

Jaded

Lissy O'Laughlin

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This body-positive alternative to Fifty Shades will leave readers begging for more.

Thanks to *Fifty Shades of Grey*, S&M erotica currently enjoys a certain level of acceptability in the mainstream. Fortunately for those who find the trilogy too long and prefer their titillating scenes closer together, Lissy O'Laughlin's juicy novella *Jaded* saves the day.

Trapped in a sexless marriage of convenience after having two children, bar manager Jade tries to bury her desires for "depraved" violent sex with a dom, desires that were awakened in her during an anonymous one-night stand years ago. She despairs of ever experiencing such passion again, until she meets her new boss, Mac. But of course, sleeping with the top dog presents complications even when both parties want each other.

The book presents more than hot couplings; it starts with the protagonist pleasuring herself. This act is presented as a legitimate means of arousal rather than as a poor substitute for coupling. The book's body-positive scenes, as well as frequent mentions of arousal by clitoral stimulation, acknowledge the orgasmic potential females have within themselves, something sorely lacking in sex scenes of books not labeled erotica. In another empowering yet rare move, Jade leaves her children with her estranged husband and moves in with her single best friend, Lucy, as things heat up with Mac. Never one to pass up an opportunity, the author manages an affecting girl-on-girl kiss without calling into question either woman's heterosexuality. O'Laughlin's skill makes a mere trip to the manicurist with verbal flirting as arousing as any sex. The author even describes Jade and Mac's many scents, and how each smell arouses the other.

For those who find Christian Grey too domineering and callous, Mac presents a welcome alternative. Mac refers to the heroine as "Jade my goddess." Although possessive and rough, he makes sure they both feel fulfilled, and becomes concerned when he thinks he's hurt her unnecessarily. The two communicate constantly during their liaisons, and their exchanges heighten the erotic nature of these already-steamy scenes, proving that speaking does not detract from sex. Of course, most of this communication involves the equivalent of "Take me now!" and "I'm going to spank you," but it's a refreshing change from the wordless sex that populates erotic stories.

O'Laughlin's creative word choice further elevates the book above standard erotica. Jade is described as "tweezing" her nipples instead of just pinching them hard. Breath becomes "jagged and sharp" when the protagonist is aroused. Erotica neophytes and veterans alike will be panting for more Lissy O'Laughlin after this. One hopes she keeps penning provocative novels with self-determined heroines and concerned men.

JILL ALLEN (May 21, 2015)

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