

**Vol. 11, Feb. 2026**

**Hello Cozy Readers**



### **BE MINE, VALENTINE?**

Is Valentine's Day for the birds?

During the Middle Ages, a common belief across France and England held that February 14 was the beginning of birds' mating season, which added to the idea that Valentine's Day should be an occasion for romance. The English poet Geoffrey Chaucer was the first to record St. Valentine's Day as a day of romantic celebration in his 1375 poem "Parliament of Fowls," writing, "For this was sent on Seynt Valentyne's day / Whan every foul cometh there to choose his mate."

Valentine greetings were popular as far back as the Middle Ages, though written Valentine's did not begin to appear until after 1400. The oldest known valentine still in existence today is a poem Charles, Duke of Orleans, wrote to his wife in 1415 while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London following his capture at the Battle of Agincourt. (The greeting is now part of the manuscript collection of the British Library in London.) Several years later, it is believed that King Henry V hired a writer named John Lydgate to compose a valentine note to Catherine of Valois.

In addition to the United States, Valentine's Day is celebrated in Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, France and Australia. In Great Britain, Valentine's Day began to be popularly celebrated around the 17th century.

By the middle of the 18th century, it was common for friends and lovers of all social classes to exchange small tokens of affection or handwritten notes, and by 1900, printed

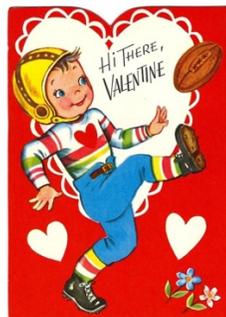
cards began to replace written letters due to improvements in printing technology. Ready-made cards were an easy way for people to express their emotions at a time when direct expression of one's feelings was discouraged. Cheaper postage rates also contributed to an increase in the popularity of sending Valentine's Day greetings.

Americans probably began exchanging hand-made valentines in the early 1700s. In the 1840s, Esther A. Howland began selling the first mass-produced valentines in America. Howland, known as the "Mother of the Valentine," made elaborate creations with real lace, ribbons and colorful pictures known as "scrap."

Who remembers getting a box of valentine cards to hand out to classmates in elementary school? Some were pictures of favorite cartoon characters, others were more frilly and romantic. It was a fun tradition that children exchanged tokens of friendship and puppy love to classmates, sometimes accompanied by a box of heart-shaped candies with sentimental words stamped on the pastel candy.

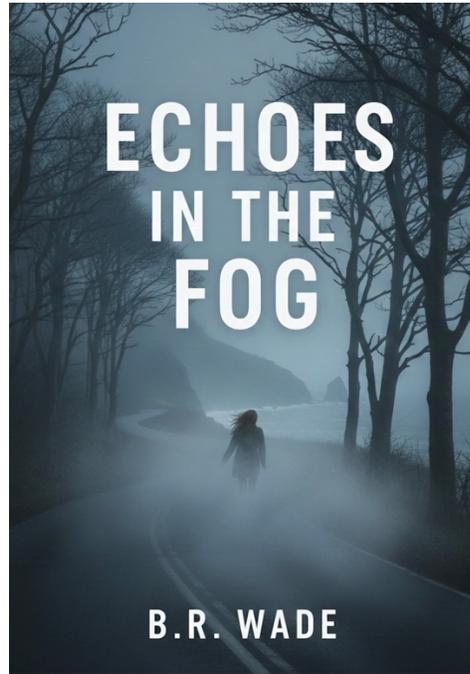
Today, according to Hallmark, more than 145 million Valentine's Day cards are sent each year, making Valentine's Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year behind Christmas.

So what are you planning this Valentine's Day? Dinner and a movie? A bouquet of flowers or a box of her favorite candy? Will you celebrate or has your relationship survived the years and such frivolity is no longer exchanged? As decades pass, husbands and wives ... partners, become complacent. The effort to win affection with silly tokens is no longer needed or perhaps this is really the time when it is needed the most. A symbol that despite the passing of time, the decades of life weathered together, it's proof that love still holds you together. And given the chance to do it all again ... you'd still choose them.



# ECHOES IN THE FOG

WHEN LOVE GOES WRONG



What happens when young love goes wrong? Our youthful selves make the wrong decisions and choices. A chance encounter ... a meeting where sparks fly and passions ignite. But is this love or merely physical attraction? When the sparks burn out and two strangers are left to face the fact that they want different things and their relationship is over ... what then?

My current writing project - ***Echoes in the Fog*** - explores that premise. A young teenage girl, innocent of the world outside her small town, falls for the smooth-talking guy that sweeps her off her feet. But as time passes and she meets other people outside her narrow world, she starts to question her life. That's what happens to Linda Boyer when she begins to see past the cracked veneer of her boyfriend's charm. Her life becomes one of survival as his loving attention turns verbally and physically abusive.

Eric Wharton crosses the line when he demands Linda steal for him. Her refusal results in broken bones and more bruises. Yet she hesitates to press charges despite her injuries until the day he robs a convenience store and a clerk is shot. Eric threatens

Linda from the courtroom as he is led away to prison. Linda takes the only course of action that she can ... run away. She changes her name and appearance and relocates hundreds of miles away.

She thinks she is safe until the nightmares begin. Footsteps in the fog echo, chasing her, and she can't get away. Her frightening dreams follow her into the daylight as she begins to suspect she is being stalked. Is it real? Did her abusive boyfriend find her? Or is her paranoia and fear consuming her sanity?

In this psychological thriller - ***Echoes in the Fog*** - readers will experience the tension and fear that ultimately lead to murder. But whose?

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## **Valentine Special Dish Honey Garlic Shrimp**



### **Ingredients:**

1/3 cup honey

1/4 cup soy sauce

2 garlic cloves minced ( or 1 tsp jarred minced garlic)

1 tsp ground ginger or minced fresh ginger

1 lb. medium uncooked shrimp - peeled & deveined

2 tsp. olive oil

\* optional chopped green onion for garnish

**Instructions:**

1. Whisk honey, soy sauce, garlic and ginger together in medium bowl.

You will use half of this marinade for shrimp and half for cooking later.

2. Place shrimp in sealed container or zip-lock bag. Pour half of marinade sauce mixture on top and stir or shake to coat. Marinate shrimp in refrigerator for 15 minutes or up to 8 hours ahead of time. Cover and refrigerate remaining marinade for use in step three cooking.

3. Heat olive oil in skillet over med-high heat. Place shrimp in skillet - discard used marinade. Cook shrimp on one side until pink about 45 seconds. Flip shrimp. Pour in remaining marinade sauce and cook it all until shrimp is cooked through about 1-2 minutes longer.

4. Serve shrimp with cooked marinade sauce and garnish of green onions. Serve steamed vegetables and brown or white rice as side dishes.

NOTE: If using frozen cooked shrimp, thaw before marinating and cooking in sauce only long enough to heat the shrimp in sauce.