

Jennifer's Baker's Dozen of Good Recent Romances: The Annotated Booklist

(When Love Hurts: Taking the Pain out of Romance Readers' Advisory)

James, Eloisa. *Duchess by Night*. (2008)

Written by a Shakespeare professor, this book set in Georgian England plays with the classic plot twist of cross-dressing and gender misidentification and features James's trademark wit and humor. Harriet, Duchess of Barrow, wants to attend a scandalous fête peopled with rakes and intriguing miscreants. She does attend and Lord Strange discovers that the man he is disconcertingly attracted to is in fact the most beautiful woman in the room.

Davis, Mary Ellen. *The Landlord's Black-Eyed Daughter* (2007)

Set in Georgian England, this retelling of Alfred Noyes' "The Highwayman" Elizabeth Wyndham, an authoress who will "more likely be attacked by an army of frogs" than marry, meets Rand Remington, a highwayman seeking to redress social injustices perpetrated by the ruling class, with the two forming an unlikely connection over Elizabeth's latest novel. It received a starred review in *Booklist* and would likely make an excellent cross-over read for non-romance readers.

Boyle, Elizabeth. *Tempted by the Night*. (2008)

This paranormal historical Regency explores the old adage, "be careful what you wish for," as a magic ring turns lives upside down with the wishes it grants. From *Booklist*: "*Tempted by the Night* will enchant readers with its wonderfully witty mix of uniquely entertaining characters, cleverly constructed plot, and delectably sexy romance."

Parker, Olivia. *At the Bride Hunt Ball*. (2008)

Think a Regency-era version of *The Bachelor* complete with ambitious misses and machinating mamas as the Duke of Wolverest brings the marriage mart to his own doorstep in order to snare a bride for his younger brother.

Krahn, Betina. *The Book of True Desires*. (2006)

Recipient of a starred review in *Booklist*, this romance set in the late Victorian era finds the archeologically inclined Cordelia Blackburn trying to obtain funding for an expedition by chasing down three Mayan carvings and the mysterious "gift of the jaguar." This leads her into the Caribbean and Mexico accompanied by her grandfather's superior and irritating butler (who's not quite what he seems) and with whom sparks and snark fly.

Quinn, Julia. *The Secret Diaries of Miss Miranda Cheever*. (2007)

“At the age of ten, Miss Miranda Cheever showed no signs of Great Beauty.” Nigel Bevelstoke, Viscount Turner, comes to her aid at a disastrous birthday party and assures her that some day she will grow into herself and then be as beautiful as she is already smart. Words like that are enough to make a girl fall in love, and fall in love Miranda did as detailed in her diary. When they meet again many years (and diary entries) later, Miranda has blossomed as predicted but Nigel is embittered and crushed by loss and betrayal. Can Miranda’s faith in her first love bring her the happy ever after she and Nigel both deserve?

Hale, Shannon. *Austenland*. (2007)

If you happen to be inordinately fond of *Pride and Prejudice* or just fond of Colin Firth’s portrayal of Mr. Darcy, then the plight of 33-year-old Jane Hayes will make sense to you. She inherits a vacation to Pembroke Park in Kent to visit a Jane Austen-themed resort. Even as she finds a real chance at love with an unlikely candidate, she discovers that she may have sabotaged her 13 previous relationships with her Darcy fixation. Received a starred review in *PW* and a positive review in *SLJ* for teens and adults.

Kwitney, Alisa. *Flirting in Cars*. (2007)

Frequently described as smart, funny, and sexy, this book lives up to those accolades as it tells the story of professional journalist, passionate New Yorker, and single mother Zoë Goren. When her daughter is diagnosed with dyslexia, Zoë picks up stakes to move her to an excellent school for kids with LD – in the middle of nowhere. Her urban savvy hits some real road blocks in rural small-town living (needing to learn how to drive and cook, for example) even as she meets Mack a recently returned Iraq vet who might just be the happily-ever-after she never saw coming.

Crusie, Jennifer, and Mayer, Bob. *Agnes and the Hitman* (2007)

Agnes, food writer and cookbook author of *Mob Food*, has something of a temper. (Don’t make her angry when she has a frying pan in her hand.) While Shane is a pretty calm guy who just happens to be a hitman. Throw dognapping, jewels, and the mob into this South Carolina mix and you have a hint of what you’re getting into as real estate double-crosses, big breakfasts, and clueless criminals abound.

Acosta, Marta. *Happy Hour at Casa Dracula*. (2005)

This smart and hip take on the ubiquitous vampire romance is suffused with satire and wicked humor. Heroine Milagro de Los Santos finds herself caught between Sebastian, her ex-boyfriend who’s renewing his attentions to the point of abduction, and the mysterious Oswald with whom she has serious chemistry and who, along with his cranky grandmother Edna and his Cousin Sam, happens to be a vampire.

Brockmann, Suzanne. *Into the Storm*. (2006)

Romance and suspense drive this intelligent thriller, which is a good entry point into the talented Brockmann's Troubleshooters series. Seal Team 16 and Troubleshooters, Inc., pair up for a winter hostage/terrorist training exercise. During this, the complicated and nascent stop/start romance of Petty Officer Mark Jenkins and TS operative Lindsay Fontaine develops even as a member of the training op disappears under disturbing circumstances and a paralyzing winter storm moves in.

Linz, Cathie. *Big Girls Don't Cry* (2007)

Big girls don't cry – they get even. Plus-size model Leena Riley returns home and finds herself working for the town's handsome veterinarian Cole Flannigan, who also happened to be the bane of her existence in school. He's seeing her in a whole new light – can he get her to do the same for him? Selected by *Booklist* as one of its 2008 Romance Fiction Top 10 of the Year.

McLane, LuAnn. *Trick My Truck but Don't Mess with My Heart*. (2008)

This light, cheerful Southern romance finds its heroine, Candie Montgomery, the town pariah when she returns home for the first time in two years. Why? Because her twin sister Sarah blames Candie for the breakup of her engagement. Completely baffled, Candie decides to get back in the town's good graces (and prove her innocence) by getting herself a (temporary) boyfriend. Cowboy Tommy Tucker fits the bill, and even though Candie's made it clear that their relationship is an act, Tommy's decided to play for keeps.