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FOR READERS AND WRITERS

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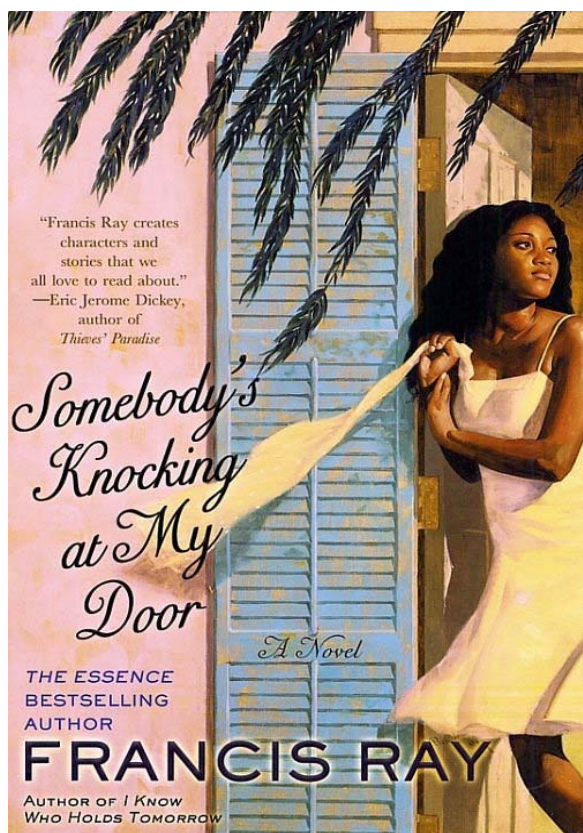
Its All About Love

Waken Your Muse...Eight

Mintues At A Time

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Character Development



FRANCIS RAY

**ESSENCE
BESTSELLER
JULY 2003**

Shades Of Romance Magazine: Can you tell us a little about you the person and the poet?



Beverly Johnson: I grew up in East Moline, Illinois, a small town on the Iowa/Illinois border. After graduation from high school, I went to college at the United States Military Academy, received a degree in engineering, and spent nine years serving as an officer in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. I have spent a lot of time living all over the world, most of which I experienced during my military travels. Currently, I am a businesswoman and live/work in a suburb of Dallas, Texas. Additionally, I have two little boys.

SORMAG: What's your favorite poem in your book?

JOHNSON: My favorite poem in the book is “**My Tears.**” It is a summary of my feelings on the journey I take you on as you travel through my book. Additionally, the poem is now a musical soundtrack that you can hear at my website www.beverlle.com.

SORMAG: How would you categorize your poems “political, relationships, love, etc”?

JOHNSON: My poems are about my life and experiences. Sometimes those are my experiences and sometimes they are the things I have been able to experience through others. More specifically, I write about children, family, relationships, and self-exploration. The binding tie in my poetry is that it is inspirational.

SORMAG: What does poetry mean to you?

JOHNSON: I have loved poetry since I was a child. For me it is a means of expression. What is so intriguing is that you take poetry and the same words can mean different things to different people. The goal of my poetry is for people to explore their own lives through my words.

SORMAG: Who is your favorite poet?

JOHNSON: Maya Angelou is my favorite poet. I have read and constantly reread many of her pieces for inspiration.

SORMAG: Any advice for those interested in being a poet or writer?

JOHNSON: Pursue your passion. I started out on this journey with little to no background in the literary world just a vision and a passion. You have to be passionate in order to stay the course because the literary world is a big place and you will have to get there one step at a time.

SORMAG: Do you also perform on stage (spoken word)? If so, where?

JOHNSON: I do read poetry from my book. All of my readings have been directly related to book promotions I have done in specific cities. However, this summer I am going to venture out into places like Sankofa in the Dallas Metroplex, which caters directly to poets.

SORMAG: Poetry is one of the most personal forms of expressions, what made you decide to share your poems with others?

JOHNSON: My poetry began as I was traveling through a very difficult time in my life. There was chaos in every aspect of my life from relationships, to work, to children, to family. During these times, I would write poetry as a journal. As I would meet other people with similar difficult situations I had experiences I would share pieces of the poetry. Finally, I came to the realization that my poetry and life difficulties served a greater purpose, so under the influence of some very close friends I decided to publish my entire journal as *Written Amongst the Tears*.

