



# Tempted

By Megan Hart

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It was meant to be fun. Something the three of us shared for those hot summer weeks Alex stayed with us. Nobody was supposed to fall in or out of love. I didn't need another man, not even one who oozed sex like honey and knew all the secrets I didn't know, the secrets my husband hadn't shared. After all, we had a perfect life. And I loved my husband.

But I wasn't the only one.

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### Editorial Review

#### About the Author

Megan Hart is the award-winning and multi-published author of more than thirty novels, novellas and short stories. Her work has been published in almost every genre, including contemporary women's fiction, historical romance, romantic suspense and erotica. Megan lives in the deep, dark woods of Pennsylvania with her husband and children, and is currently working on her next novel for MIRA Books. You can contact Megan through her website at [www.MeganHart.com](http://www.MeganHart.com).

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Light and shadow painted him. On little cat feet, like the fog, I crept toward the bed. Tug-tugging, I slid the covers off to reveal his body.

I liked to watch him sleep, despite the way it sometimes made me want to pinch myself to prove I wasn't dreaming. That this was my husband, my house, my life. Our perfect life. That there were good things to be had in the world, and I had them.

James stirred without waking. I crept closer to stand over him. The sight of him, all long, muscled limbs and smooth, sun-burnished skin, curled my fingers in anticipation of touching him. I held off, not wanting to wake him. I wanted to watch him for a while.

Awake, James was rarely still. Only dreaming did he loosen, soften, melt. If it was harder to believe he belonged to me when he was sleeping, it was also easier to remember how much I loved him.

Oh, I played a good game of confidence. I wore the ring and answered to the name Mrs. James Kinney. I even had the driver's license and credit cards to prove I had the right to the name. Most of the time, our marriage was so matter-of-fact I couldn't have disbelieved it if I'd wanted to, not when it came time to do the laundry and buy groceries, or clean the toilets, when I packed his lunches or folded his socks before putting them away. Then our marriage was solid and substantial. Granite. But sometimes, like when I watched him sleeping, the rock turned out to be limestone, easily dissolved by the slow-dripping water of my doubts.

Sunshine filtered through the tree outside our window and dappled him in all the spots I wanted to kiss. The twin dark circles of his nipples, the ridges of his ribs made sharper as he flung a hand over his head, the soft patch of hair furring his belly and meshing with the thatch between his legs. Everything about him was long and lean. Hidden strength. James looked thin, sometimes even breakable, but underneath he was all muscle. He had large, callus-fingered hands, used to working but perfectly suited for playing, too.

I was more interested in the playing as I bent over him to blow a puff of breath across his lips. Fast as sin, he grabbed me. He could pin both my wrists with one hand, and he did, pulling me onto the bed and rolling on top of me. James settled between my thighs, the only thing between us the thin fabric of my summer-weight nightgown. He was already getting hard.

"What were you doing?"

"Watching you sleep."

James pushed my hands above my head, stretching me.

It hurt a little, but then that's what makes the pleasure so much sweeter. His free hand inched up the hem of my nightgown and found my bare thigh.

His fingertips grazed the curls between my legs as he spoke. "Why were you watching me sleep?"

"Because I like to," I told him just before his questing fingers made me inhale sharply.

"Do I want to know why you like to watch me sleep?" His grin tipped the corners of his mouth. Smug. His fingertip settled against me, but he didn't move it yet.

"Anne?"

I laughed. "No. Probably not."

"I didn't think so."

He lowered his mouth to mine but didn't kiss me. I craned my neck, seeking to meet his lips, but James kept them a breath apart. His finger began the slow circling he knew well would drive me crazy. I felt heat and hardness on my hip, but with my hands still held fast in his grip, I could only wiggle in protest.

"Tell me what you want me to do to you."

"Kiss me."

James had eyes of summer-sky blue, ringed with deep navy. The contrast could be startling. The dark fringe of his lashes swept down as his eyes narrowed. He licked his lips.

"Where?"

"Everywhere...." My reply trailed off into a sigh and then a startled gasp when he stroked me again.

"Here?"

"Yes."

"Say it."

I wouldn't, not at first, though I knew sooner or later he'd have me doing what he wanted. He always did. It helped that I usually wanted what he wanted me to want. We were well matched in that way.

