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### FEBRUARY 2009 EDITION - *The Sweet Escape*

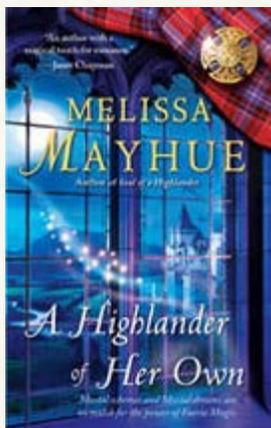
Ah, romance! People write songs, poems and of course novels about it. You've seen it in action or perhaps been fortunate enough to feel it yourself. Tell-a-tale signs include that heady, floaty feeling accompanied by the requisite butterflies fluttering furiously at the mere thought of a kiss. In reality, love can be a bit hard to capture (or keep). However, in the pages of a romance novel -- it is always at your fingertips. Whether between the covers of a reliable Harlequin paperback or a classic Jane Austen tale, you'll find yourself on a remarkable and timeless adventure. Pure escapism, at it's best. That's why romance holds such a special place in our hearts.

In honor of tomorrow's holiday, we'd like to make you our special Valentine. Please accept our virtual roses and take part in an exciting contest. Below you'll find a picture of the TKA lovebirds. Your job is to find those lovebirds hidden within this newsletter. The first person to email their location to [contests@knightagency.net](mailto:contests@knightagency.net) will win a Valentine's Day Romance Novel Prize Pack, including books by some of our very talented romance authors. While you're scouring for the lovebirds, remember to check out a fantastic interview with author Melissa Mayhue, who'll be chatting with us online next week, and a special Valentine's Day message from David Cristofano. Also, read our agency news section to find out which TKA clients have been nominated for the 2008 PEARL awards and which debut author received the prestigious ALA Schneider Book Award. Happy Valentine's Day!



IN THIS ISSUE: INTERVIEW AND ONLINE CHAT WITH MELISSA MAYHUE  
DAVID CRISTOFANO IN THE AUTHORS' CORNER - YOU OUGHT TO KNOW BY NEPHELE TEMPEST -  
AGENCY NEWS - AGENTS OF THE ROUNDTABLE - FEBRUARY RELEASES

#### THE KNIGHT POST - INTERVIEW WITH MELISSA MAYHUE



**TKA:** The fourth book in your DAUGHTERS OF THE GLEN series, A HIGHLANDER OF HER OWN, was recently released in January. Can you give us a synopsis of this story?

**MAYHUE:** Ellie Denton's world has gone topsy turvy. A strange new birthmark has appeared on her body, animals are talking to her and her mother's ex-husband is laying claim to the family's Texas ranch. It seems life can't get much more complicated. That is until she discovers her new birthmark is a connection to her Faerie ancestors.

Meanwhile, in Medieval Scotland Caden MacAlister is dealing with some issues of his own. His brother is beind held for ransom and the laird is missing. The last thing he needs is more complications,

but the Fae have other plans. A mysterious woman shows up in his stables, sent by Faerie Magic to find her true love. Caden believes she is meant for one of his brothers, and he does everything he can to deny his growing attraction. With his sketchy romantic history, Caden has no desire to find his true love -- especially a woman sent by the Fae.

**TKA: What role did your own research into your family's genealogy play in the formation of this series?**

**MAYHUE:** I spent two years immersing myself in genealogy. I absolutely loved it...which probably explains why I enjoy researching little facts for my books so much! While two years was only enough to get most of my lines back to around the mid-1700's, I was able to trace a couple of lines to Scotland and Ireland. That led to a family vacation to Scotland, which led to my sitting in The Fairy Glen, which inspired me to write my first book!

Have any of those long-ago relatives found their way onto the pages of your manuscripts? Not really...not yet at least. But they're sitting in the back of my mind...percolating!

**TKA: Can you give us a preview as to what we can expect from this series in the future?**

**MAYHUE:** Although I see the series basically as a time travel story -- and the majority of the books will be time travel -- as the series moves forward, occasionally a contemporary paranormal book will insert itself [as with HIGHLAND GUARDIAN] to give the reader a better picture of what's happening in the battle between the Mortals and their Faerie allies against the Nuadians [bad Fae]. For example, in the next book, A HIGHLANDER'S DESTINY, the world is going to take a darker shift, with the Nuadians discovering a long-lost power that enhances their evil side.