SORMAG: How can readers reach you?

JOHNSON: My website www.beverlle.com or via email at beverllemail@aol.com.



Shades Of Romance Magazine: Can you tell us a little about you the person and the poet?

Gwendolyn A. Thomas: I believe euphoric creativeness from the heart is one of the most inspiring to behold! Unrestricted raw creativeness can be breathtaking within itself. To possess the ability to capture or contain what the world can and does offer each individual is a rarity and yet a blessing! The task of an artists muse is to allow oneself to be used as a direct instrument of untarnished and non-conformed freedoms. We are consumed with beauty, all we have to do is open our eyes and behold it!

SORMAG: What's your favorite poem in your book?

THOMAS: I have so many favorites, but I adore "TEARS OF A HEART"

SORMAG: How would you categorize your poems-political, relationships, love, etc.

THOMAS: Overall I categorize my poems as "Poetic Romance". Although my poetry can be categorized as relationships, love, and or inspirational to a certain degree, I most prefer the category of "Poetic Romance!"

SORMAG: What does poetry mean to you?

THOMAS: In my opinion poetry is a narrative lyrical journey whether written or spoken that holds great possibilities for the artist in general to capture the audiences imagination. Through poetry an artist stimulates and entices its readers on a remarkable journey, henceforth painting emotional scenes with words on the largest canvas known to man the imagination!

SORMAG: Who is your favorite poet?

THOMAS: With all due respect to any individual poet(s) I do not have a particular favorite poet.

Personally, I try to enjoy and accept the works of individual poets because each has a story to share. Secondly, I feel a common bond with other poets because I believe we share our poetry out of love for the craft, gift/or talents we possess!

SORMAG: Any advice for those interested in being a poet or writer?

THOMAS: A sound advice for anyone interested in being a poet or writer that I would offer is to set attainable goals. Practice, patience, and time are also tools needed to begin your journey as a poet/writer.

Practice writing on a daily basis or as often as possible. Allow yourself room to grow by acquiring patience without any barriers. Realize through the nurturance of your writing abilities you can or will develop with time! Most importantly, one must be able to tap into the essence of their being to find the special voice given unto them.

SORMAG: Are you working on any future writing projects another collection of poetry, a novel, etc?

THOMAS: Throughout the publication process of "From the Heart of an Artist Quiet Storm", a new collection of poetry was completed. Continuously I indulge in the finer arts through my painting and various other avenues of artwork with my from the "worksofGath" collections. To note, lyrically other plans here in Japan include pairing with a producer to create my CD along with a live performance by another artist.

SORMAG: Do you perform on stage (spoken word)?

THOMAS: As of date I have not performed on stage, although I have had invites. My work is best viewed as "Poetic Romance", therefore a romantic candlelight setting would be preferable.

SORMAG: What made you decide to share your poems with others?

THOMAS: Poetry is personal and quite intimate, although I have always shared my poetry with family, friends, in anthologies, on cassettes, and also lyrically. I first began giving my poetry as inspirational gifts as a form of expressing my love. Early in childhood I fell in love with poetry and one of my goals were to publish books of poetry, therefore, I continued in the muse pursuing my aspirations to fulfill my dream! Now I want others to feel the love and visualize beauty through my artwork.

SORMAG: Do you find it difficult to determine which poems to use in your book?

THOMAS: Currently, I have not experienced any difficulty determining which poems to share with my readers. Fortunately, my poetry theme is basically about love therefore, the poetry seems to flow right along. However, I thought in each poetry book I create the first page could be viewed as an insight into me as an artist and person.

SORMAG: How can readers reach you?

THOMAS: email: GathsWorld2U@hotmail.com

Renegade
Rochelle Alers
BET Publication
ISBN: 1-58314-272-X
Published: June 2003
Rating: 5 Stars
Reviewed by: Brenda J. Turner

Renegade is a powerful love story about two people who lived totally different life styles, met and fell in love. Mrs. Alers did another outstanding job composing her story line for this book. She gave Renegade all the grace and stamina of the previous Hideaway Legacy stories.

