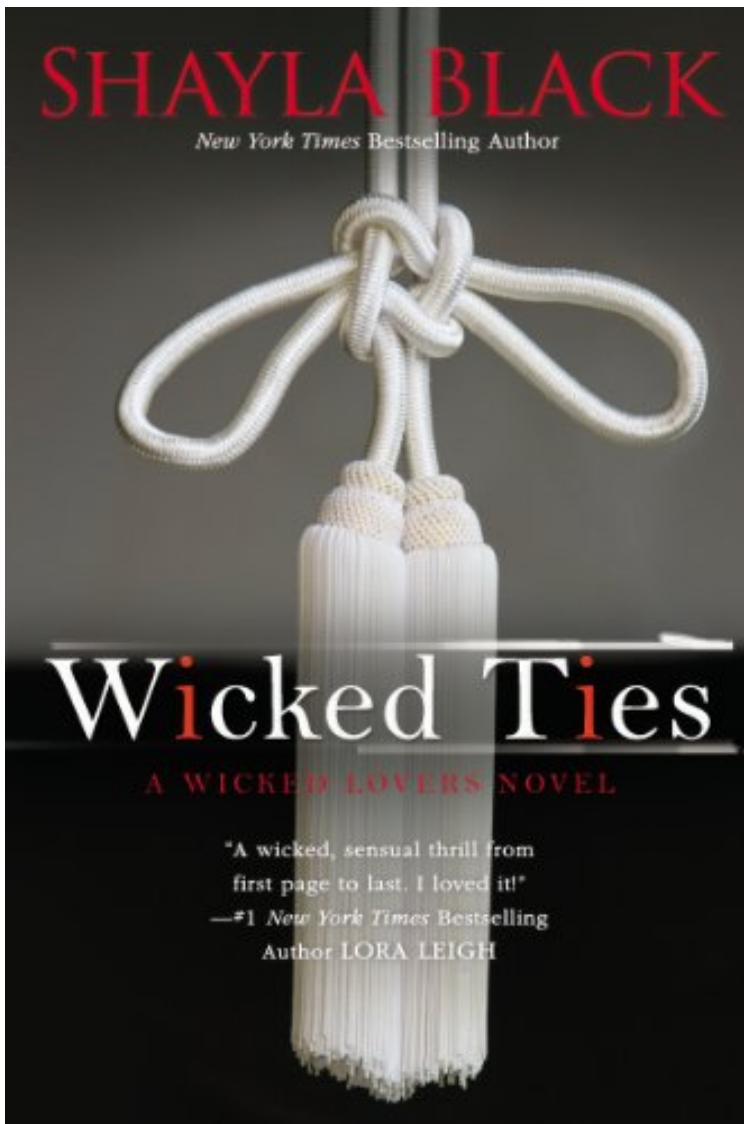


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Wicked Ties



Par Shayla Black
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Description : Description du produitWhen a stalker ratchets up his attempts to get to her, cable sex talk show host Morgan O'Malley turns to Jack Cole-a self-proclaimed dominant- for help. Though Jack is a bodyguard, Morgan feels anything but safe in his presence. Because slowly and seductively, Jack is bringing her deepest fantasies to the surface. And when he bends her to his will, what's more shocking than her surrender is how much she enjoys it and how she starts to crave his masterful touch. A willing player in Jack's games, Morgan knows that his motives aren't pure. But she has no idea how personal they are.

Prsentation de l'diteurShe didnt know what she wantedMorgan OMalley has seen a lot of kinky things as the hostess of a cable sex talk show. But shes never met a man like Jack Cole before. A self-proclaimed dominant, hes as alpha as a male can getand good for Morgan to have around when an obsessed stalker ratchets up his attempts to get to her.Until he made her beg for it.Though Jack is a bodyguard, Morgan feels

anything but safe in his presence because, slowly and seductively, Jack is bringing her deepest fantasies to the surface. And when he bends her to his will, whats more shocking than her surrender is how much she enjoys it and starts to crave his masterful touch. A willing player in Jacks games, Morgan knows that his motives arent pure, but she has no idea how personal they are.

Extrait Titles by Shayla Black
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About Shayla Black An Excerpt from His To Take Chapter One
HAVE you ever wanted to put yourself in the hands of a man whose sole purpose is to give you pleasure? The words flashed across Morgan OMalleys laptop screen. She sucked in a sharp, shocked breath.

