

AMAZON ORIGINAL STORIES

CHRISTINA LAUREN

USA Today and New York Times bestselling author of
The Unhoneymooners

Accidentally

YOURS

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LAUREN**

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The Improbable Meet-Cute: Second Chances

Fate works in mysterious ways—and on Valentine's Day, it's feeling particularly mischievous. From accidental Zoom crashes to graveyard resurrections, six beloved romance authors bring you a collection of increasingly steamy second chances.

Accidentally Yours by Christina Lauren 🌶️

When marketing consultant Veronica accidentally crashes the wrong Zoom meeting, she's shocked to receive a job offer from the company's intriguing CEO. Their professional email exchanges quickly turn flirty, but Veronica's mind keeps drifting to her reserved but gorgeous new neighbor. As Valentine's Day approaches, she'll discover that sometimes the most improbable meet-cute can lead to the perfect match.

Time Will Tell by Hannah Bonam-Young 🌶️

When a history teacher receives a letter from her deceased grandmother revealing a secret love affair in the 1950s, it leads her to a time capsule hidden decades ago. But it's the charming grandson of her grandmother's lost love who changes everything, proving that sometimes the heart knows exactly where—and when—it belongs.

Second Act Romance by Julie Soto 🌶️

When food poisoning takes out the lead in their Valentine's Day production of *Oklahoma!*, TV sensation Colby J. Turner swoops in to save the show. But for leading lady Bex Hardgrave, this last-minute casting is more drama than she bargained for. Eight years ago, their onstage chemistry

sparked real-life fireworks—until a misunderstanding brought down the curtain. As showtime approaches, Bex and Colby must decide if their second-chance romance deserves its own standing ovation.

A Play for Love by Trilina Pucci 🌶️

Years ago, during a college production of *Romeo and Juliet*, Rory and Oliver shared one unforgettable stage kiss before fate pulled them apart. Now, while drowning her Valentine's Day sorrows at brunch, she spots her former Romeo, wearing nothing but gold shorts and wings, playing Cupid for the lovelorn masses. Their chemistry still sizzles, but these former leads will need more than Shakespeare's guidance to turn their second chance into a true romance.

Death to Valentine's Day by Catherine Cowles 🌶️🌶️

After her boyfriend's betrayal, the last thing Maia St. James wants is Valentine's Day. But when friends drag her to a Death to Valentine's Day masquerade ball at a mountain lodge, she ends up kissing a masked stranger—only to discover he's her ex's older brother. And when a guest is found murdered, the party becomes a deadly mystery. Now Maia must unmask a killer before her second chance at romance is cut short.

Valentine's Slay by Navessa Allen 🌶️🌶️🌶️🌶️

Louisiana gravedigger Noah Evans's Valentine's night shift takes an unexpected turn when his high school crush, Emma, starts screaming from her freshly dug grave. As they unearth a deadly family conspiracy, Noah and Emma discover that old flames burn even hotter the second time around—especially when someone's trying to kill them.

♥ * Heat Scale Key ♠ ♥



Explicit dark romance



Romantic suspense with moderate steam



Classic contemporary romance



Sweet romance with witty banter

January 14, 2026

IMESSAGE

Veronica C.
Story time.

Clara C.

Yes!! I was just looking for an excuse to stop working.

So you know how I had that job interview today

Haven't you already had like seven this week??

Well yes my adorable and fully employed sister, that's how it goes in this market. Anyway, I had another one today, ostensibly for Chief Marketing Officer at BioLight

Is that like Bud Light, but by biologists, so it's like actually good beer?

They use bioluminescence in their biochemical assays to determine ATP levels. But I like your answer better so let's go with that.

You really did your research.

So, the interview is at 10am. Of course I'm at my desk ten minutes early, mouse hovering over the zoom link.

Such a Virgo.

And also very Virgo of me is to keep my camera off until everyone else has turned theirs on. I'm very glad I do this

Because

Somehow I ended up in a Zoom room with a bunch of tech bros, having a meeting in progress that I wasn't actually invited to

So wait.

It wasn't BioLight?