Renegade is a one night page turner. I look forward to the mastery way that Mrs. Alers has of putting down words to paper. She paints you a true picture with words, while telling you a magnificent, exciting, intriguing tale. She describe her character so that you feel like you know them at the end of the story.

I always have a super crush on all of her male characters, which was no different with Gabriel Cole. He was every bit as secretive, romantic and handsome as his father David Cole. The gray streaks in his wavy black hair were almost visible.

Summer Montgomery/alias Renegade was a very interesting young lady. Not only was she gorgeous, but talented. My God, with her little bitty self she could bring down monstrous size men with her bare hands. A she could shape Gabriel in her hands until he felt like putty. The Cole family loved her instantly.

It was hard reviewing this book without telling the story. I gave Mrs. Alers five stars for this excellent book. A marvelous read.

ONLINE WRITER'S CONFERENCE

AUGUST 3-9TH 2003
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When Dreams Float
Dorothy Elizabeth Love
GENESIS PRESS - Indigo Love Spectrum
ISBN: 1-58571-104-7
Published: June 2003
Rating: 4 Stars
Reviewed by: Shelia M. Goss

When Dreams Float by Dorothy Elizabeth Love is a captivating novel. The main setting takes place on a cruise, where Melanie McDae and Winston King discover love and passion on the high seas.

Melanie is a freelance writer and along with her best friend takes a cruise around the Tahitian Islands. She has no intentions on meeting anyone; she's there to work on her next story and enjoy the attractions. She is surprised by her immediate reaction to Winston.

Winston is a doctor who doesn't spend too much time having fun. He is on the cruise for a medical convention. His best friend convinces him to lighten up and after meeting Melanie he does. He finds her so intriguing, that he pursues her wholeheartedly.

The more they interact with one another, the more they become attached to each other.

Melanie begins having doubts about their relationship due to her insecurities. Winston tries to convince her of his noble intentions.

As the story unfolds, situations occur that threaten to "rock the boat" and each must take a look at their heart and decide if their relationship is worth saving. Will they allow misunderstandings be the demise of their newfound relationship?

Love in When Dreams Float, takes the readers on a journey of romantic love and she's created two loveable characters. Her description of each island's history draws you into the setting of the story. So take a ride on the "Love Boat" and watch Melanie and Winston fall in love.

No More Tears**Shelby Lewis****BET Publications****ISBN: 158-314325-4****Published: March 2003****Rating: 3 Stars****Reviewed by: Shaun Williams**

Miranda Evans is an artist content with her life and marriage to Leonard until he delivers some news which totally destroys that belief. Mentally and physically spent she leaves her home to start over and find peace. She meets Brody Campbell and despite her vow of no attachments her heart overrules her mind. His strength and overall good looks attracts her from the moment he rides out to save her.

Brody is a strong, charming, sexy, successful rancher and horse trainer. He encounters Miranda on his horse connecting with her soul and her overwhelming beauty behooves him. Consequently, he wishes to see her eyes light with happiness instead of sadness. In granting that wish he gives her sanctuary on his land. With no prior knowledge of where she's from, his family and friends aren't ready to give their trust as soon. Aside from their doubts and his desire to steer clear of Miranda, he cannot deny the fiery passion that ignites him whenever she is near. Unexpectedly, all he feels for her is threatened the instant secrets are revealed about her shrouded past.

Shelby Lewis carries you along with Brody and Miranda as they wrestle to keep their love alive. Amidst the pain of betrayal, adultery, lies and deceit you witness their triumph over it all as their love shines with hope for the future. In *No More Tears* you laugh, cry and acquire an extreme dislike for the conniving ex-girlfriend until you see truth and love prevail.

SHADES RADIO**sormag.com/radio.html****The Color of Trouble****Dyanne Davis****GENESIS PRESS - Indigo Love Spectrum****ISBN: 1-58571-096-2****Published: July 2003****Rating: 4 Stars****Reviewer: Cheryl A. LeCompte**

We have all heard the saying, "Love Will Conquer All", but are these statements true when it refers to an "exceptional and unique" type of love that is shared between two individuals of different backgrounds and ethnicities?