Shed met this man in an online chat room less than three minutes ago. How could he know that? He must have guessed, had to have guessed. She hadnt told him anything about herself, not one single thing, except her name and the fact that she wanted to interview him for her cable TV show. But even through her stunned silence, he kept peeling back the layers of her secrets. Do you want a man to see inside you, all the way to your fantasies, the darkest ones you dont even tell your friends about, and make every one of them come true? A surge of arousal coiled in her belly. Her palms began to sweat. Morgan swallowed hard. In the silent living room shadowed with the many colors of dusk, Morgan squirmed on the black leather sofa, shoving desires she didnt dare admit to the back of her mind. This was business. He was business. It wasnt a good idea to have the hots for the next interview subject for her show. It might be late-night cable talk, but Turn Me On was her job, her brainchild, her little rebellion . . . her life. Besides, aching for a guy whose real name she didnt know, whose face shed never seen whose lifestyle she shouldnt even ponder was just dumb. So, Master J, is that what a dominant does? she typed in response, determined to keep the conversation light.

Dish out fantasies? One of the things, he responded at length. But that would be oversimplifying the relationship. His most important goal is to earn his partners trust. Trust is important in any relationship, but especially in one involving Dominance/submission. Without that, how can a woman freely put herself in a mans care and know that her well-being and safety will always be first? How can she know her master will understand her so he can make her every wicked fantasy come true? Dominance wasnt just about tying someone to the bed and screwing them into the mattress? Surprise wrinkled Morgans brow. Trust, care, understandingshe had to admit, that all sounded like a fantasy in itself. Certainly, shed been lacking those qualities in her relationship with her ex-fianc, Andrew especially the understanding. Trust allows a woman to connect with the primitive part of her that craves the utter surrender of being at her masters mercy, despite not knowing if his plans for her involve pleasure, pain, or both. Morgan couldnt deny that Master J intrigued her even more now than when one of the production assistants, Reggie, had given her his bio. Toggling to her email, she opened the bio shed been given and scanned it again. A member of the BDSM and D/s scene for nearly ten years, Master J is experienced in all facets but continues to learn. He owns a personal security company and has been bodyguard to senators, international diplomats, and athletes. A West Point graduate, he also served in military Special Forces as a team leader before being honorably discharged. Morgan clicked the email closed. The paragraph revealed a lot about the man whose words made her shiver with dark fantasies. Self-discipline, honor, strength. Yet the blurb said very little at the same time. Who was this guy? Could he really bind and tease a woman into making her beg? Morgan? Her name flashed across the screen.

You still there? Sorry. Just thinking. Clearly, I have a lot to learn about in order to do the show properly. I guess I thought it was all about velvet ropes and handcuffs. Its about that, too. She laughed, pushing down the ache curling in her belly . . . and lower. A little curiosity didnt make her depraved. Definitely not. It was just interesting to see how the other half lived. But its also an exchange of power and trust, he typed. A woman chooses to give her master dominion over her body and her mind. She surrenders her flesh and free will to anything and everything he desires. What sort of surrender? a voice inside of her demanded to know. A thousand dark images pushed themselves into her brain from the depths of her fantasies: her kneeling to this strangers cock, him ordering her to spread her legs wide so he could simply look at her, her bound to his bed as he prepared to take whatever he wanted. Disturbed by the shocking turn of her thoughts, she shook them away. And ignored her rapid breathing. Lots of people had bondage fantasies at one time or another, shed read. Having one or two herself was normal, no matter what Andrew said. Morgan squirmed against the leather cushions again, ignoring any extra moisture between her legs. But a D/s relationship is also about a lot more, Master J typed. How do you put someone in manacles, blindfolds, and dark rooms but still earn her trust? How do you develop an emotionally gratifying relationship when one person has all the power? Its not

