

LYNN RAYE HARRIS
KIMBERLY LANG
and
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GLITZ, GLAM & GORGEOUS MEN

VOLUME 4: A BOOK OF SEXY SERIES EXCERPTS

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHORS
LYNN RAYE HARRIS
KIMBERLY LANG
AND
KIRA SINCLAIR
ANDREA LAURENCE

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Lynn Raye Harris





USA Today bestselling author Lynn Raye Harris burst onto the scene when she won a writing contest held by Harlequin. The prize was an editor for a year—but only six months later, Lynn sold her first novel. A former finalist for the Romance Writers of America's Golden Heart®

Award, Lynn lives in Alabama with her handsome husband and two crazy cats. Her stories have been called "exceptional and emotional," "intense," and "sizzling."

You can learn more at her website,

http://www.LynnRayeHarris.com

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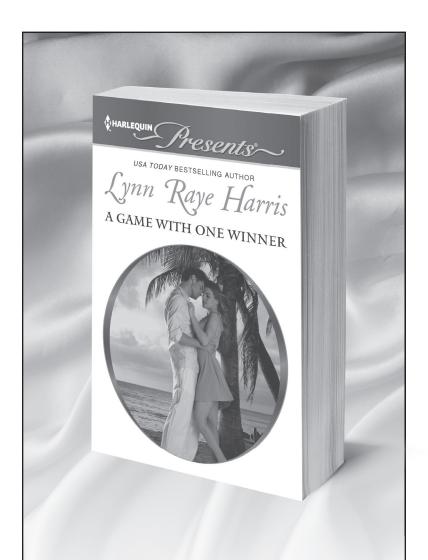
Lynn loves hearing from her readers!

BOOKS BY LYNN RAYE HARRIS:

Harlequin Presents

- The Change in Di Navarra's Plan (coming in December 2013)
- A Facade to Shatter (coming in October 2013)
- A Game With One Winner (April 2013)
- Marriage Behind the Facade (January 2013)
- The Girl Nobody Wanted (November 2012)
- Captive But Forbidden (July 2012)
- Strangers in the Desert (March 2012)
- The Man With the Money (November 2011)
- Behind the Palace Walls (June 2011)
- The Devil's Heart (April 2011)
- Chosen by the Sheikh (November 2010)
- The Prince's Royal Concubine (June 2010)
- Cavelli's Lost Heir (January 2010)
- Spanish Magnate, Red-Hot Revenge (August 2009)

And don't miss the smashing first book in Lynn's brand new Hostile Operations Team series! Hot Pursuit is coming soon wherever ebooks are sold!



A GAME WITH ONE WINNER BY LYNN RAYE HARRIS

April 2013, Harlequin Presents ISBN: 978-0373131389

Proud heiress on a losing streak?

Paparazzi darling Caroline Sullivan is hiding a secret behind her dazzling-yet-inscrutable smile. Her ex-flame, Russian businessman Roman Kazarov, is back on the sceneis he seeking revenge for her humiliating rejection or just to take possession of her troubled business?

Sources confirm that the cutthroat Kazarov is seriously ruffling the pristine feathers of the normally cautious Caro....

Rumors of scorching-hot secret trysts are flying, but only one thing is certain-in this supreme game of wills only one person can win, and Roman believes he holds the ace....

For more information, visit www.LynnRayeHarris.com/books/a-game-with-one-winner/ or scan this QR Code:



AN EXCERPT FROM

A GAME WITH ONE WINNER BY LYNN RAYE HARRIS

I've done my research," Roman said. "And I know the end is near for Sullivan's. If you wish to see it continue, you'll cooperate with me."

Caroline tilted her chin up. She'd been strong for so long that it was as natural to her as breathing. She might have been young and naïve five years ago, when she'd loved this man beyond the dictates of reason or sense, but no longer.

"Why on earth would I do that? Are you saying I should just trust you? Sign over Sullivan's and trust that you'll 'save' the stores that have been in my family for five generations?" She shook her head. "I'd be a fool if I did business that way. And I assure you I am no fool."

Miraculously, a taxi broke through the traffic and pulled to the curb then. The uniformed doorman drew open the door with a flourish. "Madam, your taxi."

Caroline turned without waiting for an answer and entered the cab. She was just about to tell the driver where to take her when Roman filled the frame of the open door.

"This is my taxi," she blurted as he shifted her over with a nudge of his hip.

"I'm going in the same direction." He settled in beside her and gave the driver an address in the financial district. Caroline wanted to splutter in outrage, but she forced herself to breathe evenly, calmly. Her heart was a trapped butterfly in her chest. She couldn't lead Roman to her door. She couldn't bear to have him know where she lived. If Ryan came outside for some reason...

No. Caroline gave the driver the address of a townhome in Greenwich Village. It wasn't *her* townhome, but she could walk the two streets over to her own house once the taxi was gone.

"How did you know we were going in the same direction?" she demanded as the taxi began to inch back into traffic.

He shrugged. "Because I'm in no hurry. Even if you went north, I could eventually go south again."

Caroline tucked her wrap over one shoulder. "That seems like a terrible waste of time."

"I hardly think so. I have you alone now."

Her heart thumped. Once, she would have been giddy to be alone with him for a long cab ride. She would have turned into his arms and tilted her head back for his kiss. Unwelcome heat bloomed in her cheeks, her belly. How many clandestine kisses had they shared in taxis such as this one?

Caroline didn't want to think about it. She slid as far away from him as she could get and turned to stare out the window at the mass of humanity moving along the sidewalks. A young woman in a yellow dress caught her eye as she walked beneath a street lamp, her arm looped into the man's beside her. When she threw her head back and laughed, Caroline felt a pang of envy. When was the last time she'd laughed so spontaneously?

Arrested by her laugh or her beauty, or some unidentifiable thing Caroline couldn't see, the man drew the girl into his arms. Caroline craned her neck as the taxi moved past, watched as the girl wrapped her arms around the man's neck and their lips met.

When she turned back, she could feel Roman's eyes on her in the darkened taxi.

"Ah, romance," he said, the words dripping with cynicism. Caroline closed her eyes and swallowed. She bit her lip

against the urge to say she was sorry for any pain she'd caused

him. They'd said everything five years ago. It was too late now, and she wasn't the same person she'd been then.

"What do you want from me, Roman?" Her voice sounded strained to her own ears. If he noticed, he didn't comment.

"You know what I want. What I came here for."

She turned to look at him and barely stopped herself from sucking in her breath at the sight of him all dark and moody beside her. After five years, was she still supposed to be this affected by his dark male beauty?

"You're wasting your time. Sullivan's isn't for sale at any price."

There was silence between them for a long moment. And then he burst into laughter. His voice was rich, deep and sexy, and a curl of heat wound through her at the sound.

"You will sell, Caroline. You will do it because you can't bear to see it cease to exist. Be stubborn—and watch when your suppliers cut off your line of credit, one by one. Watch as you have to close one store, and then another, and still you cannot fill your orders or keep your stores supplied with goods. Sullivan's is known for quality, for luxury. Will you cease to order the best and settle for second best? Will you tell your customers they can no longer have the Russian caviar, the finest smoked salmon, the specialty cakes from Josette's, the designer handbags from Italy or the custom suits in the men's haberdashery?"

A shiver traveled up her spine, vibrated across her shoulder blades. Her stomach clenched hard. Yes, it was that bad. Yes, she'd been studying the list of her suppliers and wondering how she could cut corners and still keep the quality for which Sullivan's was known. The specialty food shop was hugely expensive—and yes, she'd thought of downsizing that department, of eliminating it in some markets.

She'd wanted to ask her father. She'd wanted to sit at his

feet and ask him what he thought, just as she'd wanted to turn to Jon and ask him for his opinion. But they were unavailable, and she would not choke. She would make the hard choices. For Ryan. She would do it for Ryan.

Family was everything. It was all she had.

"I won't discuss this with you, Roman," she said, her voice as hard as she could make it. "You don't own Sullivan's yet. If I have anything to say about it, you won't ever get that chance."

"This is the thing you fail to understand, *solnyshko*. You have no say. It is as inevitable as a sunset."

"Nothing is inevitable. Not while I have my wits. I intend to fight you with everything I have. You will not win."

His smile was lethally cold. And dangerously attractive if the spike in her temperature was any indication.

"Ah, but I will. This time, Caroline, I get my way."

Her heart thumped. "And what's that supposed to mean? Surely you aren't still brooding over our brief affair. You can't mean to acquire Sullivan's simply to get revenge for past slights."

She said the words as if they were nothing, as if the mere idea were ridiculous, though her pulse skittered wildly in her wrists, her throat.

The corners of his mouth tightened, and her insides squeezed into a tight ball.

"Brooding? Hardly that, my dear. I've realized since that night that my..." He paused. "...feelings...were not quite what I thought they were." His gaze dropped over her body, back up again. "I was enamored with you, this is true. But love? No."

It should not hurt to hear him say such a thing, but it did. She'd loved him so much, and she'd believed that he had loved her in return.

And now he was telling her he never had. That it was all an illusion. The knowledge hurt far more than she'd have thought possible five years after the fact.

"Then why are you here?" she asked tightly. "Why does Sullivan's matter to you? You own far more impressive department stores. You don't need mine."

His laugh was soft, mocking. "No, I don't need them." He leaned toward her suddenly, his eyes gleaming in the light from the traffic. Her stomach clenched in reaction, though she hardly knew what she was reacting to.

"I want them," he growled. "And I want you."



October 2013, Harlequin Presents

Dismissed & Discarded: Can he deny the forgotten Corretti?

Zach Scott wakes from nightmares to the echo of gunfire. So when he stirs from a trance and finds himself not in his fighter jet but at a party, pressed up against the soft, womanly figure of Lia Corretti, he quickly rages against her sweet pity.

For years the forgotten Corretti has hidden her pain behind a façade. So Lia recognises the shadows in Zach's eyes. But there's nothing familiar about the hot heat of Zach as he traps her to him. Can she lower her guard long enough to let him see all of her?

AN EXCERPT FROM

A FAÇADE TO SHATTER BY LYNN RAYE HARRIS

"7 ach?"

His head whipped around, his gaze clashing with the woman's who'd moved through the crowd unseen and now stood before him. Shock coursed through him. It was as if he'd blinked and found himself whisked back to a different party. Almost against his will, his body responded to the stimulus of seeing her again. He wasn't so inexperienced as to allow an unwanted erection, but a tingle of excitement buzzed in his veins nevertheless.

Lia Coretti gazed up at him, her blue-green eyes filled with some emotion he couldn't place. Her dark red hair was twisted on her head, a few strands falling free to dangle over one shoulder. She was wearing a black dress with high heels and a simple pair of diamond earrings.

She wasn't dripping in jewels like so many of the women in this room, yet she looked as if she belonged. The woman who'd been talking to him had thankfully melted away, her attention caught by someone else.

"Hello, Lia," he said, covering his shock with a blandness that belied the turmoil raging inside him. He spoke as if it hadn't been a month, as if they'd never spent two blissful nights together. As if he didn't care that she was standing before him when what he really wanted to ask her was what the hell she was doing here.

But he was afraid he knew. It wouldn't be the first time a woman he'd slept with had gotten the wrong idea. He was a Scott, and Scotts were accustomed to dealing with fortune hunters. She hadn't seemed to be that type of woman, but clearly he'd been wrong.