James bit down into the sensitive spot where my neck met my shoulder. "Say it."

Instead, I writhed under his touch. His finger dipped inside me, then out, swirling gently when I wanted him to press harder. Teasing me.

"Anne," James said seriously. "Tell me you want me to lick your cunt."

I used to hate that word until I learned its power. It's what men call women who have bested them. It's what women call each other when we want to wound. Bitch has become something of a badge of pride, but *cunt* still sounds dirty and harsh, and it always will.

Unless we take it back.

I said what he wanted me to say. My voice was hoarse but not weak. I looked into my husband's eyes, gone dark with lust. "I want you to put your face between my legs and make me come."

For one moment, he didn't move. Against my hip, his heat and hardness shifted and grew. I saw the pulse beat in his throat. Then he blinked slowly, and the smug smile spread across his mouth. "I love it when you say that."

"I love it when you do it," I murmured.

Then there was no more talking, because he moved down my body and lifted my nightgown to put his mouth exactly where I told him I wanted it. He licked me for a long time, until I shuddered and cried out, and then he slid up again to fill me and fucked me until we both came with shouts that sounded like prayers.

The telephone's jangling interrupted the postcoital laziness to which we'd succumbed. The Sunday edition of the *Sandusky Register*, spread out on the bed, crinkled and rustled as James leaned over me to grab the phone from its cradle. I took the chance to lick his skin as he did, sneaking a nibble that made him jump and laugh as he answered.

"This better be good," he said into the phone.

A pause. I gave him a curious look over the lifestyles section. He was grinning.

"You son of a bitch!" James settled back against the headboard, his naked knees pulled up. "What are you doing? Where the hell are you?"

I tried catching his eye but the conversation had immersed him. James is an intense butterfly, flitting from focus to focus and giving each his undivided attention. It's flattering when it's you. Not so charming when it isn't.

"You lucky son of a bitch." James sounded almost envious, and my curiosity was piqued even more. Generally, James was the object of admiration among his peers, the one with the newest toys. "I thought you were in Singapore."

I knew, then, who had disrupted our Sunday afternoon lassitude. It had to be Alex Kennedy. I looked back to my paper, listening while James talked. There wasn't anything particularly interesting in the newspaper. I didn't really care about the latest summer fashion or what cars were trendy this year. I cared even less about burglaries and politics, however, so I scanned the columns of text and discovered I'd been ahead of my time in painting my bedroom pale melon the year before. Apparently it was the season's hot new color.

Listening to only one side of a conversation is like putting together a puzzle without looking at the picture on the box. I listened to James talking to his best friend from junior high school with only the barest

comprehension and frame of reference to help me assemble the pieces. I knew my husband as well and intimately as any one person can know another, but I didn't know Alex at all.

"Yeah, yeah. Of course you did. You always do."

The keen admiration was back, along with an eagerness new to me. I glanced at James. His face was alight with glee and something else. Something almost poignant. Despite having what could be a somewhat narrow focus on his own priorities, James was unafraid to be happy for someone else's fortune. He was, however, rarely impressed. Or intimidated. Now he looked a bit of both, and I forgot about the vapidness of pale melon altogether to listen to him speak.

"Ah, get out, man, you'd rule the fucking world if you wanted."

I blinked. The sincere, almost puppyish tone was as new to me as the look on his face. This was startling. A bit disturbing. It was the way a boy speaks to a woman he's convinced he loves, even though he knows she'll never give him a second look.

"Yeah, same here." Laughter, low and somewhat secret, crept out of him. Not his usual guffaw. "Fucking-A man, that's great. I'm glad to hear it."

Another pause while he listened. I watched him rub the curving white scar just above his heart, his fingers tracing the line of it, over and over, absently. I'd seen him do that before, rubbing that scar like a talisman when he was tired or upset or excited. Sometimes it was brief, a passing touch like he was flicking a crumb from his shirt. Other times, like this, the stroke-stroke of his fingers took on an almost hypnotic pace. I could be mesmerized watching James run his fingers along that scar, which sometimes looks like a half-moon, or a bite, or a frown or a rainbow.

James's brow creased. "No. Really? What were they thinking? That sucks, Alex. Really fucking sucks. Fuck, man, I'm sorry."