like that. Morgans gaze stayed riveted to her screen as she waited for more. For a long, silent moment, she held her breath . . . but nothing. Master J wasnt going to reply further. Just like in the bedroom, she supposed. He had the power to give or withhold. Finally, a longer reply appeared in the little chat room window. Sorry, but Ive had an urgent call. Have to go. If you feel I have the background to assist with your show, lets meet. Ill answer your questions then. Someplace public, so you dont worry I might be a serial killer luring you into danger. I can talk faster. Ive mastered a lot, but not typing . I still hunt and peck. Morgan scuttled her impatience. Not hard when the man made her smile at his jokes. I understand, she answered. Can we meet tomorrow at 3? I Googled and found a place that seems to be popular there in Lafayette, called La Roux. Know where that is? Cher, Im a native. I know every crack in the sidewalk around here. Morgan smiled and typed, Cher? Im not that tall or old enough to have had a singing career since the 60s! LOL. It means dear in French, he translated. Im Cajun, so I grew up speaking the language. Morgan read his reply and ignored the little flutter in her belly. Flirtation was a French thing, and hed been raised with the culture. It was as natural to him as breathing, no doubt. Ive lived in Los Angeles too long, I guess. Ill see you then? You will. How will I know you? Lots of pretty girls in Louisiana. I want to make sure I reveal my innermost secrets to the right one. He was a charmer, Morgan bet. Hed have to be with his interest in wielding whips and chains. Certainly, most normal women would run screaming in the opposite direction at the thought of a little pain and a lot of obedience with their sex. Ill be wearing a straw hat, sunglasses, and a big, boxy coat, she answered. Sounds more like a disguise, Master J returned. He had no idea. And she wasnt advertising the fact she had a stalker. Morgan only hoped the reason she needed a disguise would be caught and start rotting in hell soon. See you tomorrow, she jotted back. Au revoir. The message on her screen told her moments later that Master J had left the private chat room. With a sigh, she moved to close the chat room window. Her hand trembled. No, her whole body trembled, despite the heat snaking under her skin. She was tired, thats all. Tired doesnt make you ache in very personal places, the voice in her head taunted. Tired doesnt make you wet. Tired makes me hear pesky voices in my head, she grumbled. She tried to push Master J, the man, aside and focus on the questions shed ask him tomorrow. The shows outline had to be in soon, and she wanted to be prepared to launch her second season with a bang. Already, she had a growing cult following. With the right material, the show could skyrocket. Which meant she had to keep her eye on the prize and focus on work. But after ten minutes of staring at an empty screen, Morgan admitted that Master J wouldnt leave her mind. What was it about him? Other than the fact that he lives out the fantasies youve ached about? Morgan shook her head, determined to ignore the maddening little voice. She was curious, not deviant. No matter what Andrew said or her mother would think. With a sigh, she reached for the phone and dialed the number of the production assistant in Los Angeles. Reggie, she said when he answered. Hey, I talked to this Master J guy you hooked me up with, and I read his bio. Im meeting him tomorrow. Whats his scoop? Learn anything new? Yeah, returned the older man, his voice scratchy from his two-pack-a-day habit. I did some calling around Louisiana, asked people at bondage clubs if theyd ever heard of him, just to make sure hes legit. He checks out. That was a relief but it wasnt. Reggie had quickly become like a surrogate father to her, and she trusted him. But ignoring her curiosity about Master J would have been much easier if Reggie hadnt been able to vouch for him. If only she could have written him off as another crackpot who wanted to talk about sex on TV. Morgan bit her lip . . . but her inquisitive nature won out. What did everyone say about him? A bunch. Hes casual, not heavy into the lifestyle but fairly regular at a few clubs. Apparently, he has a way with women and a reputation to go with it. More than one person I talked to said that he could make Mother Teresa beg to be tied down and fucked. He definitely wants a woman submissive. Hey, youre not interested, are you? What? Morgans heart skipped a handful of beats. Me? No! She scoffed. Why would I want a bully who gets off on making a woman feel inferior? You sure? Reggie sounded skeptical. Do I seem like the type to get into this sort of stuff? she countered. Reggie said nothing. Distress coiled through Morgan. A rattling of the lock at the front door had Morgans head zooming in the other direction. She sighed with relief when her half brother Brandon shouldered his way inside. Gotta go, she told Reggie. Ill call you after Ive talked to this guy tomorrow. Hey, little sister, Brandon greeted as she hung up. Shoving the conversation with Reggie out of her mind, she rose and stepped up on tiptoe to hug him. Hi. Good day? His aristocratic mouth pursed into a frown. Not exactly. I have to go to Iraq for the next three weeks. Surprise, and if Morgan was honest, trepidation punched her in the stomach. Iraq? I thought you sat behind a desk most of the time. Mostly, but there are exceptions. Oh, wow . . . Why Iraq? Classified. He gave a bitter laugh. You know the drill . . . I cant say where Ill be or what Ill be doing. I wont be near a phone or computer for most of the time. Morgan, I dont want to leave you. Its dangerous, and I know youre afraid. She swallowed.

