'D NEVER  
IMAGINED



NAIL-BITING AND  
HEART-SWOONING  
REALITY TV THAT  
*YOU CAN READ*



*SPUNKY FEMALE LEADS  
MILITARY SUPERHEROES*



COMPETING ON REALITY  
TELEVISION TO WIN  
MONEY FOR CHARITY...  
*WHAT COULD GO WRONG?*



*TUNE IN TO ALL EIGHT STUCK-TOGETHER ROMANCES!*

IMPOSSIBLE  
THE WAY  
CAMI CHECKETTS

IMPOSSIBLE  
SCAPE  
CAMI CHECKETTS

IMPOSSIBLE  
SUN  
CAMI CHECKETTS

IMPOSSIBLE  
CLIMB  
CAMI CHECKETTS

IMPOSSIBLE  
DREAMS  
CAMI CHECKETTS

IMPOSSIBLE  
THRILLS  
CAMI CHECKETTS

IMPOSSIBLE  
CHASE  
CAMI CHECKETTS

IMPOSSIBLE  
BANDS  
CAMI CHECKETTS



EACH GUIDED SECTION HELPS YOU EXPLORE  
**CORE GOSPEL PRINCIPLES** THROUGH  
 PERSONAL REFLECTION & SPIRITUAL PRACTICE



CREATE YOUR OWN WORSHIP PRACTICES  
 & PUT THEM INTO WEEKLY PRACTICE

THIS ISN'T ABOUT BEING GOOD ENOUGH. IT'S  
 ABOUT REMEMBERING YOU'RE ALREADY LOVED.

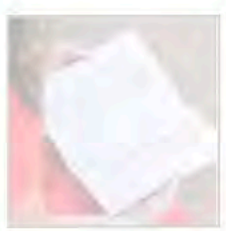
THIS JOURNAL WAS CAREFULLY GRAFTED FOR

WOMEN IN FAITH TRANSITIONS OR FAITH DEEPENING	LDS MOMS SEEKING A MORE PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH GOD	ANYONE CRAVING SOULFUL STILLNESS AND SACRED SELF-REFLECTION
---	--	---

IF YOU FEEL LIKE  
 YOU'RE DROWNING IN  
 EVERYDAY LIFE—THIS  
 JOURNAL MAY HELP YOU  
 MORE EASILY NOTICE  
**GOD'S HANDS  
 IN THE CHAOS**



Highlights



Why This Journal



What Makes It Special?



FAQs

**Some things to look forward to (so we have heard):**

- Annie is so personal, you go through it and feel like your **best friend** is right there with you studying with you!
- It helps you analyze where your relationship with God is!
- The questions can be SO HELPFUL and may lead you to rethink and reframe your life experiences—both good and bad! It helps you identify and deal with feelings of hurt.
- Diving in can lead you on a journey to rediscover and learn more about yourself.
- There is absolutely no sense of judgement—you can feel safe at any point in your spiritual journey.



Highlights



Why This Journal



What Makes It Special?



FAQs

**Answers to your burning questions:**

**Q: Is this specifically for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?** A: While it reflects LDS gospel principles and includes personal stories rooted in that faith, the journal is also filled with universal themes of faith, healing, grace, and personal worship. **Many Christian women will find it both grounding and uplifting.**

**Q: What if I'm struggling with my faith right now?** A: Then this is for you. You don't need to feel "spiritually strong" to begin. This journal is a soft landing place for the wrestle. And Jesus will meet you right where you are—with love, not shame.

**Q: Do I need to use this journal every day or every week?** A: Nope! Designed to feel like a sacred invitation, not a strict schedule, the final section is structured around a weekly rhythm. You're encouraged to move through it at your own pace, whether that's once a week, once a month, or whenever you feel pulled to reconnect. **This is a space for grace—not guilt.**



*MEMORABLE IDENTITY*

**Stand your ground**

*YOUR BRAND SHOULD*

*BE RECOGNIZABLE*

**across all platforms**

# *IT CAN STAY SIMPLE!*

- Use consistent:

- Fonts

- Colors

- Images

- Pro tips:

- Create brand kits in Canva!

- Even for series!

# *UPGRADE WHEN YOU CAN*

- When it makes financial sense...
- Hire out professional photography
- Commission a full brand identity

# RECAP!

- Use basic design principles to guide your DIY covers/graphics or to hire someone legit!
- Stay legal! Be sure to follow all IP/Copyright/Licensing agreements in your journey
- Be mindful of your audience & printing process
- Keep it simple! Start small and be mindful of where you spend your money
- Enjoy the journey!

*GET IN TOUCH WITH ME*

*PSST, YOU CAN SCAN  
THIS TO ADD ME  
TO YOUR CONTACTS!*

(Assuming the resolution is good enough!)

