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Cold Hearts (Secrets and Lies Book 2)

By Sharon Sala

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There's only one way to keep secrets buried...

If only it had been something else that brought Lissa Sherman and Mack Jackson back in touch after so many years. Something—anything—other than the murder of Mack's father. Even worse, Lissa's car had been used as the murder weapon.

Thirty-five years ago, four friends went out joyriding and ended up in a terrible accident that left one dead and the others with no memory of that awful night. Now two more people, including Mack's father, have been murdered, and if the lone survivor knows why they're being targeted, she's not talking.

Even as Lissa and Mack find themselves drawn together in the midst of tragedy, the mystery deepens when someone comes after Lissa, too. Is the danger to her tied to the other deaths, or are two killers at work in town? Now Mack has to fight an unknown attacker as well as his feelings for Lissa, but it may be that he can't win either battle.

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Cold Hearts (Secrets and Lies Book 2) By Sharon Sala Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #55790 in eBooks
- Published on: 2015-09-01
- Released on: 2015-08-25
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Review

"Perfect entertainment for those looking for a suspense novel with emotional intensity."

-Publishers Weekly on Out of the Dark

"Skillfully balancing suspense and romance, Sala gives readers a nonstop breath-holding adventure."

-Publishers Weekly on Going Once

"Vivid, gripping...this thriller keeps the pages turning."

-Library Journal on Torn Apart

"Sala's characters are vivid and engaging."

-Publishers Weekly on Cut Throat

"Veteran romance writer Sala lives up to her reputation with this well-crafted thriller."

-Publishers Weekly on Remember Me

"[A] well-written, fast-paced ride."

-Publishers Weekly on Nine Lives

About the Author

Sharon Sala is a native of Oklahoma and a member of Romance Writers of America. She is a NYT, USA Today, Publisher's Weekly, WaldenBooks mass market, Bestselling author of 85 plus books written as Sharon Sala and Dinah McCall. She's a 7 time RITA finalist, Janet Dailey Award winner, 5 time National Reader's Choice Award winner, 4 time Career Achievement Award from RT Magazine, 4 time winner of Colorado Romance Writers Award of Excellence.

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It began with phone calls in the night.

The moment Melissa Sherman answered, the connection would be broken. After a time, the calls escalated to heavy breathing and ugly laughter. It wasn't until the caller began telling her in a slow husky whisper the disgusting things he was going to do to her that she finally broke, screaming obscenities in his ear, calling him an outright coward hiding behind walls and darkness, and hung up. Then she unplugged her landline and took comfort in the fact that he didn't know the number to her cell phone.

She had less than two weeks of peace and quiet before the stalking began.

Lissa's starfish night-light had seen her through most of elementary school, all of high school and a broken heart, four years of college and six years of teaching in Savannah, Georgia.

This past summer she and her night-light had returned to Mystic, West Virginia, to teach first grade. She'd never really thought about coming home to teach, but having her childhood home to live in free and clear had been too good to turn down. It was a hard tradeoff, inheriting the house as she lost her last parent, but family memories were strong and vivid in every room.

Tonight the starfish was casting a faint yellow glow, lighting the way from her bedroom into the hall as she ran toward the living room, her footsteps making little *slap-slap* sounds on the hardwood floor.

It was after 2:00 a.m. and she'd already been up once, certain there was someone outside her house. The sound had been right beneath her bedroom window, a tapping sound, but nothing natural, because it had a very unnatural stop-and-go rhythm. It had taken all her nerve to look out, and then, when she did, she had seen nothing.

Uneasy, she'd gone back to bed and had just drifted off to sleep when she'd heard another sound that had had her on her feet in seconds. It was the sound of boots stomping heavily on the wooden surface of her front porch. Now she was running through the house in her old flannel pajamas. When she turned on the porch light to look out, she saw no one and nothing out of place. She thought about calling the police, but there was nothing to tell other than the fact she was scared out of her mind and the house that used to mean sanctuary now felt like a trap.

If her father was still alive he would have been sitting outside in the dark with a shotgun, waiting for the sucker to come back. And the longer she thought about that, the angrier she became, until she yanked the door open, letting it hit the wall with a bang as she stomped out onto the porch.

"You think this is funny?" she yelled. "You come back here again and we'll see how hard you laugh with a load of buckshot in your ass."

Then she strode back in the house with her head up and blond curls bouncing, slamming the door behind her. Just to punctuate the promise, she turned on every light in the house and then went to bed.

Across the darkened street her stalker, a man named Reece Parsons, was crouched in an alley, grinning.

She was a feisty little bitch, but that was how he liked them. He could tell she would be fine in the sack, but she wasn't ready yet. He wanted her afraid for her life before he raped her because that, too, was how he rolled. As soon as she went back inside and closed the door, he slipped away.

The next time Lissa woke up it was 6:00 a.m. and her alarm was blaring. She rolled over and shut it off, facing the fact that it was not only time to get ready for work, but it was also raining.

