



Silent Confessions (Hqn)

By Julie Kenner

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With her own love life stuck in Neutral, Ronnie's sensual studies have piqued her curiosity, and she wonders if reality can be as stimulating as fiction. She agrees to help Jack with his case, if he'll satisfy her wildest, most scandalous desires—a request Jack has no problem accommodating. But the closer they get to each other, the closer the stalker circles in, leaving Jack to question if Ronnie is merely a very skilled scholar—or the key to something far more sinister....

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Editorial Review

Review

Kenner has a "flair for dialogue and...characterization."
-Publishers Weekly

"Julie Kenner's books [are] an autobuy."

-All About Romance

"Kenner writes a novel worthy of James Patterson or Sandra Brown for its twists and turns."
-Huntress Reviews

"Kenner's characteristic flair for creating scorching love scenes and erotic drive make her one of the most memorable authors in the genre." -WordWeaving

About the Author

Julie Kenner's books have hit bestseller lists as varied as USA Today, Waldenbooks, Barnes & Noble, and Locus Magazine; have won numerous awards and have been lauded in industry publications such as *Publisher's Weekly* and *Booksense*. Julie writes a broad range of fiction, including sexy and quirky romances, young adult novels, chick lit suspense thrillers and paranormal mommy lit. Visit her online at <http://www.juliekenner.com>

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Don't be frightened, darling; lovers can say anything. Those words, out of place in colder moments, add fresh relish to the sweet mystery of love? You will soon say them, too, and understand their charm.

Detective Jack Parker snapped on a pair of latex gloves and plucked the note off the satin-covered pillow. Neatly typed on pale pink paper, the writing seemed innocent enough. Hell, in another time, another place, the words could have been romantic, lovers sharing naughty endearments and euphemisms meant only for each other.

Tonight, though, the words had been meant to terrify.

Bastard.

Their Casanova had struck twice before, and so far the police didn't have one solid lead. The situation ate at his gut.

Jack hated to lose.

Closing his eyes, he counted backward from ten, letting the efficient bustle of the crime-scene investigators wash over him. The gentle *whoosh* of the vacuum collecting telltale fibers, the *click-whir* of the camera documenting the room. New York's finest were on the job. They'd catch the creep. They had to.

Taking a deep breath, he opened his eyes and saw his partner, Tyler Donovan, waving him over from the doorway. Jack made his way across the sprawling bedroom, passing the note off on the way to be processed with the rest of the evidence.

"Give me some good news."

"Dollar beer all week at Martini's," Donovan said with a shrug. "That's about the best I can do. Here, we got nada."

"Not what I wanted to hear."

"No kidding. All I can tell you is that they don't have a clue who's doing this. But the wife's pretty shook up."

"Can't say I blame her." Over Donovan's shoulder, Jack could see Caroline Crawley sitting unnaturally straight on an upholstered bench in the living room. Her husband, anchorman Carson Crawley, stood stone-faced behind her, his hand resting on her shoulder. Both had the shell-shocked expression of the violated. It was a look Jack knew well. That haunted, injured look had marred his cousin Angela's face many years ago.

With only three months separating them in age and two blocks separating them in distance, he and Angie had been constant companions. At least until the summer of her sixteenth year.

The monster hadn't even waited until after dark. He'd pulled Angie off her bike right after school as she'd ridden by the local gas station, dragged her into the putrid men's room, and left her there when he was done with her. The gas station owner had found her hours later, unconscious and battered, her beautiful face disfigured and both arms broken. Her face and arms had healed; the rest of her hadn't.

Sweet Angie took her own life exactly one year later.

Jack may have joined the force because he was a third-generation cop. But he'd clawed his way up the ranks to detective in the sex crimes division because it was personal.

Yes, Jack knew the expression on Caroline Crawley's face. Knew it well. And it never failed to spark a rage that wouldn't dim until the perp was dead or behind bars. Until then, nothing else mattered.

"Crawley's shipping the kids off to his parents'," Donovan said, pulling Jack from his memories. "Wants the wife to go, too, but she says no. And they're gonna have the locks changed and the security system upgraded." He shook his head. "How the hell did the bastard get in? We're twenty floors up. This place has more security than Fort Knox."

