

Minion: A Vampire Huntress Legend**L.A. Banks****Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin****ISBN: 0-312-31680-1****Month Published: June 2003****Mainstream Fiction****Rating: 4+ Stars - EXCEPTIONAL****Reviewed by: Shaun Williams**

Damali Richards is a lyricist who sings Spoken Word for a company called Warriors of Light. Damali and her team of guardians are kick-butt musicians, but it is also their cover for their true calling as vampire hunters. Since they began taking out more vamps things have been HOT, yet the team has been successful in their fight for good over evil. Unfortunately, new breeds of vampires are on the scene killing artists from Warriors of Light and Blood Music. It will take everything they've learned and then some to bring them down.

Carlos Rivera is a successful owner of Club Vengeance but is also involved in selling drugs. Carlos like Damali has reason to fight, because the demon vamps attacked his brother and crewmembers. Seeking revenge for his fallen comrades he sets out to kill the murderer of his people. One woman has truly held his heart captive since they met. She shows up to give her condolences for his losses and sadly makes him wish for things he can no longer have.

Damali has to learn fast what her role is as a Neteru while still hoping against hope to save Carlos from the dark side.

Minion is a fast-paced, kick-butt vampire series that will hook you from the first page.

Ms. Banks incorporated her unique brand of storytelling interweaving realms of vampires and demons, higher spiritual forces and a little bit of romance.

In my opinion, Minion will thrill and excite you with the beautiful, warrior of light; her guardians and her love that you won't put it down until you've read the last page. You also get a sneak peek of the next book in the series "The Awakening"

The Awakening**L. A. Banks****Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin****ISBN: 0312316836****Month Published: January 2004****Mainstream Fiction****Rating: 4+ EXCEPTIONAL****Reviewed by: Shaun Williams**

"The Awakening" is the return of some great characters that visited us in the first book of this vampire huntress legend called "Minion".

Damali Richards a warrior of light is our Neteru. In "The Awakening" our vampire huntress gains strength as her birthday nears. She wields her daggers named Madame Isis and baby Isis like a ninja. She is Bad! Damali's ultimate goal along with her guardians and warrior angels is to save the world from the demons and vampires whose lifestyle threatens to take over *topside*.

Carlos Rivera on the other hand still hasn't learned his lesson and had to find out the hard way just how dark the dark side really was. After his doomed demise Carlos bartered deals with everyone his master, warriors of light and The Vampire Council to save the life he had left. All the people he came in contact with had an interest in Damali to some degree. Carlos concern was for her safety so he chose to protect her from potential harm by any means necessary.

"The Awakening" is another fast-paced, kick-butt book that takes you literally to Hell and back. Ms. Banks again gives you her unique brand of storytelling. She leaves you breathless in addition to giving you an exciting roller coaster ride that will leave you *screaming* for more. Now that the Neteru has fully changed what will happen next? Pick up a copy of "The Hunted" June 2004 and be sure to read the sneak peek in the back of the book.

Sweet Desire**Christine Townsend****Publisher: BET Books****ISBN: 1-58314-475-7****Month Published: February, 2004****Contemporary Romance****Rating: 4 Stars - EXCELLENT****Reviewed by: Connie Quarles**

Regina Lovejoy is a country music songwriter and a single parent. A rare breed in the country music field. Her estranged husband Peter lives in a foreign country and has left her reluctant to enter another marriage.

Regina notices her handsome new neighbor, Thomas Simmons who appears to also be a single parent. But she feels Thomas is a little lax in the parenting skills. Their sons are the same age and ultimately become friends and buddies.

Circumstances or divine matchmaking places the couples in each other's paths. Thomas is a college basketball coach and has to travel and finds the lovely and fiery Regina Lovejoy just a little too opinionated. Their schedules force them to rely on each other to baby sit and share responsibilities for their sons.

Their friendship and respect for each other makes them blend into one family unit: cooking, shopping and vacationing together. But are they willing to risk their deep friendship to explore the chemistry between them? What about the promise made to his wife who died of lupus? Will he be forced to break it?

Christine does an excellent job in her writing debut and provides the reader with her research sources to assist you if you want to look further about points in the books. I look forward to reading more of Ms. Townsend's novels in the future.

