

The background is a solid light pink color. In the upper right corner, there is a large, detailed illustration of a latte in a white cup, showing a heart-shaped foam design. Scattered across the entire cover are numerous small, white-outlined coffee beans. The text is centered and uses a mix of bold sans-serif and elegant script fonts.

A SWEET SHORT

Blushing lattes

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“I think you are in very great danger of making him as much in
love with you as ever.”

—PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Blushing Lattes

The ice crystals all but faded from Tye's breath the moment he set foot in the Sweet Stop Coffee Shop. A brass bell chimed above him, and the warm scents of coffee and baked goods embraced him in a welcoming hug.

Today he'd finally ask out Beth Walsh. He'd said that to himself every day since Professor Dalton's English class a year ago. He'd procrastinated long enough. It was now or never.

At the front counter, two elderly ladies chatted with Beth. She laughed at something they said, and her light dusting of freckles seemed to dance across her nose like an Appaloosa through the snow.

“A horse? Really?” he chided himself. He shook his head and ignored the questioning stares from a nearby table. Beth was the English major, and for good reason. Best for him to stick to animals and biology.

The ladies paid, and with a final wave, shuffled toward a table, fancy drinks in hand.

He unclenched his hands from the strap of his book-bag, took a breath, and stepped up to the counter.

“Morning, Tye.” Beth greeted him with her singsong voice. “I was afraid you wouldn’t make it in today with the snowstorm.”

When she turned those violet eyes on him, all words rushed from his mind. He forgot why he was there until she reached for a cup and scribbled across the side in permanent marker. “The usual?”

He worked his jaw and swallowed the dry lump that formed whenever he saw her. Did he still smell like the horses at the veterinary clinic? He’d rushed over here as soon as his class ended, but his doubts resurfaced. What girl wanted a guy who spent his days in a stable and smelled like one, too? She was beautiful, smart, and smelled of vanilla and cinnamon.

Clearing the cobwebs from his throat, he infused more confidence into his voice than he felt. “Actually, I thought I’d try something new. What would you recommend?”

“Oh!” Her eyes lit. “Well, there’s the favorites—peppermint mocha, caramel latte, flat white. Or there’s the seasonal special, red velvet latte.”

“What’s your favorite?”

A slight blush crept up her cheeks. “Promise you won’t laugh?”

“Why would I laugh?” If she said the sky was purple, she’d still be the loveliest girl he’d ever met.

“It’s not technically a coffee drink, but...” She lowered her voice and leaned in. “I always go for the raspberry hot chocolate.”

“Sounds perfect.”

With a rosy grin, she ducked beneath the counter and retrieved a large container of cocoa. While she worked on his drink, his gaze dipped to the two tip jars beside the cash register labeled *Romeo and Juliet* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

Every day, the baristas took turns choosing a different question. The guys usually picked something about sports, and the other girls wavered between celebrity gossip or movies. But he could always pick out Beth's bookish questions.

"So, today's question is..."

She scooped the last of the cocoa and started on the steamed milk. "Best literary love story."

He studied the two jars before him and noticed Jane Austen had about twice as many tips as Shakespeare. He smiled. "Is there a third option?"

She yanked the half-steamed cup from the machine, splashing her apron with white foam. "What's wrong with those? They're unquestionably two of the most praised stories of all time." She brushed an auburn curl from her face. "That's like saying Aretha Franklin wasn't the Queen of Soul."

He smiled at the comparison. "Well, Romeo is kind of a jerk, and an immature teenager at best."

"I take it you don't believe in love at first sight?" she teased.

If she only knew.

“More like I don’t think the greatest love story should end with everyone killing each other.”

“Fair point. But what about *Pride and Prejudice*? I’ll warn you, it’s my favorite book, and anything you say can and will be held against you.”

He raised his hands in surrender. “Duly noted.”

“Rethinking your answer?”

“No, just figure I should keep those thoughts to myself.”

“Smart man. So, if it’s not Shakespeare and it’s not Jane Austen, what would you suggest?” She mixed the cocoa and sugar into the milk and swirled in a scoop of raspberry powder.

He smiled at the hefty dollop of whipped cream on top.

“The Princess Bride.”

She paused with the drink halfway across the counter and pinned him with a challenging look. “Really? You think that’s a greater love story than *Pride and Prejudice*?”

He shrugged. “The author got one thing right.”

“And what’s that?” she asked.

“The hero always gets the girl.”

“Hmm.” She tilted her head in thought. “Now that, I can agree with.” She handed him the paper cup and watched as he took a sip.

Like a shot of liquid courage, he gulped the hot liquid and nearly blurted out the question. “Actually, I was hoping you’d agree to go see it. With me. It’s playing at the old drive-in theater this Saturday. If you want to go.” The words tumbled out like a newborn colt—wild, ungainly, awkward. He paused, face burning, and waited for what would surely be her *no*.

Instead, she ducked her head and gave him a shy smile. “On one condition.”

“Anything.” He’d lasso a wild mustang if she asked.

Her blush grew to match her pink sweater. If only he could kiss her right then and there.

“Promise to show me those horses you work with, one day?”

Hope flooded through him, and he knew he’d found his Buttercup.

“As you wish.”

About the Author



An award-winning author of "Fields of Glass," Alyssa is a Colorado native who attended the Colorado School of Mines, got her masters in Geological Engineering, and promptly became a watercolor artist and author (as one does). She loves writing heartfelt romances with happy endings, a bit of mystery, faith, humor, and second chances. When she's not writing, you can find her cooking, quilting, painting, or doing any number of crafty activities. Visit her website to learn more and receive a free novella when you subscribe to her newsletter.

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