



Games & Players

Manna Francis

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Games & Players Manna Francis It's all fun and games until somebody loses...

Socioanalysts can read minds and motives at a glance, predict the future, manipulate the smallest actions of their unwitting puppets, and crush careers with a single word...or so the popular rumors say. Their arrival is dreaded everywhere in the European Administration, even the Investigation and Interrogation Division. Para-investigator Val Toreth, accustomed to being feared himself, is about to discover the truth of the rumors at first hand, when he is assigned as personal liaison to Carnac, the socioanalyst seconded to I&I to root out anti-Administration sentiments among its staff. And to make matters worse, it seems that his admin Sara is smitten with Carnac and Warrick has a history with him. With his closest allies straddling the line of Carnac's camp, Toreth must rethink the rules of engagement.

The third book in the Administration series contains the novella *Game, Set*, as well as nine short stories in which virtual-reality corporate genius Warrick and Toreth must face new players in the game, and discover whether their association can survive both the tensions between the unlikely pair and the pressures of life in the near future dystopia of New London.

Games & Players Details

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From Reader Review Games & Players for online ebook

ElaineY says

Reviews for all the stories in the paperback version are here. In every case, the star ratings refer to my enjoyment of the content, not the quality of the writing which is, of course, par excellence throughout.

GAME, SET: 5 STARS

Carnac. Jean-Paul Baptiste Carnac. Would have to be another fucking Jean.

Excuse my language this morning. 'Family' in Book 2 left me very upset with Toreth.

Now, in Game, Set, I can't find the words to describe fucking Toreth. I'll post my rants later. I need some time to settle.

AS LONG AS IT LASTED: 3 STARS

This short is about that one and only fuck between Sara and Toreth. I'm still too pissed with Toreth to care. Every story after Game, Set is likely to be just another nail in his coffin as far as I'm concerned.

Rules of Engagement is up next but I'm thinking of taking a break and reading a romance about normal people to recover before tackling this next story. I'm now nervous about what else Toreth is going to do - or rather, who else - after this.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT: 4 STARS

The first segment, called Fuck of the Day, is available on the website. Rules of Engagement, in the paperback version, includes the second segment which deals with Toreth teaching Sara's sleazebag boyfriend a lesson.

Things don't start off well for Toreth in this short story. He's caught lying about fucking someone (so what's new?) and we get another peek at Warrick's feelings about Toreth - what is Toreth to him? I know, of course, but Toreth probably doesn't yet so he wants Warrick to articulate it. Toreth doesn't get to find out but doesn't press the issue. Why? Fucking's the priority, remember?

By now I am quite, depressed about Toreth. The man is incorrigible and utterly self-serving and Warrick - yeah, he's got every reason to despair as he says 'Yes' every time Toreth asks "So, do you want to fuck?". Warrick is as trapped in his obsession as Toreth is stuck in his emotional development. This takes up half the story and the remainder of the 12 pages show a side of Toreth that gave me pause. I went back to reread some parts from the previous story, and put the two together. Result? It made me think perhaps I was wrong to pigeon-hole him. Or pin that 'sociopathic' label on him.

In this story that comes immediately after the flashback of their one-off fuck, Sara's current squeeze is a sleazeball who's been stealing from her. He's lied and conned his way into her life. Toreth goes all protective but has the good sense to keep quiet about what he's going to do about Rick.

Naturally, he employs skills he's learned and honed as a para-investigator but Rick doesn't need much. Toreth picks a commonly-used scare tactic and it's sufficient to make the sleazebag do whatever he's told.

With regards to T & W's relationship, nothing's new in this short story. As I see it, it served to lure me into

believing that Toreth is incapable of seeing and feeling beyond his own needs. Then what transpires later, at Sara's flat where he confronts Rick, made me come to a screeching halt. I realize there is a side to Toreth I've missed because his unrestrained non-stop fucking distracted me from the aspects of him that he's afraid of - that he *is* capable of caring deeply about another person; that he is capable of loving and possesses all traits of someone who's loyal and protective of the one he loves. In fact, we can see this in the earlier story that I mentioned earlier, *As Long As It Lasted*:

