

A thick black L-shaped frame surrounds the text. The top horizontal bar is on the left, the left vertical bar is on the left, and the bottom horizontal bar is on the right.

# IT'S ALL ABOUT THE AUDIENCE

Alisha Rai & Courtney Milan  
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# Where to find these materials?

- 1) The worksheet/handout: <http://www.courtneymilan.com/audiencehandout.pdf>
- 2) These slides (we will be adding hand-written notes throughout; the slides with handwritten notes will be posted by the end of the day today):  
<http://www.courtneymilan.com/audienceslides.pdf>



# Who are you as an author?

- People use lots of words to describe this
  - *Your Brand*
  - *Your Voice*
  - *Words that describe your books/series*
- Easiest way to show is by example: we're going to take two well-known authors and describe their brand
- We're looking for common, recurring threads in their books. What sets them apart? How would you describe them to a friend who wanted to know if she would enjoy them?

# Beverly Jenkins

- historical
- 19th century African American
- doesn't take shit from anyone
- irreverent, inspiring, gutsy
- entrepreneurial women
- breaking stereotypes
- community / community builders

# Nalini Singh

- paranormal
  - sexy
  - alpha males (with angst! + danger!)
  - diverse characters
  - tight communities & found families
  - mates
- bonkers (good!)
- Crack

# What are the common threads running through your books?

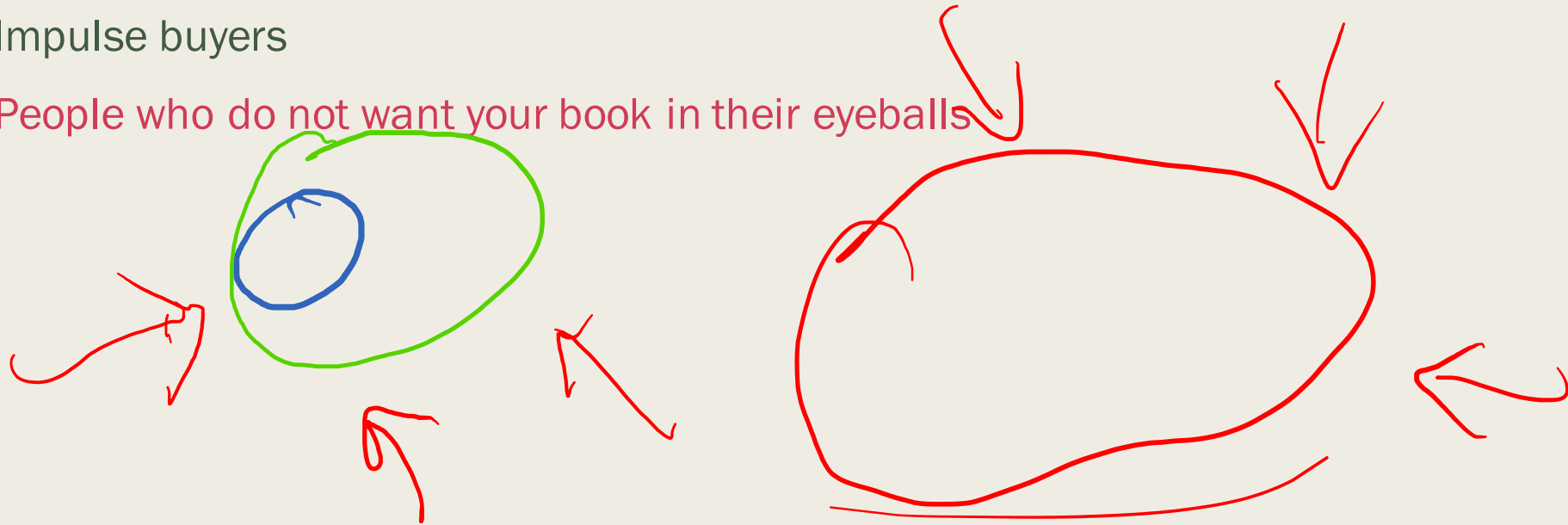
- Take a moment to write this down

# Troubleshooting if you're stuck

- You can't verbalize the common threads in your book
  - *Ask friends/your critique partners/editor/agent/facebook*
  - *Check out your also-boughts*
- You have no common threads in your books
  - *Your books are all over the place*
  - *You have so many pen names that there isn't a lot of commonality*
- You have a branding problem
  - *Let's talk*

# Figure out who your audience is

- Core buyers
- Impulse buyers
- People who do not want your book in their eyeballs



- Your mission: Keep your core. Convert your impulse. Don't stress about everyone else.