She threw back the covers to get up, then winced as she stood. The floor was cold, and because of the rain, there would be no recess, which was a teacher's worst nightmare. This day couldn't get worse.

She headed for the bathroom to shower and paused at the sink to eye the knot of curls in her hair. Rainy days made her naturally curly hair go haywire, and today was no exception.

When her gaze landed on the little brown mole just above the right corner of her lips, she frowned. Mack Jackson, the boy from high school who'd broken her heart, used to kiss the mole for good luck before every football game. She had been trying to forget him for nearly ten years now but without much success. Such was life.

An hour later she was on her way out the door with hot coffee in one hand and a backpack full of games she would need for the indoor play periods, something they all had to get through before this miserable-ass day could come to an end.

But then the car wouldn't start and she realized she'd been wrong. The day had already gotten worse. She turned the key again and again, until the engine finally fired. Mumbling a grudging thank-you to the universe, she turned on the wipers and backed out of the driveway. But the moment she put the car in Drive, the engine began sputtering.

"No!" Lissa shouted, and stomped the gas with the assumption that too much gas was better than not enough.

The fact that she made it to the school parking lot without actually being late was a miracle. She didn't even care that she had to run through the rain with a broken umbrella to get into the building. She was on the job, and the time to worry about the car and the stalker was after school was over.

Both bays at Paul Jackson's garage and gas station were full, and his other mechanic was home sick with the flu. Paul had called in extra help to run the front while he worked on the repair jobs. He replaced a starter on the first car just before noon and sent the owner on his way. Now he was almost through putting new brake pads on a truck that reeked of marijuana. He wasn't the kind to pass judgment on his fellow man, but when the young guy came to pick it up, Paul intended to give him the same lecture he'd given his own son years earlier.

He paused a moment to wipe sweat off his brow and pop a couple of painkillers. His knees throbbed, his elbow was aching where he'd whacked it on the concrete and his knuckles were bloody—all part of a mechanic's job.

Just as he squatted back down, he heard a car pulling into the station and knew from the rough sound of the engine that something was wrong with it. He stood up, wiping his hands as he turned to meet the owner, and then smiled when he saw Lissa Sherman getting out.

She had been in the same class with his son, Mack, and they'd dated long enough that he'd wondered if one day she might become part of the family. Although that had never happened, he was still very fond of her. He noticed as she darted into the bay that she looked as exhausted as he felt.

"Hey, honey, it sounds like your fuel pump is starving the engine. It's running pretty rough."

She rolled her eyes. "Oh, Paul, this has been the day from hell. I didn't think the car was going to start this morning, and then, when it finally did, I headed straight for school. The rain kept the kids inside at recess, and they were wild and bored, so you can imagine how that went down."

Paul laughed. He had always enjoyed having her around the house. She was as unaware of her beauty as a woman could be and had a great personality.

"Yeah, I wouldn't trade your day for mine. At least I know how to fix cars. I couldn't wrangle a half dozen of those little rug rats, let alone a whole room full.

However, that's not why you're here. Tell me more about your car."

Lissa shrugged. "I don't know. When it finally started, it ran rough all the way to school. A friend helped me get it started again, and here I am in need of your help."

"Yeah, sure. Just leave the keys in it and I'll get to it first thing tomorrow."

"I don't suppose you have a loaner I could drive?" she asked.

Paul frowned. "No, I sure don't. Sorry."

Her shoulder slumped as she managed a smile.

"That's okay. How long do you think it will take you to fix it?"

"Might be the fuel pump. I can't really say until I take a look at it to see exactly what's wrong."

Lissa wiped a shaky hand across her face and tried not to let her disappointment show. Even though she lived in town, since her stalker had stepped up his game she felt insecure about being without transportation.

Paul eyed her closely. For some reason she seemed uneasy, even afraid. He didn't know what was going on with her, but he knew he would just spend another lonely night on his own when he went home. Or he could stay late and do his good deed for the day.

"Hey, how about I take a look at it this evening, and if it's not a big fix and I have the parts, I'll have it ready for you in the morning."

Her relief was evident, which told him he'd read her mood correctly.

"That would be super, and I sure do appreciate it," she said.

Paul glanced out at the downpour. "Do you have a ride home?"

She nodded, pointing to the car waiting at the curb.

"Okay, then. If I run into trouble, I'll call and let you know it might take longer to fix. Are you in the phone book?"

She thought of the landline she kept unplugged and wrote her cell phone down for him on a slip of paper.

"Call this number. It's my cell."

He smiled. "I should have known. Not a lot of people still have landlines anymore. There are lots of things changing in this world."

She thought of how calm her life had been before the harassment had begun.

"You are so right about things changing," she said. "So I'll see you tomorrow?"

He smiled. "Yes, tomorrow."

He watched until she made it to the curb, and then he pulled her car into the empty bay and hung the keys on the board by the phone.