Toreth "*discovered suddenly and quite unexpectedly that he didn't want Sara to hate him under any circumstances. Especially not now, when she'd put herself on the line for him.*". And unlike his other fucks (Warrick notwithstanding), Toreth displays a tenderness towards Sara I haven't seen with anyone else he fucks - *He'd meant to go at once, but he sat for a while, watching her, stroking her hair away from her forehead. Asleep she looked so...young. So vulnerable, so un-Sara. All the passion and animation drained from her expressive face...He dug out a duvet to cover her.* This is post-coital. Sara has fallen asleep on his couch but before she did, she'd told him "*Night, then. Love you. D'you know I love you?*" Toreth replies, "*You told me before.*"

A few minutes later, just before he falls asleep, *he had a thought that he didn't remember in the morning. 'Love you.' So that was what it sounded like when someone knew you, and they still meant it.*

Reading these little snippets again make me even more certain he isn't the sociopath he's accused of being. Sara gives him what's been missing all his life - Unconditional Love. '*So that was what it sounded like when someone knew you, and they still meant it.*' I can only hope that despite the long, painful journey to the end of Book 7, Toreth realizes that's what he, miraculously, has from Sara and Warrick.

Anyway, by the time we get to Rules of Engagement Toreth has forgotten everything Sara's declaration of love 5 years ago except the fuck and the story ends with him satisfied with just another day's "work" and satisfied Sara will be safe.

WINE, WOMEN & CUSHIONS

I skipped this story the minute I saw it was FF and between Cele and Dillian. FF doesn't do anything for me and Dillian in the mix really puts me off as I do not like her. I'm glad Toreth's on to their liaison.

PLAYING WITH FIRE - 5 STARS

WARNING: SPOILERISH

Does every story start with Warrick asking Toreth about the person he met and fucked in between their meetings? That's how it seems to me. Warrick and Toreth would meet, fuck, they part. The next time they get together again, it could be just a week apart, Toreth would have found someone to fuck and Warrick would start their meeting asking about his latest fuck. It usually degenerates into a heated argument which culminates in explosive make-up sex - which gives Toreth his excuse and rationalisation to continue.

In playing with Fire, Warrick has invited Toreth along to a tech conference. Warrick, to Toreth's surprise and discomfort practically interrogates him over his latest fuck. Warrick wants every dirty detail and Toreth squirming inside, wanting to stop this but too proud to admit it. The poor guy doesn't realize he's walking into a trap and Warrick's remark, "I thought I'd try something else," is going to turn the tables on him.

Warrick confesses that he fucked someone else at the last conference but before he even gets to that, he does the prepping. He wants Toreth to reach combustion point so he drops these dangerously provocative statements, fanning Toreth's jealousy, tormenting him until Toreth breaks and in a quiet, one-word plea, tells

Warrick to Stop. But Warrick isn't done. Toreth needs to know how Warrick feels every time Toreth fucks another person. And as if that's not enough, he tells Toreth he didn't fuck this guy once but four or five times.

If Toreth is unthinkingly callous and self-centered in that aggravating adolescent way then Warrick is deliberately, intentionally, tactically cruel here. Not that Toreth doesn't deserve it. I loved this scene. I loved that Warrick gave Toreth a dose of his own medicine (*overdose, even!*) and the piece de resistance of this entire charade of getting Toreth up here for a tech (!) conference? The man Warrick fucked is here and Warrick brought Toreth because he didn't think it would be a good thing to fuck the guy again.

You can imagine how Toreth is feeling now. Toreth's insecurities are laid bare; his tortured silent pleas cut me to the bone. With one sweep of Warrick's well-aimed sickle, he's reaped an acknowledgment within Toreth that Warrick is different from all the other fucks he's ever had in his sorry life.

Warrick's words create visuals that hurt as nothing in an interrogation room at I&I could. Toreth flees the scene while Warrick is asleep and catches a late flight home. However, as so often happens in these 'slice and dice' lovers' games, neither one wins. Warrick feels just as shitty, if not worse. Luckily for them, it's Sara to the rescue. Again.

Toreth's reunion with Warrick is where I believe I see evidence that Toreth is progressing. He thinks before he opens his mouth to utter a lie. And, in this instance, he chooses honesty. It would have been good if the story ended here but no, it continues and at the conference's evening reception, we see Toreth coming face-to-face with the man Warrick fucked.

More apologies, reassurances and, of course, fucking. It will carry on in the same vein, I suppose, for the next few zillion books but I could get lucky and Toreth could actually make real and noticeable progress. One can only hope.