**TKA: How do you balance fantastical elements, such as faeries and time-travel, with the "real world," in a way that keeps your stories believable and readers engaged?**

**MAYHUE:** Faeries and time-travel just are parts of the world I've built. To "keep it real" I constantly try to put myself in the heads of the new characters who show up who don't believe any of this exists. Then, based on their personalities, I allow them to accept the truth of my world in as little [or as much] time as it takes them to come around!

**TKA: What are three must-have elements that can be found in every great love story?**

**MAYHUE:** Wow! Tough questions! Let's see, I'll take a stab at this...a deep emotional need [even if it's unacknowledged by the hero/heroine], personal growth [they have to overcome their own demons before they can take on a relationship], a successful pairing of the hero and heroine -- their personalities, needs and growth all have to mesh.

**TKA: What types of self-promotion and marketing do you feel that romance authors, in particular, absolutely must do to ensure the word gets out about their book(s)?**

**MAYHUE:** Ah, the \$64,000 question!!! Everything you can! ? Seriously, I think what you do all boils down to being accessible to your readers. Whether it's your website, MySpace, Facebook, blogs, interviews, personal appearances, conferences or something entirely different [\*which I'm working on for later this year!] you need to connect with your readers.

**TKA: What is the importance of writers, whatever their level of experience, having critique partners?**

**MAYHUE:** I know that all writers don't believe critique partners are necessary, but for me, they have been a huge part of my books being as good [hopefully!] as they have been. How have your critique partners affected your own writing? My critique partners [Rena Marks and Kirsten Richard] have a major impact on my writing. They are my sounding board for ideas, they are my initial readers, they're the ones who hold my feet to the fire when I try to sneak in an easy way out!

**TKA:** In the spirit of our Valentine's Day-themed newsletter, can you tell us what male character, in all of literature, would make the most romantic Valentine's Day date and why?

**MAYHUE:** Well, of course I'm going to name one of my heroes -- since they're all dredged up out of my imagination, they're all variations of my Perfect Man!!! ? I recently had a reader \*waving to Larimer!\* ask me which of my heroes was my favorite and I had to admit I hadn't given it a lot of thought up to that time. Once I did, I realized it was probably my first [ah, your very first!], Connor MacKiernan from THIRTY NIGHTS WITH A HIGHLAND HUSBAND. But, to be honest, I wouldn't pick him for my most romantic Valentine's Day date because I already know his story -- and he belongs to Cate!! ? Personally, I'm more intrigued by one of the heroes whose story hasn't been written yet... maybe Colin MacAlister or Dair Maxwell, or even Simeon MacDowell [all from A HIGHLANDER OF HER OWN]. Why? Because I don't know their stories yet... they're still mysterious enough to interest me!!

**To learn more about Melissa and her DAUGHTERS OF THE GLEN series, visit [www.MelissaMayhue.com](http://www.MelissaMayhue.com)!**

## CHAT IT UP - TALK TO MELISSA MAYHUE!



Melissa Mayhue is chatting with TKA on Thursday, February 19th at 9:00pm ET! She'll be giving us the skinny on her time-traveling series, DAUGHTERS OF THE GLEN, set in present day America and Medieval Scotland, and you'll be able to ask questions about her writing process and journey to becoming a published author. Also, Melissa has generously agreed to give away an autographed set of her entire series to one lucky winner during the chat!! The series includes: THIRTY NIGHTS WITH A HIGHLAND HUSBAND, HIGHLAND GUARDIAN, SOUL OF A HIGHLANDER and A HIGHLANDER OF HER OWN.

**WHEN:** Thursday, February 19th @ 9:00pm ET

**WHERE:** [Click Here to Enter the TKA Chat Room](#) \*Your computer must be Java enabled.

## THE AUTHORS' CORNER - DAVID CRISTOFANO

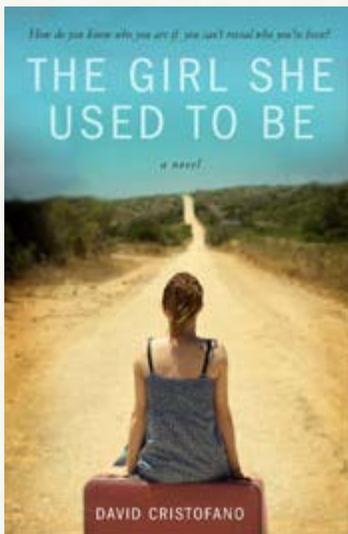
### Creating Love on Paper – via St. Valentine