# Social Media Strategies

- There is no one size fits all!
- Authenticity matters.
- Your goal is to interest your audience and not turn off impulse buyers
- WRONG QUESTION: IS THIS CONTROVERSIAL?
- RIGHT QUESTION: DOES THIS SIGNAL THE COMMON THREADS IN MY BOOKS EFFECTIVELY?

# Social media test cases

## ■ Author A:

- *Common threads: Feminist themes, heroine-focused books, LGBTQ characters and community, puppies*

## ■ Author B:

- *Common threads: "Salt of the earth" men (cowboy, SEAL, business owner), plot moppets, meddling aunts, nosy neighbors, puppies*

## ■ Author C:

- *Common threads: Small town settings, closed door sex, hapless heroines, illness is a major factor, puppies*

# What would signal the common threads in their books to an audience?

PUPPIES FOR ALL

■ Author A

marriage equality, education for girls,  
gender

■ Author B:

marcandy, men <sup>in uniform</sup> holding puppies,  
military support

■ Author C:

recipes, bandages, wacky personal  
sensible shoes stones  
breast cancer stuff fashion!



What would signal the common threads in your books to an audience?

# Dos and don'ts (1)

- **Author C: (writes hapless heroines)**

- *DON'T: "Saw cute guy. Spilled coffee on myself. This is why nobody will ever love me."*
  
- *DO: "Just spilled coffee on my white shirt in front of a cute guy. Wanted to go hide. D'oh!"*

# Dos and don'ts (2)

- Author A (writes feminist themes): sees breaking news about reproductive rights legislation in Texas
- *DON'T: Given the latest news, I guess that one-star review came from Texas. (link to news story)*
- *DO: Love to my Texas ladies! Hang in there; we're all in this together.*

# Dos and don'ts (3)

- Author B (is dissatisfied with her sales)
  - *DON'T: Nobody bought "Jane's Cowboy's Father's Secret Space Ranch." I guess people would rather read trash.*
  - *DO: Literally anything else.*

# Social media myths (or not)

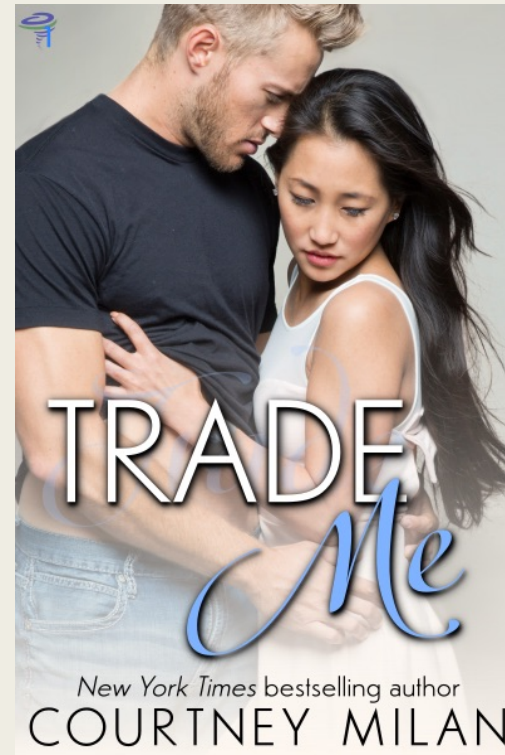
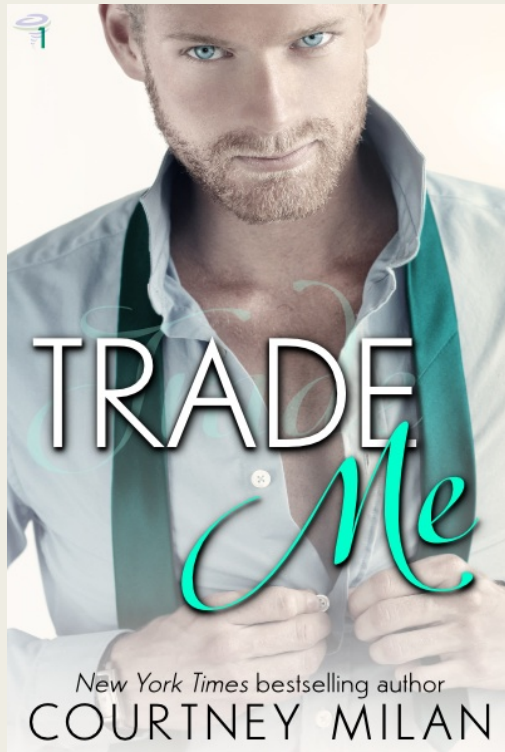
- Something you care about might drive away readers if you talk about it
- You don't always have to make choices based on your readership. You're a person, not a social-media mastering robot
- You do have to enjoy this (most of the time)
- And some social media sites are better for sharing some things than others—find what works for you!



