



Quid Pro Quo

Manna Francis

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When he agrees to do a favor for his old friend Liz Carey in Corporate Fraud, Para-investigator Val Toreth is hoping for a simple case. After all, kidnapping and dismemberment are all in a day's work for the Investigation and Interrogation Division. But in the European Administration, simplicity is often a dangerous illusion, and anyone who goes looking for trouble in the corporate world is certain to find more than they bargained for. Fraud, sabotage, espionage, blackmail, decades-long vendettas, and murder--the more powerful the corporations, the darker their secrets. Corporate insiders and innocent bystanders alike are all too easily caught up in the conflicts, but when suspects can hide behind money and power, what chance is there of any justice?

And on top of everything else, Toreth also has to deal with Keir Warrick. But that's easy. That's just sex.

The sequel to *Mind Fuck*, this second book in the Administration series contains the novella *Quid Pro Quo*, as well as five short stories set in the near future dystopia of New London and centered around professional investigator and interrogator Val Toreth, and technical genius turned corporate Keir Warrick.

Quid Pro Quo Details

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From Reader Review Quid Pro Quo for online ebook

karen says

it's the continuing erotic adventures of

and

if you have read my review for *mind fuck*, this makes sense, if not, this could be the start of a long and expensive lawsuit!

so, this is book two in *the administration* series, my foray into m/m erotica. this volume is comprised of a novella and a few short stories. the novella gets a cranky thumbs-down from me. it begins with an emergency room sexual mishap and then goes snoringly into a tepid kidnap and corporate-espionage plot that i could neither follow nor care about. book, be more fun!

the stories, though, are great. i really care about these men and their bdsm relationship. come on, guys, be more in love! you know you want it! toreth, stop being such a dog - warrick, stop being so cold. love is in the air, stop playing games. (but watch out for murrdderrrr)

but golly, here is my problem. they are gay and they like sex - so why aren't they talking about gey sex all the time so the reader knows they are gay?? and they are human and they must eat food - so why aren't they talking about food all the time so we know they like it? i mean, yeah - one time they have a meal, but that probably means they don't really like to eat, otherwise, the author would be sure to describe every meal in great detail. and air?? why aren't they constantly noting every time they breathe?? it's like the author doesn't know what people are the most interested in hearing about, or how to develop character. i know someone who could teach manna francis a thing or two.

that snarky homage aside, i am very interested in the rest of this series. see,

dana - i am turning into you, slowly!

Trio says

Excellent - really amazing. The first story, Quid Pro Quo, is creative and interesting - but the remaining short stories are my kind of fabulous. I love the relationship between Toreth and Warrick and the stories delve into their everyday life, how each is feeling and what they're both thinking. How their relationship progresses is fascinating.

Manna Francis is an incredibly gifted author - the book is flawless between the characters, plots and pacing, just a fantastic read.

Ferran says

3.5

I really enjoyed Mind Fuck, so after finishing it, I went straight to Quid Pro Quo. After finishing it however, I feel disappointed.

The main reason is that I don't like at all this compilation of stories thing. Different from the first book on the series, the procedural story here is just one chapter, that although long, has a separate and specific plot line and leaves out the development of Warrick and Toreth relationship.

Somehow, I get the feeling that after finishing the main story line, the author realised she had forgotten to tell us more about the characters, so she added 5 more short stories focused on both of them plus family.

Maybe it was intended. But no, for me it doesn't work at all for the following reasons:

- the main novella is not transcendental to the relationship nor to The Administration series, and is somehow abruptly finished
- there is no plot in the following short stories and therefore, no reason for existence (almost like any filling episode in a soap opera)
- this short stories lead nowhere, even though "Family" raises some interesting things that don't get developed
- the last story, "Mirror, Mirror", might work if inserted in between the main plot line, but as an independent story, it adds nothing, neither to the book, nor to the characters, nor to the series. And also, the repetition of the story from another POV is awfully boring
- sex most of the times leads nowhere and there is not much tension building

In conclusion:

The fantastic and amazingly constructed world of The Administration and the powerful characters don't get exploited here - Manna Francis did a really great job on that. But this book is like having bunch of fine good ingredients and not cooking them properly, so the result is mediocre. This book lacks meaning, intention, direction... goal... Moreover, finishing the book with this short stories creates no cliffhanger.