"I'm more concerned that he wanted in at all." Jack fumbled in his jacket pocket for a cigarette, then remembered he'd quit a year ago. "Our Casanova's turning dangerous."

"No kidding. But it doesn't make sense. For three weeks he's been stuffing their mailbox with nudie postcards and pages ripped out of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Then suddenly he decides it's time to sneak into her apartment and leave a little present on her pillow? Why now?"

Donovan was right. It didn't make sense. And the real kick in the pants—the reason Jack had been spending twenty hours a day following deadend leads—was that they weren't any closer to finding their perp than they'd been three weeks ago.

He clenched his fist, fighting back rage. Damn it all to hell. What were they missing?

"And why Mrs. Crawley?" Donovan added. "We've been over her life with a fine-tooth comb and can't find one person who'd do this to her."

"Then we haven't looked hard enough."

Donovan opened his mouth as if to argue, but shut it quickly enough. After two years as partners, he'd learned when not to argue. Instead he nodded. "Okay. Maybe. But could be it's just random. Carson Crawley's face is all over the six o'clock news. Maybe our guy's just fixated on the celebrity's wife. Could be he's just a weirdo."

"Great. A celebrity stalker who has no fingerprints and leaves no trace." Irritated, Jack ran his fingers through his hair and headed through the open front door and into the plush hallway. The scene was under control, and he thought better when he was walking. "What aren't we seeing?"

"Hell if I know." Donovan jammed the elevator button with his thumb. "But we're not gonna figure it out tonight. It's two in the morning. And I left a very naked, very willing woman in my bed."

"That explains why you look so tired." Since his divorce nine months ago, Donovan had pretty much joined the babe-of-the-month club.

"Not tired. Refreshed." Donovan grinned. "She's got a sister if you're interested."

The elevator opened and they stepped on. "They've all got sisters. Does your lady have a name?"

"Mindy, Cindy. Something like that."

"You're a sick man, Detective Donovan."

"Not sick. Robust."

Jack flashed his bad-cop scowl, the one he usually reserved for interrogation rooms.

"All right, all right," said Donovan, his hands held up in surrender. "Her name's Cindy, this is date number four, and she really does have a sister."

He followed Jack off the elevator, and they stepped outside. Automatically, Jack reached for his tie and loosened the knot at his throat.

Donovan shoved a hand in his pocket, then pulled out a paperclip. "So how about it?" he asked, twisting the clip. "Let's give her a buzz. Go grab breakfast somewhere."

"Why would I want to go out with a woman so desperate she'd agree to a date at two in the morning?"

"She's a nurse. End of shift. Cindy'll call her, she'll meet us, we'll have a little party."

"No." Maybe the girl wasn't a total loser, but no.

"You gotta take a break from the case sometime, man. It'll still be there in the morning."

Jack flashed Donovan a withering look. "And that pretty much goes to the heart of the problem."

"There's more to life than nailing the bad guys, Jack. You gotta nail some women, too."

Groaning, Jack rolled his eyes. "You are one sick puppy."

"Yeah, but at least I'm out there, not holed up behind a desk licking my wounds."

Jack bristled. "You're treading on thin ice, Donovan."

"I'm just worried about you."

"Nothing to worry about. I'm not licking any wounds. I'm the one who broke it off with Kelly, remember?"

"That's my point. You broke it off with her so you could focus on your career."

True enough. Kelly had wanted three things—a ring, Jack's love and Jack's time. But the truth was, all he was capable of giving her was the first one. Money could buy a ring. But he couldn't manufacture love no matter how hard he tried. And he didn't want to cut back on his job. Not for Kelly. Hell, maybe not for anybody.

"But you're not a monk, man," Donovan said, punctuating his point. "And twenty-hour days are going to kill you. You need to get laid."

"Dr. Donovan's prescription for success?"

"Shit, yeah."

"I can find my own women," Jack said. "I don't need you pimping for me."