No, I have no idea what the company was

That's freaking hilarious

It was a marketing meeting, and one of the bros was presenting

And when I say it was the worst slide deck I'd ever seen

I mean it was the worst, and that includes slides that Daniella made when I was babysitting her and she randomly opened PowerPoint on my laptop and started key smashing

lol I still feel guilty that my child broke so many keys on your laptop

Who uses the T and E and space keys? Come on.

Anyway, I listened to the presentation for a few minutes

Because in my head I'm like

These guys need marketing help

And there you were

There I was

Just an uninvited black box on the screen

Little did they know how much I could do for them

Alas, I remembered that I spent the last four years working with these same kinds of guys, saving them from their bad graphics and terrible pitches and watching them be promoted over me until, finally, I was let go with a paltry six-month severance

Preach it, sis

And I just got so mad suddenly that I gave so many ideas to the company and they took them, signed accounts, handed out bonuses to everyone at the level just above mine, and then let me go when I complained to HR that I was overdue for a promotion.

I'm just over here cheering out loud

Like screw these guys and their basic Keynote template slides and their recycled ideas!

I don't think anyone noticed I'd joined, so I carefully changed my username from my email to just my initials and unmuted and told them their slides were absolute garbage, but about ten times more brutal, and then logged off.

My younger sister: my hero.

Chapter One

VERONICA

I haven't felt this good in weeks.

It's pathetic, maybe, that it's not because I have a job offer on the table—even better would be two offers I could pit against each other—but simply because I gave some tech bros a lashing and then peaced out. Whatever, I'm putting a tick in the win column anyway.

I've been carrying so much pent-up frustration and bitterness about the terrible years I spent at my previous job and how they then ended my four years of employment: in a flaccid HR meeting with a representative expressing all the concern of a bot reading a script, which concluded with me sighing a defeated, "Thanks for the mehpathy, Chad." The resentment had been building and building, but after today's Zoom mishap it's just . . . evaporated.

My sister, Clara, says I could maybe have anticipated that a job with a marketing firm douchily named PitchSlapped would go south, but I swear it wasn't terrible at first. I was spring green out of my MBA and was the dangerous combination of idealistic and buried beneath student loans when they offered me a marketing associate position. PitchSlapped came to me with a six-figure offer, including free lunches for all employees, a game room for break time, an in-house gym, company ski retreats to Vail, and five weeks' vacation. No other job offer even came close.

They promoted me quickly to marketing manager and then associate vice director of marketing, a meaningless title created by some idiot being paid way too much money and which I hated seeing on my business cards. I languished there, giving all my best ideas in the higher-level meetings while not being invited to the higher-level salary, stock options, or bonuses. Company retreats turned out to be full of coke and misogyny. Vacation time was granted but not expected to be taken. The game room had a pool table, a *Grand Theft Auto* arcade console, and a pinball machine called *Whoa Nellie! Big Juicy Melons*.

It begs the question: “But, Veronica, you stayed for four years?” Perhaps not the best evidence of self-preservation skills, but even if I have a chip on my shoulder from the experience, at least after those four years with the PitchSlapped salary, I don’t have any student loans.

I put a heart over Clara’s last text and set my phone down, leaning back in my home office chair. It immediately lets out a concerning crack, and I need to hurl my weight forward, palms slapping onto my desk to keep myself from falling backward. When I stand, the chair flops over on its base with a groan, like it heard bad news and needed to lie down.

Amazing. Another thing I’m going to have to replace, including my ancient personal laptop (had to turn my work computer in when I was laid off), my AirPods (they were tumbled and humbled when I left them in my pocket on laundry day), and my refrigerator (it was a hand-me-down from my grandmother and honestly lived longer than it should have, but damn).

Instinctively, I glance at the clock, wondering, *Is it too early for a beer?* The small hand on the two gives me a definitive *Yes, too early*, but it does make me realize that Larry, the most consistent postal worker ever, will have just delivered the mail, and this day could be improved by the arrival of my final paycheck with my six months’ severance.