From elation to sorrow in half a second. This too was unusual from my husband, who might move easily from focus to focus but always managed to maintain his emotional stability. His syntax had changed during his conversation, reverting a little. I'm no prude about bad language, but he was saying *fuck* an awful lot.

In the next instant his face brightened. He sat up, bent knees going straight. The sunshine of his smile burst from behind the storm clouds of a moment before.

"Yeah? Right on! Fucking-A! You got it, man! That's fan-fucking-tastic!"

At this I could no longer hide my expression of surprise, but James didn't notice. He was bouncing a little, shaking the bed so the papers rattled and the sadly neglected classifieds fluttered to the floor.

"When? Great! That's...yeah, yeah...of course. It'll be fine. It'll be great. Of course I'm sure!" His glance flicked toward me, but I was certain he didn't actually see me. His mind was too taken up with whatever was happening in Singapore. "Can't wait! Yeah. Just let me know. Bye, man. See you."

With that, he thumbed the disconnect button and settled back against the headboard with a grin so broad and vibrant it looked a bit maniacal. I waited for him to speak, to share with me the piece of brilliant news that had so excited him. I waited quite a bit longer than I expected to.

Just as I was about to ask, James turned to me. He kissed me hard, his fingers tangling in my hair. His mouth bruised mine a little, and I winced.

"Guess what?" He answered before I had time to reply. "Alex's company just got bought out by a much larger corporation. He's like a fucking millionaire now."

What I knew of Alex Kennedy could fit on one side of a sheet of notebook paper. I knew he worked overseas in the Asian market and had since before I'd met James. He'd been unable to attend our wedding but had sent an elegant gift that must have been exorbitantly expensive. I knew he'd been James's best friend since the eighth grade, and that they'd had a falling-out when they were both twenty-one. I'd always had the feeling the rift had never fully been repaired, but then, men's relationships are so different from women's. If James barely spoke to his friend, that didn't mean they hadn't forgiven each other for whatever it was that had driven them apart.

"Wow. Really? A millionaire?"

James shrugged, fingers tightening again in my hair before he sat back against the headboard. "The guy's a fucking genius, Anne. You don't even know."

I didn't know. "That's good news, then. For him."

He frowned, running a hand through dark hair already tipped blond, though the summer had barely begun. "Yeah, but the bastards who bought him out have decided they don't want him part of the company any longer. He's out of a job."

"Does a millionaire need to work?"

James gave me a look that said I clearly didn't get it. "Just because you don't have to do something doesn't mean you don't want to. Anyway, Alex is done with Singapore. He's coming home."

His voice trailed off at the last, sounding almost wistful for the barest second before he looked at me with another grin. "I invited him for a visit. He said he'll probably stay for a few weeks while he puts together his next business."

"A few weeks? Here?" I didn't mean to sound unwelcoming, but.

"Yeah." James's grin was small and secret, for himself. "It'll be great. You'll love Alex, babe. I know you will."

He looked at me and was, for an instant, a man I didn't know. He reached for my hand, linking our fingers before he took them to his lips and kissed the back of my hand. His mouth caressed my skin, and he looked up at me over the top of his kiss, his blue eyes dark with excitement.

But not for me.

I was Evelyn and Frank Kinney's only daughter-in-law. Though my reception into the family had been chilly when James and I were dating and through our engagement, once I became a Kinney, I was treated like a Kinney. Evelyn and Frank had taken me into the bosom of the Kinney clan, and like quicksand, once I was so enfolded there was little I could do to escape.

We all got along well enough, for the most part. James's sisters Margaret and Molly were several years older than us, both married with children. I didn't have much in common with them aside from our gender, and though they were careful to include me in every "girls' night" party they had with their mother, we weren't close. It didn't seem to matter.

Typically, James didn't notice the superficiality of my relationship with his mother and sisters, and that was fine with me. It was all fine with me, that veneer. The shiny reflection that kept anyone from seeing what was underneath, the eddies and currents and depths of the truth. It was, after all, what I was used to.

It wouldn't have been so bad, except that Mrs. Kinney had...expectations.

Where we were going. What we were doing. How we were doing it and how much it cost. She wanted to know it all and was not contented with the knowing. She always had to know more.

## **Users Review**

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