He noticed that her golden skin somehow managed to look pale in the ballroom lights. Tight. There were lines around her lips, her eyes. She looked as if she'd been sick. And then she closed her eyes, her skin growing even paler. Instinctively, Zach reached for her arm.

He didn't count on the electricity sizzling through him at that single touch, or at the way she jerked in response.

"I'm sorry," she said in English, her accent sliding over the words. "I shouldn't have come here. I should have found another way."

"Why are you here?" he demanded, his voice more abrupt than he'd intended it to be.

She looked up at him, her eyes wide and earnest. *Innocent*. Why did he think of innocence when he thought of Lia? They'd had a one night—correction, two night—stand, but he couldn't shake the idea that the woman he'd made love to had somehow been innocent before he'd corrupted her.

"I-I need to tell you something."

"You could have called," he said coolly.

She shook her head. "Even if you had given me your number..." She seemed to stiffen, her chin coming up defiantly. "It is not the kind of thing one can say over the phone."

Zach took her by the elbow, firmly but gently, and steered her toward the nearest exit. She didn't resist. They emerged from the crowded ballroom onto a terrace that overlooked the golf course. It was dark, but the putting green was lit and there were still players practicing their swings.

He let her go and moved out of her orbit, his entire body tight with anger and restlessness. "And what do you wish to say to me, Lia?" He sounded cold and in control. Inhuman. It was precisely what he needed to be in order to deal with her. He'd let himself feel softer emotions when he'd been with her before, and look where that had gotten him. If he'd been more direct, she wouldn't be here now. She would know that her chances of anything besides sex from him were non-existent.

He would not make that mistake again.

Lia blinked. Her tongue darted out over her lower lip, and a bolt of sensation shot through him at that singular movement. His body wanted to react, but he refused to let it. She was a woman like any other, he reminded himself. If sex was what he wanted, he had only to walk back in that ballroom and select a partner.

Her gaze flicked to the door. "Perhaps we should go somewhere more private."

"No. Tell me what you came to say, and then go back to your hotel."

She seemed taken aback at the intensity of his tone. She ran a hand down her dress nervously, and then lifted it to tuck one of the dangling locks of hair behind her ear. "You've changed," she said.

He shook his head. "I'd think, rather, that you do not know me." He spread his hands wide. "This is who I am, Lia. What I am."

She looked hurt, and he felt an uncharacteristic pinch in his heart. But he knew how to handle this. He knew the words to say because he'd said a variation of them countless times before.

"Palermo was fun. But there can be nothing more between us. I'm sorry you came all this way."

He'd expected her to crumple beneath the weight of his words. She didn't. For a long moment, she only stared at him. And then she drew herself up, her eyes flashing. It was not the

response he expected, and it surprised him. Intrigued him too, if he were willing to admit it.

"There can be more," she said firmly. "There must be more."

Zach cursed himself. Why, of all the possible women in the world, had he chosen this one to break his long sexual fast with? He'd known there was something innocent about her, something naïve. He should have sent her back to her room. Unfortunately, his brain had short-circuited the instant all the blood that should have powered it started flowing south.

And it had kept short-circuiting for two long nights and an ill-advised day spent walking around Palermo like a happy couple.

"I'm sorry if you got the wrong idea, sugar," he began.

She didn't let him finish. Her brows drew down angrily as she closed the distance between them and poked him hard in the chest with a manicured finger. He was too stunned to react. "The wrong idea?" she demanded.

She swore in Italian, curses that somehow sounded so pretty but were actually quite rude if translated. Zach was bemused in spite of himself.

"There were consequences to those two days," she flashed. "For both of us, bello."

Ice shot down his spine, sobering him right up again.

"What are you talking about?" he snapped.

Her lips tightened. And then she said the words that sliced through him like a sword thrust to the heart.

"I'm pregnant, Zach. With your baby."

COMING SOON From Lynn Raye Harris

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H.O.T.

Introducing an exciting new series by Lynn Raye Harris! Do you like your men dangerous? Thrilling? HOT? Then get ready for the Hostile Operations Team!

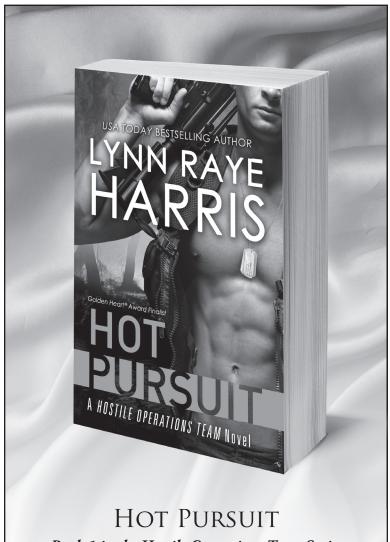
HOT is an elite Army unit, comprised of men who have undergone the most rigorous and grueling training in existence in order to become the best of the best. Their missions are secret, dangerous, and potentially politically explosive.

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They are the men of HOT!

- Book One: *Hot Pursuit* available Summer 2013
- Book Two: *Hot Reunion* coming soon
- Book Three: *Hot Shot* coming soon

And look for a novella, Hot Mess, coming in August!



Book 1 in the Hostile Operations Team Series

BY LYNN RAYE HARRIS

Coming Soon ISBN: NA

The last man she ever wanted to see...

Evie Baker's luck just ran out. Thanks to an ex-partner with organized crime ties, she's lost her restaurant, her money, and nearly all her self-respect. Forced to return to her hometown and work as a shampoo girl in her mother's salon, she doesn't think her luck can get any worse.

But then someone starts shooting at her, her sullen baby sister is suddenly missing, and the high school heartthrob who stole her heart—and her virginity—is the only man big enough and bad enough to help.

Might be the only one who can save her...

Captain Matt "Richie Rich" Girard can't afford to get involved. He's already on the verge of a court-martial after a Top Secret op gone wrong, and he's been ordered to stay out of trouble while he's home for his sister's wedding.

But when Evie's ex-partner turns up dead, staying out of trouble is the last thing on Matt's mind. He failed Evie once before; he can't fail her again. If he's going to protect her from a killer, and find her sister before time runs out, he'll have to risk his entire future—and both their lives—to do it.

Things are about to get HOT in the bayou!

For more information, visit www.LynnRayeHarris.com/books/hot-pursuit or scan this QR Code:



AN EXCERPT FROM

HOT PURSUIT BY LYNN RAYE HARRIS

C Tthink you lost your drink."

Evie knew that voice. It slid over her like hot silk and she spun to find Matt Girard standing behind her, holding the bottle she'd just ditched. Why did her heart skip the second he showed up? And why did he have to look so *delicious*?

"I didn't lose it."

He stood there in faded jeans and a dark T-shirt that molded to his hard pecs and biceps. But it wasn't his clothing that got her attention so much as his eyes. There was something in them, something she didn't remember seeing when he'd been seventeen. He'd been part of this crowd long ago, much more than she had, but he no longer looked like he belonged—in spite of the longing looks some of the women cast in his direction.

His gaze dropped over her before rising again, slowly, and her body reacted as if he'd brushed his fingers over her. There was something hot and sharp and thrilling in that gaze—and she was way more susceptible to it than she wanted to be.

Once, she would have given anything for him to look at her like that. Now, she wasn't certain she'd survive the experience.

"Great dress." His voice was silky.

Evie swallowed. She was tingling and that wasn't a good thing. The last time she'd tingled over this man, it had not turned out so well. "Thanks. I think."

He grinned. "It's definitely a compliment."

Evie crossed her arms and tried to look cool. "Thought you

weren't coming tonight."

"Now what made you think a thing like that?"

Her blood slogged like molasses in her veins. "I believe you said 'probably not' in response to Julie's query."

His teeth flashed. "Yeah, but that's before I knew you'd be here."

"What do you want, Matt?" Her heart thrummed like she was sixteen again.

His gaze dropped once more. "Maybe I might like to see what's under that dress." His voice sounded low and sexy. It pooled in her belly, sent hot waves of need spiraling outward.

"Forget it," she said with a conviction she didn't quite feel. "As I recall, the last time didn't turn out so well for me."

"I know, and I'm sorry."

"You said that earlier."

"I did."

She tossed her hair over her shoulder. "So why'd you come then? I heard you the first time."

He sighed. "Evie, Jesus." He raked a hand through his hair, and her blood hummed at the ripple and flex of muscle. "I just got back from the desert. Life out there is...unpredictable. It makes a man think. And I've decided that I don't like feeling like a shithead for something that happened ten years ago. I want to clear the slate."

Evie let out a breath. She'd been so hurt, and then she'd been angry. But it was a long time ago and she couldn't hold a grudge forever. Even now, she recognized that most of her feelings about the incident were still tied up with having her love so cruelly flung back in her face. The other stuff, while definitely unpleasant at the time, hardly mattered anymore.

"We were kids, Matt."

"I hurt you."

She didn't flinch from his gaze. "You did. But I'm not

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sixteen anymore. And like I said today, it was my fault too. I asked you to do it. And I told a couple of my friends about it, so it wasn't just you telling the boys." She shrugged with a lightness she didn't quite feel. "What happened was probably inevitable. The guys thought I was easy. The girls who were jealous said I was a slut. They made my senior year difficult in some ways. But what hurt the most was never hearing from you again."

There, she'd said it. She'd told him what really hurt, and she'd given him a window into her feelings back then. He'd have had to be an idiot not to know, but it was always possible he hadn't.

"I should have called you."

The music changed, the beat slowing. Evie took a step backward instinctively, but Matt caught her hand and held it tight. She tugged once, and then stopped. They faced each other across a few feet of space. Around them, couples began to slide together, fitting into each other like pieces of a jigsaw.

Evie's pulse beat harder. Her skin sizzled where they touched, his big hand engulfing hers, his palm calloused in a way that shocked her. He was a Girard, rich, entitled—and he had a workman's hands.

"One dance."

Her insides melted a little more. "I'm not sure it's a good idea."

But what she really wanted to do was say yes.

His eyes were bright. "Why not? We're adults now, Evie. No one's getting hurt here."

He said it like it was so easy, but was it really? Wasn't she still vulnerable on some level? She was down on her luck right now, feeling like a loser, and here he was, the same gorgeous, cocky, beautiful creature he'd always been.

Except, no, he was more than that, wasn't he? There was

something behind his smile now. Something dark and sad. Pain flared in his grey eyes and then was gone so quickly she wondered if she'd imagined it.

It shocked her. She suddenly wanted to know what had happened to him. She'd heard about him being held captive by terrorists. How could he not be affected by something like that? Of all the things she'd expected Matt Girard to do with his life, putting himself into danger had not been it. He had everything. Why would he want to risk his life that way?

She remembered when his mother had died. He'd been twelve. Mama had taken her to the wake out at Reynier's Retreat. There were so many people crowding the beautiful rooms of the mansion. The house was heavy with sadness and thick with grief and it had scared her. She'd escaped to run down the wide lawn. She'd known where to find Matt. He'd been curled inside the hollow of a tree they'd found a few years before.

He'd been dressed in a black suit, his dark hair slicked back carefully, his grey eyes wide and wounded as he looked up at her. Her heart had lifted into her throat then. She'd only been eleven, but she'd felt something in that moment that rocked her world—and would continue to rock her world until she was sixteen and shattered by his casual cruelty.

But not that day. That day, she'd slid into the hollow and sat down beside him. When she'd put her arms around him, he'd turned his face into the crook of her neck and wept.

Evie sucked in a breath. How could she walk away from him now, knowing there was something behind those eyes? Something that hurt him?

