This is the third “Alpennia” novel, set in a small kingdom in an alternate version of Europe during the period 1823-1825. *Mother of Souls* centers around two new characters. Seraphina Talarico is of Ethiopian descent (but born in Rome); she is able to “see” the flow of magic but unable to work magic herself. Luzie Valorin is an Alpennian widow; she is an aspiring composer who is somehow able to raise magical “flow” through the music she plays and composes. The major heroines of the previous two novels (*Daughter of Mystery* and *The Mystic Marriage* – both Spectrum Recommended titles) also appear in this novel.

Alpennia is being dragged unwillingly into the wider European theater of action. It is suffering the effects of sorcerous weather-magic developed by forces unknown for reasons not connected with Alpennia itself. Amidst the international turmoil and magical dangers, Seraphina and Luzie explore the complementary nature of their “gifts” as well as their developing feelings for each other.

Heather Rose Jones is an acknowledged *magistra* of lesbian historical romance. She has an unerring knack at giving her readers a real “feel” for the time periods of her stories and novels – in this case, post-Napoleonic Europe. Her skill is such that you can use allusions in the storyline to pretty much figure out where the fictional Alpennia is located; and her PhD in linguistics has enabled her to develop names and terminology appropriate for that little kingdom tucked away in a corner of the Alps. Her skill as a writer has woven all this into the storyline itself; the action, adventure, and romance aren’t bogged down by long passages of tiresome exposition. And, on top of all this, she provides a unique exploration of the magical/mystical qualities of various artforms, such as music, painting, religious ceremony, and architecture.

Gaylactic Spectrum Awards
http://www.spectrumawards.org/
The Big Lie by Julie Mayhew

(Previously published in the UK by Hot Key Books in 2015)

Jessika Keller is a good and obedient daughter. She works hard to impress Herr Fisher at the Bund Deutsche Mädel. She has a chance to be a world champion ice skater. Such is the life of a good girl in England in 2014. But in this universe, the Nazis won WW2, which makes life risky for Jessika’s neighbor, Clementine. Clementine isn’t ‘good’: she speaks her mind and could even be called radical—not a good choice in Nazi England. Clementine is Jessika’s best friend. But Jessika can’t have both Clementine and her good life, can she? A tale of love and sexuality and loyalty, of growing up.

Cocktails at Seven, Apocalypse at Eight: The Derby Cavendish Stories by Don B. Bindschadler

A collection of entertaining stories that combine the supernatural with classic gay tropes. Many of these stories began as oral tales told at an annual event; but Bindschadler gathered and added to them for this riotous written collection. These stories focus on Derby Cavendish and his many friends—a collection of inventive characters themselves—and their adventures with demons and other supernatural creatures. These tales are flamboyant, ridiculous, and a pleasure to read.

Fallow by Jordan L. Hawk

This story, eighth in the Lovecraftian “Whyborne & Griffin” series, explores the farmland setting of Griffin's childhood. A dying Kansas town provides an excellent setting for the dark and macabre happenings, and offers a counterpoint to the usual urban settings where many of the earlier stories take place. More is learned about Griffin's background, adding to the complexity and richness of this Victorian Era world. Ultimately, our heroes must work together to keep Griffin's estranged mother safe and to discover what evil permeates the very soil before something evil blooms.

Hexbreaker/Hexmaker by Jordan L. Hawk

In this world, magic and hexes are real and witches live normal lives. Some are even employed by a special police force in New York. Witches have familiars, shape-shifters, and each is bound to the other.

Hexbreaker: Tom Halloran is a good cop, as long as his past stays in the past. The secret hidden there might be exposed when he discovers a horrible murder on his beat. Cicero, a cat shifter, teams up with Tom, and the two wind up doing more than helping each other solve a crime. Will their passion hinder their investigation? And what will happen when this investigation uncovers a secret that could hurt the city?

Hexmaker: Dr. Owen Yates, a forensic hexman for the Metropolitan Witch Police, has troubles. When Malachi, a fox shifter and thief for a crime ring in New York, witnesses a millionaire’s murder, only Owen can protect him. Like Tom and Cicero (in Hexbreaker), they soon find they are partners (witch and familiar), and become lovers. The two must overcome obstacles both personal (a pending arranged marriage) and professional to solve the crime and protect the city.

Lily by Michael Thomas Ford

On her 13th birthday, Lily learns she has to but touch someone to know how they will die. She lives in a village of magic, where such things are commonplace; but her mother comes from the outside and has never fit in. When Lily's father dies, the two women begin a dark and tragic, yet ultimately hopeful, journey outside the village. This beautiful fairy tale depicts an interesting way to develop an all-male society.

Malachite by Kirby Crow

A rocky love story (which becomes a triangle) between two long-time lovers (and ex-gangsters), mixed into a story of plots to overthrow the government and society of an all-male analog of Renaissance Venice. No magic, no dragons, etc. – it’s a completely fictional world that depicts an interesting way to develop an all-male society.

Maze-Born Trouble by Ginn Hale
Blind Eye Books (Digital Only)

Former cop, now private investigator, P.I. Harmaa must navigate the labyrinth of a space station on the edge of a black hole. When he finds himself framed for the murder of a girl on the station, he enlists the aid of his ex-lover (and former partner on the police force) to solve the murder and clear his name. The investigation twists and turns through the different landscapes and varied characters of the vast space station and through Harmaa's troubled past.

Night Terrors by J. A. Pitts

The fourth in the modern urban fantasy adventures of Sarah Beauhall (lesbian blacksmith and sword-wielding hero), in a world secretly ruled by Dragons. Sarah and her friends and family-of-choice are recovering from the adventures recounted in the previous novel in the series, Forged in Fire. When Sarah’s lover Katie accidentally activates a magical power surge that rips her spirit into the deadly supernatural Sideways realms, Sarah must brave the horrors of Sideways to rescue Katie from the Bowler Hat Man (the spirit of a long-dead murderer) and his minions.

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