Ah, Valentine's Day. February's answer to Halloween: a candy-infused excuse to celebrate any and all romantic inclinations, as mandated by the commercial industries that depend on its success and prevalence. Sarcasm aside, it's a pretty fun holiday when you find yourself hopelessly in love, an opportunity in various indulgences that can be justified once per year. Beyond that—for those less enamored with their mates and find themselves sighing at the calendar in annoyance—this holiday is plastic. A fabrication. An invention as annoying and forgettable as its younger sibling, Groundhog Day.

So what makes it so wonderful for those in love and so miserable for those obligated into celebration? The difference is true love. The emotional side of your relationship has to be passionate and genuine or you're just going through the motions. When it blossoms (forgive

me) it's as real as the velvety residue on your Godiva-stained fingers. You know when you're dating someone and you wake up one day feeling . . . different. Undeniably, you're changing inside, your thoughts, emotions, and desires all suddenly revolve around this new person in your life. (Also the characteristics denoting the onset of stalking, by the way, but that's a different essay.) The point here is that you trust in this emotion with this particular person. It feels real, and you're a believer.

Love stories are no different. How does one get readers to become believers in fictitious love as well? You don't need to read many chapters before you start picking up signals when something is not right. Something is ringing false. Something is cheesy. I think you're really nice, <insert novel title>, but I just don't feel that way about you. Can we still be friends? Yet other times, we become as devoted and faithful as the characters we're reading; we've become passionate



too, in a different way. We want them to succeed, to escape, to live and prosper and show up in subsequent novels so we can grow old together.

If this is true, why is it so hard to make love come alive on paper? To make the relationship sincere? I think it's easy to fall into the trap of developing characters the way we would want them to be—perfect, clever, and saccharine—and the next thing you know you're staring at February 14th again: plastic. Take a look at your wife or husband or lover and remember what drew you to that person in the first place. How wonderful are all of the flaws, the unique actions, words and motivations that have placed a fingerprint on your heart. In my novel, THE GIRL SHE USED TO BE, so much of the protagonist's behavior came from subtle traits and behaviors of my wife, and from the way our relationship has evolved over the years. It brought a significant focus and clarity to a once lifeless character.

Sometimes the answer is not staring back at you in the mirror; it's sitting across the room.

To learn more about David Cristofano, visit [www.DavidCristofano.com](http://www.DavidCristofano.com).

## YOU OUGHT TO KNOW: FROM THE DESK OF NEPHELE TEMPEST

### What's in a Name?



The term "branding" is a buzz word that has gained a great deal of attention in the marketing world over the past decade or so, and more and more, it is a term that shows up in the world of publishing as well. As consumers, most people have heard of brand loyalty and are aware, at least in a vague way, of what that idea means. But how does it translate to books? And once it does, what does it mean for romance authors? Is it really important? Does everyone need to do it? How do you go about becoming a brand? Brand loyalty, for most of us, simply means having a brand you prefer, regardless of the item. Whether it's peanut butter or soft drinks or dishwasher detergent, there is one you like the best. It's tastier, works more consistently, reminds you of your childhood when your mother used to buy it;

whatever the reason, you tend to be loyal to that product. Your loyalty might mean you'll buy it regardless of the price. It might mean you'll wait until it's on sale to stock up on that item rather than purchase another less expensive brand, or that you'll drive out of your way to the store that has it on special.

Books work in much the same way, only in the case of the publishing world, the ultimate symbol of your personal brand as an author is your name. In most cases, particularly in genre fiction, it is the name of the author that becomes the household word, much more than the name of the product. Titles change with every new release, but the author's name becomes readily identifiable the more books they write and the more popular they become. And those author names begin to stand in for the type of book they write. Say Stephen King and just about anyone over a certain age gets chills down their spine, whether or not they have read his horror novels. In the world of romance, authors like Nora Roberts and Diana Gabaldon conjure automatic reactions from readers. They've become brands unto themselves and readers know what to expect from them. Fans trust that they can pick up the new Nora Roberts novel and get what they're looking for; Diana Gabaldon readers don't have to read the dust jacket of the latest in her "Outlander" series to know the hero will be sporting a kilt. The authors are reliable, providing the content and quality their fans expect. While readers might love any given book by one of these authors more than the others--it's human nature to have favorites--they will not hesitate to pick up any new work by these writers.