Please tell me book 3 doesn't suffer from this! The truth is that I'd like to enjoy The Administration series as much as I did on the first book.

Emanuela ~plastic duck~ says

Do I need to tell you I won't be objective? This is freaking awesome, so more freakingly awesome even than the first time I read some of the stories. I already know what these guys went through and that's why this is so fascinating, because it's like hunting for easter eggs, for the moments when the relationship between Toreth and Warrick evolves and you're there and you can say: ha ha, caught!

The first part of the book has the novella Quid Pro Quo, which begins with the episode you can read for free on Manna Francis' site, Unlucky Break, and then it revolves around a failed kidnapping. There's not a lot of romance in this part, but you get a lot of world building and it's awesome. How many times will I use awesome in this review? Well, I don't want to be coherent, holy frigging cow, with no disrespect to those who worship cows, but this series takes my guts, twists them and I'm still happy. Well, I paid a lot of attention to details, and I wonder how Manna Francis' genius is not studied in schools, because everything makes a lot of sense, it seems you're there, the world she created is complete, the rules which govern it are thought in a comprehensive way, you feel you're thrown into cold waters to swim, but you find your ground.

I enjoyed it a lot. The past investigations tied to the current one. The corporate laws. A system we loathe, because it goes against our upbringing in democracies, which has the Administration on one hand, bound on stifling resistance and free thought, and the corporations on the other hand, pursuing their interests. And our two protagonists are both deep into this system, sometimes with conflicting interests. They are not free spirits trying to overturn that system, as we would expect from our heroes, they are integral parts of it. While it's almost easy to like, or not to dislike, Warrick, because we don't perceive a harmful intent from him, Toreth - the torturer, the proud bastard with his amorality, the selfish Administration minion - grabs you and doesn't let you go until you've reached the bottom of his being. I shouldn't love him, but I do, because because...

Well, read the shorts after the novella (they are also available for free from the author's site). If the novella is all world building, the short stories are all relationship. It's not possible to call it romance yet. But is it ever?

The best is Pancakes. The first cracks in Toreth's armor. I love reading how in denial he is, how he can manipulate his own mind pretending what he has with Warrick is not blossoming something else. We don't hear his words, we see this jealousy, the extreme possessiveness which is becoming an obsession. Toreth lives his life, sleeping around as always, but sometimes it seems the non-game part of his relationship creeps up on him, making him do or think the unthinkable. I don't think I can say Toreth is fragile, but the fact that sometimes he behaves normally - buying presents, attending family gatherings, drowning his disappointments in alcohol - makes us forget he enjoys his job as a para-investigator and it manipulates us in treating him like a normal human being, while he still remains a sociopath. The short story Family highlights - for us readers, especially - how different Toreth is. When Warrick's niece, Val, calls him Uncle Toreth, when she tries to connect with him in the way children do, there is both a sort of comic effect, because it's like dressing a beast in ribbons, and also a cringing effect, because who would want to leave a child alone for five minutes with him? Tarrin, Warrick's brother and Val's father, has probably a sane reaction to Toreth, but we perceive it as a supreme act of impoliteness. Who is he to judge our hero without knowing him? Yeah, right, lol

So. Here I am. Further enthralled by this wonderful series. There's not much better than this. In the world.

Sophie says

[Added after reading this for the third time]: I'm aware I'm repeating myself when it comes to this series, but since I'm reading this again for the third time - but the first time after my initial obsession with this - I suppose that's permitted. Because it still holds up - it's as good as the first time around, and I wish I knew how it is that these characters have such a hold over me (okay, I have a suspicion, but let's try and stay out of TMI territory). This is so good.