I find it obnoxious and stupid that Payroll insisted that, due to the need for paper trails as well as the date of my termination, my final check couldn’t be direct deposited like all the other ones. It’s meant that I’ve been on high alert for over two weeks now, paranoid that this money—the only thing keeping me from having to move in with my sister—will somehow vanish into the logistical tangle of the USPS.

Trust in Larry, I tell myself.

Downstairs it is, predictably, a gentle swarm of the work-from-home contingent, who all know Larry’s schedule and probably also want an excuse to get away from their screens. There’s Catalogs from 2A, who gets dozens of glossy catalogs crammed daily into her small mailbox; Loud Kevin, the mid-twenties day trader from 8G, who is so thundering during calls from his balcony that I can often hear him from my place on the fourth floor; my silver fox next-door neighbor, *Mad Men* Roger Sterling, from 4B, who always has at least one AirPods in his ear and continues his call no matter how many of us are listening in; and Velvet Rope, the sleazy guy just below me in 3C, who dresses exclusively in very loud, but very clearly knockoff, Versace.

Obviously, I have no idea what anyone's real name is (other than Kevin, because we all hear "Hey, man, it's Kevin" a hundred times a day). Perhaps not surprisingly, ours is not the most social of buildings in downtown Chicago.

At the wall of mailboxes in the marble-and-brass lobby, we all shift around each other, apologizing under our breath like a group of moms retrieving their shoes from the cubbies at the yoga studio. I open up my mailbox—4C—and my heart sinks.

No check.

I tilt my head back in frustration, and that's when I see him walk down the curved wooden staircase.

He lives in 2C, that much I know. I think he only moved in about a month ago, and although it isn't the culture of the historic Grand Fir Estates apartment building to get very chummy in the lobby, I'm not sure I would even want us to have a conversation if it was possible. He's the kind of beautiful man to be admired from a distance, because there's no way when he opens his mouth that whatever comes out can live up to the exterior.

In a move that I will never admit to anyone other than my sister, I've taken to calling him Friday, because seeing him is what I look forward to. After glimpsing him only once as we passed in the lobby, Clara named him Lava Lamp because, according to her, "He's hot and mesmerizing."

I don't know what he does for work, just that he seems to work three days a week at home and two at the office. Also, I know that he's well over six feet tall, with dark curls, deep-brown eyes, and smooth olive skin. His work-from-home attire is worn jeans, soft cashmere sweaters or well-loved plain black T-shirts, and sneakers. His office days find him in pressed trousers and a button-down shirt that's either white or soft blue. The one time I saw him smile—he was checking the mail with one of his friends in tow—I caught a flash of two of the deepest dimples I'd ever seen and probably should have taken a pregnancy test a few days later.

Catalogs and I both watch him pull his mail from the box and obliviously make his way back up the stairs. I honestly don't care that Loud Kevin has just caught us ogling, or that there isn't a check in my mailbox today. Catching a glimpse of Friday has made me forget about all of it.

January 14, 2026

CODEIFY SLACK CHANNEL

Jude T: Did you happen to catch the username of that woman who zoom bombed the presentation earlier?

Adam P: I only saw the initials VC
I'm going to be honest. That was brutal, but brilliant.

I went through the Zoom recording and wrote down what she said.

Oh please share

“Is this a serious marketing group? What am I looking at? Slide one was a mission statement that says absolutely nothing. ‘Empowering synergies through innovation’? That’s four buzzwords in a trench coat pretending to be a thought. And what was that on slide two? A stock photo of people high-fiving in a WeWork? No data, no strategy, just vibes and Helvetica. Slide three: a pie chart with no labels. What is that even measuring? Your rapidly declining odds of making a profit?

This whole deck is fluff stapled to hope. Where’s the competitive analysis? Where’s the budget breakdown? You’re pitching a million-dollar campaign with less substance than an influencer’s skin care routine. Whoever made this either hates marketing or has never sold a damn thing in their life.”

All of that just off the cuff.

I need to find out who she is.

Jude Tilde, CEO, out for revenge?

Jude Tilde, CEO, out for a lifeline. Now that I’ve taken over, we need people who aren’t afraid to speak up. We have the opportunity to reinvent ourselves.

The Mystery Woman would have a field day with that phrasing.

You're not wrong.