Brandon had already done so much by taking her in, despite Daddy Dearests ire, protecting her from the scum who stalked her. She was afraid, but she couldnt let Brandon feel guilty for doing his job. Ill be fine. Shed think of somethingshe had to. Im busy with work. Itll be fine. If anything happens, I think you should call Dad. Morgan gaped at him, holding in a sarcastic scoff. He may be your dad. Hes my biological fatherthe one whos been denying I exist for the last twenty-five years. Brandon sighed. Morgan, you know how it is with politics, especially in the South. If people knew hed had a fling with a barely legal volunteer while he had a wife and three little boys at home . . . I know, it would ruin the senator from the great state of Texas. Theyre talking about a bid for the White House in 2012. Sympathy and regret tangled on his attractive face. Exactly why I cant call him. Not that hed take my call, anyway. He would if you were in danger. Dad can protect you. Morgan had her doubts but said nothing. Too bad we cant just tell him Im your fiance. Its working with everyone else. Hmm. If our actual relationship ever came to light, wed have to admit to incest or lying. Not fun choices. Lets hope it doesnt come to that. I dont think my sick stalker knows Ive left L.A., so he has no idea where to find me. Nodding, Brandon started to sift through the days mail. When he came to a big manila envelope, he frowned. Does anyone know youre here in Houston? Other than Master J, whom shed met online all of fifteen minutes ago, Reggie, and a few close friends back home? No. Anxiety thundered across Brandons face. Someone here knows you. This was in the mailbox. No name, no postage. It was hand-delivered. He held out the package to her, and Morgan took it with dread boiling in her stomach. She knew that handwriting. Dear God, how had he found her here? And so quickly? No! Hands shaking, breath short, she opened the envelope and extracted the contents. As she did, red rose petals with moist centers and dead edges fluttered downward, skittering across the blond hardwood floor. They looked faintly like fat drops of blood splattered all around her. Morgan gasped. He knew she was here. How had he found her? Then her gaze fell to the photos. Pictures of her, one arriving at LAX the day shed fled to Houston. The next of her in Brandons backyard wearing thin sweatpants and a tank top, with nipples teased hard by a cool morning breeze. The last, a photo of her in her sage silk-and-lace shift with matching robe, kissing Brandons cheek as they stood in the driveway before he left for work. Just this morning. Fear biting at her belly, Morgan didnt protest when Brandon grabbed the photos from her numb fingers. He flipped through them with a snarled curse. These are from your stalker, arent they? Hes been here. Son of a bitch! He raked a hand through his brown hair, ruffling the bankers cut. Im calling the police. God, she wished it were that simple. They cant do anything. The police in L.A. told me he was going to have to do something illegal before they could spend any energy finding him. Taking pictures isnt against the law. Hes been on my property. Brandon held up the photo of her in the backyard of his rambling Houston home, his big fingers wrinkling the photo. My backyard is private. The only way he could take this picture is by trespassing. Theres a law broken. He grabbed the nearest cordless phone and dialed 911. Morgan just shook her head. While Brandon was right, she doubted the Houston police were going to be any more motivated to do something than the cops in L.A. Whoever this was hadnt stolen anything, vandalized anything. He hadnt hurt anyone yet. Morgan could feel his anger building in the frequency of his contact, the fact that hed followed her to Texas. And the police wouldnt care what her gut told her. Brandon hung up the phone. Theyll be here soon. Morgan just shrugged . . . and tried to calm the panic bubbling inside her. With nothing to do but wait, she started to shove the pictures back in the envelope. When she encountered an obstruction, she realized something else lay inside. She stuck her hand between the layers of paper, perplexed. Usually the disturbed bastard only sent picturesdisconcerting, disturbingly private pictures, but nothing more. Not today. Out of the benign brownish envelope, she yanked a scrap of paper with a scrawl of ugly black writing. You belong to me. Only to me. Morgan swallowed a huge lump of fear. Now he was communicating with her. To her. Conveying his possessiveness, his fury that she might have another man in her life. This lunatic didnt know that Brandon was her half brother. Hed bought the cover story Brandon had concocted, as much to explain her presence at his house to others, as to warn off her overzealous psycho. While the thought of being alone scared Morgan, part of her was glad Brandon had to leave tomorrow. If something happened to him, it wouldnt be because her stalker had decided to get the competition out of the way. In the three weeks Brandon would be gone, shed figure something out, find somewhere else to go, so that when he returned, she didnt endanger the only one of Senator Rosss sons to give a rip about her. Maybe, like Reggie suggested before she left L.A., she needed a bodyguard . . . You really have no idea who this creep is? Brandon growled, staring over her shoulder at the note. None. She shook her head. I wish I did. I have no disgruntled coworkers that Im aware of. My ex-fianc left me, not the other way around. Someone whos watched your show? A fan who doesnt know where to draw the line? Morgan shrugged. Maybe. Ive received odd fan mail before, but nothing this

