



A Black Tie Affair

Sherrill Bodine

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Fans of *New York Times* bestselling authors Carly Phillips, Jennifer Probst and Julie James will fall in love with Sherrill Bodine! **SUITED FOR SEDUCTION**

Fashion curator Athena Smith will do anything to get her perfectly manicured hands on the Clayworth family's celebrated couture collection for her exhibit. So when she's called in to make sure the gowns are the real deal, she's ecstatic...until a dress she's examining turns out to be loaded with toxins (talk about killer threads!) and Athena faints, only to wake up face-to-face with the One That Got Away, notorious Chicago bachelor Drew Clayworth.

Drew still believes Athena betrayed him all those years ago, and he's sure he can't trust her. But when the priceless gowns go missing, she offers to help track them down. Reluctantly allied in the quest, Drew and Athena are soon stunned by the barely restrained passion still sizzling between them...and memories both bitter and sweet. Is their new partnership just a business arrangement? Or is this something more than...

A BLACK TIE AFFAIR

A Black Tie Affair Details

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From Reader Review A Black Tie Affair for online ebook

Hima says

Nice romantic novel, plot could have been better but the main characters are likable. Similar to mills and boon novels from old time.

Ruth says

I live in suburban New Orleans, and this time between Epiphany and Mardi Gras is Carnival. I read somewhere that more tuxedos and ball gowns are purchased here, per capita, than anywhere else in the country. Most cities have a certain "set" that does the charity balls, débutante balls or other formal black tie affairs, but the average person doesn't don formal garb other than for weddings, once his/her senior prom is history. In New Orleans, however, Mardi Grad balls are for everyone. Sure, there are the clubs that are only for the rich blue-bloods but there are plenty of krewes that are more interested in your ability to pay dues than anything else. Most people have been to at least a couple of balls in their lifetime.

So why am I writing about Mardi Gras balls when A Black Tie Affair is set in Chicago? Because this book, like Mardi Gras, is full of formal wear, Greek names and fun. Like Mardi Gras, it is tough to take A Black Tie Affair seriously. It is a short romance novel--only 220 pages, and what sets things off is the heroine, a museum curator and part-owner of a vintage fashion shop, examining a dress that the hero's family is donating to the museum. The dress releases some sort of toxin that causes her to hallucinate. The hero was her first love, and something separated them. Under the influence of the toxin, she kisses him, and flame is re-lit. After she is released from the hospital they discover that the five vintage dresses which were to be donated have been stolen. Athena and Drew set out to find them, and during the course of the search come to grips with what separated them years ago, as well as with a modern problem that could keep them apart.

There is something about the way the book is written that feels fast, breezy, almost breathless. It is quite a ways into the book before we learn what separated the couple originally, though the fact that something did happen is discussed almost from the beginning. Also, Athena's father was recently fired by Drew, but no one knows why. The book is almost over before we learn the reason, yet it doesn't seem like a mystery; it is almost more of an annoyance, like a kid saying "I have a secret, and I'm not telling". Once revealed the secrets provide motive for some of the behavior, but the climax has nothing to do with these secrets.

There are a couple of bedroom scenes and they happen before marriage. They aren't the most vivid ones I've ever read, but this isn't the movie where the bedroom door closes and we are on the outside. The ending of the book seems to be a set-up for another, and Athena has two sisters, so I suspect we haven't seen the last of her.

I received a complimentary review copy of this book from Anna at Hachette Books. Thanks, it was a fun read.

Danielle says

Of late I find myself giving ratings of two stars or less, so I ask that you not be too harsh if you find that I am completely off mark. This book promised to be interesting, especially with its fashion focus but this book like many others tells the story of a couple who fell in love years before but because their conflicting sense of what is right or wrong, split up only to reunite years later. The main female character, Athena Smith has reason to somewhat regret that her actions were the direct cause of the end of her relationship with Drew Clayworth but strangely I did not think that she really did anything wrong. I felt like Drew showed what a big baby he was when he rejected Athena even though she acted to save his life. (Ohh no you told my uncles that I was going to sail in a dangerous race that had killed my parents the year before :-() I felt no sympathy for Drew and was kind of annoyed when he said "I believe you told my uncles because you thought you were doing the right thing. You cared about me and wanted to keep me safe." Patronizing much? His character annoyed me as a whole and did not help me enjoy the book.