[This is the first review I wrote for this book] Part two in my new favourite series - and I love it. Love it love it love it. I'd already read most of the stories contained in this book on the author's website, but a) this book was a must-have for me, because it's fantastic, plus something this good needs to be supported and paid for and everything and b) this book contains one novella that isn't available on the website, and it's really good. What I love about those stories is that while there is a very heavy pure m/m component, there are also parts that are pure crime fiction, and as it's crime fiction in a very cool sci-fi setting it's even better. The plot of the novella - as in "Mind Fuck" - is a very compelling one, really intriguing and well-written. So that alone would have been worth my money.

But the best part is of course the m/m part, and I still can't get over how *fascinating* those characters and their constellations are. It's even better now that I already know more about what's going to happen, because

at this stage the relationship between Toreth and Warrick is still in its early stages, and the development is appropriately slow and utterly believable. "Pancakes" is one of my favourite stories so far - I remember the way my heart was hurting during the "Just... shh" moment. Oh god. So *good*. Anyway, what I also love is that Toreth's character and actions are never "smoothed over" - it's made perfectly clear again and again that there's something seriously wrong with him. But there is also the possibility of change within him, and the exploration of that is what makes it fascinating. As for the other characters, they're likeable and if not quite three-dimensional, still well-fleshed out.

Another part I like is the sex. It's very well written, and believable and it just works. The author really manages to create a certain mood, and there's a great balance between detail and, well, not too much detail (in some slash stories, the sex can get very "technical", and here that never happens).

This certainly isn't a book for everyone - while the world building is good, it's not detailed enough to work as a pure sci-fi crime novel (but that is actually part why I love it - I hate too detailed descriptions of fake history and stupid new names for stuff, and I love getting one piece of the puzzle here and another one there). But for people who are looking for good m/m fiction and who are open-minded when it comes to kink and darker stuff, this is perfect. It certainly has become one of my favourites. I'm so unbelievably glad that I discovered this series. Great plot, great characters, great romance, great sex. *clutches it to chest* I'm never going to let this one go.

First read January 28, 2010

LenaLena says

Mind Fuck wasn't a 5 star read for me, personally. I loved the world building. Who can resist a good dystopia? Not me. This particular dystopia, with its totalitarian regime (The Administration) and its corporate counterpart of the Confederation of European Corporations, is absolutely chilling in all its futuristic cold-war-style bureaucracy.

Toreth had his days filled with Chevril's offloaded prisoners, explaining to Justice representatives why it was possible to seriously interrogate prisoners or it was possible to guarantee they wouldn't die, but it wasn't possible to do both. Or rather that the guarantee wouldn't make them any less dead if things went wrong, which was why he sure as hell wasn't putting his name on it. The representatives listened and nodded, and went back to their superiors and returned the next day with a carefully reworded demand for exactly the same impossibilities.

I loved the characters. Toreth -is he or is he not a sociopath?- with his distinct lack of empathy for anyone but his admin assistant Sara. And Warrick in all his icy superiority, except in bed. But I didn't feel the connection between the men in *Mind Fuck*. That may have something to do with my lack of enthusiasm for anything BDSM related, but I think it is more because there is no emotional connection between the men at that time. And yet, at the end this series ended up on, or near, the top of my all time favorite m/m reads. Despite the BDSM, yes.

But all that fangirling about 'best series evah!' starts with the story *Pancakes*. Whenever anybody starts this series and is making 'I don't get it, what's the big deal, I'm not really liking this' noises, we, the veterans, impart the following bit of sage advice: Keep reading until *Pancakes*. If *Pancakes* doesn't change your mind, you can quit. *Pancakes* is halfway into this book 2, so yes, you'll need to read a book and half before you get to this pivotal story, but chances are good you'll thank us later. Because everything changes in *Pancakes*. It's the story where 'just fucking' turns into something... into something Toreth can not allow himself to put into words. Something that slithers away whenever his mind threatens to think about it, because if he would

acknowledge it he would have to run from Warrick and all that he stands for and that would be... inconvenient.

