

From the Stacks
By Julie Orf
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The release of Hannah Brown's romance novel debut by Harlequin, *Mistakes We Never Made*, underscores a broader trend in the publishing landscape. "The Bachelorette" alum's foray into "steamy" fiction arrives as the romance sector enjoys a significant renaissance. While general publishing faces industry consolidation and digital competition, romance remains a powerhouse of growth. Data from Circana reveals that the genre has seen a staggering 113% increase in sales over the past three years. Harlequin publishing is rebranding to stay ahead of younger readers and the influence of social media. In other words, Harlequin novels are "not what they used to be" or what your grandmother read!

Harlequin's *Love Inspired* and *Love Inspired Suspense* lines represent a specialized corner of the publishing market that blends wholesome, contemporary romance with a strong Christian worldview. *Love Inspired* books emphasize emotional intimacy and traditional values, avoiding explicit content or profanity in favor of a "sweet" romance style often set in tight-knit small towns or rural communities. *Love Inspired Suspense* takes those same foundational values and heightens the stakes with "edge-of-the-seat" danger. These stories typically feature ordinary characters in extraordinary circumstances, such as a heroine in jeopardy or a hero in law enforcement, where the couple must work together to solve a mystery or survive a threat while their relationship develops. Patricia Davids, Lynette Eason, and Marta Perry started their writing career with Harlequin novels.

The Harlequin *Intrigue* line is designed for readers who want complex, gripping crime dramas alongside a central love story. *Intrigue* novels feature a gritty, intense atmosphere with low-to-moderate sensuality and no restriction on secular themes. The plots typically revolve around professional "alpha" heroes, such as special forces soldiers, federal agents, or relentless detectives, and equally capable, resilient heroines who work as their equals to solve kidnappings, homicides, or cases of psychological suspense. Delores Fossen, Cindi Myers, and Debra Webb are popular and prolific authors who have come to define this line for Harlequin.

The Harlequin *Historical* line offers an escape into the past, featuring researched settings that range from the rugged Viking era and Medieval courts to the glamorous ballrooms of the Regency and Victorian periods. These novels focus on high-stakes social drama, scandalous reputations, and the rigid class structures of the time. Common themes include marriages of convenience to save a family estate, fake

courtships to avoid a forced season, and the redemption of a "bad boy" through the love of an unconventional woman. Bronwyn Scott, Millie Adams, and Lucy Adams are familiar authors to this line with their descriptive characters and smart dialogue.

Both the Harlequin *Romantic Suspense* and Harlequin *Special Edition* categories focus on deeply emotional, contemporary journeys. "Heart-racing romance and breathless suspense" where life-and-death situations force adventurous heroines and brave heroes to rely on one another define the *Romantic Suspense* line. Carla Cassidy writes cowboy romances with a thrill. *Special Edition* novels focus on relatable, real-life characters navigating family, career, and community. These are longer novels that allow for deep internal conflict and subplots involving siblings, parents, or children. RaeAnne Thayne and Christine Rimmer are top authors in this line usually setting their stories in Western or rural locales.