



Forever Faithful

Claire, look at
you every night
looking at them, too
just keep thinking that I'll be home
I'll be with you and Grace and nothing
will ever pull us apart again. I love you!
Forever,
Nic

Isabella

FOREVER FAITHFUL

FOREVER FAITHFUL

ISABELLA

SAPPHIRE BOOKS
SALINAS, CALIFORNIA

Forever Faithful

Copyright © 2014 by **Isabella** All rights reserved.

ISBN EPUB - 978-1-939062-76-5

This is a work of fiction - names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, business, events, or locales is entirely coincidental. The combat situations in this book are fictional and any resemblance to actual events is entirely coincidental.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without written permission of the publisher.

Editor - Kaycee Hawn

Book Designer- LJ Reynolds

Cover Design- Christine Svendsen

Sapphire Books

Salinas, CA 93912

www.sapphirebooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

First edition – February 2015

This and other Sapphire Books titles can be found at

www.sapphirebooks.com

Dedication

To the SPC 4 who started all this, you give me more than I will ever be able to give back. I am forever faithful, to
you.

To my sons. My life is forever better for having you in it.

Acknowledgments

They say it takes a village, well in this case it took the help of some wonderful women and men in the military to take this book somewhere I've never been, combat. A big thanks to AJ Johnson for her candid responses to my questions. I couldn't have had Afghanistan as a back drop without her help. To Rachel R, who doesn't know it, but without her detailed telling of her job in Afghanistan, this book wouldn't be what it is now.

To the readers! I appreciate all of your support, feedback, and encouragement. I love when I can meet you, talk to you, and just hang out.

To my Sapphire sisters. You ladies rock! You inspire me with all you do.

LK, what can I say, you have taught me so much, but then you probably hear that a lot. Thanks for your guidance, friendship, and counsel. You're a gem!

Chapter One

As Nic stepped out and around the Humvee, a metal click barely pierced her consciousness. It suddenly registered, and she knew it signaled danger. The air around her vibrated as the explosion launched her and anything in her vicinity backwards.

“Bom—,” was all she could squeeze out before she tasted dirt in her mouth.

The sun had been eclipsed, darkness engulfed her, and she struggled to take a breath.

Blackness.

Silence.

Claire.

Grace.

The smell of Jasmine filled the warm air. She loved Jasmine; it reminded her of Claire. Momentary thoughts flashed through her mind. She saw Claire standing in front of her, beautiful in her white dress, a wedding dress, clutching a small bouquet of wild flowers. Grace stood next to her mom; a soft light blue dress rustled as she danced around her mom’s legs, laughing. Nic smiled and bent down to pick Grace up, swinging her around, and around, and around, until Nic was dizzy.

“More, Nickie,” Grace said, laughing, her arms stretched out. Suddenly Grace was slipping from her grip, falling away from Nic. The harder Nic tried to hold on to Grace, the faster she moved away, slipping further into the darkness.

“Grace,” Nic said, reaching for her daughter. Fingertips touched and then Grace was gone.

Nic glanced around her, but she couldn’t see anything in the pitch black. It was surreal. One minute she’s swinging Grace, the next she was standing alone. Her body felt like it was on fire, coupled with the distinct smell of something burning. Nic turned to her right. The sergeant standing next to her was on fire.

“Sergeant, you’re burning.”

“Ma’am?”

“Sergeant, look,” Nic pointed to the sergeant’s arms. “Fire.”

Blackness again.

“Nic, honey?”

Claire stood over Nic, smiling down at her.

“What are you doing here, baby?” Nic touched Claire’s face. Her bloody fingers left a trail down the delicate pink skin of Claire’s neck. Turning her hands over, Nic saw the skin was broken, bleeding, and charred. The coppery smell assaulted her as she tried to wipe the blood off of Claire’s face. “I’m sorry, sweetheart.” The smudges only grew as she pushed her broken fingers across Claire’s skin and down her white dress.