While the writing overall is superb, this is where it truly shines. This is where Manna shows exactly what is going on, without ever explaining it to you, while Toreth stays purposely oblivious. With innocent little sentences like *'More water and something to eat didn't chase the queasy feeling away.'* for instance she shows a) how Toreth is so upset by what happened that he is having a thoroughly visceral -and physical- reaction and b) that he is doing his damndest to not have a clue. This is where she hooks the readers and makes them wonder if Toreth is ever going to catch on. Warrick, of course, has his own special brand of willful obliviousness going on at the same time.

Quid Pro Quo starts out with the novella of the same name that is mostly focused on one of Toreth's cases. It's a solid story and gives you an even better idea of Toreth's work on one hand and his intelligence and his skill in playing people and playing the system on the other, but if you are in a rush to get to *Pancakes* you can skip it and get back to it later when you've acquired the burning need to read everything Administration related *right now*. (Make sure you don't skip *Mind Fuck* though, that one is essential to understand this world.)

Friday is a short scene where Warrick tries to explain Toreth to one of his oldest friends:
"Well... tall. Short blond hair. Blue eyes. Attractive." Feeling the description was rather too physical, he added, *"Intelligent."* Personality disordered.

Then follows *Pancakes*....

Surprises recounts several scenes in which the subtle notion that things are indeed changing between Warrick and Toreth gets reaffirmed. Toreth meeting new people is always entertaining, and so are Warrick's reactions. In particular when Toreth meets Warrick's ex-wife. Burn....

And then *Family* firmly puts the readers back in their place. Just in case we thought we were heading for unicorns and rainbows, we get to cringe and squirm as Toreth goes home with Warrick for the holidays. And on top of that, things aren't quite as they seem.

Mirror, Mirror ends the book with kinky sex. Like dessert.

Irina says

Only now beginning to see what's the fuss all about.

I've realised the first book and QPQ's first story were just a warmup before the real torture. Toreth & Warrick unconsciously building some sort of a relationship is a disaster waiting to happen and the more tangled they get, the less likely it is to work. I LOVE this edgy, painful exploration of each other's limits, suppressed hidden desires that would prove a mere human weakness (and we can't have that!) and the dangerous games these two are playing.

I'm practically drooling over Warrick's intelligence, patience and self-control. He's my favourite if I were to pick sides. But I also have a soft spot for Toreth who, I'm suspecting, was deeply traumatised at some point

in his past. And I'm dying to know what happened to him and if there's any chance for him, for them. Even though I know it's not going to be easy.

4.2 stars

Jumping right into the next book with Sofia - it turned out to be a marathon :)

R * A Reader Obsessed * says

3.5 Stars

Apparently this is an actual collection of shorts interrupted by a novel length mystery, and for me, was two totally different things.

The titled "chapter" Quid Pro Quo continues in the same vein as Mind Fuck, featuring the machinations of the corporate world that are constantly running and nothing is as it seems. Greed is always the motivating factor to get and stay ahead, where this time around, a terrible kidnapping puts into motion an investigation that reveals many secrets desperately trying to stay hidden. Toreth is the main focus here (Warrick is but a fleeting presence), and he finds himself sucked into the case, where delving too deep could cost him not only his job, but possibly his life.

The rest of this compilation includes the shorts Unlucky Break, Friday, Pancakes, Surprises, Family and Mirror Mirror (#2.1-2.6). Here they showcase the evolution of Warrick and Toreth's relationship (if you could call it that). By no means conventional and a far cry from hearts and flowers, take note that die hard romantics like myself, might find their dynamic off putting (view spoiler). Despite that huge "no no", I found myself taken in by their complex dance. At times it was eyebrow raising (strong bdsm elements) and maddening. At other times I basked in the intimacy and small glimpses at their more tender, funny moments.

