

Happy Holidays!

It's that time of year when several winter holidays converge and the world seems glittery and bright. Some embrace the festivities, some endure them, and some ignore them altogether.

As I child I was in the 'endure' category. Sure, I liked the presents, and Unco Bunco's rice pudding was worth waiting all year for, but there were also visits with family I didn't know very well or like very much, too many people, too much noise, and too much pressure to be cheerful all the time.

As an adult, I began to lean into the religious aspects of Advent and Christmas (occupational hazard of being a pastor, I guess!), and I found that I appreciated December a lot more when I let go of all the cultural and societal expectations. Unfortunately, family dinners were still events I had to endure, as much as I wished I could have enjoyed them. And I'm still

grieving the fact that Unco never wrote down his rice pudding recipe, and all my attempts to replicate it after he died in 1999 failed miserably. But for the most, part, it was better.

Now that I have my own family, Christmas is a very low-key event. Our tree usually goes up during the first or second week of December, and the kids have taken over decorating it. Ever year I consider putting out the nativity scene I painted in a ceramics class thirty years ago, and every year I decide that I don't really want to risk the tiny lambs or the manger with the sleeping baby Jesus becoming cat toys, so I leave the entire set in its box. The cats content themselves with undecorating the tree one ornament at a time. We don't usually have company, and we've stopped going to visit the extended family I was never very comfortable around. Christmas morning involves watching my kids open presents--something that's a lot less fun now that they're teenagers--and then me spending most of the day in the kitchen making a feast that will feed the four of us for weeks. I don't bother trying to make Unco's rice pudding anymore. My digestive system can no longer tolerate dairy, so what's the point?

None of that is happening this year (except I'm still not attempting the rice pudding--that's staying the same).

Right now my family is in the process of packing up our house. Within the next few weeks, we'll relocate to Canada. So this year our tree is staying in its box along with the nativity scene. Presents will happen for the kids, but they'll be somewhat minimal. We've made reservations to eat our feast at a restaurant on Christmas Day.





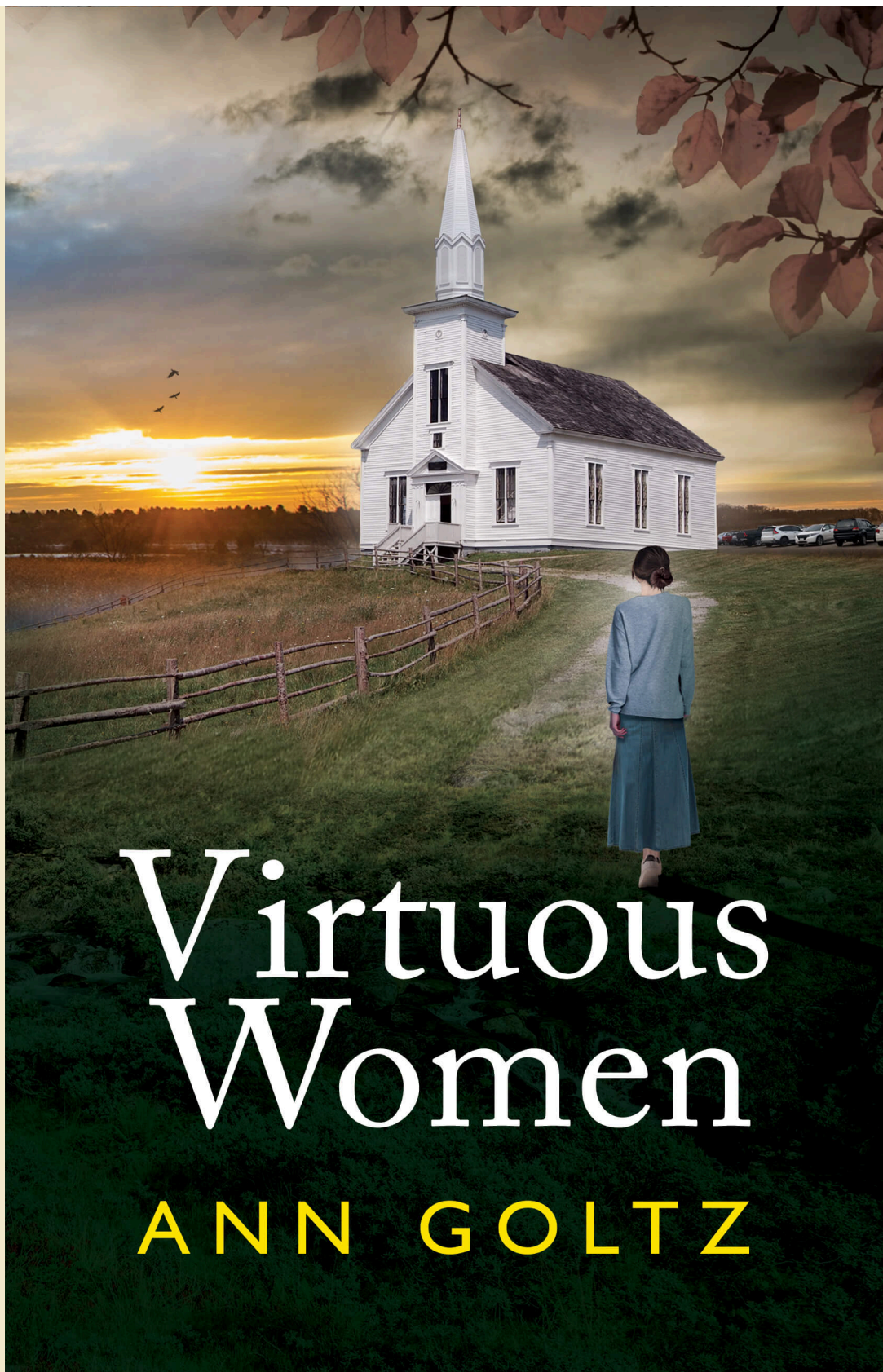
Pippin, Fezik, and Selina (not pictured) have nothing to undecorate.

