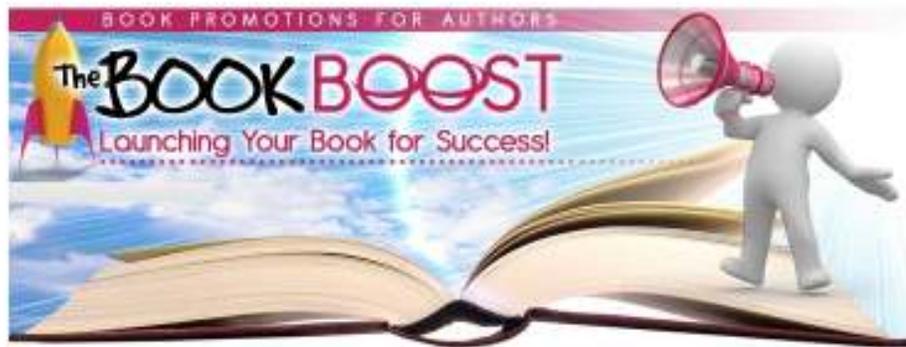


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## A Chat with Author Marcia James Today @ The Boost!



**Win a copy of *At Her Command* and welcome our featured author Marcia James to the blog today!**

*We recently had a chat with pet-friendly Marcia and here's what she had to say...*

**TBB: Welcome to the blog, Marcia. We are excited to host you as our featured Book of the Month author for February.**

MJ: I'm thrilled to be a guest on The Book Boost this month as February is traditionally associated with romance -- and romance novels. Valentine's Day (the Queen of romance holidays) falls within February, but the month features other romantic dates, such as the Celebration of Love Week (Feb. 12 - 18), International Flirting Week (Feb. 13 - 19), and World Marriage Day (Feb. 12).

Since my romance novels always feature dogs, I noticed that February also includes a number of animal-friendly holidays, such as National Justice for Animals Week (Feb. 19 - 25), Sled Dog Day (Feb. 2), and Love Your Pet Day (Feb. 20).

No matter what holidays you celebrate, I hope your February will be very special and filled with love!

**TBB: How did I know you'd bring those furry friends into the mix? ;-) Can you tell us a little about your writing background?**

MJ: I've always enjoyed writing and remember penning poetry as early as seven years old. At the University of Virginia, I minored in Creative Writing, and at American University, I received a Master's in TV production and scriptwriting. Then, after years as a freelance advertising copywriter, I decided to try my hand at romance writing. I'm a sucker for Happily Ever Afters!

**TBB: How did you come up with the idea for this particular book?**

MJ: I have a sense of humor that's been described as "offbeat." ;-) And the premise of the series appealed to my slightly bent funny bone. The idea of a female sex therapist/amateur sleuth offers lots of comic possibilities, especially if the homicide detective hero is a "meat-and-potatoes" guy sexually (read "prude"), who's not too keen on the heroine's profession.

Dr. Ally Skye's specialized knowledge, however, proves useful to the police when they're trying to solve sex-driven crimes. I had a great time writing about these two very different characters who are drawn together by murder and an inconvenient -- put powerful -- attraction.

**TBB: Oooh, I can't image the hot detective being a prude. Too funny. How did you come up with the title for this book and will this be a series?**

MJ: I wanted to give readers a clue to the order of the books in the "Dr. Ally Skye, Sex Therapist" comic romantic mystery series, so the word "single" in the title (*Sex & the Single Therapist*) is the hint that it's the first book. My second book, which I'm writing now, is titled, *Death & the Double Entendre*. The third will be *Murder & the Menage a Trois*. In addition to the books' sequence, the titles refer to the murder that kicks off each book's mystery.

For example, in *Death & the Double Entendre*, someone is murdering clients of phone sex services.

**TBB: Love, love, love those titles. I'm a title kind of girl. Well, when you're not busy writing, what are you reading?**

MJ: *Smooth Play* by Regina Hart. I enjoy contemporary romances, like Regina's emotional "Love 'N Hoops" series featuring a fictional NBA team. I'm also partial to romantic comedies, like those of Jennifer Crusie and Susan Elizabeth Phillips.