The Princess and The Wolf**Karen Kay****Publisher: Avon****Month Published: April 2004****ISBN: 0380820684****Historical Romance****Rating: 3+ Stars****Reviewed by: LaShaunda C. Hoffman**

Prince Alathom, Princess Sierra and High Wolf were best friends. They did everything together. They plan on announcing Princess Sierra and High Wolf's engagement together. They naively thought their family would approve of a marriage between them.

Unfortunately the Prince and Princess family had other plans for their children. A marriage between them would bring their two lands together. Three friends are devastated and secretly plan to leave together.

However a friend of Sierra's makes sure their plans are destroyed along with the trust of Sierra and High Wolf. High Wolf and the Alathom leave for America thinking the other had become Sierra's husband.

Sierra is left alone thinking her friends had betrayed her. Forced to marry the prince by proxy. Sierra begins her life without a husband.

Ten years later she is still without a husband and the ruler of a country whose people believe she forced the prince away. Upon hearing news that the prince is dead, Sierra makes plans to head to America to see for herself if he's truly dead.

She request for High Wolf to be her guide to find her husband. High Wolf refuses to escort her; however circumstances changes his mind. Together they set off to locate the prince.

In the process they realize the love they shared is still alive, just buried deep inside. As they grow closer they have to face the possibility that they are doomed if they find the prince alive.

Ms. Kay has written a beautiful story of forbidden love. Each chapter the love is reawaken and you wonder if this couple will ever be together.

A Feeling Like No Other**Loure Bussey****Publisher: Blue Nile Publishing, LLC****Month Published: August 2003****ISBN: 0972148213****Mainstream****Rating: 3+ Stars****Reviewed by: LaShaunda C. Hoffman**

A missing father made a drastic change in Sierra's life. Her mother became a bitter woman, who turned that bitterness into emotional and verbal abuse. The one thing that kept Sierra going was her love for music and her dream to be a singer.

Sierra's father introduced her to music and unknown to her mother, everyday that love affair grew. Sierra's mother blamed music for the problems in her marriage and she wanted no parts of it for herself or her daughter. Sierra was determined to be a singer and left home to follow her dreams.

This begins a life that somehow pushes her dreams aside. She falls in love with a married man, who promises to help her with her career. Sierra becomes the perfect wife, losing her own identity in the process. One day she realizes she's no longer on the path of being a singer due to the one persons she cares about.

Sierra returns home and is discovered in a local lounge. Her musical career is everything she hoped for. She even has a man to make the dream complete. Jealousy shows up in her life and it almost destroys her world.

Ms. Bussey first mainstream is a romantic suspense that takes you into the world of music. She shows you the point of view from a singer eyes, from trying to break into the business to having a number one hit. Her twist at the end has you wondering if true love will win out in the end.

Take Me to Heart**Deborah Fletcher Mello****Publisher: BET Books****ISBN: 1-58314-473-0****Month Published: December, 2003****Contemporary Romance****Rating: 3+ Stars - VERY GOOD****Reviewed by: Connie Quarles**

Marguerite Cole has a quirky family that you can't help but love. When they all come together it is quite an affair.

Marguerite is done looking for Mr. Right. Too many Mr. Wrongs have done her in and so she tries to avoid the chemistry between Dexter Williams and herself. Anyway she never mixes business with pleasure and Dexter is a consultant working for her company.

Dexter knows what he wants and he wants Marguerite. She took his heart the moment he saw her and his mission is to take hers. Both have to deal with baggage in order to find out what is really in their heart. Dexter has to remember the wise words from Marguerite's grandma and encouragement from her uncle and his brother in order to break down the barriers Marguerite's past has placed in their way.

The book is funny, sad, has interesting turns and hot romance. It is a book that I definitely enjoyed reading and reread. Grab it off the bookshelf before they are all gone. Find a rainy day and enjoy.

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Carmen Bin Ladin's *INSIDE THE KINGDOM: My Life in Saudi Arabia*, written by Osama's sister-in-law, a penetrating, unusually intimate look into Saudi society and the Bin Ladin family's role in it, as well as the treatment of Saudi women, to Jamie Raab at Warner, at auction, by Susanna Lea (NA).