ALL WORK & NO PLAY - 5 STARS

Content-wise, this started off meh but the second section with Toreth in a sim session with Warrick bears paying attention to.

Toreth and Sara go to the annual year-end training party where the fresh grads jockey for the positions of choice. There's a nice little morsel here to enjoy between Toreth and Nagra, a fresh grad he's checking out to replace Doyle. It gave me a bigger chuckle than the ones I come along every now and then. Those are usually involving Toreth and his familiar, FEB (Fucking Evil Bastard).

The rest of the story involves Warrick and Toreth at Sim-Tech where Warrick gets T to try out something in the sim before it's uninstalled, the project having been suspended. But before this, Toreth is baffled and, of course, suspicious as to why Warrick - two weeks so far - has been too tired to fuck. An insecure Toreth is fun to watch but this sequence was all to familiar to me as I used to ask the same thing myself. Toreth, dejected and at a loose end after yet another 'Work' excuse from Warrick wonders what the hell did he do on Saturdays before he met Warrick - and comes to the conclusion it must have been boring. Whilst I know why I even wanted to compare, Toreth doesn't even stop analyze it. Just slams the lid down. He probably subconsciously knows that if he opens a can of worms, pythons would come out, as far as his inner life is concerned.

The sim sequence didn't do much for me but the prelude to this did. Toreth, by this time, is so antsy and scared that Warrick is losing interest in him that he's ready to jump through hoops just to get an evening with him, not that he'll admit it even to himself. These spots in each story segment are usually revealing and show

me that Toreth is progressing. He is now sustaining a regular relationship where the sex isn't just an itch to scratch or a filler for some free minutes on his I&I schedule. The Relationship is now center-stage in his life and even if Toreth hasn't realized that, he's doing and feeling everything that normal people do when we are in one. Not a single one of his reactions where Warrick is concerned is abnormal. He goes through the same insecure internal questioning as I and other people do when a partner is not as available as he/she ought to be. Some, like me, eventually manage to shrug it off and move on. Others, like one of my ex-employees may find it takes longer - she received love letters written in her husband's blood (they were in the midst of divorcing). Now, that's not normal and that's what I'd expect Toreth to do if he were abnormal. Only it wouldn't be his blood. It would be either Warrick's or Sara's cat's.

Back to the sim. While the technicalities of it didn't interest me much, I did manage to get something useful out of it. Meaning, something that I could connect to Toreth.

The sim session involves two Warricks having sex. One's the real Warrick and the other, a copy. Toreth, after observing them, enters into the sim sequence and participates. Lo and Behold! Our man is able to tell which is the real Warrick and which is the copy. He couldn't at first, when he was just a spectator but now, touching them, kissing them, he is able to tell. It feels identical, *they* feel identical but Toreth is able to sense something is off when it's the copy and immediately knows when it's the real Warrick. More than this, Toreth realizes that it unnerved him when, '*the idea of fucking Warrick and not knowing who—or what—he was touching almost frightened him. He shivered.*'

That doesn't stop Toreth from enjoying the sex that follows, of course. As he said to Warrick, it was as if he'd died and gone to heaven (fucking two Warricks, the ultimate menage for Toreth!) Yet when it's over and only the real Warrick is left, Toreth's answer, when Warrick asks what he thinks of it, is very telling:

"Pretty good," he said. "But..."

Warrick frowned. "But?"

"But it isn't you, is it?"

Well done, Toreth:)

GEE - 3.75 STARS

I enjoy teacher-student romances, not finding the sex icky at all. But that's probably because of the age of the student (over 18) and because it's a Romance.

What we've got here in Gee is nothing like that. It gives us a glimpse of Toreth's history, back in his adolescent years. He's having lunch with Sara at a cafe-bar when a man approaches Sara to verify Toreth's identity. Toreth is surprised, startled, in fact, to meet the man who was his teacher during his years at Retraining Center.

We often talk about a person's formative years and the part they play in the adult we become. Gee is Toreth's. Just 12 pages but enough to fit in another piece of the Toreth puzzle.

SHOPPING & FUCKING - 5 STARS

It occurs to Toreth (just a fleeting thought, of course but still, hallelujah!) that Warrick has a life outside Sim-Tech and him, that Warrick does things - normal, everyday things - with friends and family without Toreth. For me, these little realizations are vital to the kind of person Toreth will be - or has the potential to be - by the end of this series.