“Colonel...” Nic’s body shook. Nic strained to see something, anything, but there was barely any light coming into the tunnel she found herself in. She thought she heard something, but now she wasn’t so sure.

“Colonel...open your eyes, Ma’am.”

There is was again, a noise just out of earshot. She tried to move, but lead had replaced her muscles, keeping her pinned down. Each breath was taxing in the effort it took just to inhale; opening her mouth to gulp down more air, she choked on the dirt that coated her mouth. The distinct smell of cordite, blood, and smoke filled her lungs each time she barely inhaled. Again, the taste of blood and dirt mixed with the small pebbles in

her mouth. Trying to spit, she tried to clear her throat, but could barely move her jaw. Pain jagged through her head the harder she tried to open her mouth

"Fuck."

She wasn't dead.

"Ma'am?" The voice sounded like it was calling down to her from somewhere far above her.

Where the fuck was she and how the hell did she get here?

Darkness enveloped her and she faded back into the abyss she'd just been swimming around in.

Chapter Two

2 months before the explosion

“Congrats, Colonel Caldwell, you’re being sent to Afghanistan.”

“Excuse me?” Nic felt like the floor had just fallen out from under her. Suddenly her head was swimming. Surely he hadn’t just said she was being shipped out overseas, not to Afghanistan. “Is this some kind of joke?”

“I don’t joke, Colonel Caldwell,” the provost said, then thumbed through a file and spread it across his desk. “Your mentor has recommended you for the assignment. It’s a new position the defense department has put together. There is a civilian going over there to interview tribal elders, connect with them, and find out how they interact with the Taliban. Besides, you owe the Marine Corps a payback tour and yours is Afghanistan.”

“Sir, I was told that I would be doing research here at the Naval Postgraduate School as my payback tour. There must be some mistake.”

He rolled a fat cigar between his thick lips, wetting the outside and then biting the end. There was no smoking inside the building, but she suspected there wasn’t anyone around that outranked the arrogant bastard.

Nic had never meshed with her mentor. After arriving at the Naval Postgraduate School, she’d reported for duty and changed her degree from engineering to counter-terrorism, which put her smack dab in the middle of his program. From what she’d heard, she was the first woman in his program and he’d made it clear that he didn’t think women were cut out for the counter-terrorism focus of the degree. He’d made it extremely tough for her to pass his two classes. He constantly encouraged the men, while he ignored her raised hand, and at the end, she just blurted out answers. Finally she’d just given up trying and was happy to pass the damn classes. This was the last semester of her education, so passing was the most important thing to her; ranking mattered in the beginning, but now screw it and him. Clearly, she wouldn’t be at the top of her class, no thanks to that bastard.

She’d seen the provost of the school and her mentor laughing it up in the Poseidon room at the Officer’s club. In fact, she’d made it a point to go over and greet her advisor, just to try and get an introduction to the commandant.

Big mistake.

“Good afternoon, sir,”

“Colonel Caldwell, shouldn’t you be at the library studying for your next exam?” he said smugly.

“Just came from there. I thought I’d grab a bite to eat and then hit the books again. Sir,” she said, offering her hand to the commandant. “Colonel Nichole Caldwell. How are you?”

“Colonel,” he said; a hint of disdain laced his next words. “I understand from your advisor you’d like a research position here?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Hmm.”

“She’s the only female in the class,” her advisor offered.

“Really. Seen combat?”

“Sir?”

“Have you done a combat tour, yet?” The commandant picked up his beer and leaned his massive frame against the bar.

It was the way he emphasized 'yet' that bothered her. She wasn't about to recite her whole military record, just to suck up. Lay out her time overseas. She'd seen plenty who recited it like a mantra every chance they had. That wasn't her.

"Yes sir, Iraq."

"Hmm. In my day we didn't see women on the ship, hell, we didn't even see 'em till we got shore leave and then they were only..." He looked up at Nic, who must have had a disapproving look on her face, because he stopped and sipped his beer. "Well, I guess things are different now, aren't they?"