26-year old Siddharth Dhanvant Shanghvi's first novel *THE LAST SONG OF DUSK*, "being touted by the Indian press as the next Arundhati Roy," to Cal Barksdale at Arcade, in a nice deal, by Kim Witherspoon at Witherspoon Associates.

Los Angeles Magazine editor RJ Smith's *THE GREAT BLACK WAY: Central Avenue and the Legacy of African-American Los Angeles*, about a few remarkable years in the 1940s, when an African-American community came together in Los Angeles and found its voice--helping to launch the civil rights movement, rhythm & blues, hip hop, a noir sensibility, and a whole ghetto fabulous way of being in the world, to Lisa Kaufman at PublicAffairs, at auction, by Betsy Amster (world).

Greg Stohr's *A BLACK AND WHITE CASE: How Affirmative Action Survived Its Greatest Challenge*, a narrative of the Michigan affirmative action cases that brings alive the story of the path to the important Supreme Court cases with insider access to the key parties on all sides of the issues and the personal stories of those involved, to Jared Kieling at Bloomberg Press (world).

Christal Jackson's *WOMEN OF COLOR PRAY*, a collection of short inspirational writings by women of color, reflecting a direct connection to the Divine in their lives, to inspire, challenge, and comfort, to Maura Shaw at Skylight Paths, by Linda Roghaar at Linda Roghaar Literary (world).

Nikki Johnson's *MY MOTHER'S BLACK CHILD*, about her childhood as the prodigy of an inter-racial family, to Dianne Helm at Helm Publishing, in a nice deal (US).

FOR MATRIMONIAL PURPOSES author Kavita

Daswani's *THE VILLAGE BRIDE IN BEVERLY HILLS*, the story of a naive young Indian bride married off by her parents to a man living in the US she doesn't even know who packs her off to find a job where, in a humorous series of events, she morphs from a receptionist into the hottest celebrity gossip columnist in Hollywood, to Jennifer Hershey at Penguin and Susan Watt at Harper UK, by Jodie Rhodes.

Puerto Rican author Edgardo Vega Yunque's *BLOOD FUGUES*, in which the teenage son of an ex-NYC cop experiences a violent rite of passage while working on a farm in rural upstate New York, leading to revelations about his family's dark past, to Rene Alegria at Rayo/HarperCollins, outbidding previous publisher FSG, for publication in early 2005, by Thomas Colchie (NA; world Spanish).

Model and founder of two cosmetics and skincare brands for women of color Iman's *THE BEAUTY OF COLOR: A Makeup Celebration for All Skin of Color*, to "celebrate the multi-ethnic face of global beauty," showcasing global beauty and women of all ethnicities, to Jennifer Hershey at Putnam, at auction, for publication in 2005, by Karen Gerwin at William Morris.

CBS Morning news anchor Mario Bosquez's *THE CHALUPA RULES: A Latino Guide to Gringolandia*, using time-tested proverbs and modern day life experiences to help Latinos survive in the United States, to Ryan Harbage at Plume, in a nice deal, by Johanna Castillo at Sanford J. Greenburger Associates (world).

Pamela Newkirk's *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIFE IN LETTERS*, bringing together a collection of letters by African Americans spanning American history, from slavery times to the present, and including the letters of the famous -- Martin Luther King,

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Frederick Douglas, Ralph Ellison -- as well as the ordinary., to Ayesha Pande at FSG, by Neeti Madan at Sterling Lord Literistic (NA).

The sequel to HIDDEN IN PLAIN VIEW, Jacqueline Tobin's FROM MIDNIGHT TO DAWN: THE LAST TRACKS OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, the story of the 30,000 slaves who, following the Underground Railroad, escaped over the border into Canada in the 19th century, to Janet Hill at Harlem Moon/Doubleday, in a very nice deal, by Barbara Lowenstein and Madeleine Morel at Lowenstein-Morel Associates (world).

Essence list bestseller Nikki Turner has sold two "street lit" novels for publication in 2005 to Melody Guy at One World/Ballantine

Kim Wong Keltner's BUDDHA BABY, the sequel to "The Dim Sum of All Things" (Bridget Jones meets The Joy Luck Club), another portrait of the clash of cultures in real life relationships, to Erika Tsang at Avon/Morrow, by Agnes Birnbaum at Bleecker Street Associates (NA).