Toreth takes Warrick shopping. Where? The New London equivalent of an adult store. Where else? Warrick

ends up with a very expensive birthday gift from Toreth - and it's not even his birthday.

S&F is one long kink session after this. The gift is a kind of wardrobe with chains and cuffs inside instead of clothes hangers. Here, we see Warrick's obsessed with the wardrobe; his unquenchable thirst for pain, that hunger that invades his body and mind and makes him take risks that will endanger his life.

The sex here is intense, involving fisting though not graphically covered in painful detail (as it is in SF:) and only leaves Warrick desperate for more. And more.

The highlight for me was Toreth, as he climaxes, crying out Warrick's name but attaching to it words tells me Toreth is not too far from a place where he can acknowledge what Warrick means to him. There are other little revelations. Like learning Toreth isn't fantasizing about someone else when he's fucking Warrick. It's always Warrick. Even when Toreth is bringing a third (Dillian or Sara), it's still about Warrick.

Toreth tells Warrick about a couple he met recently and adds that he didn't fuck them. Even Warrick is surprised. Far as he's come, I wouldn't be surprised if Toreth does fuck them at some point but it's his post-coital thoughts I'd be interested in.

Dillian makes an appearance in this story and, as usual, is getting her knickers in a twist over her brother's relationship with the para-investigator. Toreth loses several more points when Dilly catches sight of the bruises on Warrick's wrists. She pushes and digs and pushes until Warrick decides to show her what he and Toreth do.

By the time he's done showing Dillian the wardrobe, she's about to puke. Good. Does she stop? No. She continues her ranting and raving then threatens to tell Mommy about what her brother's into. I wish she did. What an irony, considering who/what Kate really is. Anyway, Warrick is pissed off by the threat and smashes his tea-pot, one he was fond of and a wedding gift (to him and Melissa). That's when Dilly sees the bruises on his ankles, too.

Dillian can only see the negative where Toreth is concerned. Not that I blame, to be honest, especially when Warrick goes in to details about their BDSM activities. As far as Dilly is concerned, her brother is sleeping with a psychopath.

POOL SCHOOL - 3.5 STARS

Toreth decides a change would be nice since all he and Warrick have done since he bought him that wardrobe was indulging in their kink. So Toreth goes along with Sara to a strip club. Warrick and Dillian will be there, too. The latter's presence could put a crimp on the evening but he goes, anyway.

They play pool and Toreth, confident that he'd win, ends up losing and the forfeit - he's got get up on stage and do a number. This short story is light and fun. A nice breather after the rather intense ones earlier.

WITHOUT THE GAME - 5 STARS

I should have known 'light and fun' would be shortlived. The next story (the last one in the book) despite being the same length as Pool School, is a major milestone IMO. It's inversely connected to All Work and No Play where we saw Toreth realizing he didn't like not knowing who or what he was fucking. In Without the Game, it is Warrick who is using Toreth and so deeply caught up in the BDSM scene (starring The Wardrobe) that Toreth realizes Warrick isn't aware of his presence. He's just one of the items in their kink play. He's not an Administration para-investigator, he's BDSM para-phemnalia.

That's not the only reason Toreth is in such a foul mood either. We learn that the night before, he was summoned by Warrick to his flat. We aren't told what happened that night to put Toreth in a foul mood but I wouldn't be far off the mark if I said Toreth had yet another revelation re. fucking strangers and meaningless sex. So when he's ordered to be at Warrick's flat after work, Toreth doesn't want to go. He does, anyway, and right into a heated argument the moment the door is closed.

It appears the argument, and Toreth's anger, is over Warrick's use of the wardrobe. He is as obsessed with it as he is with the sim. Even more so these days. I can't find another more convincing piece of evidence that here, Toreth is where every man who loves someone should be. Toreth is in the *right* place in this sequence. It was heart-warming. Something you'd have to read for yourself to believe me when I say there isn't anything abnormal about Toreth. Perhaps in the later books he will display a trait that's truly sociopathic but up to now, I haven't seen that. And definitely not here in this final book of Games & Players.