"One dance, Evangeline," he said softly when she hesitated. "Make a soldier's night. I just got back from the desert a few days ago. I'd like to dance with a pretty woman and forget about that hellhole for a while."

HOT PURSUIT 29

Evie swallowed. "That's not fair."

He grinned. "Because you can't say no now?"

She nodded.

"Good for me then."

"Just one dance and we go our separate ways, got it?" Because she didn't want to feel this tangle of emotions again. This tiny blossoming in her heart that said she was going to be in so much trouble if she didn't shut it down quick.

"If that's what you want." His voice was rough.

He took her other hand then, ran his palms up her arms to her shoulders. Little sparks of sensation swirled in her belly, lighting her up like the fourth of July. He pulled her into his arms right there on the edge of the floor.

Evie braced her hands against his chest, pressed back when he tried to bring her closer. It was already overwhelming to be so close to him. To feel his heat and hardness next to her body.

To feel everything she'd once wanted so much...

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-Everyday Is The Same

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—Pearl's World of Romance

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KIMBERLY LANG





Kimberly Lang isn't one of those people who always knew she wanted to be a writer. She actually wanted to be a ballerina, but puberty failed to deliver the required swan-like elegance. That dream scuttled, she went on to get her Master's Degree in English—and she has the bartending skills to prove it. At her husband's insistence, she quit teaching in 2007 to write full-time, and in May 2008, sold her first book to Harlequin's London office.

That book, *The Secret Mistress Arrangement*, debuted at number nine on the Borders Series Bestseller list and won the 2009 National Readers' Choice Award for Best First Book.

Since then, Kimberly's books have appeared on the *USA Today*, Amazon, Borders, and Bookscan bestseller lists, and have been translated into more than a dozen languages. (And, yes, that's really cool.)

She's married to her college sweetheart, whom she affectionately (but appropriately) calls her Darling Geek, and is Mom to the most brilliant and beautiful child on the planet (aptly nicknamed Amazing Child). She started taking yoga-based fitness because she eats way too many jelly beans while writing, and became an instructor once she figured out that spending time with her butt over her head helped spark her creativity. More than one sticky plot point has been solved in the Down Dog position. She has no hobbies because she doesn't have time, but if she did, they'd include knitting, skiing and ballroom dancing, because they sound like they might be fun.

Visit Kimberly's website at www.BooksByKimberly.com

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- "Grace Felt the Heat" in When Honey Got Married...
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THE
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OF A
GOOD GIRL
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TAMING
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THE LABLANC SISTERS

Love in the Big Easy... isn't

Vivienne

Playing the saint to rock-star Conner's sinner should be so easy, but her less-than-saintly thoughts are putting more than just Vivi's halo in danger...

Lorelei

Resisting temptation was never her strength, but giving in to the very tempting Donovan may destroy Lorelei's last chance at redemption...

AN EXCERPT FROM

THE DOWNFALL OF A GOOD GIRL BY KIMBERLY LANG

Vivi turned to look at the circus on the other side of the street. Connor and his team were being followed by camera crews and reporters. It was good publicity for what they were doing, but it meant Connor's team was doing it very, very slowly. She had a point, but still... "Pardon me if I don't cry for him."

"Wow, you're mean. It's a good thing the *Bon Argent* people don't know you better or they'd pull your halo in a heartbeat, Saint Vivi."

"He told me yesterday how much his fans mean to him. He doesn't mind this."

"There's a big difference between the fans who love and admire him and the press who just want something from him."

When had Lorelei developed such insights *and* the need to share them? "Maybe. But the two go hand in hand. He can't have one without the other, so..."

Lorelei patted her on the shoulder. "You just keep clinging to that if it makes you feel better." Grabbing an empty trash bag, she started to walk away. Over her shoulder, though, she tossed one last grenade. "But remember it though, the next time you wonder why everyone always thought you were so sanctimonious."

Lorelei was too far away for Vivi to rebut the accusation, and the words hung in the air like a rebuke. A very unfair rebuke. She wasn't sanctimonious, darn it; she just had a strong inner compass. That wasn't a character flaw; it was practically

a virtue. More people needed that kind of inner knowledge; otherwise they ended up in the tabloids like Connor.

But... Connor *was* rather struggling over there, and with the press in the way, nothing was going to get done, and that was what was really important. He'd mentioned his loyalty to his fans, but nothing about the press. She could throw him a rope.

Taking a deep breath, she crossed to the middle of the street. Hands on her hips in what she hoped looked like annoyance, she shouted as loud as she could. "Hey, Connor!" Cameras turned in her direction, but she brazened it out. "You gonna stand around all day like a pretty boy or are you gonna work?"

Silence fell. She raised an eyebrow and all the heads swiveled back to Connor for his response. Connor met her eyes and she swore she saw the corner of his mouth twitch into a smile before he caught it.

"It's not that my team doesn't relish kicking your butts," she said, and a cheer went up behind her from her team, "but it just doesn't seem sporting if you're not even trying."

"We're just warming up, Vivi, so don't start celebrating too soon." He turned to the press. "Y'all have enough to run with. You're welcome to stay, but if you do, I'm going to expect you to work. I've got some catching up to do."

There were grumbles, both from the media and Connor's team, but the reminder seemed to do the trick. Work gloves were pulled back on, trash bags picked back up, and cameras loaded into vans. Connor joined her on the street – neutral territory between the two teams now working in earnest.

Quietly he said, "Thanks. I owe you."

"That's twice now, and I do intend to collect."

"I always pay my debts."

"Good to know. But I should warn you, my favors don't come cheap."

"I should certainly hope not." He looked her up and down in a way he never had before, and something fluttery came to life in her stomach. *Damn it, damn it, damn it.* She should be past this kind of juvenile response. But there was just something so raw and sexy about Connor in his black Sinner shirt, jeans and work boots, she'd have to have been dead for a week not to feel the effect. Even with the cameras following him around, he'd managed to work up a sweat and the beads of moisture at his temples only added to that purely masculine vibe.

Focus. "And you won't be getting off quick and easy, either."

"Excellent." Connor obviously found something amusing in this – more amusing than it seemed – and Vivi felt like she was tripping over a current running through the conversation without knowing how or why. "Quick and cheap aren't really my style, you know."

What on earth...? Lord, she needed a map to navigate this conversation. "Well, I didn't break that circus up to stand around and chit-chat with you, so I think we should both get back to work."

There was that smirk again. "On you go, then."

Vivi stepped back to do just that and immediately tripped over a piece of asphalt knocked loose by the flooding. She landed with a thud, and a sharp pain shot through her left butt cheek. Her eyes watered as she reached under herself and removed another, smaller, piece of asphalt. "Ouch."

Connor squatted, amusement and concern written equally on his face. "You okay?"

"Yes." It was embarrassing, but at least the cameras had already been put away. *Small favors*.

"That whole 'grace and poise' thing doesn't actually count as much in the pageant system as we're led to believe, does it?"
"Hush."

There was that grin again. "You're not the first woman to be

knocked off-kilter by my presence..."

"Don't flatter yourself."

Conner chuckled and stood. "Should I offer assistance?"

"It would be nice," she snapped.

He extended a hand and hauled her to her feet. Vivi rubbed a hand over the spot where the sharp debris had dug in. "That's going to leave a bruise."

"Want me to rub it for you?"

Shock rocketed through her. "Why don't you just kiss it," she snapped.

His voice dropped a notch as he leaned in. "Calling in one of your favors already?"

Vivi's throat closed. She hadn't meant it like *that*. Heat rushed over her body at the thought of Connor... Of Connor's lips... His hands... She took a big step back and tried to blot out the image, to shake off the feeling... "You wish." *Ugh*. She'd meant that to sound snappy and flip, but it came out weak and shaky.

Connor's response was another low chuckle that did nothing to help the situation. Then he was heading back to his side of the street without a backwards glance, but his casual whistling floated back to her ears and the heat on her skin found a new source. *Damn him*.

This is ridiculous. She was just oversensitive after yesterday, and Connor's attempt to fluster her in the wake of that was adolescent. As was her response, she admitted.

Her butt still hurt, but she couldn't rub the ache away without thinking of Connor's offer. She went to the cooler and grabbed a water bottle and drank deeply, trying to look casual. Her brain began to function normally once she had some distance from him, and she froze in horror as the conversation replayed in her head. Dear Lord, had she really implied that ... And he'd said... And then ... *Oh my God*.

How could her face feel hot while cold chills of horror crawled over her skin? Maybe she was sick. That would truly be excellent: she could claim the earlier conversation was simply feverish ramblings *and* she could spend the rest of Sinners and Saints locked up in her house.

I should be so lucky.

This is what came of trying to be nice to Connor. At least when he was insulting or irritating her, he didn't throw little double-entendres into the conversation to trip her up and mess with her mind.

That explains it. Relief washed over her. She wasn't insane; she just wasn't used to Connor acting like that. He'd taken advantage of her politeness and gotten flirty like she was just another simpering fan. That's what had thrown her off her game. Her world didn't seem so quite off-kilter now. She straightened her shoulders and got a hold of herself. No more Miss-Nice-Vivi. It was dangerous.

And how dare he talk to her like she was one of his slobbering, sex-starved groupies? Anger flashed through her. There was a time and a place for that kind of banter and here and now were neither. And she certainly wasn't the right audience. The anger at Connor gave way to anger at herself when a little voice piped up to remind her how quickly she'd jumped to a full-color visual of Connor...

Ugh. Do you have no self-respect at all?
Okay, note to self: no more tossing Connor a rope.
It might end up tied around her neck next time.

AN EXCERPT FROM

THE TAMING OF A WILD CHILD BY KIMBERLY LANG

℃ Tdon't understand you at all, Lorelei."

So few do." She chuckled. "But, then, that makes us even. I don't get you either."

"I'm not exactly a mystery. What you see is what you get."

She looked at him closely, then shook her head. "No. I don't think so."

"What makes you say that?"

"The fact you're on my porch."

Once again, the quick change in topic had him scrambling to catch up. Boy, Lorelei really didn't want to play games. "Think about it for a second. That's not really a great mystery, either."

She gave him a smile that made him want to take her right there, on the swing, without giving a single damn about who might see. "At least you're honest about it."

"Do you want me to lie?"

"Nah. If I want sunshine blown up my skirt, I'll call Jack back." She raised an eyebrow at him. "Do you know I'm the most *fascinating* women he's ever met?"

There was that strange need to punch Jack again. "Actually, I would."

"Oh, so you can do empty flattery."

"No, it's just I've met most of the same women. The competition isn't that stiff."

"Ouch." She shook her head. "If that's your pickup line, no wonder you're still single."

"So are you."

"That took careful planning on my part, my friend. The kennel club is all about selective breeding, you know, so I stay far away from the prize studs."

It was his turn to laugh at her. "The mutts are much more interesting anyway."

She grinned back and took another drink. They sat there in silence for a few moments, but it wasn't an uncomfortable silence. And that was kind of odd.

But it was nice, too.

Then Lorelei sighed. "Don't take this personally, but I think you should go."

"What?" How was he not supposed to take that personally? "If you stay, I'm probably going to invite you inside."

He didn't actually see the problem with that, but Lorelei's voice was so heavy, *she* obviously did. "And here I was kind of hoping you would."

She sighed. "Two hookups make a fling. Three hookups... Well, then it starts to become something. And this isn't supposed to be something."

And he was a mutt. "'Something' is a mighty big category. Lots of room for interpretation."