**TBB: I'm reading an "oldie" by Jennifer Crusie now, *Tell Me Lies*. Very good stuff. I chose it because it is labeled as being her "Break Out Novel". As a successful author yourself, what advice do you have for other writers out there?**

MJ: As important as it is to learn the craft of fiction writing, it's equally important to learn the business side of publishing. For example, I teach author promotion workshops, and I see how unprepared most new authors are when it comes to promoting their brand and their books. There is so much an author can do before getting "The Call" to learn about marketing and to establish his or her pen name.

In addition, aspiring authors should understand basic contract information, research agents and editors, be familiar with what publishers are looking for, etc. The best way to do this is to learn these things simultaneously to perfecting one's craft. And joining a professional organization like Romance Writers of America can speed up the process.

**TBB: I couldn't agree more. I, in fact, took your amazing promotions workshop a few years back. That's why I always write my website name as ([www.KerriNelson.com](http://www.KerriNelson.com)) now with the capital letters. :o) See what a good student I was? (wink, wink) Have any interesting writing quirks to share?**

MJ: I'm a plot-driven author, so I know the important milestones in a book's plot before beginning to write it. However, I often do a draft of the love scenes before starting the first chapter and writing the rest of the book chronologically. I love writing kissey-face scenes!

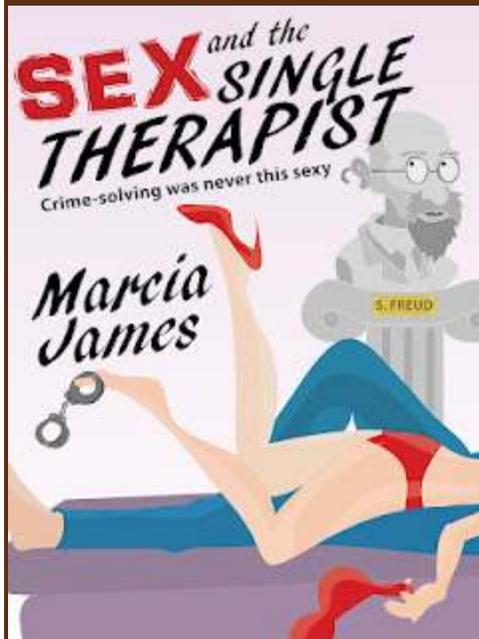
**TBB: That is interesting. I always write my love scenes last. You have so many projects in the works, do you have time to do anything else these days?**

MJ: I'm brainstorming plots and "researching" love scenes with my husband and hero of many years. ;-)

**TBB: Zoiks! You go girlfriend! Guess you had a stellar Valentine's Day then.**

**But before you go, please give us a blurb and teaser for your newest book and thanks for joining us at The Book Boost and for your continued support of finding a cure for Juvenile Diabetes (from which my 11 year old daughter suffers). Big hugs to you from us, my friend.**

**Blurb:**



A crime of passion...

To clear an innocent friend, sex therapist Dr. Ally Skye investigates a patient's murder. Soon she's trading heated words and hot kisses with a sexy cop. Can this free-spirited amateur sleuth and her posse of Vegas insiders solve the crime before the killer targets her?

A sexy complication...

Cynical homicide detective Zack Crawford has the murder to solve. The last thing he needs is a red-hot sex therapist who haunts his dreams. Ally is trouble and, given her job and his luck, she'd probably grade his performance in bed.

A dynamic duo...

Zack and Ally form an uneasy and sexually charged alliance. Murderers, extortionists and psychos are no match for these reluctant partners. Crime-solving was never this sexy or this fun!