But these are well established authors, whose reputations have grown over time. For new authors, just getting into the game, the idea of branding is a bit more daunting. You should keep in mind that not every author becomes a household name, but that does not mean there aren't things you can do from the start of your career to help readers develop a sense of who you are and what to expect from your work.

1. Many authors in the romance world use pseudonyms if they are writing in more than one sub-genre--think Nora Roberts's use of J.D. Robb for her futuristic suspense novels. This helps readers associate one name with one type of book.
2. Keep your writing style and subject matter in mind when you develop your web site. Even if you have yet to sell a single book, your site should convey the mood of the works you aspire to publish. Darker novels call for darker imagery, where as light colors with either traditional or modern motifs might be appropriate for contemporary romances, and pastels or rich, royal colors for historical novels.
3. Some authors find that hobbies or other interests linked to their subject matter make for a great addition to their sites. Think about the women's fiction crazy that has sprung up around knitting--such as Kate Jacobs's FRIDAY NIGHT KNITTING CLUB--or books that revolve around food or wine.
4. Other writers dress the part: Sherrilyn Kenyon shows up to readings and other fan events wearing velvet and lace and other clothing items that make her seem to have stepped from the pages of some of her stories. Do your books lend themselves to this sort of costuming? It does not have to be elaborate--a series of novels with floral titles could simply mean you tuck a flower behind your ear when you show up for conferences.

It also helps to find your writing niche and stick to it until you have established yourself. The idea behind branding is that the product stands for something, and in the book business, what you stand for is a certain kind of plot. As I mentioned earlier, that does not mean you cannot branch out; Nora Roberts certainly writes in a lot of sub-genres, even under her own name. But even she started somewhere, writing lots of category romances before she went into single titles, and then plenty of those before she started mixing things up with some paranormal stories and so on. Come up with your brand--the package you are offering readers--and work to develop that as you work to develop your career. In a tough economy, book buyers are less likely to experiment and go out on a limb to try someone new. First they'll buy books by their favorite authors--those brands they trust. After that, they'll take a risk on a new book that looks like something they might like--and a well-defined brand can help them make that decision.

Jonathan Friesen's debut young adult novel, *JERK, CALIFORNIA* is the recipient of the American Library Association's Schneider Book Award. The Schneider Award is designed specifically for books that embody the artistic expression of the disability experience for child and adolescent audiences. Past honorees include Louis Sachar and Andrew Clements.

Several TKA authors are finalists in the 2008 PEARL awards. The nominees include: *THE MAGICAL CHRISTMAS CAT* by Nalini Singh, et al. and *HOTTER THAN HELL* by Marjorie M. Liu, Susan Krinard, et al., in the Paranormal category; *THE DARKEST PLEASURE* by Gena Showalter and *NIGHTKEEPERS* by Jessica Andersen in the Fantasy or Magical Realism category; *HEART FATE* by Robin D. Owens, in the Futuristic category; *GALE FORCE* by Rachel Caine in the Science Fiction/Fantasy category; and *HOSTAGE TO PLEASURE* and *MINE TO POSSESS* by Nalini Singh in the Shapeshifter category.

First-time author David Cristofano's *THE GIRL SHE USED TO BE* is already garnering praise from reviewers. Publishers Weekly recently gave it a starred review, hailing the book as, "...intense, romantic debut...[whose] mad love scenario sizzles like garlic in hot olive oil." The book is set to release in March 2009.

Also, Rhyannon Byrd received a fab review in the February issue of Publisher's Weekly for her latest release, *EDGE OF HUNGER*.

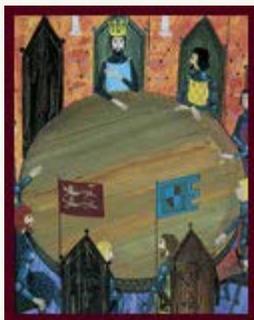
Nalini Singh's upcoming release, *ANGELS' BLOOD*, the first installment in the *GUILD HUNTER* series, was recently reviewed by Romantic Times and made the cover of their February issue. How's that for an endorsement!?! Be sure to check out this blockbuster book, which will be released in March. A special introduction to the new series, *ANGELS' PAWN*, will be available February 24th in all e-formats, including Kindle.