So I admit, I swooned and was alternately quite indignant, and surprisingly I'm still intrigued. The dystopian mystery was decent, and though I don't agree with Toreth's ideas of what love is (I'm confident in saying he doesn't understand the concept either), I don't think it will truly deter me from reading more. I simply have to change my expectations.

As always, a big thanks to Meags. It's great when we equally rant and rave about the same thing! Such validation!

Kat says

2015: Reread with Lo-Lo and Jenna and..bloody hell, I didn't even realize how much I'd missed T & W!

2012: Behold my Manna Francis shrine*.

I almost opted for a plastic BDSM duck instead. But that would've been overdoing things, right? And as you

can see I'm just not that crazy fangirl type...

So how do you sell a series like *The Administration* to people, without coming across as a religious freak and while knowing that shoving a recommendation down someone's throat can greatly diminish their desire to actually read the books?

Having just finished *First Against the Wall* and still completely in awe by that brilliant mix of political intrigue, interestingly twisted characters, thrilling suspense, humor, beautiful and erotic love scenes and a dose of heartbreak, it simply strikes me as odd that this series has so few ratings and reviews overall.

Why do run-of-the-mill romances attract thousands of readers, whereas this series...it's like comparing KFC nuggets to caviar! I get it though. No really. Many readers just want a happy go lucky romance without some dangerously exciting sociopath who *kills people for a living and screws around like a tomcat on testosterone...* And yeah yeah, book 1, *Mind Fuck*, does tend to drag on a little if you're not into internal politics. But once you make it to the short stories you're absolutely in for a treat!

I regret that Manna is pretty much non-existent on Goodreads and instead decides to keep her fans posted via a barely updated LiveJournal page (God, LiveJournal is so nineties..so..so Friendster) and a website that has hardly been updated since 2009 (links to reviews that no longer exist, so little news..). And although Goodreads is probably the biggest and best platform for readers and authors nowadays, I honestly respect her - Jesus, I made the woman a shrine! - decision to not make the most out of it.

And yet it bugs me.;

Quid Pro Quo contains the following 5 short stories: *Friday, Pancakes, Surprises, Family and Mirror, Mirror*. These stories can also be found on Manna's website and are free. The book however, contains the novella *Quid Pro Quo*, which is not available on her website.

Please join The Administration Zone if you're a fan (or groupie) of Toreth, Warrick and *The Administration* series by Manna Francis.

* *No animals were sacrificed upon this shrine, although some Sandalwood incense may have been burned.*

SueC says

I loved this.

I loved how every scene felt like it's own short story; cleverly presented and neatly wrapped up. Every scene was somehow distinct from each one before or after it. Clear snapshots of defining moments rather than everything flowing from one to another. Most of the scenes weren't particularly happy but I found myself smiling and thrilled to bits by each of them. XD

I am all Team Toreth. He's such an interesting character. I loved seeing his intentions change for Warrick... the slow undeniable need growing despite his initial denial and then resistance. He found Warrick irresistible and I loved that so much. But what was most fascinating to me was his dark complex behavior. That's what I want to read more of. I want to see what makes him tick, the reasoning behind his behavior.

I loved how the characters had their own distinct voices. Each with their own cleverly unique vocabulary and presence. I could hear relaxed and giggly Sara, Warrick with his fuddy-duddy comments and Toreth with his dry commanding no-nonsense remarks. <3

On to Games and Players once my awesome BR partner Jenni is ready. Yeah!

Sofia says

I'm finding it difficult to think of and rate each story separately as they are all little pieces of the story which build up the whole and when I reach a culminating bit which leaves me surprised, angry, happy etcera it is not just that particular moment I appreciate but the whole build up which MF does masterfully. She is giving us the story and the characters drop by precious drop and I'm enjoying it.

