

Taken For Revenge, Bedded For Pleasure

The story behind the story...

This was the book that marked the end of my post-sale honeymoon period; the one that made me seriously wonder whether the first three had been nothing more than happy accidents, because I found this one harder to write than the rest of its predecessors put together!

The idea began with the opening scene, which takes place in an auction house. It was in the period of blissful exhaustion just after I'd submitted the Orlando and Rachel's story (later to be titled *Mistress: Hired for the Billionaire's Pleasure*) The children were home for the summer holidays and I was doing a bit of desultory ironing one morning while half-watching low rent daytime TV and thinking about the next book. I wanted a French setting, I knew that much, and I wanted to capture the atmosphere of languid late summer and the turning of the year and I wanted the relationship to be sensual and slow and simmering with unspoken emotion, but at that stage I had no idea who the characters might be.

As one of those interminable programmes about people buying or selling stuff at auction came on I found myself getting quite caught up in the drama of the saleroom. We have a great auction house in the town where I live, and over the years I've picked up quite a few things there so I'm very familiar with the adrenaline rush of bidding against someone else for an object you've really set your heart on. Suddenly I knew I'd found the starting point for the story. Unfortunately the rest of it wasn't so easy to come by!

However, matters were significantly improved by my mental casting of James Franco, owner of the most beautiful mouth in Christendom, in the role of the hero. Olivier Moreau is a high-flying hedge fund manager with a ruthless streak a mile wide that conceals a desperate need for conspicuous success. He's all about what's on the surface, until his chance encounter with a beautiful girl and a seemingly valueless painting in a London auction house make him re-evaluate his outlook.



Art plays a significant role in the story, since it is a particular painting which brings Olivier and Bella together, but which is also responsible for keeping them apart. The painting in question, which is called *La Dame de la Croix* is entirely fictional, but Manet's *Olympia* also makes an appearance in the book. Anxious, insecure Bella is wistfully envious of the shameless sexuality of Manet's luscious nude. The girl in the painting has a power and a confidence that Bella can only aspire to, until Olivier

unlocks those qualities in her.



The book starts out as a simple revenge plot, but of course such powerful emotions are never straightforward. To Olivier Bella is initially nothing more than a Lawrence—a member of the family who destroyed his father. But that's only who she is on the surface. Underneath lies the woman who can make him put the past behind him.

The Music

I'd intended to make Olivier cold and ruthless, but from the moment I heard the song 'Look After You' by The Fray it crept into my head and made me think about him from a different angle. In the same way that that became his song, Bella's was 'Underneath Your Clothes' by Shakira, which again touches on that theme of what lies beneath the surface. And it's a blooming great song.

The strange thing about writing this book was that throughout I had no idea how it would end (Although I seriously hoped that Olivier and Bella would end up together...) The turn of events at Bella's eccentric uncle's house in the closing chapters took me completely by surprise but was, I suspect, influenced to some degree by the Papa Roach song. Weird. Not my usual listening material at all, but it worked at the time!

To listen to the songs which inspired me, click below.

Extract from the book

Olivier followed her through the crowded room.

Already, he noticed, she was walking taller, holding her head higher. There was a provocative sway to her hips. In short, a glimmer of the brilliant spark he had noticed yesterday in the auction room had returned.

With just one kiss.

Dieu, what he would do to her with a whole night...

On the landing outside the sitting room she stopped and turned to him. There was a pink stain in her cheeks and an intense, almost feverish glitter in her eyes.

'Thank you? I'm supposed to thank you for this?' She looked down at herself. Beads of caviar gleamed darkly on the pale skin of her arms and the ivory swell of her

breast. 'Of course. Caviar body paint is such a good look...'

Olivier smiled lazily. She might be being sarcastic, but she was actually completely right. She looked good enough to eat. 'Believe me,' he drawled, 'it's a lot better than being completely humiliated in public by some overbearing bastard treating you like a child.'

'Do you mind?' she gasped. 'That was my brother!'

'And that makes it alright for him to treat you like that?' Olivier asked coolly.

'He's protective. He just—' Bella broke off, shaking her head in confusion. 'Look, I don't know what this has to do with you...'

'I don't like bullying. Now, which is your room?'

'Why?' she demanded.

He paused, looking at her thoughtfully. Standing there with her eyes sparking with fury she looked oddly sweet, and he couldn't help but admire her defiance. The prospect of seducing her was like a sudden and unexpected blow to the stomach. 'Let's just say I don't like people who use their natural advantages to repress people who don't have the same power,' he said quietly.

She laughed suddenly; a short, joyful peal that broke the tension. 'I didn't mean that.' She looked up at him and their gazes locked. 'I meant, why do you want to know which is my room?'

'Because I think you need to get out of that dress.'

The sparkling laughter faded from her eyes, and was replaced by something much more intense.

Gently, not wanting to frighten her, he reached out and cupped her breast in the flat of his hand, feeling the ripeness and heat of her skin through the severe black crepe. A small shiver ran through her. Slowly, lazily he ran his thumb over the bare skin above the low-cut neckline of the dress where her cleavage spilled out, scooping up black beads of caviar that glistened against the creamy flesh. Her eyes stayed fixed to his the entire time, and he saw the momentary flicker of her eyelids at his touch.

Removing his hand he put his thumb to his lips and sucked off the caviar.

She drew in a soft, shuddering breath. 'Up there,' she said in a low voice. 'My room is up there.'

From the book Taken for Revenge, Bedded for Pleasure

Harlequin Mills & Boon Modern Romance

Publication Date: January 2009

ISBN: 9780263869934

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Reviews

India Grey will blow readers away with her wonderful gift for characterization, superb ability to evoke emotion and breathtaking love scenes written with an almost poetic sensibility. Exquisitely-written, beautifully told and simply breathtaking, *Taken for Revenge, Bedded for Pleasure* is destined to be a classic of category romance. (Cataromance, 5 stars)