Lissa was soaked by the time she got home. She changed into dry clothes before starting a load of laundry, then began making something for supper. Keeping her students inside today during the noon hour meant

lunch hadn't happened for her. She wanted something filling but quick to make, which took her straight to eggs. Within a short time she had a cheese omelet and a couple of slices of buttered toast on a plate, and was ready to dig in. She settled in front of the television to eat, enjoying the food and grateful for the roof over her head because the rain was really coming down.

Once she finished eating, she cleaned up the kitchen, switched the load of laundry from the washer to the dryer and took a cookie with her as she went back into the living room. She channel surfed for a couple of minutes until she happened on a country-music program highlighting hit songs from the past ten years. The moment she saw who was performing and heard the song he was singing, she froze.

Alan Jackson was singing "Remember When."

She closed her eyes, but it didn't stop the tears as the memory came flooding back.

Mack stood naked before her, his hand outstretched.

Lissa shivered once but took it without hesitation. They'd made love before, and she knew what it felt like to come apart in his arms.

He swung her off her feet and carried her toward the bed.

"I love you, Lissa. So much," he whispered, as he laid her down and then slid onto the bed beside her.

"I love you, too," she said, as she wrapped her arms around his neck.

The radio was playing softly in the next room, a song called "Remember When." She sighed as he began leaving a trail of kisses from the base of her throat all the way down to her belly. She would remember this moment long after they grew old together. She wanted him inside her so bad that she ached, but she knew Mack would take his sweet time. When his fingers slid between her legs, she moaned.

"Do you like that, baby?" he said softly.

"Yes, yes, yes."

His breath was warm against her ear, then her cheek, and then he kissed the little mole near her lips.

When he did, Lissa turned to capture the next kiss for herself, but instead of kissing her, he gently bit the edge of her lower lip and rolled her nipple between his fingers just hard enough to send a sharp ache of longing through her body.

He pushed a knee between her legs, asking her to let him in, and when she did, in one fluid motion he slid inside her so fast that she gasped, unprepared for the suddenness of his actions. She began moving beneath him, already chasing the climax to come. They moved in rhythm without speaking, lost in the sensation of making love.

She went from the heat of passion to a full-blown climax so fast she almost screamed. She was still coming down from the high when Mack shuddered. The blood-rush shot through his body in gut-wrenching waves as he collapsed on top of her and then kissed the hollow at the base of her throat before he pushed up on one elbow to look at her.

"We're so good together," he whispered. Then he kissed her again.

The song ended and so did the memory. She didn't want to remember how good they were together. She didn't want to remember how easily he could make her lose her mind. What she did remember was that six weeks later, when she'd found out she was pregnant, it had never occurred to her that Mack would let her down.

When she'd told him, the look on his face had been as panicked as she felt. But he'd immediately put his arms around her and told her that he loved her. It didn't help that she'd felt him shaking even as he'd said the word *marriage*. He wasn't the only one who was scared. Her future was changing, too.

And then she'd had the miscarriage. The fight they'd had afterward was almost bizarre. She'd never understood his anger or why they hadn't spoken since, and just thinking about it made her lose her appetite. Unwilling to go down that road again, she changed channels and tossed the cookie in the trash.

Wind blew rain against the window in a rat-a-tat pattern that gave her the shivers, but the evening passed without incident. It appeared the inclement weather was serving as a deterrent to her stalker. Even creeps hated getting wet and cold. She went to bed, assuming when morning came that Paul Jackson would have her car back in order.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alan Fan:

In this 21st millennium, people become competitive in most way. By being competitive currently, people have do something to make these people survives, being in the middle of the particular crowded place and notice by simply surrounding. One thing that oftentimes many people have underestimated this for a while is reading. Yep, by reading a publication your ability to survive increase then having chance to stand up than other is high. To suit your needs who want to start reading a book, we give you this particular Cold Hearts (Secrets and Lies Book 2) book as nice and daily reading publication. Why, because this book is greater than just a book.

Shannon Silva:

This Cold Hearts (Secrets and Lies Book 2) is new way for you who has curiosity to look for some information mainly because it relief your hunger of knowledge. Getting deeper you onto it getting knowledge more you know or else you who still having bit of digest in reading this Cold Hearts (Secrets and Lies Book 2) can be the light food to suit your needs because the information inside this kind of book is easy to get by means of anyone. These books develop itself in the form which is reachable by anyone, that's why I mean in the e-book type. People who think that in book form make them feel drowsy even dizzy this e-book is the answer. So there isn't any in reading a guide especially this one. You can find actually looking for. It should be here for anyone. So , don't miss that! Just read this e-book type for your better life and knowledge.

Helen Williams:

In this particular era which is the greater man or who has ability in doing something more are more important than other. Do you want to become certainly one of it? It is just simple strategy to have that. What you must do is just spending your time little but quite enough to get a look at some books. Among the books in the top list in your reading list is usually Cold Hearts (Secrets and Lies Book 2). This book which can be qualified as The Hungry Hills can get you closer in turning into precious person. By looking up and review this guide you can get many advantages.

Beverly Thomas:

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