Our main characters, Jonathan Steele and Kari Thomas are willing to test their love despite being disowned by both of their families and being belittled by friends, neighbors and other acquaintances. Jonathan and Kari meet while attending college in the small, rural town of Lonett, Alabama. Despite the two of them proclaiming their deep and passionate love for each other, Society still places judgment on the two of them because of the differences in their race. You see in this story, our main characters, Jonathan is a handsome blonde-hair, blue eyed Law student and Kari is a petite, caramel-colored African American Accounting student.

The story begins when Kari accidentally walks into their kitchen on what seems to be Jonathan after a fling with a business acquaintance named Sharon. It was very convenient of Sharon to be able to produce photographs of her and Jonathan making love during a recent photo session. Sharon persuades Jonathan into doing a few modeling sessions for a magazine and becomes physically attracted to him. This isolated incident rips the trust that Jon and Kari have developed for each other. Although, Jon tries desperately to explain to Kari that "things are not as they seem", she is unwilling to listen to him.

Dyanne Davis tells the story in such a way that it allows each reader to view stereotypes, racial relations and your own personal prejudices. Love has no "color boundaries" and should not be judged as such. When we listen to our "hearts" and not our "heads" nor the opinions of others, you will

The Puzzle**Tracie J. Scott****Nimat Publishing Company****ISBN: 0-9712334-0-3****Published: 2002****Rating: 4 Stars****Reviewed by: Shelia M. Goss**

The Puzzle is a great debut novel by Tracie J. Scott. The main character Vergie faces many issues as her story unfolds.

Vergie settles into a boring-stale marriage. Her husband, David, does not try to liven the marriage up and finally does something that causes her to consider ending their marriage. Her comfort-zone is further shattered when a man from her past shows up. This man ignites feelings that she thought were long dead. Can Vergie cipher through her feelings and make a sound and just decision concerning her marriage or will she take a chance on a new love?

Although she is dealing with her own internal issues, she finds time to be there for her best friend and parents. A secret from her parent's past causes her to rethink her belief system. As she deals with this new information, she must come to terms that her parents are "only human."

She is facing drama in all areas of her life. Will Vergie be able to find the missing links to put her life back in order or will she always feel as if something is missing?

THE PUZZLE, by Tracie J. Scott, is a vibrant emotional written story that draws you into each character.

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Someone to Love**Alicia Wiggins****GENESIS PRESS - Indigo Love Spectrum****ISBN: 1-58571-098-9****Published: July 2003****Rating: 2 ½ stars****Reviewed by: Renee Motley**

Claudia Ryland has created a list to find the man of her dreams to become her future husband and she plots out to get him. Unfortunately, she reveals this plan to her best friend and confidant, Ray Elliot. Ray has a plan of his own to make Claudia the woman of his dreams. As their individual plans unfold, their friendship is put to the test. Do they risk a lifelong friendship for passion or stay on the safe course? They chance risking losing everything in order to search for someone to love.

This novel was very well written and the character development was good. I even found the storyline plausible, but story itself left a little to be desired. I was confused as to whether the main characters were dreaming or whether they were really together. Ray's ex comes on the scene and throws Claudia for a loop, but she can't imagine why. In the meantime, she has met the man of her dreams, but she can't commit. The best advice was to look under her nose for her dream man. It took her the entire book to figure out what the rest of us knew by the first third of the book. Even though my copy had 12 pages missing, I was able to figure out what was going on. Read it when you

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The Dirty Girls Social Club: A Novel**Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez****St. Martin's Press****Published: May 2003****ISBN: 0-3123138-1-0****Rating: 4 Stars****Reviewer: LaShaunda C. Hoffman**

If you're looking for a fun summer book, this is the book to pick Ms. Valdes-Rodriguez debut novel about sisterhood, Latino style.

TDGSC is a juicy book that introduces you into the Latina community. Ms. Rodriguez introduces you to six friends who met while in Boston University. To maintain this friendship after college, they meet twice a year. The story revolves around these ladies and their lives. They each take turns narrating the story.

It began with Lauren, newspaper columnist who picks bad boys for loves, Usnavys, (Yes that's her name, read the book and find out why) a materialistic person who doesn't realize she already has what she's looking for, Sara a stay at home mom, living the perfect life or so her friends think, Rebecca the founder/editor of a magazine for Latina women, seems to have it all together or does she? Elizabeth is a morning talk show host and Christian with a few secrets of her own. Last is Amber a struggling singer who finally sees her dreams come true, however at costs.