However, the fashion side of the story was different and was probably the only reason I kept on reading. Unfortunately, in my rush to finish the book I believe I glossed over who exactly stole the dresses from the secret bunker (but no great loss believe me). The stories of how Athena and Drew figured out who purchased the stolen gowns were very funny and in a way made you feel that justice had been served. I don't know if I was expecting too much but I liked the mystery part of the story but was annoyed by the romance portion, and I'm a sap for romance.

All in all it was a very light read with two very naive protagonists. I believe I would have rated it higher if it revealed anything about who at John Clayworth and Company was actually to blame for the risky investing that Athena's father had been "forced to resign" for. I feel like I would enjoy the second installment in this series more because it may reveal more about this mystery but until then I would rate this book as just ok.

Rhonda says

4 STARS

Well this is the third Sherrill Bodine book that I have read this week. I have like all three. This one has an almost unbelievable poison in it. That actually did happen to a real person. Though I don't know if the side effects are the same.

Athena, Venus, and Diana Smith are sisters who are opening a store together Pandora's Box. A Vintage couture bazaar. Their father was let go of his shop after working for years at Clayworth's. Their father won't discuss it and Clayworths won't either they signed papers to that fact.

Athena doesn't want to do anything with them now, but she was in the process to get 4 vintage couture gowns of Bertha Palmer that are stored in a secret underground bomb shelter. The exhibit would be part of a scholarship fundraiser that her assistant would get.

When in the bomb shelter in the vault by herself after an hour she is having hallucinations that Bertha is there and Jackie O but she was leaving so she was going to follow her. Bridget got Athena to the emergency room for help. was Bridget was too worried about getting Athena to medical care she did not lock up the bomb shelter and the four dresses were stolen.

Athena one of the side effects was telling the truth. She was calling Drew's name and so he went to see her in her hospital room.

Drew Clayworth lost his parents at 18 and Athena betrayed him when she was 17. Since then they stayed out of each other's way. Now the 4 dresses that were taken could infect others and they could be sued if others were harmed.

So Drew and Athena had to work together to find the dresses and they spend a lot of time together and look

back at the things and see what happened. As they find the dresses one by one.

Who knew that old dresses could end up poisoning those around them in just the right conditions (or wrong ones)

I enjoyed reading Black Tie affair and can't wait to read Diana's story if their is one coming.

Kristina says

I'll start off by saying I thoroughly enjoyed this book. What made it even more interesting for me is that this fictional romance got it's inspiration from a true-life debacle! Ms. Bodine's story was quick to pull you in and keep you reading.

I enjoyed the fact that the character's back story was worked into the throughout the story instead of thrown at me all together in the beginning of the book. It kept me guessing as to Athena and Drew's past and what exactly happened between them.

It was a great tale about Chicago's finest and a look into the life of the (fictional) rich and famous. You were able to picture the elegance and beauty of the clothes through the vivid descriptions, and if you love vintage clothing you'll probably enjoy this book.

The ending was perfect, and I definitely want to read further with the Smith sister's and the Clayworth men's futures. I have a feeling that two very interesting characters will end up together and lots of interesting secrets will come out!

Kristi (Books and Needlepoint) says

My synopsis: The first dilemma that comes to light is that four Bertha Palmer dresses have become infected with a "truth serum" type toxin. This toxin was created as the materials in the dresses started breaking down over the years. Athena Smith has the misfortune of discovering this after laying down under one to study it. She had been observing the dresses in the Clayworth's Secret Closet in hopes of acquiring them for her Founding Families Exhibit at the museum. An exhibit that would help cement the scholarship fund for her assistant, Makayla.

The second dilemma occurs after Athena is rushed to the emergency room under the effects of the toxin. The Clayworths rush to the hospital to make sure that Athena is going to be okay, and to try and discover what has caused this episode. When they go to recover the dresses from the Closet, an unknown thief has gotten to the dresses first, not knowing that they can infect innocent people.

Athena practically throws herself at Drew Clayworth while under the effects of the truth serum toxin, which creates the third dilemma. They both have unresolved feelings from a relationship that had ended 15 years earlier, when Athena was only 17 and Drew was 19. How will her "revelations" affect their relationship now, and will they be able to work together to try to find the missing dresses?