Donovan snorted out a laugh. "Too bad. I've got great taste." Donovan stopped alongside his beat-up Jeep, parked in front of a fire hydrant. "Come on. Cindy's sister might be the woman for you. You could be missing out on the lay of a lifetime."

It was Jack's turn to laugh. "I'll risk it," he said. "Right now I just want to go home and get some sleep."

"Sleep?" Donovan asked, doubt lacing his voice.

"That's what I said." And that's exactly what he intended to do. Right after he swung by the precinct and took another look at the file.

The summer heat taunted her, denying her sleep. In front of her, photocopied pages from *The Pearl* and *The Boudoir* were strewn haphazardly across the sturdy oak door she'd converted into a desktop. Ronnie picked up a page at random, needing to work, but not in the mood. Instead of analyzing the words as a proper academic should, Ronnie lost herself in the prose, her pulse quickening as she skimmed the text.

There, on the page, the fictional Monsieur lifted his lover's skirts, revealing her stockings...her garters...her

sex. With reverence, he urged her thighs apart, then knelt in front of her, his tongue laving her intimately.

With a low moan, Ronnie closed her eyes, imagining it was her, and not the fictional Bertha, who was the subject of the Monsieur's attentions. Arching her neck, she trailed her fingers down the front of her thin cotton nightshirt. Her body shuddered as she ran her hands over the swell of her breasts, letting her fingers linger on her nipples, which hardened under her touch.

Lord, she was frustrated.

And pitiful.

She pulled her hands away and sat straight in her chair, her elbows on her desk. Across the room, the window air conditioner spit out cool air at random, barely making a dent in the oppressive heat.

What kind of academic got all hot and bothered while trying to study? Well, that was easy. An academic who was stupid enough to pick a research topic related to erotic literature, and then dumb enough to go and read source material way past her bedtime. And *The Boudoir*, no less.

Not that the research wasn't...fascinating. At the rate she was going, she'd need to invest in industrial-strength air-conditioning. As if on cue, the ancient window unit shuddered and gasped, finally belching out one last burst of tepid air before dying completely.

Considering the temperature for the rest of the week was supposed to hit record highs, she probably should have expected massive equipment failure. First the robbery, then two days without even a word from the cops, then the argument with her academic adviser, and now this. The final insult of an already rotten week.

A cold shower, that's what she needed. Surely she'd sleep better if she could just cool down. Frustrated, she took off her glasses, tossing them onto her desk. She rubbed the bridge of her nose, then ran a hand through her sweat-dampened hair. Who was she kidding? Even if her apartment was climate controlled to a constant sixty-eight degrees, she'd still be awake.

Since the robbery, every creak and shudder of the old building made her jump. Especially since the police had been so closemouthed, not letting her know if they had any leads as to who might have broken into her bookstore downstairs.

And it had been such a creepy robbery, too. As if someone had just wanted to rifle through her stuff. The store was filled with expensive books and rare manuscripts, and yet none of that was touched. Not any of the near-priceless incunabula in the display case, not the clamshell set of Dickens's serials displayed behind her work desk, not even the three hundred dollars in petty cash she'd left in the top drawer.

Instead, her burglar had left books strewn about on the floor and on top of bookshelves, and had tossed the papers from her desk all over the floor. It had taken Ronnie a full day to sort through and organize her lecture notes, personal correspondence and business bills.

Annoying and creepy. Definitely creepy. Combine the robbery with the looming deadline for her dissertation outline, and she doubted she could sleep even if the place were tomb silent, meat-locker cold and surrounded by armed guards.

A trickle of sweat ran down her temple and she brushed it away, trying to focus on work. Less than twenty-

four hours ago, her faculty adviser had rejected her dissertation topic—the Influences of Erotic Literature on Contemporaneous Popular Culture—as too broad, and now she had to come up with a narrower focus, and fast. Since she was wide-awake at 4:00 a.m., the least she could do was spend the time productively. She'd worked hard to build up the store's collection of erotic art and literature, and she'd hoped that combing through some of the volumes would inspire her.