We're excited for this move, and also a little anxious. There's a lot of uncertainty in our future. But this is where focusing on the religious aspects of the season helps. Advent is about preparation and expectation in the midst of uncertainty. Christmas is about hope. Those are things that resonate with me right now.

Our holiday season may not look like it usually does, but I'm still leaning into Advent and Christmas. And while I'm not able to maintain the expected level of cheerfulness, I am finding peace and joy.

I wish the same for you and yours.

(And if anyone has an awesome recipe for rice pudding, send it along! I can't eat it because of my severe dairy intolerance, but I'll be happy to publish it. Maybe it can become part of someone else's holiday tradition!)



[Bookshop.org](https://www.bookshop.org)* (paperback)

[Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) (paperback/ebook)

Thanks to the Cyber Monday sale, *Virtuous Women* made it to **NUMBER SIX** in the Women's Religious Fiction category on Amazon. Thank you!

Product details

ASIN : B0CTW464ZG

Publisher : Quiet Publications (March 5, 2024)

Publication date : March 5, 2024

Language : English

File size : 2786 KB

Simultaneous device usage : Unlimited

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

X-Ray : Not Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 348 pages

Best Sellers Rank: #60,408 in Kindle Store (See Top 100 in Kindle Store)

#6 in [Women's Religious Fiction](#)

~~#132 in [Sibling Fiction](#)~~

#1,796 in [Family Life Fiction \(Books\)](#)

Customer Reviews: 4.6 ★★★★★ ✓ 36 ratings

Book Sale

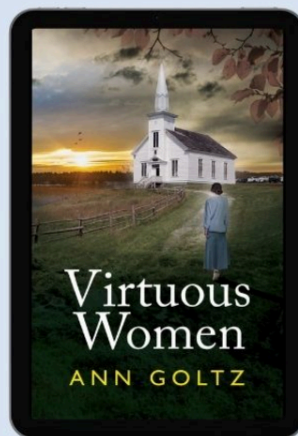
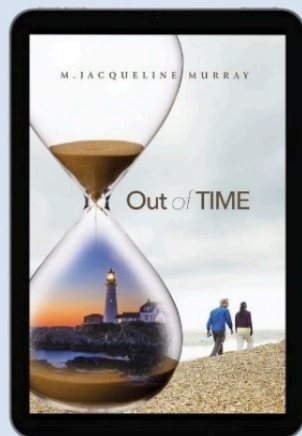


Click here for deals!

Several dozen authors of women's fiction teamed up to offer our books as part of this deal. Some are contemporary, some historical, some have romantic elements, some are thrillers, and some are speculative fiction. All focus on the emotional journey of the protagonist (the working definition of women's fiction). If you liked *Virtuous Women*, you'll probably also like some of these books. I've picked up a few from this promotion myself.

So click on the link above (or below) and check out some of these titles!