It had gone all downhill after that. She finally excused herself; she clearly wasn't part of this old boys club. What had she been thinking?

His smug smile irked her as he continued to talk around the cigar. "You *are* doing research, Colonel. You'll be working out of Camp Leatherneck in the Helmand Province in Afghanistan. You and some civilian are being sent over to interview the local tribes. Seems the government wants you to interact with the natives and gather information for research being done by some governmental agency. They want to learn about the locals and how they interact with the Taliban, or some bullshit like that," he said dismissively. "I'd just bomb the shit out of 'em if it was me, but this ain't my war."

No, this wasn't his war; hell, it wasn't Nic's either. She'd paid her dues and now she couldn't believe that the Corps was sending her overseas, again. How was she going to tell Claire? What about Grace? She'd grown up a lot in the three years they'd been in Monterey and now she was a little cuddle bug Nic couldn't live without.

Nic stared down at the orders in her hand. She still couldn't wrap her mind around what she was being told.

"I'm reserve, sir. I have a family," she said, barely realizing she'd given her thoughts voice.

"You're a Marine, Colonel Caldwell."

The man staring back at her was right out of a forties movie. His starched uniform, flat top, and grizzled exterior made her think of John Wayne. He was from another time and his next words proved it.

"Colonel Caldwell, if the Marines wanted you to have a family they would have issued you one. You feelin' me?"

"Sir?" *What an asshole*, she thought as she fingered the silver oak leaf on her cover.

"I know things are different for you LGBT in the military. You get the same benefits as those who live by God's law and I have to accommodate you and your girlfriend the same way as all the other wives, but it doesn't mean I gotta like it."

"No sir, I don't suppose it does," Nic said, her voice peppered with sarcasm. "But you *will* respect the rank. I've earned that much."

DOMA might have been repealed, but it was the same military ten minutes after the decision that it was ten minutes before the decision. The fact that the Commandant of the Marine Corps had come out against the repeal practically gave carte blanche to anyone who wanted to keep those same bullshit views they had when women and blacks wanted to integrate into the military. She wasn't surprised this old bastard was holding on with a death grip to his hate-filled views. A year later, it was pretty much the same. Some command structures would never change in the Navy and Marine Corps. They had a long history of being deep in male attitude. Shit, she'd seen women who she swore had grown a set of testicles just to stay on a commander's good side. She was only sorry she couldn't make the provost eat his words.

Standing, she squeezed her orders, the paper crinkling in her hand, and said, "Will that be all, sir?"

"You deploy with the rest of the team after your graduation."

"I don't get a few days between school and deployment?"

“Yep, you’ll get about a month to get your records ready, shots, and all your paperwork in order and then you’re overseas. I suggest you get things squared away, Colonel.”

The muscles in his jaw bunched as he started to grind his teeth. Orders weren’t meant to be questioned, just followed – to the letter.

“Thank you for the advice, sir. Permission to leave, sir.”

The provost leaned back in his chair and made a point of giving her a once over before he went back to the paperwork littering his desk, ignoring her completely.

She stood ramrod straight and waited, crumbling the paperwork more as she clenched her fist tighter. He might like jerking her chain, but she was still a Marine and she wasn’t about to dishonor the Corps. Another minute passed before he finally said something.

“Dismissed.”

His disrespect to her rank pissed her off. He didn’t have to like her as a person, but she’d earned her rank and his bullshit move and his flagrant disrespectful statements grated on her with each step she took towards the door. She wished she could take it up with the IG, but she wanted the research job and she’d promised Claire they’d stay in Monterey and build a life for themselves. Taking on this jerk would sever that chance, for good. She grabbed the handle, but stopped and turned to go back to the asshat’s office just as her phone went off.

Karma, she thought, looking down at the photo splashed across the screen. Someone wasn’t going to allow her to throw her career away, just to make a point.

Claire.