If you like friendship books, pick this one up. Its filled with the frank girlfriend talk, the petty jealousy and the love only you can get from your sisterfriends. Ms. Valdes-Rodriguez debut is a fun book for the summer.

The Second Time Around**L.S. Jones****Destiny Books****ISBN: 0-9726421-0-2****Self Published****Rating: 3 Stars****Reviewed by: Brenda J. Turner**

Three very close friends, each searching for Mr. Right. The all believed that they would never find him. Is true love strong enough to find them? Will God give them a second chance?

Lisa Williams had a chance at love with her boss, George Tyler. He asked her to marry him. However, they did not mix. She had a dream about and unknown man, with whom she was going to fall in love. Could dreams come true?

Drew, was blindly in love with her cheating husband. She did not want to give up on her marriage. Drew persuaded Lisa, her friend, to go to a concert with her. It was the night that Lisa would meet the man in her dream, Walter Jackson, a singer with the Commissioners.

Tony was dating a guy named David, their relationship abruptly ended because they were of different races and his parents objected. Because Tony and David really loved each other Lisa tries to encourage them to work out their problem.

Will they find happiness? Will they let go and let God? Check it out in "The Second Time Around."

I gave L.S. Jones a three star rating. This is her first published book. This reviewer is sure this will not be her last.

**SHADES OF ROMANCE MAGAZINE
IS
WRITER FRIENDLY**

For Love And Grace
Kendra Norman-Bellamy
ISBN: 1-55306-394-5
Rating: 3 Stars
Reviewed by: Renee Motley

Two friends, Dr. Gregory Dixon and Attorney Derrick Madison, who are closer than brothers, have a falling out. They are the modern day biblical friendship version of Jonathan and David. That is until Gregory saves the life of the young woman who took the life of Derrick's mother. Once Derrick learns about the surgery that saved Grace's life, he ends his friendship with Gregory. Gregory, while caring for Grace and watching her struggle after brain surgery, falls deeply in love with her. Sherry Madison has to cope with her husband's decision to end the friendship, yet while trying to maintain a friendship with Gregory. Through out this dilemma, these young Christians learn the true meaning of friendship, love and grow closer once they put their trust in Christ.

I found this to be interesting read and an enjoyable one. As with most romance stories, there were parts that were a stretch to believe, but all in all, it was a good story. There was good character development and a plot, something that is missing in romance stories today. If you are looking for a good Christian novel, or just a good story, I highly recommend this story. I believe the author truly believed in what she was writing about and that is a refreshing change.

Mary Kay Cosmetics

Renee Motley

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www.marykay.com/rmotley1

Second Sunday
MicheleAndrea Bowen
Publisher: WalkWorthy Press/WarnerBooks
ISSN: 0-446-53033-6
Published: June 2003
Rating: 3+ Stars
Reviewed by: Pat Byrdsong

Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church is about to celebrate its 100th anniversary. However, the church is faced with the daunting task of finding a new pastor after Pastor Forbes has died. The Deacon and Finance Committee members including Louis, Bert, Cleavon, Wendell and Melvin Sr. will decide on the new pastor and, ultimately, the direction of the church.

The women in the church, the real stars of this novel, decide to take charge and will help the men, unknowingly, with their choice. The women, Nettie, Katie Mae, Sylvia, Viola, hatch a wild, crazy plan to help choose the next pastor with the help of a wayward woman, Sheba Cochran.

Will the church withstand the onslaught from in- and outside the church's walls?

Bowen masterfully provides a glimpse into the rich texture in the black church with the sights and sounds of the 1970s. Filled with intrigue and laugh-out-loud dialogue, this book is certain to be a hit! As my father would say, "Church is like a hospital for sinners. If we were all well, we wouldn't need to go." And this book proves that point.

The book is divided into six parts, and I feel some of the subplots are not necessary. Yet, like a roller coaster, this breezy, fun ride makes the reader enjoy the thrill and still want more! This is perfect summer reading!