Her chin lifted as she considered that. "True. Something doesn't have to be anything. I'm just not sure what, if anything, this something could be. Everything is so complicated right now, that a something that's not anything might be a good thing. Or nothing. Or something like that."

He'd lost the thread of this conversation pretty quickly, causing him to re-think his earlier assessment of her sobriety. "How much have you had to drink, Lorelei?"

She laughed and ran a hand over her face. "That didn't make much sense, did it? But it's not alcohol. I'm more tired than anything else. I didn't get much sleep last night."

"Neither did I, now that you mention it."

"Can I ask you something?"

"Sure."

"I know why you're here, but I want to know why you're here instead of at Julie Hebert's. Or Jess Reynald's, for that matter."

"You're prettier, for one thing."

She frowned at him. "Honestly, now."

He had another flippant answer, but at that qualifier, he swallowed it. "Jess and Julie have agendas. I don't like being an item on an agenda. Or a means to an end, either."

"I thought we were clear that Julie was just wanting to use you for sex."

"If she were just looking for a good time, that would be one thing, but Julie's on the rebound and angry about it. I'm not about to get pulled into that. She'd just be using me to get back at her soon-to-be-ex. Jess's agenda is a bit more complex, but both of them are playing games, and I don't play."

"So you assume I don't have an agenda?"

"Oh, you have an agenda, too. Whatever you're out to prove right now by taking over for Vivi," the look that passed over her face told him he'd hit a nerve there and confirmed his suspicions, "I'm obviously not a part of the plan. You wouldn't be so worried about 'everything' otherwise."

"How astute of you." Although it was politely enough said, a barrier dropped between them at that moment. "In fact, you would be – are," she corrected, " a big old monkey wrench in my plans. Which is why this can't be something."

"I respect the fact you're honest enough with yourself – and me – to say that. Of course, that also means that you're honest enough to take this for what it is – *without* it becoming something or anything beyond that."

"Wow." She blew out her breath and shook her head. "I'm

not sure if I should be flattered or insulted."

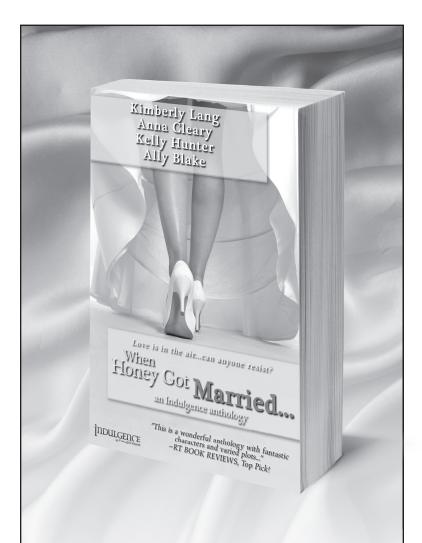
"Neither, actually. You asked for honesty."

"And it seems like I got it." With another deep sigh, Lorelei stood and stretched. Maybe honesty hadn't been the best policy. Maybe he'd read this situation wrong. Of course, if he had, and Lorelei had been looking for some other answer, it was probably a good thing he found out now, instead of later. It was disappointing, but...

"I'm going to bed." Lorelei picked up the tablet off the swing and grabbed her beer from the table.

Well, he had his answer. "Good night."

Lorelei paused with her hand on the door. "Are you coming?"



WHEN HONEY GOT MARRIED

By Kimberly Lang, Anna Cleary, Kelly Hunter and Ally Blake

May 2013, Entangled Indulgence ISBN: 978-1622660926

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An *RT Bookreviews* Top Pick!: "A wonderful anthology with fantastic characters and varied plots and [...] a lot of small-town details that make it charming and very realistic."

AN EXCERPT FROM

GRACE FELT THE HEAT BY KIMBERLY LANG

In less than forty-eight hours, Honey Moreau would marry Brent Delacroix, joining the two oldest and most important families in Bellefleur through the bonds of holy matrimony in the most ostentatious, over-the-top wedding ever witnessed.

And it was now Grace's responsibility to make sure it happened.

For the thousandth time, she reminded herself what a great opportunity this was. Lana Parks, Honey's original wedding coordinator, had done all the months of hard work before she'd eloped on Saturday with another bride's groom, leaving this three-ring wedding circus without a ringmaster; now all Grace had to do now was see it through. *She'd* be the one to save the reputation of Grayson-Bennett Events, earning her major brownie points with the bosses and possibly a better office, too.

Like that wasn't *enough* pressure, Judge Moreau, Honey's father, had pulled her aside at their meeting yesterday to stress how important this day was to his little girl – like she hadn't been able to tell – and dangled an obnoxious amount of bonus money in her face to ensure that Grace made Honey's day as flawless as the enormous *rock* on her finger.

It wasn't the wedding that had her stomach in knots; she'd done hundreds of weddings – and every other kind of event under the sun – in her last four years at Grayson-Bennett, and while the scope was a little daunting, walking in as she was at the very last minute, she had no doubts she could handle it.

It was the thought of being here, with these people when all

she wanted to do was forget the first eighteen miserable years of her life.

Focus, Grace. You're a professional. Do your job and ignore everything else.

That's easier said than done.

Suck it up. You're not poor little Gracie Lee anymore.

I am to these people.

Why do you care?

Dear Lord, was she actually arguing with herself? It had taken less than twenty-four hours for this job to drive her certifiably insane. She just hoped Judge Moreau's bonus money would be enough to set her up in a *nice* room in the loony bin.

Grace followed the gravel drive around the main house to the visitor parking area and took a moment to gather herself.

She'd spent yesterday and today visiting and talking to every vendor playing a role in this event – the florist, the band, the pyrotechnic guru handling the fireworks on the barge, and even a chainsaw-wielding ice sculptor – save one: Beau Vaughn, the owner of and head chef at the Belles Fleurs plantation.

He should have been number one on her list, but she'd saved him for last, needing some time to prepare herself for this meeting.

She checked her lipstick in the rearview mirror and frowned at her reflection. It was ridiculous, really, the amount of effort she'd put into herself today. From the extra time on her hair and makeup to the outfit chosen specifically to cinch her waist in and push her boobs up and out...

Maybe it was ridiculous, but it had taken Honey a gratifying half-hour to place Grace in her memory yesterday, proving beyond a shadow of a doubt just how far she'd come from poor little Gracie Lee. All it had taken was a proper and flattering haircut, clothes that fit and weren't several years out of style, and a little confidence to completely reinvent herself.

It was enough to make her head hurt when she thought about it too much. It was easier to let it go. She really should let it *all* go, forget all the high school trauma and drama and grow up. It was in the past, and she wasn't Gracie Lee anymore. It would be the smart, mature thing to—

The thought stopped as her eyes landed on a photo of Beau, in his white chef's jacket, above a message welcoming people to Belles Fleurs. He certainly hadn't changed much in the intervening years. Beau Vaughn had been the star of every one of her freshman fantasies. He'd been a senior, a sports hero, Mr. Popular... In short, a true, unattainable, unrequited crush for the Gracie Lees of the world. Heavenly blue eyes, light brown hair falling across his forehead... She could picture all too clearly the way he'd absentmindedly brush it back, only for it to fall right back where it was. She also remembered that smile all too well, the way it seemed to say he'd figured out the punchline thirty seconds before everyone else. She also couldn't help but remember how that smile had morphed to mock her right before he said "Just say goodnight, Gracie," and crushed her.

Screw maturity. It's totally overrated.

She'd been publically humiliated and emotionally destroyed by a smug jerk. There was no way in hell she was just going to forgive and forget.

For more information, visit http://www.whenhoneygotmarried.com/ or scan the QR code below.



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http://www.BooksByKimberly.com/

(SV)

Kira Sinclair





Kira Sinclair is an award-winning author who writes emotional, passionate contemporary romances. Double winner of the National Readers' Choice Award, her first foray into writing fiction was for a high school English assignment. Nothing could dampen her enthusiasm...not even being forced to read the love story aloud to the class. Although it definitely made her blush. Writing about striking, sexy heroes and passionate,

determined women has always excited her. She lives out her own *happily ever after* with her amazing husband, their two beautiful daughters and a menagerie of animals on a small farm in North Alabama. She loves to hear from readers at:

www.KiraSinclair.com

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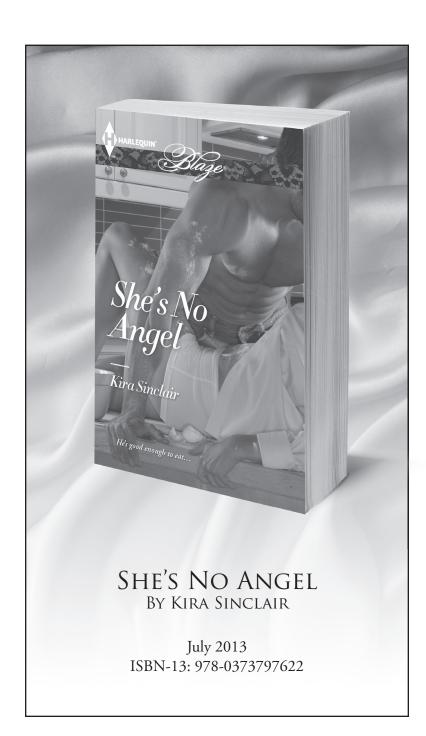
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- 1. When a craving hits, give in! It's amazing what you can do with some melted chocolate and an equally melt-in-yourmouth guy.
- Just a tiny taste will do...unless it's a taste of architect Brett Newcomb with his icy blue eyes and killer body.
- Then work it off—big-time! Treat yourself to all the wicked-hot sex you can get. No calories!

So, go ahead—give in. After all, too much of a good thing can be wickedly delicious....

AN EXCERPT FROM

SHE'S NO ANGEL BY KIRA SINCLAIR

CHAPTER ONE

Chocolate was Lexi Harper's drug of choice. The only thing that could beat the decadent taste of that melted goodness was really stellar sex. Unfortunately, her hips proved that chocolate—even the gourmet stuff—was easier to come by.

Which is probably why she'd opened her own shop. There was something about baked goods that made everyone happy. You couldn't frown with a piece of fudge in your mouth. It was physically impossible.

Well, for everyone except Mrs. Copeland, who could frown no matter what.

"Alexis Harper!"

Sighing, Lexi suppressed a cringe and turned to look at the self-appointed grande dame of Sweetheart, South Carolina.

"I'll be with you in just a moment, Mrs. Copeland," Lexi said in her sweetest voice. Even if it killed her she'd be nice.

Mrs. Copeland pinned Lexi beneath a steely glare that was specifically designed to have her spine snapping straight and 62 Kira Sinclair

Lexi jumping to do her bidding. She was intimately acquainted with the look and had been since the age of ten.

"I've been waiting for almost fifteen minutes," she barked.

Old habits were hard to break and a residual shudder ran down Lexi's spine. While she was growing up, Mrs. Copeland had been her etiquette instructor. On the third Saturday of every month for eight years, Lexi's mother would ship her off for several dreadful hours where the woman delighted in pointing out every flaw, gaffe or perceived slight.

Who really needed to know the proper way to pour tea or where to sit the governor if he should happen to agree to dinner? Lexi had certainly never run across the need for most of the things that Mrs. Copeland viewed as more important than breathing. And what little she had used would have been covered by human decency and politeness.