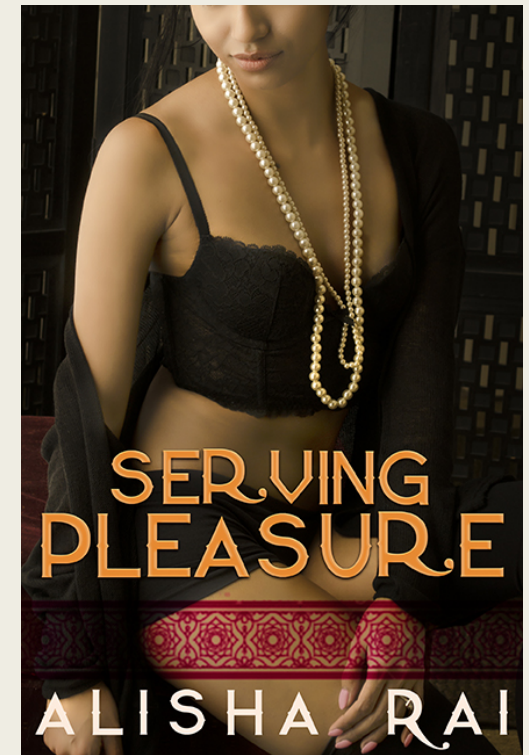
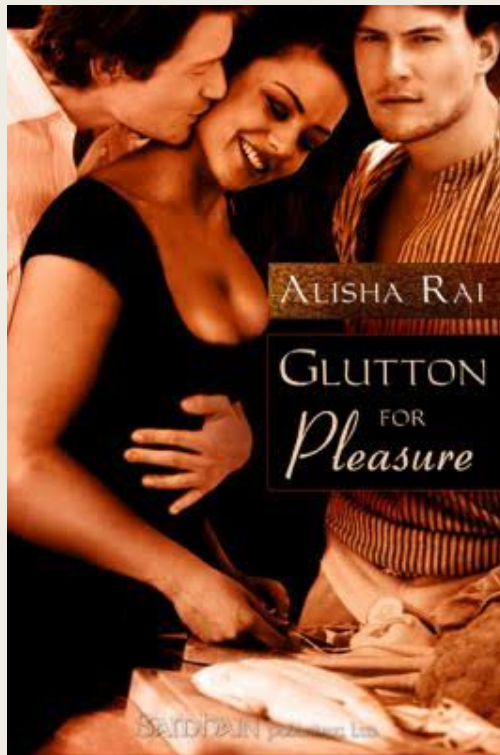
# Packaging!

- Author CM
  - *Feminist, smart, heroine-focused, intersectional, distinctive*
  
- Author AR
  - *Feminist, smart, heroine-focused, intersectional, distinctive*

# Author AR



# Author CM



# What should you think about in packaging?

- What themes/elements/images do the covers in your subgenre have in common?
- Of those themes, what elements correspond to themes in your books?