Underlying all of this is the fact that Athena's father, Alistair, has been "forced" into retirement from John Clayworth and Company's stores. He has retreated to Florida without telling his daughters the details of his dismissal. What part did Drew play in this dismissal and how will it affect his possible second chance with Athena?

Throw in the other two Smith sisters, Venus and Diana, along with Connor, Drew's cousin and another eligible bachelor and Bridget, the Clayworth boys' aunt, and you have two very loyal families who will stand up against all to protect their own.

My thoughts: I really enjoyed reading this book. It started out on such an original note with the toxic dresses and I found that refreshing. Having all the subplots really helped the book to move along and made me want to know how everything would play out in the end. I was cheering for the unrequited love of Athena and Drew and wanted this couple to be able to work things out. I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys contemporary romance.

Stephanie says

1.5/5

This one is part mystery, part romance.

Athena Smith is a fashion curator, and is dying to get four Bertha Palmer vintage couture dresses for her museum exhibit. The Clayworth family own these dresses which presents a problem: Drew Clayworth broke her heart 18 years ago. When she is allowed to see the dresses, she becomes infected by “truth serum” like toxins that were released from the dresses, and winds up in the hospital. Then, the four dresses go missing. Athena and Drew must work together to get these valuable dresses back, and to stop others from being infected by the toxins too. Will love find them again in the process, or will the past keep getting in the way?

The premise of this story is unique and focuses a lot on fashion and vintage couture, which was neat. It made for a different kind of story, not the same old, same old. However, the story was somewhat lacking for me. I just could not get very interested in it for whatever reason. The romance really does not come into play until later in the story which was kind of disappointing, but the story did get somewhat better when the romance did appear. I like how the two characters were reconnecting after many years. Some of the story was confusing and I don't feel like I really got to know the characters well, and that they were quite unrealistic. It was sort of a cute story though, and like I said, pretty unique. If you love fashion this might be the book for you.

All in all though, this was definitely not the most romantic romance I've ever read, with somewhat unrealistic characters. Perhaps it might be a good read for people interested in the fashion industry, though.

Note: I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Bridget says

Athena loves fashion and cannot believe her luck when she is chosen to authenticate the a certain collection of gowns. When she ends up getting sick, she thinks things couldn't be any worse. When the owner of the gowns, Drew, walks in Athena realizes that things are only starting to get interesting.

Something happened in the past that keeps Drew from trusting Athena. The gowns disappear and Athena offers Drew her help. Desperate to find them, he reluctantly accepts. Soon it becomes all too obvious that there is something more going on between these two. Will they be able to keep their passion at bay at least until the gowns are recovered or will they forget all about the gowns and drown in each others' arms?

The desire between these two is unstoppable. Whenever you're in the mood for a quick, steamy romance, pick up this book.

Angele says

Athena Smith, the costume curator for a Chicago museum, is elated to finally see the legendary vintage gowns worn by a city icon, Bertha Palmer. But the gowns are owned by the Clayworth family, who are not on good terms with Athena's family. The Clayworths just fired Athena's father from their company for unknown, but scandalous, reasons. So Athena has little hope of gaining the gowns for an exhibition at the museum. While looking at the gowns, she inhales a toxin which acts as a truth serum. What truth does she spill? Athena still has feelings for Drew Clayworth, her high school sweetheart. Will Athena and Drew be able to overcome the secrets in their past and their current family feud to fall back in love?

I won this book through a Goodreads Firstreads contest, and the reason that I wanted to read this book is the fashion aspect of the story. The curator of vintage fashion and costume at a museum is a fascinating job to me. Athena and her sisters also run a vintage couture boutique! These aspects of the book are very well done and well researched.

It took awhile for me to see any chemistry between Athena and Drew, but once I did, they made a great couple. I thought it was cute that Drew and his brothers were considered such eligible bachelors. But otherwise, the leads weren't that interesting, I wanted to know more about them.

I was a little confused and bewildered at the beginning of the story by all the different characters. There were so many names to keep track of, I had to keep flipping back to previous pages to find out who was who. Once I got their names straight, I really enjoyed Athena's sisters, Diana and Venus (don't you love the Greek myth theme?) They both seemed so feisty, and even though I'm sure they will both get their own books, I wanted to see more of them in this book too!