After one particularly embarrassing incident involving mustard, a Siamese cat and licorice when she was twelve, Lexi had begged her mom not to send her back. But there were certain things that happened in Sweetheart, and attending Mrs. Copeland's etiquette classes was one of them. Along with the debutante ball.

Just the thought of it sent a shiver of remembered dread down Lexi's spine. God, she'd been such a spastic klutz back then.

"Everyone else has been waiting just as long, Mrs. Copeland. Longer, since they were here before you."

Mrs. Copeland's mouth tightened into a hard, unpleasant line. She didn't say anything else, but the unpleasant knot in the pit of Lexi's stomach didn't ease. And it wouldn't until the horrid witch left. Lexi wanted to hate herself for letting the woman get under her skin. Mrs. Copeland couldn't hurt or embarrass her anymore. But logic apparently couldn't trump remembered misery and years of ingrained dread.

Pushing the unpleasantness aside, Lexi focused on the rest

of her customers. She cut and boxed a set of chocolate-dipped, rum-soaked caramel apples for Mary Beth. Mr. Arcella had stopped in for a box of assorted truffles for his wife. It was their twenty-fourth anniversary. Lexi slipped in several of Mrs. Arcella's favorite flavor—champagne—even though he didn't ask for them.

She spent another five minutes answering the questions of a woman she didn't recognize. The woman wanted to know about Lexi's herb-infused aphrodisiac chocolates, which probably meant she was from out of town. The best thing Lexi had ever done was start advertising those on the internet. Customers had been coming out of the woodwork ever since.

The line finally cleared and Mrs. Copeland was up. Turning to the woman, Lexi braced herself for whatever unpleasantness was coming—because it always did. The woman viewed it as her personal crusade to point out everyone else's flaws while simultaneously breaking as many of her precious etiquette rules as humanly possible.

She didn't disappoint. "Aphrodisiac chocolates. That's disgraceful, Alexis Harper."

Lexi bit her tongue and swallowed the automatic response at not only the woman's acerbic tone but at the use of her given name. No one, not even her own mother, called her Alexis anymore. But Mrs. Copeland despised nicknames.

"Heaven only knows what your poor mama thinks about those..." She waved her hand at the artfully sensual display beneath the glass. "...those things."

"Why don't you ask her, Mrs. Copeland?" Lexi suggested, a calm, fake smile curling her lips. She folded her hands on the glass countertop and leaned across as if she were imparting a secret. "Better yet, ask Daddy at the council meeting tomorrow night? Mama took some home just last week."

Mrs. Copeland's eyes widened and then narrowed

dangerously. "Well," she huffed. "I shouldn't be surprised. You always were a hopeless cause, Alexis Harper. My one true disappointment as an educator."

If Mrs. Copeland was an educator then Lexi was a supermodel, something that was so far from the realm of possibility as to be pure fairy tale.

Lexi boxed Mrs. Copeland's selection of iced petit fours and, though it galled her, decorated the thing with her signature red gingham bow.

"At least you've found a way to make a living from your love of sugar," Mrs. Copeland offered with a sharp smirk. "Although I never would have expected you to slim down nearly as much with all this temptation around. Bless your heart, there wasn't a Saturday you came into my class that you didn't have a smear of chocolate somewhere, was there?"

Lexi gritted her teeth and jerked her mouth up into the approximation of a smile. And hoped her eyes weren't glaring daggers the way she feared.

"Yes, ma'am. I'm real lucky."

"Good breeding helps," Mrs. Copeland offered as a parting salvo with a glance up and down that left the unmistakable impression of her opinion. Apparently, in Lexi's case, good breeding wasn't quite enough.

When the bell tinkled and the door snicked shut, Lexi slumped tiredly against the edge of the display case. A few moments. That's all she needed, and then she could handle closing up the shop.

"Why didn't you put her in her place?"

The low, smoky voice startled Lexi, and she jerked her spine straight again.

A man she'd never met stood in the far corner leaning against her shelf of pre-bagged goodies. She'd been so preoccupied that she hadn't noticed him. "Because it would have been wasted breath, and I try not to waste anything."

His arms were crossed negligently over a wide chest. The line of his body stretched out, long and tempting. Tight jeans clung to thick thighs and Lexi had no doubt that if he turned around she'd get a nice view of a high, round rear. Her body reacted immediately, coming alive at the presence of a virile male in the center of her world. She clamped down on the buzz of female interest.

He was a stranger, and after what had happened a few months ago, she didn't trust strangers.

He studied her with cool blue eyes that had another knot of unease forming in her belly. Lexi didn't like being watched. Nothing good had ever come from being the center of attention. As the mayor's daughter, everyone in town knew her and thought her life was fair game for comment. The perils of living in a small town.

For a long time she'd struggled to figure out who she was. There were so many loud voices in her head telling her what she should do and then how she should feel. Finding a place where everyone else's opinion of her didn't matter had been a hard battle.

She was happy with the life she'd built. She had a good business, wonderful friends and she'd come to terms with her own weaknesses. Most days she was good, although every now and then old ghosts resurfaced.

His scrutiny made her uncomfortable. And warm. He straightened and stalked across her shop with a predatory grace that left her mouth dry as cotton. All bunching muscles and laser focus. He smiled and her stomach tightened.

She didn't want to notice the way his bottom lip pulled up in the center. Or the brush of dark-brown hair that touched the curve of his ears. She didn't want to notice him at all.

Breaking the hold he had on her, Lexi dropped her gaze and fiddled with the boxes beneath the display counter. Stacking and restacking them, despite the fact they were already straight.

"What's good?"

"Everything," she answered without pause. Every single thing in the ten-foot-long case had been handmade. By her. And since quality control was a major concern, she'd personally sampled everything. Once and only once. Followed immediately by at least five miles on the treadmill currently sitting idle in the office at the back of her store.

It was either that or go back to being "Piglet" Harper. A prospect she did not relish. The nickname might have been cute when Gage, her brother, gave it to her as a baby, but right around middle school the charm had disappeared. Unfortunately, the name hadn't.

"I need something for dessert."

"Well..." Lexi's gaze swept the case. "For how many?"

"I have no idea."

"A challenge."

He leaned closer to the case. The scent of his aftershave, something clean, crisp and totally male, mixed with the tempting scent of sugar. Lexi's mouth began to water.

"Do you like challenges?" he asked, one eyebrow pulling up in a dare all its own.

He was flirting. The blood pounding furiously through her veins and the interested crackle beneath her skin told her that. But she wasn't going there.

Although somehow she found herself snapping back. "Nope, I like life easy and boring." Which really was the truth. She didn't like drama. She was perfectly content with the nice, quiet life she'd built for herself.

"I can tell." A smile rippled across his lips, but before it could fully form he pulled it back.

She had a great business she could be proud of, good friends, and whenever she had an itch that needed scratching, a big city close enough to provide some pleasant diversion.

It was obvious this man had the skills to be very diverting, but after Brandon she'd learned to be cautious with men who walked through her front door.

With a deep breath Lexi broke away from whatever this was and focused on her job. "Well, you could take petit fours, but you don't strike me as a tiny bite of cake kinda guy."

"Uh, no. I don't like tiny bites of anything."

An unexpected shiver lanced through her. Lexi clenched her fists and ignored it.

"There's always caramel apples, but somehow those seem more intimate and since you don't know how many people are coming that probably won't work."

He shook his head.

All of the brownies and cakes she'd made today had sold hours ago. She did have one, a new recipe she'd tried and was planning to drop off to Gage and Hope, her best friend and future sister-in-law, on her way home. She hesitated to sell a product that she hadn't fully vetted, but she'd been perfecting the recipe for the lemon-cardamom cake for months.

Besides, she didn't have anything else that would work, and she hated to send a customer away unhappy. Especially a new one. Okay, maybe she just didn't want to send this one away unhappy. But what was wrong with that? She was big on customer service.

Turning away, Lexi slipped through the curtain into the back. A few moments later she reemerged with a cake covered in rose-scented frosting and candied rose petals.

"Will this work?"

He straightened from the languid slouch against her counter and stared at the cake in her hands. The playful, watchful air 68 Kira Sinclair

he'd had disappeared. "That's too pretty to eat."

She'd surprised him. Which surprised her. And possibly pissed her off. What had he expected her to pull from the back? A chocolate cake with canned frosting slapped on top?

"Nonsense," she said her voice tight with a suppressed frown. Lexi reached down for a box and a bow. "Food is meant to be enjoyed. Savored. Especially dessert."

She handed the box to him. "That'll be thirty-five." His fingers brushed against her hand. His cool blue eyes went from watchful to melting. A zap of electricity blasted up her arms and she almost dropped the cake.

He scrambled to rebalance the weight of it in his palms. "Well it would have been a shame if something that pretty had hit the floor. Tasting this is about the only thing I'm looking forward to tonight."

Unbidden, a vision of him feeding her bites of that cake swelled in her mind. Her lungs labored to catch a breath, and she licked her lips. She hadn't meant to, but she'd wanted to taste that icing and the skin of his fingers beneath. The flavor of her own lips wasn't nearly as exciting.

His eyes snagged on her mouth. The box crackled in protest as his hands tightened, threatening to crush the cardboard.

The phone beneath the counter rang, breaking the spell.

Oh, Lord, what was she doing? This man was a complete stranger. A customer! He'd been in her store for less than fifteen minutes and her libido was ready to flip the open sign over and drag him into the back for a different kind of work-out than her treadmill provided.

Turning her back, she answered the phone. "Sugar and Spice."

"Oh thank goodness you're still there." Her mother's frazzled voice echoed down the line. "I need a huge favor."

The bell behind her chimed. Lexi turned to see who'd come

into the store only to discover it was empty. And two twenties were on the counter.

She should be grateful that he was gone, but her energized body certainly wasn't happy. Tough. Dragging in a deep breath, Lexi held it for a moment before letting it—and the last fifteen minutes—go.

"Alexis Harper, are you listening to me?"

Shaking her head, Lexi refocused. "I'm sorry, Mama, I was distracted. What favor?"

"Please tell me you have something in the case I could use for dessert."

"I just sold my last cake."

"Dammit!"

Lexi straightened. Her mother never swore. This was obviously more than a rampant sweet tooth. "Don't worry, give me an hour and I can make something. What's this about?"

"I knew I could count on you, Lexi. Be sure to wear something nice."

"Uh, why?" She had an early morning tomorrow and had really just planned to head home and watch mindless TV for a little while before crashing into bed. The good thing about handmaking all of her products was that she could guarantee quality. The bad thing was that, since she was an exacting perfectionist, she had to be up bright and early every morning to actually do the handmaking.

"A representative from Bowen Enterprises showed up today. He's here for the council meeting tomorrow night. Your father invited the man to dinner."

That was her daddy all right. Friends close and enemies closer. There was a reason he'd been mayor of Sweetheart for the last eighteen years. He was smart, cunning and charming.

"I still don't understand what this has to do with me."

"I need you to balance out our numbers, dear."

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Without giving her a chance to protest, her mom hung up. For about sixty seconds Lexi thought about calling back and telling her no way. But Lexi knew she wouldn't do it.

Instead, she headed back to the kitchen to evaluate what she had that could be thrown together in an hour. Whatever it was would have to be spectacular.

Everyone in town hated Bowen Enterprises.