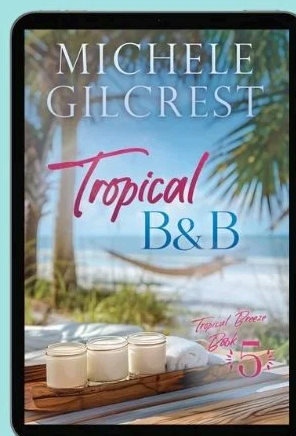
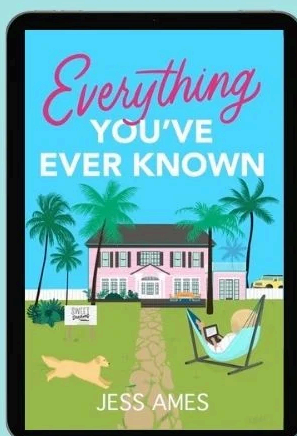
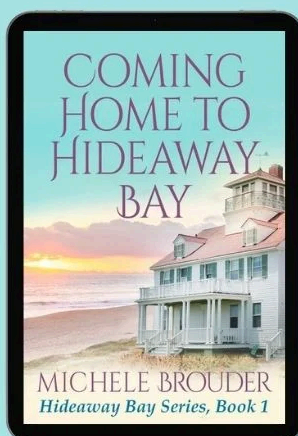
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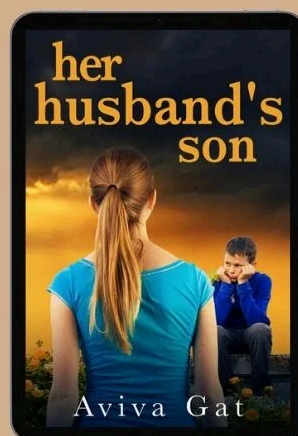
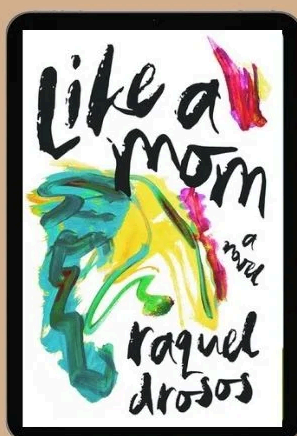
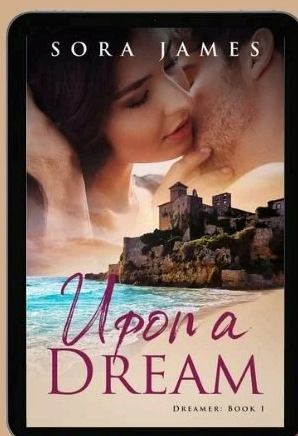
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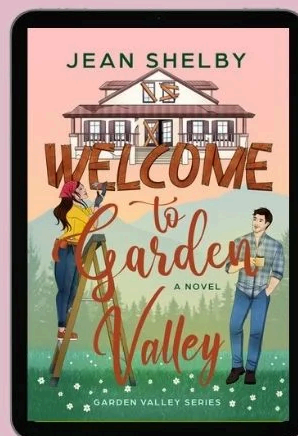
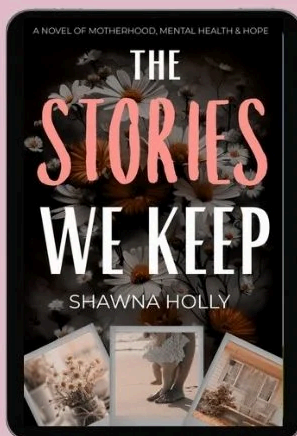
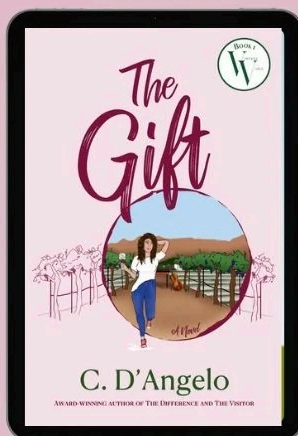
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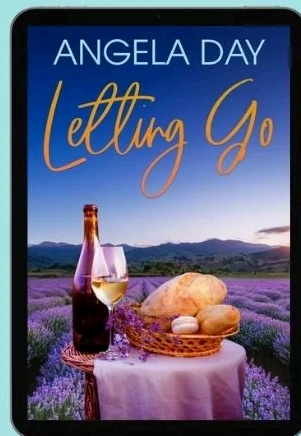
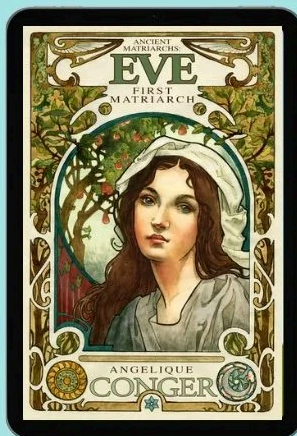
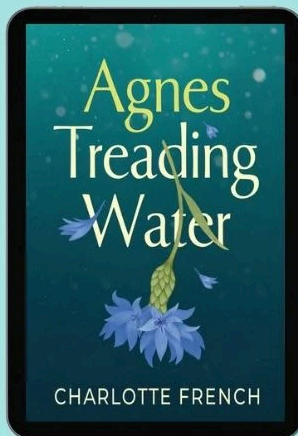
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