The story seemed more like a madcap mystery than a romance to me, with a little bit of romance on the side. Think of an episode of "Bones" or "Castle." There were really three (3!) mysteries to solve: Who stole the dresses? What broke up Athena and Drew when they were teenagers? Why was Athena's father fired from the Clayworth's company?

I wanted to read this book because of the vintage fashion theme, and in that regard, this book delivered. However, I felt like the story and characters weren't quite as spectacular as all the vintage gowns.

reviewed for <http://inthehammockblog.blogspot.com/>

Jess says

I won this book through Goodreads Giveaways, and it is the first book I have read by this author. I had some troubles rating this one. I liked parts of the book, but other parts left me either frustrated or irritated. I ended up giving it a 3 because I did like Athena and Drew together. Their relationship was very romantic and to watch them both grow together was very heart warming.

The overall concept of the book was character Athena Smith is a fashion curator, she is creating a museum exhibit and she needs four dresses from the Clayworth Family Collection. Drew Clayworth doesn't want to see Athena because she betrayed him when they were teenagers, but when Athena becomes sick after examining dresses from his collection he goes to find her. While Athena is in the hospital, the same four dresses she wants have been stolen from the Clayworth secret closet. Athena and Drew team up to find the dresses before others are infected and the media finds out and the Clayworth's gain bad publicity.

The main focus of the book was not on the missing dresses but on the relationship between Athena and Drew. Once best friends and lovers, they have been reunited but can they overcome their past betrayal. The relationship between these two was fun to watch. To watch them slowly decide what is going on between them and where their relationship was going to end up. I also liked the side relationship between Athena and her other sisters and between Drew and his cousin Conner.

But honestly, the rest of the book just fell flat for me. I'm still confused about who originally stole the dresses and for what purpose. Did I miss this aspect, is it going to be addressed in another book, or did the author feel it wasn't necessary to the story? Another thing that sort of bothered me was the whole emphasis on Athena wearing tinted glasses. After it was brought up for the 10th time, I got it. She wore them so she could hide. Okay. Stop bringing it up, please.

The betrayal that happened between Drew and Athena was sort of laughable and anticlimactic. The question of how Athena betrayed Drew is dragged out for the whole book, and then the reader finally finds out and I was disappointed. I just said to myself "That's it?"

I'm not sure if another book is being written to make this into a series. I have a feeling it is because there seems to be a lot of loose ends in regards to Connor and Venus (one of the other Smith sisters), and a side plot with the sisters father. I may or may not read it, but I don't think I'll be buying a copy.

Kelly Moran says

Author Sherrill Bodine claims that family is her number one passion, writing second, and philanthropy or travel as a dead pan for third. She has written books under the pen name Leslie Lynn, (Buried Shadows, A Soldier's Heart, and Autumn Loves), and also under the pen name Lynn Leslie, (Street of Dreams, Defy the Night, and The Other Amanda.) The other title under her name is Talk of the Town. Sherrill resides in Chicago, Illinois with her husband, children, and grandchildren.

Fashion curator Athena Smith was overjoyed to find she was finally going to be able to get her hands on the Clayworth family's couture collection for her museum exhibit. But when she's called in to authenticate the rare gowns, they turn out to be laced with toxins, causing her to pass out and wake up face-to-face with her first love, Drew Clayworth. Drew still believes that Athena betrayed him all those years ago, but his

traitorous heart still beats wildly for her. And now the gowns have gone missing, causing him to have to work closely with her to retrieve the priceless part of Chicago history before anyone else gets sick. Can the past be put behind them to finally move on, or will more lies keep them apart forever?

The plot and pacing for this book seemed a bit rushed to me, especially at the end, and the way that the dresses were coincidentally found was almost too easy, but neither of these things deterred me from reading.

What makes this book stand out for me was the author's ability to use internal thoughts and punch them into stellar one-liners. It made the characters so much more dimensional, complete with lovable flaws. You really found yourself relating to them and rooting for them. The tension between the hero and heroine was sexy right from the start, jumping off the page. The secondary characters were endearing. I would love to see spin off books on Athena's sisters. Though the gowns had toxins in them and then were stolen, this book was intended to be a light-hearted romance and not a suspense. Readers can get a real feel for Chicago in this book, as well as information on what goes on in the world of museum curators. You won't be slammed by unnecessary facts, but you will come away knowing more than you did. Recommended!