The story ends on a very, very good note. Toreth asks for sex without the 'game'. Just him and Warrick. I see that as Toreth now knowing the difference between the real - no frills to mask, to hide behind - and the the false - where your lover can become just another object, another piece of paraphernalia.

He wants Warrick to want him and just him - the man who feels, who needs, who loves and needs to be loved for himself, even though all he can manage with which to communicate that is five simple words: "*Without the game. Just us.*"

Dreamer says

Read 9 of the 10 stories (all the free on-line ones). These books just get better and better. Made me laugh out loud in places and such hot sex scenes..

'Toreth wasn't normal. Most of the time he could pass well enough, and then something like this happened, almost as if to underline how profoundly not normal he was.'

Ingie says

November 2013

4.3 Stars - Crazy weird and fun reading once again

Book #3

I read all the free short stories to book #3 ('free Adm books on website'). It is more or less the whole book (*Games & Players*, containing a new short story not yet available on the site).

As so many other fans was I at once stunned by these men and addicted to this scary crazy "Adm" world in the near future dystopia of *New London*.

Keir Warrick: Corporate Director *SimTech*

Val Toreth: Para-investigator *Investigation & Interrogation Division*

Reviews for the first longer novella and two favorite shorties in book #3:

#3.1 - Game, Set

#3.6 - All Work And No Play

#3.7 - Gee

Will do a proper review when I finished to read the series (see "box" review: The Administration, #1-7).

I LIKE - yummy interesting with crazy plot

karen says

happy valentine's day!!

today i would like to take a minute to review this book - the third in the administration series - and confess that i am totally hooked. it is more than a dystopian s/f series, it is more than an m/m romance series. it has now worked its way into my brain and heart and if my star rating seems low, it is simply because some of these are stories and some of them are better than others, so i gotta round 'em. but i five-star these characters and their back-and forth because their tension is killing me in an excellent way.

these books take place in a "near-future london dystopia" where the deeply flawed and sexually addicted sociopath toreth works as an interrogator (read: torturer) and meets warrick, the virtual-reality making, hobbyist baker who loves being tied up and hurt, and they form what should be the best relationship ever! but they are trying to keep it casual because of how puzzled toreth is about human emotions and how scientific warrick is forcing himself to keep himself. they plant their own obstacles and each of them feels more than they let on and it is so deeply frustrating, the way thomas hardy is so frustrating. characters - talk to each other, jeez!

but the cracks! (not those cracks, pervs) they appear and you just want them to be in love already. and admit it. there are these tiny perfect moments where toreth is just so small and sad and vulnerable. oh, it makes me want to be able to fix everything! i understand the character of sara - toreth's assistant, who knows what he is, but still wants to break through to him emotionally. she wants what i want. (yes, all of it)

but after three books, i really care about these characters. talk about gay, right? but i do. the structure of these books is generally a novella about toreth and warrick and then some short stories that are sometimes about them, and sometimes about supporting characters. and i get angry every time it is not about them, even when they give good oblique character stuff about them.

is it condescending to wonder why she is wasting her time writing m/m fiction?? a genre with a growing, but still very small and specific audience. although - i do not care about gay male sex. i do not care about s/m. there is nothing in here that should make me feel sexified. and yet... and yet...more than any of the books i have read with the bodice rippers society, this one both got me a little flushed and also made me feel heart flutters of romance. so it seems like the audience can surprise itself, once they get over these icky covers. i swear - these are really well-written books.

Christina says

Re-read 01/2015; 03/29/2017

Game, Set - 5 Stars

As Long As It Lasted - 3 Stars

Rules Of Engagement (paperback only) - 3.5 Stars

Includes Fuck of the Day

Wine, Women and Cushions - 3 Stars

Playing with Fire - 5 Stars

All Work And No Play - 4.5 Stars

Gee - 4.5 Stars

Shopping & Fucking - 5 Stars

Pool School - 4 Stars

Without The Game - 5 Stars

Irina says

This book was seriously pushing my buttons. I thought I could take a lot of angst but this instalment had made me question how well I know my own limits. Still, despite all that or maybe because of it, I ended up loving it most.

A lot of pain and a constant feeling of hopeless despair kept me on my toes to the end and left me hungry for more. I only hope I'll see the light at the end of it all.

I must add, I wouldn't have coped without Sofia's support. Some books are definitely better read in company and this was one of those. Thank you!