Nonfiction writer and editor in chief of The Independent Film & Video Monthly Magazine Rebecca Carroll's untitled interview-based narrative nonfiction on the legacy of Booker T. Washington, to Janet Hill at Harlem Moon/Doubleday, in a nice deal, by Meredith Bernstein.

Essence bestselling author Kayla Perrin's THE SWEET SPOT, about a pro-football player who loses his winning touch before a big game when a female sportscaster unwittingly jinxes him in the locker room, to Lucia Macro at Avon trade paperback, in a very nice deal, by Helen Breitwieser at Cornerstone Literary (NA).

Nina Foxx's MARRYING UP, about a young African-American woman in search of a mate who discovers that there is more to the measure of a man than the size of his wallet, to Carrie Feron at

Avon, for publication in July 2005, by Elaine Koster (NA).

Cydney Rax's MY HUSBAND'S GIRLFRIEND, a spicy, and surprising, story of a love triangle involving an African-American married couple and the other woman, to Rachel Kahan at Crown, by Claudia Menza at CMLA (world).

Chris Nickson's OutKast, a biography of the recent grammy-winning hip-hop sensation, to Michael Connor at St Martin's, in a nice deal, by Madeleine Morel
2M Communications (world).

Fortune writer Kimberly Allers' MOCHA MATERNITY: THE PREGNANCY LIFESTYLE GUIDE FOR TODAY'S BLACK WOMAN, a detailed, look into pregnancy, economic and life issues concerning African-American women, to Dawn Davis at Amistad/Harper, in a nice deal, by Nicholas Roman Lewis.

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The Silent Killer

By

Rhonda Jackson Joseph

The killer watches for its prey, not making a sound. Striking individuals of African American ethnicity with more accuracy than any other ethnic group in this country, the killer looks for certain characteristics in its victims: those who are overweight, smokers, and those with unhealthy eating habits with diets high in alcohol, sodium, fats and cholesterol. This deadly stalker is hypertension, commonly known as high blood pressure.

Blood pressure is the amount of the force of blood pushing against blood vessels. This measurement is made in two numbers, the systolic pressure and the diastolic pressure. Systolic pressure is the force exerted by the blood on the blood vessels when the heart beats, and is the top number in the reading. As the heart is at rest between beats, the pressure decreases and this is the diastolic pressure. When a diagnosis of hypertension is made, it is based on the blood pressure measurement having been made correctly and consistently reading higher than the average 120/80. Both numbers in the measurement are important, as the systolic measurement tends to be the indicator for high blood pressure in older Americans, and the diastolic measurement for younger people who suffer from hypertension. However, both numbers are important and will be utilized by a physician accordingly for prevention and management.

Certain steps can be taken to prevent hypertension. According to Mitzi Bass, a Registered Nurse of twenty years, the preventative measures are pretty simple. "Lower salt intake. It's not as hard as you think. Cook with a smaller amount of salt. No one wants bland, unseasoned food, but if you can taste the salt, it's too salty. Take the salt- shaker away from the dinner table. Put it in the cabinet. Out of

sight, out of mind." Mitzi also cautions, "If you smoke, make an honest effort to quit. Smoking not only affects the lungs, it causes circulatory problems that can result in increased blood pressure. And alcohol intake should be limited to minimal amounts." Mitzi also suggests the following in an effort to circumvent high blood pressure:

- Limit the stress in your life. Concern yourself with the things that you can do something about, and even then, don't worry about it.
- Periodically have your blood pressure checked.
- Get adequate rest and some form of exercise. It doesn't have to be aerobics; it can be going for a walk every day...and exercise is an excellent stress reducer.

Once high blood pressure has been diagnosed, the management of the disease follows along the same lines as the preventatives. Marian E., a novelist, was diagnosed with hypertension five years ago. The diagnosis didn't come as a surprise to Marian, because she states that she struggled to maintain a normal level for several years before it became chronically high. "Being that it fluctuated for several years beforehand, I was aware and saw [hypertension] as a serious concern." Marian manages her condition by watching her diet and exercising, but cites that with a hectic schedule, a steady routine can be difficult. She also remarks, "High blood pressure has had no effect on my work life, but I am now personally more conscious of foods and exercise."