Kelly Moran,
Author and Reviewer

Brigid says

I really wanted to like this book. I'm a museum professional, and as a group, we are notorious for busman's holidays: we like to go to other museums, read about what other museums are doing, watch movies about museums, and yes, read popular fiction set in museums.

Most of the time museum books involve murder, theft, monsters that need artifacts. You know, the normal day at the office.

This did feature theft, but it's primarily a contemporary romance.

I thought this would be a fun little read with rich people behaving badly. There was yacht racing, a filthy rich curator - a curator of costumes nonetheless. This should have been fluffy and escapist. But instead I can't get over the glaring conflict of interest for the main character. She is a curator of fashion/costume at a 'major Chicago museum' - but she also owns an upscale vintage store with her sisters selling the exact same stuff. Even if you don't know museum practices (and the author claims this idea came to her after a discussion with a friend who is a curator of costumes) this should be obvious! You can't collect against yourself!

Apart from that issue, the book, well, it's dull. Just dull. It's the same plot point over and over with different characters. Seriously - the exact same scene happens three times - the character names are changed, and I suppose the author bothered to use a thesaurus to change some words, but that's it.

Even the romance was boring. I'm not sure who the audience was for this, but it came across as what a 13-year-old girl thought grown ups did. (Plus a few things that I hope my daughter won't know about when she's thirteen... or a lot older. But even those love scenes were dull.)

In short, I just couldn't care less about these characters. It's set up for a sequel since absolutely none of the

major "plot" points are resolved. and I can't even be bothered to find out if she wrote one.

Katie(babs) says

Athena Smith and her sisters, Venus and Diana, are shocked when their father is forced into early retirement as the treasurer for the exclusive John Clayworth and Company department store. The Smith's and Clayworth's go way back together and when Athena was a teenager, she and Drew Clayworth were the best of friends who stopped speaking after she did something Drew could never forgive. After fifteen years, Athena and Drew have never forgotten one another but they refuse to see or speak to each other and talk things out. Now with the mystery behind her father's job loss, Athena is even more upset with Drew.

The one thing Athena needs the Clayworths for is their much celebrated couture Bertha Palmer dresses that Athena hopes will be donated to the museum she works for. She is called in to make sure the four gowns are authentic. As she investigates the dresses, she starts to hallucinate because someone has poisoned the dresses with some sort of truth serum. As Athena is taken to the hospital by the head of security for John Clayworth and Company, someone steals the dresses and Athena is framed.

As soon as Drew hears that Athena has been poisoned, he rushes to her side. She tells Drew her darkest desire and feelings for him because of the state she is in. Drew doesn't know what to think about Athena because he can't get over her betrayal and is still hurt. But, he wants to find out who is responsible for making her sick and stop anyone else from ending up the same way. Athena accepts Drew as a partner, of sorts, and soon they are running all over Chicago on the search for these very valuable dresses that can cause problems for anyone who touches them with their bare hands. Soon Drew can't keep his own hands off of Athena and he wants to start all over with the woman he has never stopped loving.

A Black Tie Affair is a cute and fluffy romance where two former lovers have a reunion of sorts. This is a high-class mystery with some funny moments as Athena and Drew come to terms with the past as well as an unknown future in regards to one another. Drew is a man most women worship while Athena is very level headed and yearns for so many things that she feels she has a right to. When Drew storms back into her life, she is so confused, as well as, crushed because she aches for Drew but doesn't know how to tell him.

Watching Drew come to the conclusion that Athena is the only woman for him makes for great reading and he is one character that is sweet and wonderful, if only more heroes were written with his personality and charm. Athena keeps him on his toes and watching him make Athena squirm leads to some fun moments. When these two finally give into their attraction for one another, it makes for nice love scenes.

If you are in the mood for a witty story with well-rounded characters, who live a glamorous lifestyle, check out A Black Tie Affair and the writing talents of Sherrill Bodine.

Michelle (Undeniably Book Nerdy) says

I have my complaints about this book but it was an okay read. It's a very light romance involving Athena Smith, a museum curator with a flair for expensive vintage dresses, and Drew Clayworth, CEO and heir of John Clayworth and Company, an exclusive department store. The story was set in the glamorous world of Chicago, which is a welcome change from the usual glitzy world of New York where books like these are

usually set.