threatening or privacy-invading. Im going to find someone to get to the bottom of this, kiddo. Im not going to let anything happen to you, he vowed. At times like this, Morgan wondered how she and Brandon were descended from the same loins as Senator Rosss other sons. They were nothing like the man and his other greedy, power-hungry offspring. Damn it, he cursed suddenly into the silence. I wish like hell I didnt have to go tomorrow. The car is picking me up at o-five hundred, and the timing couldnt be worse. Shit! Uncle Sam can be a demanding mistress. Morgan didnt know exactly what Brandon did; he wasnt allowed to tell anyone. From things hed said in the three years since hed found the skeleton in their fathers closet and tracked her down, shed guessed he was in Intelligence. She had no idea who for. If you hate the job so much, and you want to run for office as badly as I know you do, why dont you just do it? For the first time she could remember, Brandon wouldnt meet her gaze. He turned away, fists clenching. He unclenched them with obvious effort, then said, I cant. THE following day, Morgan dropped down into a wrought-iron chair at a little sidewalk caf in a quaint cluster of unique shops. The February afternoon hung thick, lazy, and surprisingly sultry all around. Fighting off exhaustion after a nearly sleepless night, she glanced at her watch. Three oclock. Shed made good time on her drive from Houston. Master J should be here very soon. Her stomach tightened at the thought. That wasnt the only reason, though. She also felt eyes on her, watching, assessing, probing. The hairs on the back of her neck stood up. She looked around, scanned the crowd. Nothing. Morgan took a deep breath, trying to quell her uneasiness. It wasnt hard to imagine that if a psycho would follow her from Los Angeles to Houston, hed go the extra mile to trail her to Lafayette. She was probably safe sitting here in the middle of a sunny public square, but if he recognized her, hed see her with Master J and make assumptions that would make him even angrier than the appearance that she was marrying Brandon. Then when night fell, and she was alone in Brandons house . . . No, she couldnt think that now. She would have to keep this all business, so that if her stalker identified her and watched this meeting, he wouldnt assume there was anything sexual between her and Master J. She adjusted the scarf and hat to make sure they completely covered her hair and pushed the sunglasses up on her face. Maybe she was being paranoid. No one should be able to recognize her like this. Maybe after this interview, she would slip away to that cozy European-looking bed and breakfast shed seen on her way into town and catch up on sleep so she could figure out how to shake this stalker. A waiter came by with a wide smile, white teeth stark against his ebony skin. Morgan did her best to smile back as she ordered iced tea. Once hed gone, she tugged the boxy, lightweight coat shed dragged out of Brandons closet down over her hips and flipped up the collar. The waiter arrived with her tea. She checked her watch again. Five after three. Shed give Master J another few minutes. Sitting here in the open, vulnerable to the sick man whod been following her . . . suddenly it struck her as very unwise. You must be Morgan. The deep whisper came from behind her, delivered right in her ear. His warm breath cascaded down the side of her neck, and she gave an involuntary shiver. She started, turned, stunned anyone had been able to sneak up on her, as jumpy as she was. But hed been utterly silent. And he was breathtakingly gorgeous. Thick, dark hair teased his broad forehead. An angular jaw and cleft chin dusted with a five oclock shadow shouted his masculinity with all the subtlety of a sonic boom. His wide mouth curled up with an expression that looked half smile, half challenge. But, oh, his eyes. They captured her. Accented by a sweep of black brows, those knowing eyes of his watched her, as if he could see deep inside her. As if he knew all her secrets. Allowing her gaze to wander south didnt help tame her pulse, either. Master J stood about six feet tall, with broad shoulders and a body of well-honed muscle evident under a tight black T-shirt that made her think of a mountain with its solid, quiet permanence. No one could move a mountain. No one was going to move this man either, unless he wanted to be moved. Just staring at him jolted her with attraction and a healthy dose of lust. Thank goodness their time alone would be limited to this one meeting in public. Otherwise, Morgan didnt think she could be responsible for her behavior. She swallowed, trying to find her voice. Yes, Im Morgan. When she stuck out her hand, he didnt just shake it. Too simple. Tangling his gaze with hers, he bent and brought her hand to his mouth, placing a kiss on her fingers. Oh, dear God . . . Fire raced up her arm, turning her heartbeat into a staccato chug. He lingered, a hot breath caressing the back of her hand, his fingertips teasing the sensitive center of her palm. Tingles burst across her skin, up her arm. His effect on her didnt end there. Instead, the impact of his presence, his touch, dove deep inside her, where an ache began to pulse gently between her legs. As if her clit needed to announce the fact that her libido wanted to get naked with this man. Business, business! The demand chased itself in her head. With a discreet tug, Morgan pulled her hand free. Master J smiled as he sat beside her rather than across and scooted his chair a few inches closer. She tried to ignore her awareness of his thigh brushing hers, the tingling under her skin. Thank you for meeting me here, Mr . . . what would you like me to call you,