Sofia says

[I love how Warrick has wormed his way into Toreth heart, life, being and vice versa. What seemed so impossible is now impossible to live without. (hide spoiler)]

Katerina says

A really good book. Best entertainment. I'm so glad to have taken the step. Toreth and Warrick are so special. Unique. The whole series is addictive. And the characters grow on you. Even Dilly. And no idea. Cele seems to me as an incarnation of Manna itself. Strange. I had this impression today. As Torreths stage appearance an end found. As Cele / Manna has completed the presentation with a whistle. My thoughts. Sometimes rather strange. I like this series so much. And Toreth ... sigh ...

And always nice attention to the wrists (giggle) ...

Nina Bilinszki says

Oh Lord... another fucking Jean...

Another fucking Jean who drove me up the wall while reading. I I'm ever going to meet a Jean in real life the only thing I'm gonna do is run. Away. Fast!

I think we learned a lot about Toreth in this novella. How his mind works, how he sees others persons, how he sees himself. I was shocked at his nearly complete emotional disability and non-existed empathy. At the same time he is jealous as hell. He knows that technically he does not deserve Warrick and that apart from the sex he can give him nothing to hold him. And from an objective point of view I would have to agree to that.

BUT I'm not objective when it comes to Toreth. And when he and Warrick are alone, you can just see that he gives him more than just sex. There is so much more between them. Yes, Toreth has no clue what his feelings mean – he can't even see them, though they are clearly there – and he has no idea how a relationship has to work, but Warrick is just brilliant in guiding him and making it seem as if it was something accomplished hby Toreth when in reality it was all his doing.

Penny says

I loved it.

This was great, great, great!

There are incredibly strong moments in this book, truly powerful and deeply emotional without being sentimental or corny in the least.

It made my heart pound uncontrollably many times. It was almost impossible to put the book down, it was so addictive!

The sex is very hot. Their relationship is slowly progressing. We can feel the emotions, the angst even when we don't hear the feelings expressed out loud (or even thought for that matter).

It's a beautifully crafted relationship. I can't wait to watch it grow, expand into something more defined and with a shared future.

Toreth and Warrick are amazing characters; I can't imagine ever wanting to stop knowing more about them.

My reviews of The Administration series' books:

Book 1: Mind Fuck - 3 Stars

Book 2: Quid Pro Quo

Book 2.1: Unlucky Break - 2 Stars

Book 2.2: Friday - 3 Stars

Book 2.3: Pancakes - 5 Stars

Book 2.4: Surprises - 4 Stars

Book 2.5: Family - 4 Stars

Book 2.6: Mirror Mirror - 4 Stars

Book 3: Games & Players - 5 Stars

Book 3.1: Game, Set - 4 Stars

Book 3.2: As Long As It Lasted - 3 Stars

Book 3.3: Fuck of the Day - 3 Stars

Book 3.4: Wine, Women and Cushions - 2 Stars

Book 3.5: Playing with Fire - 5 Stars

Book 3.6: All Work and no Play - 3 Stars

Book 3.7: Gee - 2 Stars

Book 3.8: Shopping & Fucking - 5 Stars

Book 3.9: Pool School - 3 Stars

Book 3.95: Without the Game - 4 Stars

Book 4: Control - 4 Stars

Book 4.2: Wait For It - 4 Stars

Book 4.3: Caged - 5 Stars

Book 4.4: Unaccustomed as I Am... - 3 Stars

Book 4.5: Helen - 4 Stars

Book 4.6: Shopping, No Fucking - 4 Stars

Book 4.7: Losing It - 4 Stars

Book 4.8: Coming from America

Book 5: Quis Custodiet - 3.5 Stars

Book 5.2: Gratuitous Kink - 4 Stars

Book 5.3: Then and Now - 4 Stars

Book 5.4: Friends in the Right Places - 2 Stars

Book 5.5: Smoke & Cameras - 4 Stars

Book 5.6: Sunday - 3 Stars

Book 6: First Against the Wall - 4 Stars

Book 7: For Certain Values

Book 7.1: Family Values

Book 7.2: Boy's Toys - 3 Stars

Book 7.3: Make it a Surprise

Book 7.4: Prodigal

Book 8: Blood & Circuses

Book 9: Corpora Delicti

Gratuitous Epilogue

Steelwhisper says

Overall rating is 3.5 rounded up to 4*

Game, Set: 2*

The weakest so far, as per the prose and writing. Too many entirely needless and overly "clever" one-liners. Things are becoming a bit too repetitive, and boring in this. Carnac is yet another quite unreliable narrator, and if anyone is looking for a sociopath among the main characters, he's the one to target. Toreth starts to slowly slip into the role of the red herring in this whole thing. I even feel somewhat sorry for him by now.