“Hey baby, what’s up?” Nic smiled. A call from Claire was the highlight of many a stressful day. She couldn’t help but relax at hearing Claire’s cheerful voice.

“Hi Honey, just wondering when you’ll be home for lunch.”

It was their Wednesday ritual since she started back to school. Most of her days were spent in the library doing research, but Wednesdays were special. Their time for planning their lives, to talk about Grace, or just sit in the back yard and hold hands. It was sappy, but it was her and Claire’s most intimate time outside the bedroom.

Nic twisted her watch. “About ten minutes.”

“You okay?”

Claire knew her well enough that she couldn’t lie to her, but news like this had to be told face-to-face. God, how was she going to tell Claire she was being deployed? Nic always knew it was a possibility. When you went to college on the military dime, you owed them. She’d figured since she’d been wounded in action in Iraq, she’d stay closer to home. In fact, she’d applied to work in research at NPS and all signs were a go for a research position, but the military always made other plans and rarely did they ever fit yours.

“Nic?”

“Huh? Yeah, I’m good, I’ll be home in a few. I love you.”

“I love you too, baby.”

Shit, shit, shit. Nic positioned her cap and pushed the door wide, slamming it against the cinderblock building. Her uniform suddenly felt like a straightjacket she wasn’t about to get out of anytime soon.

Chapter Three

Claire bit the inside of her lip. Something was wrong with Nic and she knew it, she felt it. Nic's voice was distant and strained. Maybe graduation was weighing on her. Claire had taken the liberty of putting together a party for this milestone in Nic's life. It surprised both of them when Nic's parents said they'd come. Maybe Nic's dad had mellowed with age. It happened. She, on the other hand, had passed on inviting her dad. He was a sore spot in her life and she wasn't feeling contrite enough to endure his fire and brimstone attitude. Jordan would be there and a few fellows from Nic's class were coming.

Nic had plans for her life and they'd made a decision to live off post in the event they stayed in the area. That was if she got the research job. Nic had switched her major to some sort of counter-terrorism degree, adding an extra semester, but it seemed to be a better fit; at least, that's what Nic told her. Nic explained that the job opportunities were endless with the new degree. Once Nic was done, she'd promised Claire it was her turn to go back to college. Now Claire had to decide what her future would look like. The local university, California State Monterey Bay, had a few programs that looked interesting, assuming they stayed.

"Mommy, mommy, come 'er."

Grace ran through the house, hand trailing behind her, reaching for her mother.

"Grace, no running through the house."

It was a constant reprimand. She wished she could just put on a recording and push play every time Grace raced around. Grace was growing up to be a dynamo that never seemed to run out of energy, but the minute her head hit the pillow, she was down for the count. Amazing.

"It's time for your nap, young lady," Claire reminded, following behind her daughter. The last three years had seen Grace flower into a slightly more mature little girl with a tomboy attitude. Nic attributed it to all the boys living in housing. Without other little girls to play dolls with, Grace was socialized just like the boys. Gone were the dolls in her toy box, replaced with toy helicopters, cars, and, much to Claire's dismay, a few toy guns. Mostly of the water variety, but Nic had convinced her that if they made them taboo, Grace would covet them and since most of her playgroup was comprised of boys, Claire suspected Nic was right. She'd thrown a doll or two into the toy box on the off chance Grace would find her softer, gentler side.

Claire had been momentarily thrilled to see Grace playing with her dolls today, until she realized Grace was using her makeup to turn them into zombies.

"Zombies?" Claire said, still shocked at the answer. "Where did you hear about zombies?"

"Tim's house. His parents let him watch 'em on T.V."

Grace blacked out an eye with eyeliner and then added smudges on the doll's arms and legs. "This is where her skin is falling off, and look, mommy, she's missing an eye. I poked it out." Grace shoved the doll in Claire's face.

It's just a phase, Claire chanted under her breath. She would be talking to Tim's mom at the next playgroup meeting.

"They eat people you know," she said so matter-of-factly.