since I dont know your name?That grin seemed to taunt her with her own uncertainty and his wicked knowledge of their forthcoming sexual discussion. For now, just call me sir.Okay. Yes, sir.The moment the words were out of her mouth, Morgan realized how sexual they sounded. How sexual hed intended they sound. Not just deferential, though they were that, too. But around Master J, she just couldnt seem to muster enough air to power her voice beyond a husky murmur.What would it be like to call him sir in private?Despite the dark sunglasses shielding her, his dark eyes seemed to dance with the knowledge of her every thought, every sinful feeling, as he held her gaze, as if he could read the desire all over her face.Morgan used the untouched tea in front of her as an excuse to look away and scoured her brain for a safe, neutral topic.Hard to do that when shed invited him here to talk about sex.So, according to the bio I received about you, youre in the personal security business. A bodyguard?Exactly. He shrugged those deliciously massive shoulders. I guard a lot of politicians and their families, diplomats, an occasional athlete.You meet a lot of interesting people, Im sure. Do you work with celebrities? she asked.A hint of humor curved his wide mouth to something nearing a smile. Too flaky. Politicians are liars, but at least you know what to expect. You Hollywood types are either paranoid, self-absorbed, or as psycho as the people stalking you. No thanks.Morgan couldnt decide if she was annoyed or amused. Im none of the above.Give it time. He winked.Incorrigible described him perfectly. A hint of arrogance laced with a healthy dose of sex appeal and teasing humor. The mixture went down real smooth, thanks to his flirtation skills and a hint of Southern charm. No doubt, he was lethal to a womans common sense. Morgan swallowed.The waiter came by, and Master J ordered a cup of thick Louisiana chicory coffee. She shuddered when the waiter brought it to their table moments later.Tell me more about your show. His words should have been an invitation, but Morgan heard the subtle command in them. Not harsh, not driving. But his voice held a note of steelone that made her stomach tighten . . . and her womb clench.Turn Me On combines interviews and facts to explore various facets of sexual life for both established couples and the newly dating, from the vanilla to the way out there. Last season, I did a show one week about sex etiquette on a first date, another about friends with benefits, then followed it up with couples who had tattoo fantasies. This will be my second season, and I was thrilled to be renewed. Since the network provides cable programming geared toward women and couples, I think its a perfect fit.Hmm. Tell me about this seasons shows.Again, another subtle command. Well, were still at the ideas stage, but were definitely pursuing shows about boudoir photography, couples massage, erotic finger painting andAnd Dominance and submission.Morgan swallowed. Shed been caught up in her enthusiasm for the show and almost forgotten they were going to discuss that topic. The topic that fueled her shameful late-night fantasies.Yes.He quirked a dark brow at her expectantly, somehow managing to look sharp, displeased, and nonthreatening all at once.Puzzled, Morgan stared. What did he want?Yes, sir, she ventured.His smile dazzled, rewarded. Very nice.I thought such forms of address were reserved for ones . . .Submissive? Frequently, but you contacted me for a quick lesson or two. I thought it best to start with a hint of the dynamic and see how you do with it. He leaned forward, an elbow braced on the table. His gaze poured directly into her, molten and unrelenting. Do you understand what it means to submit to a man? Completely surrender?Morgan tried to suck in a breath, stunned to find it ragged beyond her control. His eyes flared hot with approval.Th-this isnt about me, she argued breathlessly. I just need to relate the concept to theHow can you relate without a taste of it, cher? A little nibble aint gonna hurt you. The smile he flashed her could only be termed pure sin. You might even like it.Thats exactly what Morgan was afraid of.She did her best to send him an expression that was all business. It doesnt matter if I like it. After all, I managed to finish taping the show about couples tattoo fantasies successfully without ever getting a tattoo myself. Its all about understanding why its important to them.Paying someone to imprint a design on your skin while your significant other watches is a lot less personal than being blindfolded, naked, and bound for your masters pleasure.With a gulp, Morgan realized he was right. Worse, that nibble he offered was starting to sound like a feast to her neglected sex drive.No. This time around, Adam was offering the apple of temptation to Eve, and she was smart enough to know better. If she seemed interested, it was because he filled her head with suggestion. He was hard to ignore. She wasnt depraved, wasnt the kind of woman to get off on letting a bully chain her down and tell her what to do. The idea was just novel. She had a purely intellectual curiosity in the concept. Okay, mostly intellectual. That didnt mean she should indulge.Even if Master J looked like the kind of man who could have invented the concept of pleasure.What are you afraid of? he asked.Myself.She looked away from his intent gaze. Its just not my thing.That displeased brow snapped up again. His glare filled with impatient demand.Sir, she added, almost against her will.His expression softened. In the few minutes Ive been sitting here, your skin has flushed, the heartbeat pulsing at your neck has

