

## Romance with a dark side

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### Promises and Other Broken Things

by J.S. Eades (Self-published, 406 pages, \$19)

In her debut novel, "Promises and Other Broken Things," Kitchener author J.S. Eades, presents a romance with a dark side.

No, not that kind of dark: you won't find vampires or other paranormal goings-on in this exploration of a passionate liaison between co-workers at a successful advertising agency. The darkness here comes from the fact that the two lovers — Amelia and Declan — are married to other people. Yes, this is a story of adultery.

Amelia York, a bright, ambitious accountant, happily married to Scott, is the "new girl" at the Baker, Wright and Kavanaugh agency. On her first day, befuddled with too much information on the tour of the office, she encounters Declan Kavanaugh in the hallway. Their eyes meet and, boom, it begins.

Declan is a partner in the firm, his tough-guy exterior hiding a problem-filled married life and troubled family situation. Amelia's a sympathetic colleague — at first. But as in any romance novel, the forces of attraction are just too hard to resist.

Eades explores the allure as well as the perils of breaking the rules. As their attraction grows, Amelia and Declan find their home lives suffering, but it's hard for the lovers to acknowledge whether the romance is affecting their marriages, or if the problems at home are driving them together for comfort. Of course, this is a modern romance as well, so the physical attraction is a strong vibe throughout the story.

Told in two voices — Amelia's laid-bare "diary" and Declan's internal, masculine monologue (yes, much swearing) — "Promises and Other Broken Things" moves at a fast pace with lots of dialogue and a focus on plot. Although at times it reads a bit like fan fiction with its references to pop culture (Amelia has an "Amy Pond" moment in homage to a character in the TV show "Dr. Who," for instance) Eades tells a story of two people struggling to find a balance between right and wrong, and not always getting it right.

No spoilers here: the two protagonists navigate their situation to a conclusion, but whether they reach a place they deserve is a good question, and one that Eades leaves up to readers.

J.S. Eades will be signing copies of her novel at the Chapters store in Waterloo on March 7, from noon to 4 p.m.

Jean Mills is a Guelph writer and author.



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