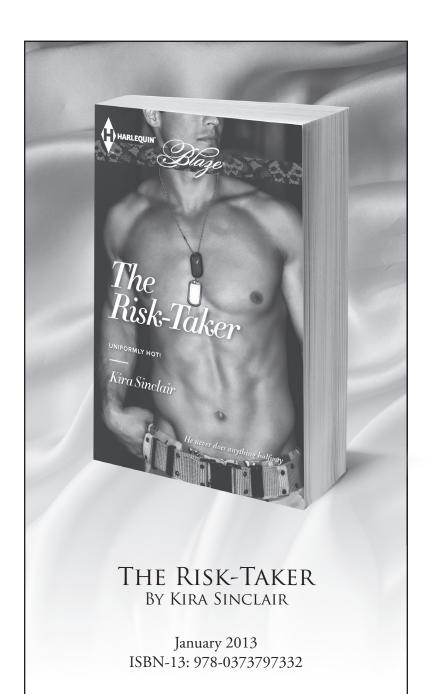
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Subject: Totally buff ranger Gage Harper **Current Status:** Walking wounded—both physically and mentally

Mission: Finally get the girl he could never have **Obstacle:** She may just be the biggest risk he's ever taken

All returned POW Gage Harper wants to do is forget, even if he has to let some gym rat beat him to a pulp to do it. He certainly doesn't want to tell the tale of his heroism to the tabloids. Especially since he's no hero.... But one journalist is determined to get the inside scoop—and she's the only girl Gage has never been able to resist.

Hope Rawlings never took Gage's romantic advances seriously growing up. After all, she was just his buddy, and a guy like Gage could have any girl he wanted. But now she needs his story to get her dream job in the city. And she's willing to do anything to get it.



"A tender tale with the occasional hardheaded moment, this edition of the Uniformly Hot! series satisfies with ample sex appeal and a pure connection between the hero and heroine."

-Kim Jefferson, RT Book Reviews

AN EXCERPT FROM

THE RISK-TAKER BY KIRA SINCLAIR

CHAPTER ONE

A heavy fist connected with his jaw. Gage Harper's head snapped backward and the crowd, pressed tight against the raised platform, roared.

All Gage heard was the rush of adrenaline as it poured through his body. It drowned out the words that had been haunting him all night. "In a war that brings mostly sad news, tonight there is a brighter story to tell." Someone should tell the solemn man who delivered that statement to the world that bright and war should never be used in the same sentence.

But Gage wasn't going to be the one to do it.

Instead, he squared his feet beneath him and countered the blow he'd received with several of his own.

Head, gut, kidneys. This wasn't the sort of place worried about rules. The backwoods fighting ring was exactly what he needed to distract him from the memories he didn't want.

Micah's flag-draped casket being loaded into the transport for home. A hard-eyed insurgent yelling into his face before ripping 74 Kira Sinclair

both of his thumbnails out with pliers. The screams of his friends as they endured torture.

Torture he could have prevented if he hadn't screwed up.

Yeah, this was a great use of a Thursday night even if he'd had to drive an hour out of Sweetheart, South Carolina, to find it. The blessed numbness would be worth every fist to the face.

Grounding his weight onto his left leg, Gage lashed out with a roundhouse kick. Channeling all the frustration, rage and guilt built up inside him, he put more power behind it than he'd meant to, aiming straight for the guy's gut. He was finding it difficult to hold back after months of fighting for his life. Those kind of hard-won instincts were a bitch to get rid of. Luckily the other guy blocked.

Scenes he thought he'd dealt with flashed across his mind. Gunfire. Smoke-filled hallways. A dark, dirty cell with barely enough room to lie down. Tanner, a fellow Ranger, bloody and broken before they'd even been thrown into that room, moaning in pain. Needles. Knives. Pliers.

But he didn't break. He hadn't told them a damn thing.

Gage ground his teeth and pushed the memories away. Nothing could change what happened to Tanner.

Or bring Micah back. The man he'd met in jump school was gone. Killed when his gun misfired while cleaning it. That, more than anything, was what bothered him about his friend's death. He knew Micah. Had trained with the man. Micah could disassemble, clean and reassemble his weapon in his sleep. They all could. Dying in battle, that he could have dealt with. They'd all signed up for that possibility. But not some freak accident.

That anger, grief and skepticism were what sent him out into the scorching desert looking for the same kind of fight he'd found tonight. Something to silence the racing thoughts and numb the pain he didn't want to deal with. He'd gotten a distraction, all right. And several good men had been pulled straight into hell with him.

He never should have watched the national news story his mama had saved. The latest in a long line of shouldn'ts.

Who knew she could operate the DVR? When he left for basic training twelve years ago she could barely get a DVD to play. He'd been looking for something mindless, like old football games or episodes of CSI. Instead, he'd found hours of news stories detailing his capture and high-profile rescue from Taliban insurgents.

The worst had been the leaked propaganda videos. The close-up shots of his own dirt- and blood-streaked face as they'd forced him to deliver their messages to the U.S. government. He could still taste the bitter words, hated himself for saying them even if he'd done it to save Tanner from more torture he wasn't strong enough to survive.

He'd wanted to turn them off. Should have. But couldn't. What those slick news anchors with their perfect white teeth hadn't said was that what happened was entirely his fault.

His thumbs began to throb where his missing nails should have been. Gage clenched his fists tighter, asking for more. He relished the pain. The reminder. His injuries were nothing compared to Tanner's. If he hadn't let grief and a mindless need for a distraction blind him to the warning signs...

If he hadn't taken unnecessary risks and pushed them all straight into a trap his buddy wouldn't be lying in a hospital bed looking at months of rehab, learning to live without a limb and the possibility that his military career was over.

The guy in front of him, clearly some gym rat trying to show off the muscles he'd honed in air-conditioned luxury, twisted on his heel and threw out a leg aimed straight for Gage's head. He easily blocked the kick, letting the other guy's foot glance off a shoulder.

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He could wipe the floor with this guy. It had taken Gage less than ninety seconds to pick up on his weaknesses, and if they'd been in the middle of the desert instead of a crude ring made from worn padding, plywood and rope he wouldn't have hesitated. But he wasn't there to defend his life or a set of ideals he wasn't even sure he believed anymore.

He was just there to forget. And the quickest way to that was to let this guy beat the crap out of him so he could concentrate on something other than pointless regrets and decisions he couldn't take back. Besides, he didn't need the prize money these guys were after. Better to let some struggling father win the pot so he could buy something nice for his family.

Gage's lip split. Blood splattered across the floor. His head wrenched sideways and something in the audience caught his eye. The familiar flash of green-gold eyes and dark blond hair he hadn't seen in twelve years.

Well, unless you counted dreams. And he didn't.

Hope Rawlings. His belly tightened, a sensation that had nothing to do with the repeated blows he'd taken.

Gage twisted, skillfully maneuvering his opponent so he could scour the faces surrounding them. But whatever he'd seen was gone.

Or maybe he was imagining things. Was it crazy that he would think of her now that he was back?

Given their history, yes, it probably was. Although, while he was reviewing regrets...

In that single moment of distraction the force of Gym Rat's fist exploded across Gage's left cheekbone. The pain reverberated through his entire face. The crunch of bone on bone burst in his ears.

"Shit," he spat out with a mouthful of blood. Well, the guy had gotten his attention again. With a sigh, Gage resigned himself to a good tongue-lashing when his mama saw him at

breakfast in the morning.

You can purchase the full book at Barnes & Noble and Amazon

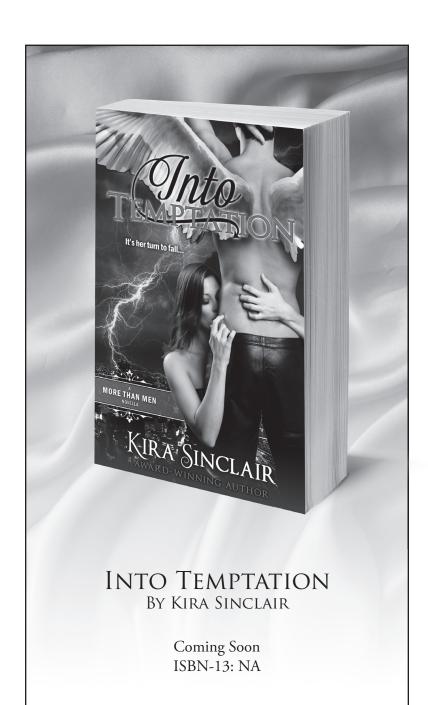




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Handling her first big case as a prosecutor, Evie Carr is definitely in over her head. Everyone knows Monroe Stilton is guilty of multiple counts of sexual assault against a child, but proving it has become difficult. She's desperately afraid the monster is going to walk. And that fear becomes personal when the psychopath threatens her own daughter.

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Andrea Laurence





Andrea has been devouring books since she learned to read at a young age. An old portable typewriter got her started writing in elementary school and she's been writing ever since. She always dreamed of seeing her work in print and is thrilled to finally be able to share her special blend of

sensuality and dry, sarcastic humor with the world.

A dedicated West Coast girl transplanted into the Deep South, Andrea is working on her real-life "happily ever after" with her boyfriend of twelve years and their collection of animals including two cats, two mutts and a Siberian Husky that sheds like nobody's business.

She loves to hear from readers, so if you enjoy her work, tell her on her Facebook Fan Page or Twitter and if you feel inclined—send lint rollers!

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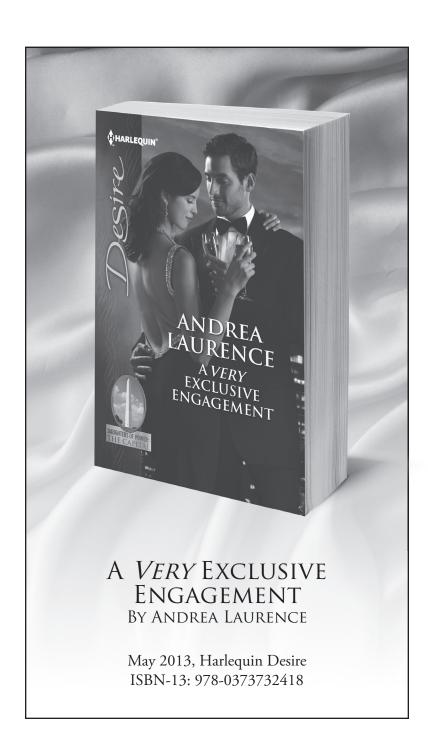
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"What happens in the elevator, stays in the elevator, right?"

Trapped between floors with his spitfire employee, media mogul Liam Crowe can't control the chemistry. First, Francesca Orr is calling her new boss names in the boardroom; next, she's kissing him! Now Liam has some choice names for Francesca: flancée, maybe even wife. Because the only way to keep control of the scandal-plagued news network he's just acquired is if he settles down, and Francesca is perfect fake-flancée material. But when she goes along with the plan, things get real—really fast—because there's nothing fake about Francesca....

AN EXCERPT FROM

A VERY EXCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT BY ANDREA LAURENCE

CHAPTER ONE

Figlio di un allevatore di maiali.

Liam Crowe didn't speak Italian. The new owner of the American News Service network could barely order Italian food, and he was pretty sure his Executive Vice President of Community Outreach knew it.

Francesca Orr had muttered the words under her breath during today's emergency board meeting. He'd written down what she'd said—or at least a close enough approximation—in his notebook so he could look it up later. The words had fallen from her dark red lips in such a seductive way. Italian was a powerful language. You could order cheese and it would sound like a sincere declaration of love. Especially when spoken by the dark, exotic beauty who'd sat across the table from him.

And yet, he had the distinct impression that he wasn't going to like what she'd said to him.