Mitzi echoes the same sentiments regarding the management and prevention of high blood pressure. "Most of the patients I see with hypertension do not manage the illness properly.

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Many of them are not compliant in their medication regimen; many do not watch their diets appropriately. Others engage in other activities that add to the dangers already presented with a diagnosis of hypertension, such as smoking and [high] alcohol consumption." Mitzi further asserts, "Many people are aware of the risks that lead to hypertension, but make a conscious choice not to do what is required to manage the disease process. As human beings, we like to be in control, and don't like being told what to do. We are also very resistant to change. Having hypertension requires changes in our diet, as well as lifestyle changes. We tend to be resistant to these necessary changes, and want to do things our way...ultimately, we hurt ourselves."

Hypertension is dangerous because the condition makes the heart work too hard. If left untreated, other serious illnesses can occur, such as stroke, heart attack, kidney problems, eye problems, and even death. As a result, the disease must be controlled and or prevented whenever possible. Along with a change in lifestyle, certain medications may be utilized in the management of the condition. A physician will select drugs on the basis of individual patient factors, and may change them if they are ineffective. However, the patient must remain in communication with the physician regarding any side effects suffered, and make sure to take the prescribed medication.

When individuals are aware of the causes and effects of hypertension and dedicated to utilizing preventative and good management methods to keep from becoming victims, the silent killer is stopped in its tracks. The one thing Marian E. would have the world know regarding hypertension is, "Hypertension is a very serious illness that strikes without warning. If you are diagnosed, take medication regularly and monitor your blood pressure, because it is possible that medication that may have stabilized your pressure

could be ineffective [in the long run]." Mitzi adds, "Hypertension and its related health issues are the leading causes of death among African American people. It is more prevalent among people of African descent than any other ethnic group. Do not allow yourself to be a statistic. Manage the disease or it will manage you."

There is no reason why the silent killer has to be successful in all its stalking efforts.

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Shades Of Reading Magazine: Please give the readers a brief bio on you the person and the writer.

Darnella Ford: Darnella The Writer-that's the easy part. I began writing at the age of nine. I was a published poet by the age of sixteen. I moved to Hollywood at the age of twenty one and began to write screenplays and teleplays; but my passion rested in novels. I always wanted to be a novelist. I had a baby in 1997 and this grand responsibility prompted me to 'show up' for the rest of my life. I picked up a pen to write my first novel when my daughter was four weeks old and I haven't looked back yet...

NOW...Darnella The Person-that's the tough part. I am an overly-sensitive, neurotic, poet with a good heart, a restless spirit, and a compulsion that keeps me plastered to a blank page, incessantly trying to prove my worth to the rest of the world...and maybe in part, also to myself.

SORMAG: Tell us about your current book?

FORD: CRAVE is an authentic look at the quest we as human beings have to love and to be loved. It's told in first person through the eyes of a woman named Michael who chases the woes of her womb up and down the dense streets of Shilo, Colorado. It's about giving everything you've got to find love-and then keep it without losing yourself in the process. It's one woman's journey in being painfully human.

SORMAG: What is your favorite scene from your book?

FORD: Page 1 through page 305...(smile)

SORMAG: What would you like your readers to take away from your book?

FORD: I would like them to walk away knowing that one of the grandest things about being human is loving and being loved in return. I want them to

walk away feeling like they've just gotten a GREAT lesson in love.

SORMAG: What type of publicity did you do for your book?

FORD: I'm a foot soldier so I always take to the streets to talk to everybody visible. Coupled with pitches to national magazines, national book clubs, etc., etc., press releases, scheduling book signings and radio interviews. Also mass e-marketing from the internet. Basically-ANYTHING and EVERYTHING I could think of.

SORMAG: How did you stay motivated to finish your book?

FORD: I believed in the story. Faith is EVERYTHING.

SORMAG: What books, newsletters, or articles are helpful to you?

FORD: I read a lot of industry-related material just to stay up on the market and inspirational material to stay up on my own personal journey.

SORMAG: Any last advice for the aspiring writer?