"They aren't real, Grace."

"Yes, they are, and Tim says we have to get ready for the apolips, mommy."

Claire picked up Grace and turned her towards her. "No more Tim's house until I speak to his mother."

"Mommy," Grace said, throwing herself backwards, almost toppling them both to the floor.

“Nap time, honey.”

“Mommy...I’m not tired.”

“Yes, I know.”

When will she grow out of this stage? Claire wondered. Careful what you wish for, she could hear Nic say. Pretty soon she’ll be in prom dresses and boys and then what?

Claire leaned against the doorframe and watched Grace push a doll up her arm. Grace was losing the fight to stay awake, drowsy eyes and a pouty mouth signs she was giving up the ghost, so to speak.

Claire sat on the bed, cradling her daughter close. What would she do when she was chasing boys for all the wrong reasons? Trying to banish the thought from her mind, she clutched Grace closer, laying her head on her chest. She felt Grace relax against her, the fight gone.

“Mommy?”

“Hmm?”

“Why do I have two mommies and Tim only has one?”

Aw, the looming realization that her parents were different. She knew it was coming, but Claire didn’t expect it quite yet.

“Cause you’re lucky.”

God, what a stupid answer, she thought, pulling Grace closer. Gently she laid Grace down on the bed and lay beside her, threading her fingers through sweaty hair, pushing the unruly mess out of Grace’s face.

“Can we find Tim another mom?”

“What?” She had to stop herself from giggling at the notion that Tim needed another mom. What would Tim’s dad say?

“Yeah, he needs another mom, too.”

“It’s not that easy honey.”

“But you have Nic and you love each other, so Tim’s mom needs another mommy to love her, too.”

Oh, the innocence of youth. If life were only that simple.

“Grace, honey, it’s different for me and Nic. We like each other and Tim’s mom likes boys. So I don’t think she would want another mommy.”

“Why?”

The doll was pushed up her shoulder, her neck and then Grace pointed the doll’s face at Claire and waited for a kiss. Complying with the silent request gave Claire a moment to try and make sense of something that most adults didn’t understand. What makes a woman love another woman? She could go clinical but Grace wouldn’t understand, she could say it was just nature, but she wasn’t quite sure Grace would get that either.

She’d told herself she would treat it as a normal relationship, but society, parents, and kids will fill Grace’s head with other ideas if she didn’t treat it with the respect it deserved. They weren’t any more different than any other couple. She and Nic went shopping, paid bills, and looked at having a mortgage in the near future, and were a committed couple just like everyone else. The only difference was they were two women.

“Mommy?” A sleep-laden voice beckoned.

“Yes, sweetie?”

“When are you and Nic going to get a wedding?”

“You mean married?”

“Uh huh.”

“Oh, I don’t know, why?”

Marriage.

She and Nic hadn't talked about it in a while, but now that DOMA was a thing of the past, there wasn't any reason why they couldn't. Assuming Nic wanted to get married. It would give them more benefits, but that wasn't a reason to get married. They'd celebrated the repeal of DOMA, reminded each other that they could get married, legally, and promised each other that after graduation they would seal the deal. Even if it was just a justice of the peace sort of thing. A grand party wasn't needed, but Nic had reminded Claire she'd never been married, so maybe a small ceremony was in order, especially for Grace. The message they sent to their daughter about marriage would stick with her for the rest of her life. Nic always worried about Grace and it warmed Claire's heart every time she put Grace's comfort before Nic's. A true parent without the biology.

"Tim says you can't get married 'cause you eat carpet." Grace turned over and faced the wall. Everything said so innocently that a six year old didn't realize what she was saying. "I told him you don't eat carpet. Do you?"

That little bastard, Claire thought. Her temper flared. She was going to have to have a talk with Tim's mother. Bitch. Before she could say anything, soft snores were floating from Grace.