Jessica Andersen's *SNOWED IN WITH THE BOSS* is *Intrigue's* top pick for March.

*REFLECTIONS OF GOD'S HOLY LAND* by Eva Marie Everson and Miriam Feinburg Vamosh is a finalist in the Evangelical Christian Publisher's Association Awards (formerly known as Gold Medallion).

Shannon Greenland's *THE SPECIALISTS: MODEL SPY* and Chandra Sparks Taylor's *SPIN IT LIKE THAT* were chosen by ALA as 2009 Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults.

## AGENTS OF THE ROUNDTABLE



**QUESTION:** Name one common misconception/myth about the romance industry.

**PAMELA HARTY:** The most common myth is that romance novels are all about sex and anyone can write one. The foundation of a romance novel is the pivotal relationship. The relationship is the cake, and the sex is the icing. What most people fail to realize is that romance writing is composed of several different genres, including; inspirational (read: no sex), paranormal, contemporary and historical. Secondly, writing is a talent that must be honed by practice and dedication, regardless of whether you're writing a category romance or literary tome.

**LUCIENNE DIVER:** We're all starry-eyed romantics still mooning over Mr. Darcy and other Regency

rakes. While I love a good Regency rake – who doesn't?– I'm just as apt to fall for a vampire or shape-shifter or, heck, half-demon. Modern-day heroes are as likely to slash you with their weapons as their wit. And that's just fine by me.

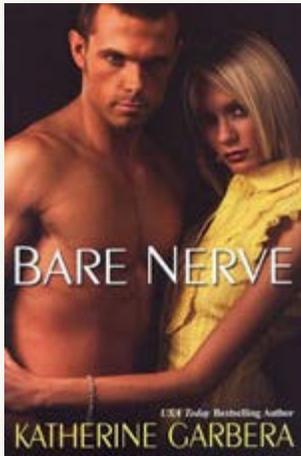
**ELAINE SPENCER:** I think a lot of people think that romance novels are "fluff" and so authors in the genre don't take their jobs as seriously or have it as difficult as authors who are writing "more serious" stories. I think in many instances romance authors have a more difficult time because they have to create the one thing that each and every one of us can relate to; love. Personally, I can't think of anything harder to put into words than the profound, intangible emotions that unite to form true love.

**MELISSA JEGLINSKI:** False: Romances are bodice rippers, those naughty little books you have to hide from strangers. Truth: Well, there are sometimes naked people on the cover, but it's usually the hot hero with the washboard abs--nothing

wrong with that, I say. But romances are not all about lusting and panting and longing glances. They are about meaningful relationships, overcoming obstacles, finding the other half to oneself. Well written romances have great characters with real and relatable conflicts that move the reader and entertain for hours.

***\*Please remember that you can participate in Agents of the Roundtable. Send a question you would like our agents to tackle to [info@knightagency.net](mailto:info@knightagency.net), and we might feature it in an upcoming issue!***

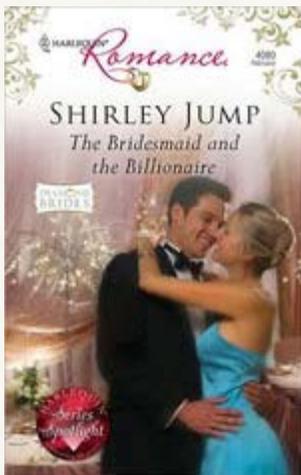
## FEBRUARY RELEASES



### **BARE NERVE**

by Katherine Garbera | Kensington

The daughter of an English aristocrat and former British ambassador, Anna Sterling doesn't need to get her hands dirty to obliterate the bad guys. She can destroy lives using nothing more than a laptop. Now her formidable hacking skills have uncovered a black market gun-running operation, and Anna-along with a group of ex-mercenaries headed by Jack Savage-travels to Algiers to track down the leader. Jack is as rough around the edges as Anna is refined, which makes the blazing night they spend together completely inexplicable-and mindblowingly hot... Jack's the best at what he does, and he'll make no apologies for his methods-or for wanting gorgeous, sophisticated Anna anywhere and everywhere he can get her. If she's wary of him now, she'd be even more shocked by the man he used to be. But the only way to keep her safe, and take down the enemy, is to risk the one thing Jack never thought to lose-his heart.