accelerated, and your nipples have hardened. I know the scent of arousal. I can smell yours. Im going to ask you again; what are you afraid of ?Shock punched her gut. Oh, my . . . Shed been as easy to read as a book. Easier, even. Morgan closed her eyes, drew in a breath. Then another. Her mind raced.Dont think too hard, he cautioned. Lying invokes punishment.Punishment? You have no right! she returned in a heated whisper.He stared for a long moment. I told you yesterday online that a relationship of this sort requires a great deal of trust. I trusted that you were who you said you were. In order to earn a little of your trust, I allowed your production assistant access to some very personal information about me. Thats right. No need to look surprised. I knew the minute he started calling around about me. If I hadnt advised my clubs in advance that they could give your guy information, no one would have even said good morning to Reggie, much less confirmed the details of my sex life.He shifted in his seat, brushing his thigh against hers again, and then lifted her chin with his finger. Morgan melted a combination of shock and arousal, topped with the delicious thrill of Master Js overwhelming sex appeal.Trust, he murmured. I placed some in you. If were going to work together, you need to have a bit in me. Im not going to ravish you or force you or any other melodramatic scenario running through your head. If Im going to help you understand the psychology of Dominance and submission, you have to have enough trust to be honest with me. And with yourself. Do you understand what Im saying?Y-yes, sir.Excellent. Now, for the last time, why are you afraid of the idea of submitting?A loaded question, one she didnt know how to answer. Rejection. Being ridiculed again. Shame. Fear of pain and degradation. A stronger fear that shed love being mastered by someone like him and be unable to deal with the shame and guilt.She couldnt admit thatnot any of it. She might as well hand him her soul on a silver platter.Please, she whispered. Please . . .Master Js jaw tightened, his eyes narrowed. For some crazy reason, she hated letting him down. She owed him nothing, damn it. Nothing at all. He was an interview subject, and hed be compensated for his time and information. Period.Fighting the dueling impulses of resisting until hell froze over and giving in, it took Morgan a few moments to realize that their waiter had returned to refill Master Js coffee. Then the young guy looked at her with a confounded sort of smile.Some dude paid me twenty bucks to give this to you.He handed her a regular mailing envelopewith very familiar handwriting.The waiter departed.Her heart started pounding. The speed of light had nothing on her as she opened the envelope to find a handful of red rose petals with soft centers and dead edges. They spilled through her fingers, and she gasped, feeling all blood drain from her face.No . . . She looked around the sunny square with panic. No!Morgan? Master J questioned, voice laced with concern.She looked at him with wild eyes. Hes here. Here. Followed me. Oh, my . . . I have to go. She sucked in a scared breath and clenched trembling fists. Hide. Now!Master J grabbed her by the shoulders. Who is here and where are you going?Shrugging free of his touch, she looked around frantically for any face that might be dangerous or familiar. Most other chairs in the square sat empty, as did a few nearby windows and balconies. Shadowed store-fronts held any number of people, but they all looked like natives. The little coffeehouses other patrons either took little notice of her or cared even less. Like every other time her stalker had approached, hed been as silent as smoke, as invisible as air. Panic ate at her gut.I cant stay. Im sorry . . .He grabbed her again, looking determined to shake answers out of her. Instead, he froze, his gaze zeroed in on something across the street.Morgan felt the energy burst through his body a second before he pushed her to the ground. Down!He shoved her under a table and covered her body with his an instant before a gunshot erupted above her head.Chapter TwoJACK Cole curled his body protectively over Morgans tiny female form and used the small iron table to shield her as another shot rang out. People around them screamed and scrambled away in the melee. He swore as she trembled violently beneath him.Damn it! Revenge was so close, and now this? He couldnt fuck his enemys woman until she screamed his name if she was dead.Fury rattled through him, but the fact that someone was trying to thwart his revenge wasnt the only reason. Nope, he was downright pissed that some asshole had filled such a small but vibrant woman with complete terror.Admittedly, hed lured Morgan here to use her but never to physically hurt her. Just the opposite. He would find out what made her tick and fulfill every one of her fantasies until her body hummed with satisfaction.Until she no longer had any interest in Brandon Ross and left the son of a bitch.The jackoff currently at the other end of the gun, however, had other ideas, like planting a bullet between her eyes.Another shudder went through Morgan. She held in a cry. Jack hugged her tighter, shoving her right against the iron table. Saving her was instinct. An occupational hazard. A necessity. Brandon Ross had earned this revenge three years ago, and Jack planned to deliver him humiliation in spades. He wasnt about to let Morgan die.Ill get you out of here safely. He whispered the vow in her ear.His churning gut demanded he draw his .38 and return fire. But there were too many people around to take that risk. And he sensed it would scare the hell out of