It had finally happened. Grace was old enough to ask questions, have her opinions formed by others, and hear the disgusting comments usually only said by adults. Grace didn't know she was different or that her parents were different. The world just encroached on Grace's perfect little world with just a few ill-spoken words from a playmate.

Carpet muncher, marriage, what else would today bring?

Coming in 2015 - Faithful Valor

Nic and Claire have survived a deployment to Afghanistan. However, can they survive what's coming next? Stay tuned for *Faithful Valor* as Nic and Claire's love is tested when a fellow student presses all the right buttons while Nic is gone, yet again.

About the Author

Isabella lives on the central coast with her wife, and three sons. She teaches college and in her spare time, which there seems to be little of lately. She is working on her writers retreat in the Sierra foothills for those that want a quieter place to learn and work. She is a GCLS award winner for, Always Faithful and a finalist for Scarlet Masquerade. She also finaled in the International National Book awards and has two honorable mentions in the Rainbow Awards.

She also writes under the nom de plume - Jett Abbott. A darker, rogue who's a motorcycle enthusiast and loves people watching.

Like her fan page for the latest in news on readings, appearances and books.

<https://www.facebook.com/isabella.sapphirebooks>

or

www.sapphirebooks.com/isabella.html

Other Isabella titles available at Sapphire Books

Award winning novel - Always Faithful

ISBN - 978-0-9828608-0-9

Major Nichol "Nic" Caldwell is the only survivor of her helicopter crash in Iraq. She is left alone to wonder why she and she alone. Survivor's guilt has nothing on the young Major as she is forced to deal with the scars, both physical and mental, left from her ordeal overseas. Before the accident, she couldn't think of doing anything else in her life.

Claire Monroe is your average military wife, with a loving husband and a little girl. She is used to the time apart from her husband. In fact, it was one of the reasons she married him. Then, one day, her life is turned upside down when she gets a visit from the Marine Corps.

Can these two women come to terms with the past and finally find happiness, or will their shared sense of honor keep them apart?

Broken Shield

ISBN - 978-0-9828608-2-3

Tyler Jackson, former paramedic now firefighter, has seen her share of death up close. The death of her wife caused Tyler to rethink her career choices, but the death of her mother two weeks later cemented her return to the ranks of firefighter. Her path of self-destruction and womanizing is just a front to hide the heartbreak and devastation she lives with every day. Tyler's given up on finding love and having the family she's always wanted. When tragedy strikes her life for a second time she finds something she thought she lost.

Ashley Henderson loves her job. Ignoring her mother's advice, she opts for a career in law enforcement. But, Ashley hides a secret that soon turns her life upside down. Shame, guilt and fear keep Ashley from venturing forward and finding the love she so desperately craves. Her life comes crashing down around her in one swift moment forcing her to come clean about her secrets and her life.

Can two women thrust together by one traumatic event survive and find love together, or will their past force them apart?

American Yakuza

ISBN - 978-0-9828608-3-0

Luce Potter straddles three cultures as she strives to live with the ideals of family, honor, and duty. When her grandfather passes the family business to her, Luce finds out that power, responsibility and justice come with a price. Is it a price she's willing to die for?

Brooke Erickson lives the fast-paced life of an investigative journalist living on the edge until it all comes crashing down around her one night in Europe. Stateside, Brooke learns to deal with a new reality when she goes to work at a financial magazine and finds out things aren't always as they seem.

Can two women find enough common ground for love or will their two different worlds and cultures keep them apart?

Executive Disclosure

ISBN - 978-0-9828608-3-0

When a life is threatened, it takes a special breed of person to step in front of a bullet. Chad Morgan's job has put her life on the line more times that she can count. Getting close to the client is expected; getting too close could be deadly for Chad. Reagan Reynolds wants the top job at Reynolds Holdings and knows how to play the game like "the boys". She's not above using her beauty and body as currency to get what she wants. Shocked to find out someone wants her dead, Reagan isn't thrilled at the prospect of needing protection as she tries to convince the board she's the right woman for a man's job. How far will a killer go to get what they want?