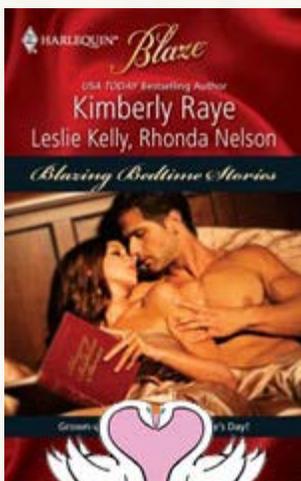


### **THE BRIDESMAID AND THE BILLIONAIRE**

by Shirley Jump | Harlequin

Bridesmaid Susannah Wilson has poured her dreams into planning the trip of a lifetime. The only trouble is, her locked-up heart is being opened by a brooding out-of-towner.

Billionaire best man Kane Lennox is escaping the stifling expectations of New York. Being with Susannah, he's breaking the rules. Happily ever after isn't on his agenda. Yet he can't take his eyes off her. For the first time he has something that money can't buy--a woman who loves him for who he really is.



### **BLAZING BEDTIME STORIES**

by Leslie Kelly, et al. | Harlequin

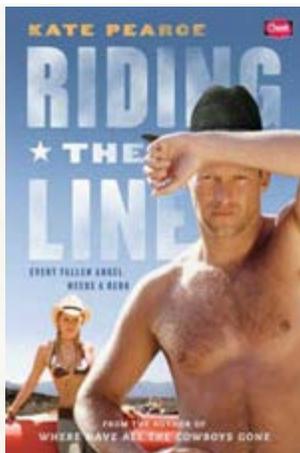
These Valentine's Day stories have Blazingly happy endings... "My, What a Big...You Have!" by Leslie Kelly -- Scarlett Templeton doesn't believe in fairy tales. That is, until she meets a sexy rogue in the woods, on her way to Grandmother's house....

"Once Upon a Bite" by Kimberly Raye -- Beauty and the beast--in the bedroom! When wolfishly irresistible Matt Keller lands in Skull Creek, Texas, Shay Briggs sees a hunky beast who needs her taming touch.

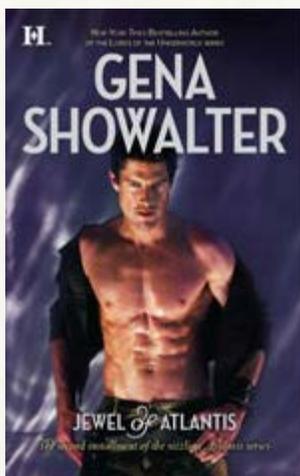
"Sexily Ever After" by Rhonda Nelson-- Ugly duckling Juliet only wants to be a femme fatale. Little does she guess that a chance meeting with hottie Gareth will inspire her to reveal her sexy swanlike plumage--and a lot more--before long!

### **RIDING THE LINE**

by Kate Pearce | Virgin Books Limited



Rodeo cowboy, Dakota Scott, seems to attract trouble. After his truck breaks down and leaves him stranded in a small New Mexico town, he meets a woman who desperately needs his help. Robyn Sparrow, washed-up celebrity, has hit rock bottom and promises him anything to get a ride to the West Coast. As Dakota unwittingly leads her back to the spotlight, can Robyn resist the lure of Hollywood...or will she give it up for love?



### **JEWEL OF ATLANTIS (Re-release)**

by Gena Showalter | Harlequin

All Atlantis seeks the Jewel of Dunamis, which legend claims can overcome any enemy. Grayson James, human agent of the ultrasecret Otherworld Bureau of Investigation, has orders to keep it from the wrong hands—or destroy it. What he doesn't know is that Jewel is a woman, not a stone! But once he meets this precious gem, destroying her is the last thing on his mind....Jewel, part goddess, part prophet, needs Gray's help to win her freedom. Gray needs her wisdom to navigate monster-ridden Atlantis. But need blossoms into passionate love as they battle demons, dragons and vampires—and fight for a future that seems impossible....

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