He hadn't expected taking over the company from Graham Boyle to be a cakewalk. The former owner and several employees were in jail following a phone-hacking scandal that had targeted the president of the United States. The first item on the agenda for the board meeting had been to suspend ANS reporter Angelica Pierce for suspicion of misconduct. Hayden Black was continuing his congressional investigation into the role Angelica may have played in the affair. Right now, they had enough cause for the suspension. When Black completed his investigation—and hopefully uncovered some hard evidence—Liam and his Board of Directors would determine what additional action to take.

He was walking into a corporate and political maelstrom, but that was the only reason he had been able to afford to buy controlling stock in the company in the first place. ANS was the crown jewel of broadcast media. The prize he'd always had his eye on. The backlash of the hacking scandal had brought the network and its owner, Graham Boyle, to their knees. Even with Graham behind bars and the network coming in last in the ratings for most time slots, Liam knew he couldn't pass up the opportunity to buy ANS.

So, they had a major scandal to overcome. A reputation to rebuild. Nothing in life was easy, and Liam liked a challenge. But he'd certainly hoped that the employees of ANS, and especially his own Board of Directors, would be supportive. From the night janitor to the CFO, jobs were on the line. Most of the people he spoke to were excited about him coming aboard and hopeful they could put the hacking scandal behind them to rebuild the network.

But not Francesca. It didn't make any sense. Sure, she had a rich and famous movie producer father to support her if she lost her position with ANS, but charity was her *job*. Surely she cared about the employees of the company as much as she cared about starving orphans and cancer patients.

It didn't seem like it, though. Francesca had sat at the

conference room table in her form-fitting flame-red suit and lit into him like she was the devil incarnate. Liam had been warned that she was a passionate and stubborn woman—that it wouldn't be personal if they bumped heads—but he wasn't prepared for this. The mere mention of streamlining the corporate budget to help absorb the losses had sent her on a tirade. But they simply couldn't throw millions at charitable causes when they were in such a tight financial position.

Suffice it to say, she disagreed.

With a sigh, Liam closed the lid on his briefcase and headed out of the executive conference room to find some lunch on his own. He'd planned to take some of the board members out, but everyone had scattered after the awkward meeting came to an end. He didn't blame them. Liam had managed to keep control of it, making sure they covered everything on the agenda, but it was a painful process.

Oddly enough, the only thing that had made it remotely tolerable for him was watching Francesca herself. In a room filled with older businesswomen and men in gray, black and navy suits, Francesca was the pop of color and life. Even when she wasn't speaking, his gaze kept straying back to her.

Her hair was ebony, flowing over her shoulders and curling down her back. Her almond-shaped eyes were dark brown with thick, black lashes. They were intriguing, even when narrowed at him in irritation. When she argued with him, color rushed to her face, giving her flawless tan skin a rosy undertone that seemed all the brighter for her fire-engine red suit and lipstick.

Liam typically had a thing for fiery, exotic women. He'd had his share of blond-haired, blue-eyed debutantes in private school but when he'd gone off to college, he found he had a taste for women a little bit spicier. Francesca, if she hadn't been trying to ruin his day and potentially his year, would've been just the kind of woman he'd ask out. But complicating this

scenario with a fling gone wrong was something he didn't need.

Right now, what he *did* need was a stiff drink and some red meat from his favorite restaurant. He was glad ANS's corporate headquarters were in New York. While he loved his place in D.C., he liked coming back to his hometown. The best restaurants in the world, luxury box seats for his favorite baseball team...the vibe of Manhattan was just so different.

He'd be up here from time to time on business. Really, he wished it was all the time, but if he wanted to be in the thick of politics, which was ANS's focus, Washington was where he had to be. So he'd set up his main office in the D.C. newsroom, as Boyle had, keeping both his apartment in New York and the townhouse in Georgetown that he'd bought while he went to college there. It was the best of both worlds as far as he was concerned.

Liam went to his office before he left for lunch. He put his suitcase on the table and copied Francesca's words from his notebook onto a sticky note. He carried it with him, stopping at his assistant's desk on his way out.

"Jessica, it's finally over. Mrs. Banks will be bringing you the paperwork to process Ms. Pierce's suspension. Human Resources needs to get that handled right way. Now that that mess is behind me, I think I'm going to find some lunch." He handed her the note with the Italian phrase written on it. "Could you get this translated for me while I'm gone? It's Italian."

Jessica smiled and nodded as though it wasn't an unusual request. She'd apparently done this in the past as Graham Boyle's assistant. "I'll take care of it, sir. I have the website bookmarked." Glancing down at the yellow paper she shook her head. "I see Ms. Orr has given you a special welcome to the company. This is one I haven't seen before."

"Should I feel honored?"

"I don't know yet, sir. I'll tell you once I look it up."

Liam chuckled, turning to leave, then stopping. "Out of curiosity," he asked, "what did she call Graham?"

"Her favorite was stronzo."

"What's that mean?"

"It has several translations, none of which I'm really comfortable saying out loud." Instead she wrote them on the back of the note he'd handed her.

"Wow," he said, reading as she wrote. "Certainly not a pet name, then. I'm going to have to deal with Ms. Orr before this gets out of control."

A blur of red blew past him and he looked up to see Francesca heading for the elevators in a rush. "Here's my chance."

"Good luck, sir," he heard Jessica call to him as he trotted to the bank of elevators.

One of the doors had just opened and he watched Francesca step inside and turn to face him. She could see him coming. Their eyes met for a moment and then she reached to the panel to hit the button. To close the doors faster. Nice.

He thrust his arm between the silver sliding panels and they reopened to allow him to join her. Francesca seemed less than pleased with the invasion. She eyeballed him for a moment under her dark lashes and then wrinkled her delicate nose as though he smelled of rotten fish. As the doors began to close again, she scooted into the far corner of the elevator even though they were alone in the car.

"We need to talk," Liam said as the car started moving down.

Francesca's eyes widened and her red lips tightened into a straight, hard line. "About what?" she asked innocently.

"About your attitude. I understand you're passionate about your work. But whether you like it or not, I'm in control of this company and I'm going to do whatever I have to do to save it from the mess that's been made of it. I'll not have you making a fool out of me in front of—"

Liam's words were cut off as the elevator lurched to a stop.

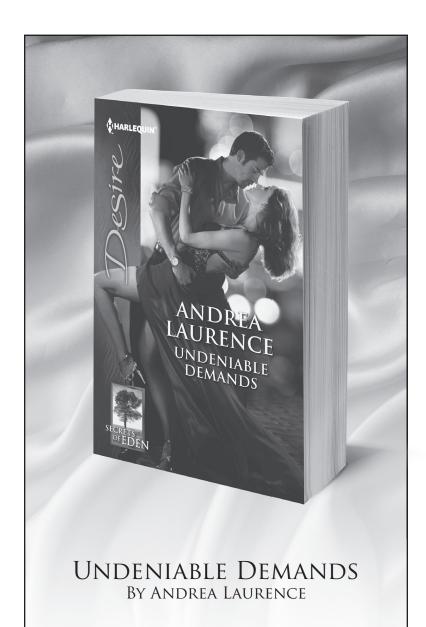
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January 2013, Harlequin Desire ISBN-13: 9780373732203

There's Always Room to Negotiate

When Wade Mitchell finds himself face-to-face with Victoria Sullivan, he has to reconsider his usual tactics. Wade needs to buy something she owns, and he needs it now. Since he and Tori have enough heat to melt ice, it should be a done deal.

But melting Tori's resolve is a harder task. She's not giving in to the man who once fired her. Yet Wade has to keep trying, because if he doesn't, he risks exposing a secret that could destroy his family. When all proper negotiation fails, seduction may be his only option.

AN EXCERPT FROM

UNDENIABLE DEMANDS BY ANDREA LAURENCE

CHAPTER ONE

Wade hated the snow. Always had. You'd think a man born and raised in New England would feel differently or leave, but he'd done neither. Every November when the first few flakes started falling, a part of his soul would shrivel up until spring. That was why he'd booked himself a trip to Jamaica for the week before Christmas. He'd planned to return to the Edens', as always, for the holiday, but the frantic call he'd received from his foster sister, Julianne, had changed everything.

He had been loath to tell his assistant to cancel the trip, but perhaps if all went well, he could use the reservation after Christmas. He could ring in the New Year on a beach, drinking something frothy, with thoughts of his troubles buried deep.

Interesting choice of words.

The BMW SUV wound its way down the two-lane road that led to the Garden of Eden Christmas Tree Farm. Wade preferred to drive his roadster, but rural Connecticut in winter was just not the place for it, so he'd left it in Manhattan. The SUV had snow tires, chains in the back and enough clearance not to scrape on chunks of ice in poorly cleared areas.

Spying the large red apple-shaped sign that marked the entrance to his foster parents' Christmas tree farm, Wade breathed a sigh of relief. He hadn't realized until that moment that he'd been holding his breath. Even under the less than ideal circumstances, returning home always made him feel better.

The farm was the only home he'd ever really had. None of the other foster homes had felt like one. He had no warm memories of living with his great-aunt before that, nor of his early years with his mother. But the Garden of Eden was just that: paradise. Especially for an abandoned young boy who could just as easily have become a career criminal as a millionaire in real estate.

The Edens changed everything. For him and every other child who had come to live there. He owed that couple his life. They were his parents, without question. Wade didn't know who his father was and hadn't seen his mother since she dropped him at her aunt's doorstep as a toddler. When he thought of home and family, he thought of the farm and the family the Edens had pulled together.

They were able to have only one child of their own, their daughter Julianne. For a time it seemed that their dreams of a house bustling with children who would help on the farm and one day take over the family business had been dashed. But then they decided to renovate an old barn into a bunkhouse perfect for rowdy boys and started taking in foster children.

Wade had been the first. Julianne had been in pigtails when he arrived, dragging her favorite doll behind her. Wade had been in his share of foster homes, and this time just felt different. He was not a burden. Not a way to get a check from the state. He was their son.

Which is why he wished he was visiting them for another reason. In his own mind, disappointing his parents would be the greatest sin he could commit. Even worse than the one he'd committed fifteen years ago that got him into this mess.

Wade turned the SUV into the driveway, then bypassed the parking lot and took the small road behind their large Federal-style house to where the family kept their cars. It was nearing the middle of the afternoon on a Friday, but even so, there were at least ten customer cars in the lot. For it was December 21—only a few days until Christmas. His mother, Molly, would be in the gift shop, pushing sugar cookies, cider and hot chocolate on folks while they waited for Ken or one of the employees to haul and bag their new tree.

Wade felt the sudden, familiar urge to start trimming trees and hauling them out to people's cars. He'd done it for all of his teenage years and every Christmas break from Yale. It came naturally to want to jump back into the work. But first things first. He had to take care of the business that had brought him here instead of the warm beaches of Jamaica.

Julianne's call had been unexpected. None of the kids were very good about calling or visiting their parents or each other like they should. They were all busy, all successful, the way the Edens had wanted them to be. But their success also made it easy to forget to make time for the important people in their lives.

When Julianne had shown up at the farm for Thanksgiving with little warning, she'd been in for quite the surprise. Their father, Ken, was recovering from a heart attack. They hadn't called any of the kids because they didn't want them worrying about it or the crippling hospital bills.

Wade, Heath, Xander, Brody—any of the boys could've written a check and taken care of their problems, but Ken and Molly insisted they had it under control. Unfortunately, their

solution was to sell a few plots of land they couldn't use for growing trees. They couldn't understand why the kids were so upset. And of course, the kids couldn't tell their parents the truth. That secret needed to remain buried in the past. And Wade was here to make sure it stayed that way.