FORD: YES-LEARN the craft and RESPECT it. And above all else, NEVER write for money because I promise you this, you will wither before you see a dime. Write because you love it, write because you can't breathe without doing it and more than anything write because you were called to it.

SORMAG: How can readers get in contact with you? (mail, email, website)

FORD: www.darnella.com and also by email: dapoetd@aol.com

SORMAG: Can you give us a sneak peek at your next book?

FORD: Funny you should ask--I JUST completed my third novel a couple weeks ago. I've been working on this one since 2001-I will tell you this...this is a story of struggle and the choices we make when our backs are against the wall. It is dedicated to anyone who has "ever needed a miracle" ...

Shades Of Reading Magazine: Please give the readers a brief bio on you the person and the writer.

Jackie and Miriam are a writing team who writes under the name, J.M. Jeffries.

Jackie: Miriam and I have been together for a long time. Sometimes, I want to kill her, but most of the time I love her. I have a nice house, a cool dog who things there's nothing beyond me (Wish I could find a man like that). My one ambition in life is to corrupt Miriam.

Miriam: I just want some extra sleep. Jackie is wearing me out. We write almost daily, and I would love to be on either the USA Today best-seller list, or the NYT best seller list. I want more shoes. I need more shoes. I live for shoes.

SORMAG: Tell us about your current book?

Jackie: *A Dangerous Obsession* is the third in our Cold Case Unit series.

Miriam: I love *A Dangerous Obsession* because it has sex, sex and more sex. I wanted to try a heroine who was agoraphobic. Agoraphobia affect a large number of people. My "what if..." was if she were incapable of leaving a place where danger threatened what would she do?

SORMAG: What is your favorite scene from your book?

Jackie: For me, it's the prologue. Because it's about unabashed survival and because during so much of the book, we deal with Lily being afraid and this was a departure for us. We end to do the Alpha heroine and Lily wasn't. But I think when it really counted, Lily refused to be a victim. That and the breath mint scene, but I don't want to give that away because it's funny.

Miriam: I love the scene when Marco first arrives with his huge Great Dane in tow. I had an Anatolida Shepherd a few years back and she was big enough to eat Jackie.

SORMAG: What would you like your readers to take away from your book?

Jackie: I want them to be entertained. If someone reads *A Dangerous Obsession*, and they've been entertained, I've done my job.

Miriam: I want readers to know that even if a person suffers from a disease, they don't have to give up.

SORMAG: What type of publicity did you do for your book?

Jackie: Just trying to make people aware of it. We did a lot of early promotional work at conferences, book signing

events. But not as much as we would have liked, but were under deadline for two more books.

Miriam: I tried to buy a trailer at the movie theater.

SORMAG: How did you stay motivated to finish your book?

Jackie: I have a spite list. Basically it's a list of people who told me I couldn't be a writer. I wanted to prove them wrong. Yeah! I know it's petty, but that works for me.

Miriam: I like seeing my name on book and this is my shoe money and I love shoes.

SORMAG: What books, newsletters, or articles are helpful to you?

Jackie: Christopher Vogler, *The Writer's Journey* and Jayne Ann Krentz's *Ravished*. That book knocks my socks off every time I read it.

Miriam: I teach creative writing and that reminds me of why I write .

SORMAG: Our theme for this issue is resources on the net. What resources on the net have been very helpful with your writing?

Jackie: I found a lot of people as resources on the Internet. There are several web sites that deal crime that have happened all over the country, and I never know when I'm going to get a good idea for a story. And just being on the Internet leads me to other writers who cheer me on and give me therapy.

Miriam: I teach writing and every class reminds me that I'm a writer and no longer a rank amateur who worries about losing my work to a more unscrupulous writer.

SORMAG: Any last advice for the aspiring writer?

Jackie: Don't give up. Writing a book is a process, not an event. I have to remind myself of this continually.

Miriam: Finish the d*** book.

SORMAG: How can readers get in contact with you? (mail, email, website)

Snail mail: Box 267, Mira Loma, CA 91752

email: cupidclub@yahoo.com

website: jmjeffries.com

Miriam: by post card.

SORMAG: Can you give us a sneak peek at your next book?

Jackie: Code Name: Diva. James Bond meets Vogue Magazine.

Miriam: She's brilliant, sexy, and lost in the desert.