I like how we come to see that this is not the story Toreth and Warwick wanted or expected. How they are changing in little ways to let each other into their lives. Warrick is like a horsewhisperer. **A Toreth-whisperer.** And I like seeing Toreth so reluctantly (or willingly) drawn in. But it's not all roses for Warrick either. He too has to give in or give up things. So this is definitely a two way relationship.

Both the story and the characters are so **impossibly tangled** in the web woven by MF and I for one am curious to see if she will keep me at the edge of my seat like she has done up to now.

e-book version:

Quid Pro Quo (Selman case)

Friday

Pancakes

Surprises

Family

Mirror, Mirror

BR with IRA - Have to continue

Christina says

Re-read 01/2015; 03/2017

Unlucky Break &

Quid Pro Quo (paperback only) - 3.5 Stars

Friday - 3.5 Stars

Pancakes - 5 Stars

Surprises - 5 Stars

Family - 5 Stars (better the second time, so I bumped it up)

Mirror, Mirror - 4.5 Stars

ElaineY says

I have finished the last two stories in this installment - Family and Mirror, Mirror. Scroll down for my reviews.

Some spoilers on T & W's relationship.

QUID PRO QUO: 4 STARS

The first story, QPQ, starts off with Toreth and Warrick having their brand of fun and games. For someone who doesn't buy BDSM-themed books much, I found myself totally caught up in their scenes, always wishing (as I read the other stories later on) that Ms Francis didn't fade out on them so much. Anyway, in this encounter, Warrick ends up injured more than they intended (Warrick, anyway) and with the end of this chapter (titled 'Unlucky Break' and still available free on the series website), the rest of QPQ deals with Toreth's latest case - investigating possible insurance fraud in the case of Sophie Kenward's abduction, rape and dismemberment. Sophie is Paul Kenward's teenaged daughter and his company has been paying out insurance to him since the kidnapping.

His investigation leads Toreth to a web of corporate intrigue, sabotage and similar abduction cases in the past - abduction of the victim, rape with an axe handle then dismemberment. Since all these already happened, I didn't have to sit through the real-time ordeal of the victim. Once again, the investigation is long but less tedious than in Mind Fuck. But it's also more convoluted because I'm still not yet that familiar with the workings and mindset of the Administration, in this case, the paying of ransom demands and the implications and consequences of breaking of corporate accords. I followed this case with considerably less enjoyment than that of Mind Fuck, hence the 4, not 5, stars.

Not much Toreth-Warrick time in this novella. After the first chapter where we leave Warrick in hospital to recover from his BDSM-related injury (and Toreth takes off to go fuck a girl he picked up at the hospital canteen), we don't have any quality time with the two men until the end of the chapter when they meet once again for their weekly trysts. Only this time, Toreth hasn't kept their Friday evening appointment for two or three weeks I think. I'll have to reread QPQ because the investigation was occupying my mind and not fully on the relationship, plus Warrick was missing for a greater part of the time.

However, the two times I recalling them meeting after the first chapter - once somewhere in the middle of the book then at the last chapter, are significant to the development of their relationship. It's testament to Ms Francis' skill that she is able, in just a short scene, show me how T & W's relationship is changing and climbing to another level even though the men don't realize it yet in this second installment.

I took particular enjoyment in the scene between T & W when their pre-evening fuck dinner & conversation goes to shit, ending with their after-dinner fuck plans being aborted. It was the first time I saw Toreth displaying some balls in his relationship with Warrick. At this point in time, they don't have, as yet, a Relationship. They simply meet on Fridays for dinner and fucking. This Friday, Warrick's mood is ruined when their conversation veers onto Toreth's job as a para-investigator (read 'torturer'). Apparently, one of their 'rules' is that they do not talk about Toreth's work and when this happens, Warrick decides to take a rain-check on the evening and starts to walk out on Toreth. What ensues had me cheering, in a way, for Toreth because you know - he's getting way too dependent on these weekly meetings and for a supposedly

intelligent man (he's *The Para-investigator*, after all) he can't see that danger. Did Warrick even know how his decision to walk out on their evening hurt Toreth?