She grimaced, thinking of her body's reaction to the Monsieur's story. She'd been *inspired*, all right, just not academically. Instead, she was feeling hot, bothered and sorry for herself, comparing her lack of anything remotely resembling a sex life to the bawdy, exotic and most definitely *erotic* adventures of the women she spent evening after solitary evening reading about.

Leaning her head back, she sighed. A man. That's what she needed.

No. She pressed her fingers to her lids and rubbed her closed eyes. Between her course work and trying to make the bookstore profitable, she was fully occupied one-hundred-and-twenty percent of the day. And even that wasn't enough.

Besides, she'd had a man, and while the sex had been fabulous, Burt had been anything but. She shook her head, banishing the still-vivid images of her ex-husband and his receptionist, butt-naked, going at it on *her* two-hundred-and-fifty thread-count Ralph Lauren sheets. Not a pretty picture.

At least she was rid of him. She'd marched straight from their apartment to her attorney's office. Good riddance to bad rubbish. Going on two years now. Hell, maybe she'd throw a party.

No, she didn't need a man. But maybe a vibrator.

Nibbling on her lower lip, she toyed with the pages on her desk, papers that revealed passions and emotions that reached powerful heights. Heights she'd been sorely missing lately.

What irony. Veronica Archer—the owner of Archer's Rare Books and Manuscripts, a specialist in rare erotica, author of more than twenty scholarly articles on erotic books and art—had the most pitiful sex life imaginable.

She shoved the thought away. She was happy with her life. Right now, her career came first. It wasn't a sacrifice—it was liberating. While her friends were waiting by the phone wondering if Mr. Right was going to call, she was free to occupy her mind with more interesting pursuits. Unlike Joan, her twenty-four-year-old hot-and-heavily-into-dating assistant, Ronnie could gain a pound without having a panic attack, could rent all the sappy movies she wanted, and could care less about the fine art of small talk.

With a sigh, she gathered the pages and her notes. Since the air-conditioning had conked out, if she wanted to get any reading done tonight, she'd have to do it downstairs. At least the electrician was coming back to the store in the morning. Maybe he could coax the contraption into surviving one more summer.

Her door opened up onto the interior stairs that connected the five floors of the old family brownstone. Formerly for servants' access, the stairs now ran from the bookstore on the first two floors, to the storage room on the third floor, to Ronnie's apartment on the fourth and her brother Nat's on the fifth.

She eased the door open and stepped onto the landing, avoiding the weak spot that always rang out like a shot. Since the burglary, Nat had been fussing over her safety. No sense letting him know she was having

trouble sleeping.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Glenda Rizzo:

Do you one among people who can't read enjoyable if the sentence chained inside the straightway, hold on guys this particular aren't like that. This Silent Confessions (Hqn) book is readable simply by you who hate the perfect word style. You will find the info here are arrange for enjoyable reading through experience without leaving perhaps decrease the knowledge that want to provide to you. The writer involving Silent Confessions (Hqn) content conveys the thought easily to understand by many individuals. The printed and e-book are not different in the content material but it just different as it. So , do you even now thinking Silent Confessions (Hqn) is not loveable to be your top list reading book?

Scot Vines:

Reading a book tends to be new life style in this particular era globalization. With studying you can get a lot of information that could give you benefit in your life. Together with book everyone in this world can certainly share their idea. Ebooks can also inspire a lot of people. A great deal of author can inspire all their reader with their story or perhaps their experience. Not only situation that share in the textbooks. But also they write about the information about something that you need example of this. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your kids, there are many kinds of book that you can get now. The authors on this planet always try to improve their expertise in writing, they also doing some research before they write to their book. One of them is this Silent Confessions (Hqn).

William Sinclair:

Spent a free time to be fun activity to do! A lot of people spent their down time with their family, or their very own friends. Usually they undertaking activity like watching television, gonna beach, or picnic inside the park. They actually doing ditto every week. Do you feel it? Do you want to something different to fill your personal free time/ holiday? May be reading a book could be option to fill your totally free time/ holiday. The first thing that you'll ask may be what kinds of guide that you should read. If you want to test look for book, may be the guide untitled Silent Confessions (Hqn) can be very good book to read. May be it could be best activity to you.

Marge Lee:

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