If he was lucky, he could take one of the four-wheelers out to the property, buy the land back from the new owner and return before Molly could start wondering what he was up to. He wouldn't keep the purchase a secret from his parents, but he'd certainly rather they not fret over the whole situation until it was done.

Wade found the house empty, as expected. He left a note on the worn kitchen table, slipped into his heavy coat and boots and went out to grab one of the four-wheelers. He could've driven his SUV, but he didn't want to pull up in an expensive car and start waving money around at people.

Heath and Brody had both made visits to the farm since Julianne broke the news. Digging up as much information as they could, they found out that the person who had bought the smallest parcel of land was already living out there in some kind of camper. That sounded positive to him. They might need the money more than the land. But if they thought some rich guy was bullying them to sell it, they'd clamp down. Or jack up the price.

Wade took the four-wheeler down the well-worn path that went through the center of the farm. After selling eighty-five acres, the Edens still had two hundred acres left. Almost all of it was populated with balsam and Fraser fir trees. The northeastern portion of the property was sloped and rocky. They'd never had much success planting trees out there, so he'd understood why Ken had opted to sell it. He just wished his father hadn't.

By the time he rounded a corner on the trail and neared

the border of the Edens' property, it was a little after two-thirty. The sky was clear and blue and the sun's rays pounded down on the snow, making it nearly blinding despite his sunglasses. He slowed and pulled out the new surveyor's map Brody had downloaded. The eighty-five acres that his parents had sold were split into two large tracts and one small one. Comparing the map to the GPS location on his phone, he could tell that just over the rise was the smallest, a ten-acre residential property. He was fairly certain this was the one he was after.

Wade refolded the map and looked around for any familiar landmarks. He'd deliberately chosen a spot he would remember. There had been a crooked maple tree and a rock that looked like a giant turtle. He scanned the landscape, but it appeared to him as though all the trees were crooked, and all the rocks were buried under a foot of snow. It was impossible to know for sure if this chunk of the property was the right one.

Damn. He'd thought for certain that he would know the spot when he saw it. That night fifteen years ago remained etched in his memory no matter how hard he tried to forget it. It was one of those moments that change your whole life. Where you make a decision, right or wrong, and have to live with it forever.

Still, Wade was certain this was the right area. He didn't remember traveling far enough to reach the other plots. He'd been in too big a hurry to roam around the property all night trying to find the perfect spot. He eyed another maple tree, this one more crooked than the others. That had to be the one. He'd just have to buy the land back and hope that once spring came around, he would find the turtle rock at its base and know he'd bought the right plot.

Surging forward through the snow, he continued up to the rise and then started descending into the clearing toward what looked like some sort of shimmering silver mirage.

He pulled closer and realized it was the midafternoon sun reflecting off the superbly polished aluminum siding of an old Airstream trailer. You could have got a suntan from the rays coming off that thing. Parked beside it was an old Ford pickup truck with dually tires to haul the twenty-foot monster of a camper.

Wade stopped and killed the engine on the four-wheeler. There was no sign of life from inside the camper yet. Brody had searched online for the property sale records and found the new owner was V. A. Sullivan. Cornwall was a fairly small town, and he didn't remember any Sullivans when he went to school, so they must be new to the area. That was just as well. He didn't need to deal with anyone who remembered his troublesome days before the Edens and might give him grief.

His boots crunched through the snow until he reached the rounded doorway. It had a small window in it that he watched for movement when he knocked. Nothing. No sound of people inside, either.

Just great. He'd come all the way out here for nothing.

Wade was about to turn and head back home when he heard the telltale click of a shotgun safety. His head spun to the left, following the sound, and he found himself in the sights. The woman was standing about twenty feet away, bundled just as heavily as he was in a winter coat with a knit cap and sunglasses hiding most of her features. Long strands of fiery red hair peeked out from her hat and blew in the chilly wind. The distinctive color immediately caught his eye. He'd known a woman with hair that color a long time ago. It had been beautiful, like liquid flames. Appropriate, since he was playing with fire now.

On reflex, his hands went up. Getting shot by some overprotective, rural militia type was not on his agenda for the day. "Hey there," he called out, trying to sound as friendly and

nonthreatening as he could.

The woman hesitated, and then the shotgun dropped slightly. "Can I help you?"

"Are you Mrs. Sullivan?" Hopefully Mr. Sullivan wasn't out in the woods with a shotgun of his own.

"Miss Sullivan," she corrected. "What's it to you?"

A single female. Even better. Wade had a certain charm about him that served him well with the fairer sex. He smiled widely. "My name is Wade Mitchell. I wanted to talk to you about possibly—"

"Arrogant, pigheaded real estate developer Wade Mitchell?" The woman took a few steps forward.

Wade frowned. She didn't seem to care for him at all. He wished to God the woman wasn't so bundled up so he could see who she was. Maybe then he could figure out why the mention of his name seemed to agitate her. Of course, he was wearing just as much winter gear as she was. "Yes, ma'am, although I wouldn't go so far as to use those adjectives. I wanted to see if you would be interested in..."

His words dropped off as the shotgun rose again. "Aw, hell," she lamented. "I thought it looked kinda like you under all those layers, but I thought, why would Wade Mitchell be in Cornwall making my life hell again after all this time?"

Wade's eyes widened behind his dark sunglasses. "I have no intention of making your life hell, Miss Sullivan."

"Get off my land."

"I'm sorry, have I done something to you?" He scanned his brain. Had he dated a Sullivan? Beaten up her brother? He had no memory of what he could've done to piss this woman off so badly.

The woman stomped across the snow, closing the gap between them with the gun still pointed directly at him. She pulled off her sunglasses to study him more closely, revealing a lovely heart-shaped face and pale eyes. Her skin was creamy, the perfect backdrop to the fiery strands of hair framing her face. When her blue eyes met his, he noticed a challenge there, as though she was daring him not to remember her.

Fortunately, Wade had an excellent memory. One good enough to know that he was in trouble. The fiery redhead glaring at him was a hard woman to forget. He'd certainly tried over the years, but from time to time, she'd slipped into his subconscious and haunted his dreams with her piercing, iceblue gaze. A gaze that reflected the hurt of betrayal that he couldn't understand.

Property owner V. A. Sullivan was none other than Victoria Sullivan: green architect, eco-warrior and the employee he'd fired from his company seven years ago.

His stomach instantly sank. Of all the people who could've bought this property, it had to be her. Victoria Sullivan. The first person he'd ever fired from his company. It had pained him at the time, but he'd really had no choice. He had a strict policy on ethics violations. She hadn't taken the news well. And judging by her stiff posture and tightly gripped firearm, she was still upset about it.

"Victoria!" he said with a wide smile, trying to sound pleasantly surprised to see her after all this time. "I had no idea you were living out here now."

"Miss Sullivan," she corrected.

Wade nodded. "Of course. Could you please drop the gun? I'm unarmed."

"You won't be when the cops come." Her words were as icy cold as the snow, but eventually the gun disengaged and dropped to her side.

She pushed past him to the front door of the Airstream, pulling it open and climbing the stairs. "What do you want, Mr. Mitchell?"

As she hung at the top of the steps, looking back at him, Wade realized he needed to change his tactic, and fast. His original plan had been to tell the owner that he wanted the property for one of his development projects. If he told her that, she'd refuse him just to ruin his plans.

He'd have to appeal to a different side of her. That is, if he could explain himself before she started shooting.

"Miss Sullivan, I'd like to buy back this property from you."

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THE MORE THAN MEN SEXY TRILOGY BY ANDREA LAURENCE

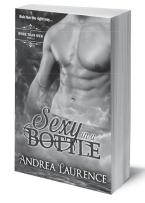


Strong, sexy and powerful... the kind of man every woman wants in her life and in her bed. But these men are more. Oh, so much more.

SEXY IN A BOTTLE

Valerie Thomas has hidden herself from the world, isolating herself in a New England lighthouse while she waits to die. Somehow, it's easier for her to cope with the reality of her illness if she doesn't worry about who she's leaving behind. Not that there is anyone important in her life to really miss her.

Rajan has been trapped inside his gold and sapphire prison since his last master



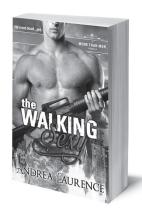
dropped the necklace into the ocean. He never expected to wash up naked on a rocky coastline with a beautiful woman hovering over him. A *djinn*, trapped by a sorcerer's curse, Raj offers Valerie three wishes, but the stubborn woman refuses to make them.

As strong nor'easter threatens Valerie's tiny island, she and Raj discover the key to ending each other's miserable, lonely existence. But can the genie and its mistress both get their wishes granted?

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Greyson Foster has lived an isolated life since the outbreak. Humans are afraid of him. The ravenous undead ignore him. He doesn't know what he is anymore, but one thing is certain—his attraction to the beautiful and sexy scientist occupying an abandoned laboratory is undeniably human.

Daria Mason didn't leave town when the survivors fled or died. Her work on a vaccine for the Anthropophagus virus is too



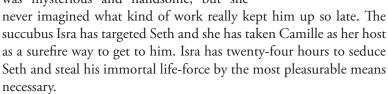
important. But when the handsome and mysterious Grey arrives to warn her about a pack of zombies heading her way, she finds her heart racing with desire, not fear.

When she discovers that Grey might be the key to a vaccine, there's no time to waste. The Pack has arrived... hopefully it isn't too little, too late.

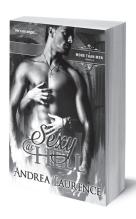
SEXY AS HELL

Seth gave up everything to circumvent death, including his freedom. Now he's an immortal warrior serving the Archangel Michael. But Seth has been compromised and he may finally earn his life back. He's just got to send one sexy, stubborn succubus back to hell.

Camille always thought her neighbor was mysterious and handsome, but she



The clock is ticking...



STILL AVAILABLE From Andrea Laurence

MORE THAN HE EXPECTED ISBN-13:978-0-373-73185-5

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Playboy Alex Stanton likes his relationships short and without strings. But his fiery fling with Gwen Wright left him craving more. So when a holiday weekend getaway provides an opportunity for another taste of the tantalizing



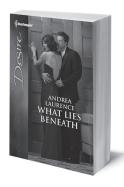
woman, he grabs it. Only, things have changed since their last encounter....

Besides being noticeably pregnant, Gwen insists she's sworn off men. As if the challenge weren't tempting enough, Gwen's enticing new curves have made the sexy spitfire even more appealing. But how can the footloose bachelor hang on to his heart when he can't stop longing for the soon-to-be mama?

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She's Awake. So Why Can't She Remember?

They say she's Cynthia Dempsey, fiancée of media mogul Will Taylor. But try as she might, she can't recall their high-society life or the man sitting by her hospital bed. Though



her body certainly remembers him. Even as she senses the distance between them, the electricity when they touch is undeniable.

Will can hardly believe Cynthia's transformation. Gone is the ice queen who betrayed him, and in her place is a woman who seems genuine and warm. But can he risk his heart again, not knowing what might happen when her memory returns?

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Romantic Times Top Pick, April 2012

RT Reviewers' Choice Awards 2012 Winner—First Series Romance

**** 1/2

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"What Lies Beneath is a fascinating story showcasing the deeper side of a love... I totally blame Ms. Laurence for making me tear-up..."

—Joyfully Reviewed

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