I do feel protective of Toreth because despite his swagger and posturing and the stuff that's said about him, he's really quite emotionally fragile and vulnerable. I suspected this back in *Mind fuck* when Warrick was able to play him so easily but since QPQ doesn't have them together much, I wasn't sure. Then, as the book ends with Toreth and Warrick making up over dinner, my suspicions about Toreth's growing feelings for Warrick were even stronger.

Warrick is on the same page, of course, and I saw a glimpse of that in this last portion before the book ends but Warrick, to me, is way colder and more dispassionate than Toreth and I only foresee my poor baby getting hurt before it gets better. If it does.

(I find later, in *Pancakes*, that Sara feels exactly the same way about T and warns Warrick. Truly a girl after my own heart.)

FRIDAY: 5 STARS

Just 13 pages on my reader but gave me a good look into Warrick's own insecurity about his relationship with Toreth. Remember, none of this is spelt out in the story - all showing and no telling! *<Two thumbs up for the author>* and I liked Friday because it made me feel better about Toreth falling for Warrick. Warrick is beginning to show some chinks in his armor where Toreth is concerned. Just teeny ones but still a good sign.

I was also introduced to Cele, a friend of Warrick's sister and now his, too. Cele is the first person he talk to about Toreth. I also got a yummy description of Toreth as Cele presses for details.

At this point in TA, Toreth is still someone Warrick merely meets for sex once a week and someone Warrick wants to keep a secret. I thought Toreth was fine with that. I was wrong, as I would see later on.

PANCAKES: 5 STARS

This short story doesn't start well for my baby :(

Warrick walks out on him - again! - and Toreth ends up shit-faced drunk. Thankfully, things get better - much better - from here. Toreth finds himself taking a cab to Warrick's apartment and it's the first time he's been there.

I loved *Pancakes*. Now I know why Kate wanted me to read right through to this installment:). It was here that I felt much more charitable towards Warrick. It's here that Sara issues the warning to Warrick re. Toreth; here that Warrick turns out to be rather domesticated (okay, so he likely has a cleaning service) and he makes pancakes for Toreth's breakfast.

It's here, in *Pancakes*, that I suspected Warrick has fallen in love with Toreth!!! And I shall never eat another pancake without thinking of these two men.

Sigh-worthy 5 stars!

SURPRISES: 5 STARS

This is slightly longer than *Pancakes* and a great follow-through. I left Warrick in the previous book sensing that Toreth's overnight visit to his home was a turning point for Warrick. Here in *Surprises*, the focus shifts to Toreth. Now that I saw signs of Warrick having fallen in love with Toreth (maybe too strong a description here but I'm fairly sure) I could sit back and enjoy Toreth's green-eyed monster rearing its head when he learns from Sara that she'd been spending time in the sim with Warrick. Since he's got first-hand experience

on what Warrick does in the sim, Toreth is not at all happy.

Surprises, like Pancakes, is all about T & W's developing relationship. I saw Toreth admitting his hurt to Warrick when he's treated as if he were invisible at a Sim-Tech function Warrick invited him to, along with Sara. I don't want to say more about Surprises and ruin the surprise but this is a major, *MAJOR* leap forward for Toreth then, as the book ends, for Warrick. And for their relationship.

And the sex, while again still not explicit, had me literally breathless. The build-up of sexual tension combined with revelations of each men's growing feelings for each other was almost more than I could handle. I stayed up to 2am then made myself switch off my reader because I have an early lunch appointment and errands to run before that and can't be too distracted by these two guys.

But I'm a goner. It's too late. I've now got Warrick under my skin, too. This is bad for my health.

I wonder what's in store for me in the last 2 shorts, Family and Mirror, mirror. More T & W or are they about a secondary character? I can't wait...

FAMILY: 4 STARS

Dillian? Warwick's sister?!! Toreth crossed a line here with me.