As Long As It Lasted: 3*

Sara's and Toreth's only instance of sex, both are moderately to seriously drunk. Well set up and showing definitely more caring than everyone keeps harping about. Crisply written.

Fuck of the Day: 1.5*

It may or may not add to Toreth's baddie image, in this one I just couldn't care less.

Wine, Women and Cushions: 3*

A close and intriguing, and rather well-written look at Cele and Dillian. I like Dillian, even though she can be a bitch.

Playing with the Fire: 2*

Like "Family" this is too convoluted. And much, much too pat.

All Work, No Play: 5*

Thoroughly erotic, and a neatly written glimpse at the interaction of a couple knowing each other so well as to notice their distractions.

Gee: 5*

This is probably a setting few non-English people will be able to thoroughly get a handle on, as it quite

exceeds just the concept of sexual assault on a minor. It is quite brilliantly written, plays with corporeal punishment as was common in British schools up to circa 2000 (when Scotland finally abolished it as well). Caning and birching were nearly equally as long official penalties for both adult and juvenile delinquents. It is not that long ago, that teenagers were birched on the spot by policemen for their misdeeds. "Slippering" in schools was something pupils bragged of afterwards. And in the prisons the serious whippings were done behind prison walls with adult men tied to scaffolds.

What is so neatly reflected here, and insofar this is truly brilliantly written, is--through Sara--the ignorance of the younger generations, as well as those pupils who went to state schools (where CP was abolished much longer), as opposed to--through Toreth--the easy acceptance of just about any kind of assault by those educated in state institutions or public schools.

Toreth's lack of comprehension (that something immoral was done to him) isn't truly extraordinary, rather it is exemplary instead. His appreciation of Gee, the fact that he competed for his grace and reacted negatively to being pushed from that semblance of affection (as warped and objectified as it was) indeed speak for themselves and are one way many of these youths reacted to this.

Shopping and Fucking: 5*

Brilliantly written BDSM and UST. I like the last part, with Warrick explaining himself to Dillian (and the reader).

Pool School: 4*

Amusing.

Without the Game: 4*

A good rendering of Top Drop and the care any top will invest in their bottom.

Caution! Toreth is still an unreliable narrator. His conclusion of what Warrick feels is just his conclusion. Compare with Warrick's ramblings in "Shopping and Fucking".

Kat says

Manna Francis, what are you doing to me!?

Em says

I think this is my favourite so far, I'm now officially hooked. I really enjoyed seeing Carnac play his little mind games, he's such a rogue, though Toreth was the star of the show for me, so much fun and so unpredictable at times and so so jealous! I loved it!

"You told him you didn't want to fuck any more, and he just said 'okay'?"

"Yes. Precisely so. And he put a very favourable mention of my work in his report."

"Oh. Right. Then I'll tell him tomorrow."
He grinned happily, a minor but irritating problem solved.
"See? I told you it was no big deal."

Camilla says

Games & Players is the 3rd book in this series..

Its a total of 10 short and shorter stories about Toreth and Warrick.. Again, its a very mixed crowd, some I didnt have an opinion on, some I LOVED!

The first story is Game, Set

Review:

This short is about Toreth and Warrick, yet again, having to deal with jealousy.. What about giving up, and just have each other, huh guys?

Anywho. Toreth gets a socioanalyst, Carnac, into his life. Carnac has been assigned to write a rapport about the I&I and chooses Toreth as his "personal slaveboy." Carnac is a mean SOB, and tries to come between Toreth and Warrick, because *he can* and because he thinks Warricks deserves better than Toreth.. Carnac plans to get Toreth to trust him, and then leave him.. To fuck him up ~~even more~~, so-to-speak.

Anyway. Warrick doesnt like Carnac nad Toreth screwing, so he tells Toreth that he doesnt want to see him, as long as he's seeing Carnac too. Of course Toreth doesnt understand why, because he's *emotionally challenged*, but it all works out in the end, where we *finally* get to see Warrick doing Toreth!! Been waiting for that. And it definitely believers! Hot!