Morgan. She was already terrified, damn it. She smiled pretty for the camera for a living, she didn't dodge bullets. When the waiter had delivered the letter to their table and he'd seen the sweet flush drain from her face, leaving behind chalk-white shock as half-dead rose petals spilled into her hands, he'd smelled her fear. After catching a glint of gunmetal in the sunlight on a roof across the street . . . Jack had no doubt what would happen next. He hated to be right about shit like this. Glancing at the chair Morgan had occupied moments ago, he saw the discolored gouges left by unforgiving bullets. He swore again. Beneath him, Morgan tried to sit up. Jack held her in place. Stay down! I need to go. Run. Hide. A quick glance over the table at the rooftop across the street showed their shooter had fled. Either that or he had come in for a closer shot during the chaos. That meant they were easy targets and he had to get Morgan out of this open area fast. I'll get you to safety, Jack emphasized, dragging Morgan to her feet. Are you hurt? She shoved the hat back over her head and tightened the scarf beneath, which covered her hair. No. Then let's run! He grabbed her small, cold hand in his. Engulfed it. Damn, she was tiny, much smaller than a powerful name like Morgan implied. Taking off as fast as his legs would carry him, Jack tugged Morgan behind him, ducking behind upturned tables when the shots rang out again. He dragged her behind the cover of the cafe's coffee bar, then pulled her around the corner of the building, silently urging her to keep up. She did, clutching her hat against her head with her spare hand. Jack looked beyond Morgan with a frown. No way to tell if the shooter was following in this crowd, but he assumed so. Better safe than dead. Where are we going? Jack didn't answer; he was too busy improvising a plan in his head. In silence, he pulled her up streets, down alleys. More gunshots rang out. A bullet whizzed past his ear, and he swore. If this son of a bitch harmed a hair on Morgan's head, Jack was going to enjoy beating him senseless with his bare hands. Ducking into a busy store, they narrowly avoided crashing into an elderly woman. Stepping aside so the scowling grandma and her walker could pass cost them precious seconds. As soon as the path cleared, he took Morgan's small hand in his again and tugged, forcing her to run again. Out the back of the store, down a narrow walkway, into a darkening alley. Thank God he knew this town as well as the shape of his own face. Another series of staccato blasts sounded again, this time in front of the store they'd just exited. Shit! Run faster, cher. Panting, sweating, she merely nodded. And picked up the pace. At the far end of an alley, they came to a metal door with scarred black paint and red lettering that read SEXY SIRENS. Even with the door closed, it vibrated with the pounding of raucous music and the rowdy crowd inside despite the fact that it was barely three in the afternoon. From experience, Jack knew the door would be locked. Raising a fist, he hammered on it with all his might, not caring if he left a dent. While he waited, he looked over both shoulders to see if they were being followed. A blast of gunfire erupted, kicking out chunks of brick not six inches from Morgan's side. With a quick scan of the alley, he cursed. It was rife with trash bins and overgrown with crawling vines, providing plenty of places for her shooter to hide. Son of a bitch! He banged on the beat-up metal surface again. Someone answer the damn door. Finally, a familiar bleached blonde wrenched the door open. Jesus, Jack. What the hell is wrong? He pushed Morgan inside, then followed her into the backroom cluttered with empty beer cans. Shooter out there. I need your help. A child's stick pony and a riding crop lay next to the stage entrance. Angélique had apparently just performed. He slammed the door behind him and again scanned the darkened room, illuminated by a single red bulb and decorated with peeling black paint. One thin door separated this area from the main stage and the throbbing music in the club beyond. A shooter? Holy . . . Who have you pissed off now? Alyssa, this is Morgan, he shouted over the music. She's the hostess of a cable TV show You're Morgan O'Malley! I love Turn Me On! Morgan, who had doffed her sunglasses, extended her hand to Alyssa. Hmm. Blue eyes rimmed in red, a smattering of freckles, very fair skin not Brandon's usual type. But times changed, he supposed. Jack drawled, Then I'm assuming you'd like to help me keep her alive long enough to do more shows. The shooter was aiming at her. Jack turned to the other woman. Morgan, this is Alyssa Devereaux, owner of Sexy Sirens. The most famous or infamous gentlemen's club in southern Louisiana, depending on your point of view. Brandon's little woman flashed a weak smile, trying her damndest not to stare at Alyssa's inch-thick makeup, near-indecent skirt, and fuck-me boots. There was nothing subtle about Alyssa. She still dressed like a stripper, though she hadn't danced around a pole in years. She sucked a cock like a woman trying to ingest the brass off a doorknob. She had worse language than he did. But she also had a big, big heart. *Revue de presse* "A wicked, sensual thrill from first page to last. I loved it!" --#1 New York Times Bestselling Author Lora Leigh "Filled with scrumptious, burning love...and impassioned sex that keeps the heat on high until the very last page." --Just Erotic Romance s "Intense, erotic, and sizzling hot." --Fresh Fiction "A deliciously kinky and naughty thriller...A satisfying tale of suspense and

sexual awakening."--Joyfully ed"Absolutely took my breath away."--Romance Junkies