Secrets and deception twist the rules of the game as a killer closes in. How far will Chad go to protect her beautiful, but challenging client?

American Yakuza II - The Lies that Bind

ISBN - 978-10939062-20-8

Luce Potter runs her life and her business with an iron fist and complete control until lies and deception unravel her world. The shadow of betrayal consumes Luce, threatening to destroy the most precious thing in her life, Brooke Erickson.

Brooke Erickson finds herself on the outside of Luce's life looking in. As events spiral out of control Brooke can only watch as the woman she loves pushes her further away. Suddenly, devastated and alone, Brooke refuses to let go without an explanation.

Colby Water, a federal agent investigating the ever-elusive Luce Potter, discovers someone from her past is front and center in her investigation of the Yakuza crime leader. Before she can put the crime boss in prison, she must confront the ultimate deception in her professional life.

When worlds collide, betrayal, dishonor and death are inevitable. Can Luce and Brooke survive the explosion?

Surviving Reagan

ISBN - 978-1-939062-38-3

Chad Morgan has finally worked through the betrayal of her former client and lover, Reagan Reynolds. Putting the pieces of her life back in order, she finds herself on a collision course with that past when she takes on a new client, the future first lady. Unfortunately, Chad's newest job puts her in the cross-hairs of a domestic terrorist determined to release a virus that could kill thousands of women.

Reagan Reynolds has paid for her sins and is ready to start a new life. Attending a business conference in Abu Dhabi gives her the opportunity to prove to her father and herself that she's worthy of a fresh start. Her past will intersect with her future at the conference when she accidentally comes face-to-face with Chad Morgan.

Time is running out. Will Reagan confront Chad? Can she convince Chad she's changed, or will death part them forever?

Writing as Jett Abbott

Scarlet Masquerade

ISBN - 978-0-982860-81-6

What do you say to the woman you thought died over a century ago? Will time heal all wounds or does it just allow them to fester and grow? A.J. Locke has lived over two centuries and works like a demon, both figuratively and literally. As the owner of a successful pharmaceutical company that specializes in blood research, she has changed the way she can live her life. Wanting for nothing, she has smartly compartmentalized her life so that when she needs to, she can pick up and start all over again, which happens every twenty years or so. Love is not an emotion A.J. spends much time on. Since losing the love of her life to the plague one hundred fifty years ago, she vowed to never travel down that road again. That isn't to say she doesn't have women when she wants them, she just wants them on her terms and that doesn't involve a long term commitment.

A.J.'s cool veneer is peeled back when she sees the love of her life in a lesbian bar, in the same town, in the same day and time in which she lives. Is her mind playing tricks on her? If not, how did Clarissa survive the plague when she had made A.J. promise never to change her?

Clarissa Graham is a university professor who has lived an obscure life teaching English literature. She has made it a point to stay off the radar and never become involved with anything that resembles her past life. Every once in a while Clarissa has an itch that needs to be scratched, so she finds an out of the way location to scratch it. She keeps her personal life separate from her professional one, and in doing so she is able to keep her secrets to herself. Suddenly, her life is turned upside down when someone tries to kill her. She finds herself in the middle of an assassination plot with no idea who wants her dead

Scarlet Assassin

ISBN 978-1-939062-36-9

Selene Hightower is a killer for hire. A vampire who walks in both the light and the darkness, but lately darkness has a stronger pull. Her unfinished business could cost her the ability to live in the light, throwing her permanently back into the black ink of evil.

Doctor Francesca Swartz led a boring life filled with test tubes, blood trials, and work. One exploratory night, in a world of leather and torture, she is intrigued by a dark and solitary soul. She surrenders to temptation and the desire to experience something new, only to discover that it might alter her life forever.

Will Selene allow the light to win over the darkness threatening the edges of her life? Two women wonder if they can co-exist despite vast differences, as worlds collide and threaten to destroy any hope of happiness. Who will win?