Object Of His Desire**Artiste C. Arthur****Genesis Press, Indigo Love Spectrum****ISBN: 1-58571-094-6****Published: August 2003****Rating: 3+ Stars****Reviewed by: Shaun Williams**

The desire between Jordan Blake a young international billionaire and the beautiful, successful attorney Macy Glenn is instantaneous. Macy wants to avoid any personal relationship with Mr. Blake because of the feelings he evokes within her.

Jordan being a successful businessman is used to having things his way. Jordan is totally intrigued with Macy and uses his influence as a guise for business but his interest is personal. Macy is forced to relocate where she spends intimate time with Jordan changing her initial impression of him. Suddenly, she is having a hard time keeping things strictly business.

Jordan receives bad news about his brother death that sends him along with Macy on a trip out of the country. This trip ultimately changes both of their lives and puts them in grave danger as someone is setting up plans of destruction. Their love sustains them as they experience the pain of betrayal, fear, greed, the exposure of lies and deceit, as well as the quenching of an all consuming passion they share in their lovemaking. In the end Jordan learns the meaning of devotion as he takes the time to trust again and give himself up to his one true desire, and Macy finds love to last an eternity.

OOHD is romance, passion, intrigue, murder and mayhem but also a love story with great chemistry between a strong hero and heroine. It was a page turner and I was compelled to read straight to the end. A. Arthur has given us a great romance.

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BEA 2003

Seen through Evelyn Palfrey's eyes

My trip to Los Angeles was for Book Expo. It is the annual trade show where publishers show off their books to independent booksellers. The focus is on books either just out, or coming out between now and the end of the year. The Expo is huge! It took up 3 great halls of the Convention Center. My feet are still hurting from all the walking--and they've had a hot stone massage since then. There are workshops, lunches, dinners, and parties.

The Expo runs Fri. - Sun. But for folk interested in AA books, it starts on Thursday. There is a luncheon, sponsored for the past 2 years at least by Time Warner Books. 5 or 6 of their authors read from their works or talked about them. Walter Mosley was the headliner. He didn't read from his work, but gave an interesting talk about his writing life. The author of Church Folk read from her upcoming sequel, Second Sunday.

At a workshop session, Pocket Books presented Dr. Renee Poussaint. She is editor, with Camille Cosby (who appeared by video) of *Wealth of Wisdom: Legendary African-American Elders Speak*. She described this on-going project of capturing the words of our elders, and gave interesting and some funny anecdotes from the actual interviewing process.

At both the workshop session and the luncheon, there were far more authors present than booksellers. At another workshop--Inventory Management--mostly booksellers attended and the crowd was much, much smaller. Even though I'm not a bookseller--and have no such ambition--I am

a business person, and I learned a lot about shelf-life of books.

The day is capped by the Ingram (distributor) reception. The food is always fabulous. AA authors with new books coming out are stationed at tables around the room and give away copies of their books. This year, there were far fewer than in the past. A group of 6 authors were there, showcasing their collaborative work of Christian short stories--*Blessed Assurance*. It is a beautiful hard-cover book and the stories I've read so far have been good, and uplifting. Many authors were at the reception and it was good to see old friends, and meet new ones.

Friday, Sat. and Sun. are for roaming the exhibits. Most of the major publishers have exhibits, but there were specialty areas for small presses, children's books, religious books, etc. Not only all the publishers in America, but also foreign countries like Japan, Spain and Germany are represented. I noticed that the foreign section was much smaller this year. All kinds of businesses associated with bookstores are also represented--greeting cards, bookmarks, display equipment, you name it. There is a huge section devoted to author signings. 40 authors at a time, that change every hour or 1.5 hours. You just line up and get a book, autographed by the author. Some of the lines are very short, others wrapped around the area. The lines for the mega-named authors require a ticket. (James Patterson and Chaka Khan are the only ones that stick in my mind at this late hour) The tickets are free--at 7 a.m.! Of course, I didn't get in any of those lines=:) The one mega-name with a new book who wasn't there, was Hillary.

Saturday night was the Blackboard reception. It was held on the top floor of a swank office building. Blackboard used to provide the bestseller list for *Essence*. It has been in remission for a year or so, but is coming back on a subscription basis soon. They gave awards for the best fiction (E. Lynn Harris), best non-fiction (Judge Mathis biography) and best publisher (Tony Rose of Amber Books). Again