The hero and heroine were best friends turned to something more when they were young but a betrayal in Athena's part separated them for fifteen years. They were brought together again when the vintage couture dresses (owned by Drew's family and Athena wanted to feature in the museum she works for) were stolen. However, the dresses give off a sort of poisonous "truth serum" that causes whoever comes near them hallucinations. Athena, when called to confirm the authenticity of the dresses, was the first "victim" and in the mad dash to get her to the hospital, the dresses were stolen. When Athena regained her head, she and Drew decided to work together to find the dresses and find the person who stole them. As they worked together in close proximity, feelings they thought were buried in the past start to surface and they must confront that old betrayal--as well as problems in the present like why Athena's father was fired after working for Clayworth for many years--if they ever want to have a future together.

I liked reading the romance between Athena and Drew--there was chemistry between them and I felt that they belonged together and I especially liked how they came together in the end. However, the "betrayal" felt kind of silly to me and does not warrant the fifteen years they spent apart because of it. Also, I felt that the story behind of why Athena and Drew broke up was more of a mystery than the missing dresses--they were all found by the way but who took them and why Athena's father was fired remained unsolved and I guess the that mystery would carry on to the next book in the series. This book was also laden with references to Greek mythology and I felt the Greek facts thrown in here and there were a little random and unnecessary. I don't find Greek mythology that interesting so I didn't really appreciate it in the story but others might.

Overall, this book is a light, fluffy romance and a quick weekend read. It has great leads in sweet, lovely Athena (who wasn't shallow at all!) and charming, sexy Drew and provides wonderful escape into the rich, glamorous lifestyle of the affluent Chicago society. I have my complaints about it but it was an okay read just the same.

Mary Gramlich says

A BLACK TIE AFFAIR by Sherrill Bodine

10/10 - Grand Central Publishing - Mass Market Paperback, 240 pages

Fate is a magical and wonderful mystery in our lives that throws out surprises we never expect and occasionally some bloopers we could live without. Athena Smith is getting a huge dose of both right now and she will have to take the good with the unexpected and roll with the way things play out. She may have been named for the Goddess of Wisdom but past mistakes make her question that particular title as it applies to her.

Athena has finally gotten permission to inspect and display the Bertha Smith antique dress collection at the Fashion Institute of Chicago where she is the curator. But the catch is the dresses are part of the Clayworth family collection and this forces her to interact with her childhood love Drew Clayworth. Drew is the man that she has always loved but also the one she can never forgive because he broke her heart and caused hurt beyond recovery.

Drew is equally leery of having Athena back in his life as well but fate has stepped in and brought them back together reminding him of everything he had and lost. He loved her so much but had to let her go when the tragedy of losing his parents in the Fastnet. This ultimate sailboat racing event was something he pushed his

parents into and felt guilt when it took their lives. All this grief that Drew put upon his shoulders did not leave room for Athena or her love. Now they are thrown back together when the dresses that Athena wants to display are stolen and apparently causing whoever touches them to have a chemical reaction that makes the wearer act in interesting and “truthful” ways.

Athena and Drew are both holding back a secret or two that could cause this reconciliation to crumble like the antique dresses they are trying to find but is withholding the information worse than the truth even when Drew is not telling Athena that he now plans to race in the Fastnet.

Athena also has her sisters to contend with, the opening of their vintage collection store and allot of family meddling all surrounding trying to keep Athena apart from Drew. All of the sisters worry about their father who was terminated by Drew’s family business and how that will all play out when Drew is confronted with the issue and the part he played in the termination.

The search for the dresses becomes an adventure in more ways than one and both Athena and Drew are reminded that they are so much better together than apart despite the road blocks facing them. They may be able to sail out together but not on calm waters the way things keep popping up to toss them around.

This book makes you believe in the magic of love and the wonder of everything happening for a reason. Some life events are mysterious and some wonderful but true happiness at being reunited with the love of your life not much else can go wrong – or so we hope. What a great book with wonderful characters and amazing underlying mystery. The tie-in to the next book in this series is enough to make you wish time moved faster and the next book was about to be released. It is not fate that has Ms. Bodine writing such a great story but the talent of a good writer.