**Excerpt:**

*The front entrance of Dr. Ally Skye's office cracked open, and Gladys poked her head in. Her perfect French twist sprouted wisps of hair, her silk scarf was askew, and she'd nibbled off her lipstick. In the five years since Ally had established the practice, her unflappable office manager had never been shaken.*

*"There's a cop out here." Gladys hissed the words in a stage whisper before Ally could speak. "There's been a—"*

*The woman squeaked as a wide, tanned hand grasped the edge of the door above her head and shoved it fully open. A long-limbed, broad-shouldered man stepped around Gladys and closed the door in her face.*

*The grim man strode forward, impatience shimmering off him in waves. Holy guacamole, as her mother used to say. Beneath her clamoring fight-or-flight instinct, Ally recognized a thoroughly female reaction to his overt maleness...a sexual awareness that buzzed like a low-voltage current.*

*Lean but muscular, he wore a short-sleeved shirt revealing powerful, sun-darkened arms. His untucked, orange-and-turquoise Hawaiian shirt hung over dusty jeans that molded to his thighs. And there was a bump under his shirt tail. A belt holster?*

*A desert tan gave the cop the look of an Old West lawman despite his vibrant shirt. His hair, unruly and the color of espresso, brushed his collar. The room's diffused lighting glinted off gold highlights probably threaded through his dark mane by Nevada's relentless sunshine.*

*Fine lines emphasized the man's vibrant cobalt eyes and full, sensual mouth. The cop's serious demeanor fit the sharp planes of his handsome face. He halted in front of her, and Ally fought the knee-jerk urge to retreat.*

*"Detective Zack Crawford, Las Vegas Metro Police Department." His gruff introduction wasn't accompanied by an offer to shake hands. The man's gaze drifted over her, insolently assessing, before his eyes returned to her face. "I need to ask you some questions."*

*Ally met his cool stare, tilting her head to adjust to the good half-foot differential in their heights. He was deliberately crowding her personal space, probably attempting to make her nervous. Well, she didn't intimidate easily. "Could I see some identification?"*

*He rolled his eyes before producing his shield from a back pocket. Ally didn't need her grad school body language courses to spot the exasperation in his posture and expression.*

Unable to resist needling him, she plucked the shield from his fingers and studied it for several long seconds. Then, returning it to him, she extended her hand and completed their introductions. "I'm Dr. Ally Skye."

Crawford took her hand, gave it a single shake and dropped it. During the brief contact, she felt the warm, rough texture of his calloused fingers and awarded him points for giving her a firm but not vise-like squeeze. He might be impatient and aggressive, but he'd taken care not to crunch her knuckles.

Ally motioned to her client chairs. Crawford slid a hip onto the arm of the nearest one, ensuring he would hover over her if she settled onto the seat of her chair.

So that's your game. She almost grinned, enjoying their non-verbal jockeying for dominance. It was easy to spot a control freak when you had a few of those tendencies yourself. Unwilling to sit submissively below his level, she perched on the arm of her therapist chair, glad she'd chosen to wear the linen pants suit and not a dress that morning.

His lips tightened. Oh, he'd noticed the power play but didn't comment. Instead, he took a notebook out of his shirt pocket and flipped it open. "I'm here about a patient."

The disdain he'd layered on the last word was crystal clear, and Ally sighed. As a sex therapist, she was accustomed to unenlightened people denigrating her work. "I can't discuss my clients."

His eyes narrowed in a look that probably made criminals cower. "Don't pull that confidentiality bullshit, Doctor Skye. I know what services a surrogate performs."

Ally ground her teeth. He assumed she was a sex surrogate, which many considered synonymous with "call girl." No wonder he thought he could push her into discussing her clients.

"Detective Crawford," she mimicked his derisive tone while chiding herself for letting him push her buttons. "I'm a licensed therapist, not a sex surrogate. And my clients are entitled to the same confidentiality as those of any doctor."

He leaned toward her, his musky scent sending an olfactory jolt to her brain's lust center. Ally shallowed her breathing in self-defense.

"This is a homicide investigation," he announced. "Tug Shaffer's been murdered, and we're questioning his wife."

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\*\*Winners for Book Boost prizes are drawn the first week of the following month and posted in the Recent Winners box in the right hand side of the blog. Check back to see if you are a winner and to claim your prize! Please leave your contact information in your blog post!\*\*