5 stars.

2nd story: As Long As It Lasted

Review:

This was a very short about Sara and Toreths night together, 5 years before the start of 'Mind Fuck'.

Really didnt like seeing them together, for some reason.. Felt way to uncomfortable.. For me.. not for them.. Obviously..

2 stars.

3rd story: Rules Of Engagement. (Not available online)

Review:

In this short, Toreth finds out that Saras boyfriend is stealing from her, and goes on a Superman mission, to

get her money back.. And of course getting a BJ from the guy.. Well, he is Toreth after all.. *rolls eyes*

2 stars

4th story: Wine, Women and Cushions

Review:

This is a short, where we find out that Sara and Cele used to be lovers.. And apparently, both of them havent gotten over that just yet.. But Sara thinks she wants a husband and not a wife.. So for now, Cele will take what she can get..

The 3 star rating is an inbetween thing.. Didnt really ad anything good or bad to the story..

3 stars

5th story: Playing with Fire

Review:

Playing with fire *indeed*.

This short is about Warrick *finally* getting *some*, away from Toreth.. And when he's pissed off, that Toreth screwed someone else, once again.. Warrick decides to let Toreth know that he screwed around too.. Which, of course, he has every right to, since they are only "*regular fucks*" and nothing more than that.. Nooo.. of course not..

Anywho.. of course Toreth doesnt take the news so well.. He actually thinks himself, that he's being hypocritical, but still, he wanted Warrick to be *his* and only his. But before Toreth even has the chance to tell Warrick that, Warrick says he's sorry, and that he will never screw around again.. Which made me very happy.. Until Toreth told him he couldnt say the same, which led them to having sex.. What?

So nothing has changed.. Warrick is still the good little boy, not cheating, while Toreth is still the SOB screwing everything with a heartbeat.. Good short though.. ;)

5 stars

6th story: All Work And No Play

Review:

This a short about Toreth being grouchy about Warrick, because he's too tired to get it on.. For 2 whole weeks.. Aww.. Poor Toreth, ey? ;)

Anywho.. Warrick has been busy at work.. Actually screwing *himself*.. ? Yeah, I guess thats what they do at SIM..

He brought Toreth around to experince it, so he ended up having a 3some with 2 Warricks's.. Thats a bit like twincest, no? And I dont do family kink, thank you very much..

But oh well... Its still Warrick and Toreth, and I *do* love those two..

4 stars

7th story: Gee

Review:

In this short, we met the man *Gee*, which turned out to be a "teacher" who molested Toreth when he was 13/15 years old..

I say Molested, even though, Toreth just laughed about it, in the short.. Good Gawd..

2 stars

8th story: Shopping & Fucking

Review:

This is a short about a wicked shopping trip.. Toreth decides to take Warrick to a sex shop, where he tells him to pick one thing.. Warrick decides on a closet of sorts, where he can be hung from cuffs..

That leads to a very, very hot date night..

Which leads to a hot dirty phone call..

Which leads to Sara later, seeing the bruises on Warrick's hands and ankles, which again, leads to her freaking out..

Warrick decides to "come clean" with her, or to at least try and explain why he needs Toreth, or the the things Toreth can do to him..

That talk seriously made me teary eyed.. Wtf Milla? Good Gawd, I'm such a sap.. Typical, that the first time I get teary eyed so far, in this series, its because of Warrick and Sara..

5 stars

9th story: Pool School

Review:

This was such a funny, great Toreth and Warrick story.. right up until the last sentence, because Toreth is a slut..

Anywho.. This was the 3 girls, with T and W out at a Strip Club. Having fun. Toreth challenges Warrick to a game of strip pool.. Without knowing that Warrick is a pool shark.. That leads to a very funny scene of stripping.. on stage..

5 stars

10th story: Without The Game

Review:

Whatttt??

They finally decide to do it without the game, and we dont get to see it.. ???

But whyyyy?!?

5 stars

I cant even lie anymore, I effing love these guys.. Probably Toreth a bit more than Warrick, and I dont even want to know what that makes me, but holy hell, I just want to shake him up, and then comfort him at the same time.. 5 stars for sure!

Trio says

Excellent! Really great character development, love these stories.