"*Please don't tell him*" he says to Dillian. '*PLEASE*'. '*DONT*'. '*TELL*'. '*HIM*'??? WTF.

That showed me Toreth *knew* - he effing KNEW it was wrong! I was already feeling stirrings of anger at him when he started to think about Dilly 'that' way. I couldn't believe it when he kissed her (even if it was cut short by her reaction).

I gave Family 4 stars on the strength of the writing but it was not a pleasant read at all. I was just as uncomfortable visiting Warrick's family as Toreth was then the whole Dillian thing made me want to puke.

MIRROR, MIRROR - 3 STARS

This short revolves around a BDSM scene and did nothing for me.

OVERALL REVIEW FOR BOOK TWO: 5 STARS

Major developments in this second series of short stories and the novella-length Quid Pro Quo. It's a powerful follow-up to Mind Fuck (which everyone struggled with, many giving up on it and the series, which is a pity).

But Book 2 is a nasty trap. If you go into it clueless like me, get totally sucked in by the changes in fucking Toreth's & Warrick's relationship and get all aglow after Pancakes, you will be so sorry. Like me.

I'm stating it here clearly: I am NOT feeling charitable towards fucking Toreth at all. And you know what? Worse is to come.

The Administration is coming very close to being as nasty on my senses as Special Forces. Unquestionably a series not to be missed by masochists. Just don't read it immediately before or after SF. Dan and Toreth one after the other is more than any human being can bear.

MaDoReader says

Bueno, esta valoración es más bien un 3,5 redondeada al alza más por el buen hacer de los relatos cortos que por la aburrida novella que es la primera mitad del libro.

Valoraré los relatos individualmente, aquí voy a permitirme hablar en general de esta relación, abierta, disfuncional, WTF, pero relación al fin y al cabo. En este libro ya se ve mucho más claro que algo tienen, y yo, como una ilusa sigo esperanzada en que Toreth deje de "repartir amor" algún día, porque tras Special Forces y los 2 primeros libros de TA, definitivamente, no me van las relaciones de este tipo.

Los aspectos de dominación/sumisión en sus interacciones para mi son lo más entendible de todo, soy capaz de empatizar, reconozco las emociones que conlleva, es toda la compleja parte emocional que subyace lo que me tiene algo ¿cabreada? ¿Desconcertada? Y es la calidad de los MC lo que me mantiene ahí, pegada al e-reader, suspirando porque algo, ALGO, suba de nivel.

Toreth tío, eres lo peor, así, sin paños calientes, total y absolutamente lo peor, pero oye, eres un personaje interesante, muy interesante, con cara dura incluida. Me has matado en dos o tres ocasiones, pero ahí sigo queriendo ver de dónde vienes y dónde vas a acabar (con Warrick espero, cruzo los dedos). Warrick, el niño de mis ojos, clarito te lo digo, búscate un club de BDSM dónde soltar lastre y pasa de Toreth, esto no va a acabar bien (ojalá me trague mis palabras), te veo abrirte, buscarle y lo paso fatal, me tienes el corazón en un puño.

De momento creo que voy a intercalar lecturas, aunque Toreth en Mirror Mirror me ha puesto difícil no querer continuar leyendo, pero necesito coger fuerzas, un atracón de amorcito rico y después volveré a tirarme de los pelos viendo a Toreth "merodeando" por New London

Laura says

****January 2015 Re-read****

“What makes you think I’m ever going to stop?”

I had forgotten how all-consuming this series is for me. This world, words, men, and power completely take over my senses, thoughts, and daydreams. It’s why I read--to find this kind of dynamic, chemistry, and magic on the page. I thank the stars above and every reading god out there that I found this series. Especially....

PANCAKES! I have gushed all about Pancakes before though, so this time out my focus is on Surprises. How could I forget the power of Surprises? Of course, I remembered the gift. I could never forget that well-orchestrated, perfect moment in the mirror. Toreth watching Warrick’s reaction and face. *sigh* But there are so many other unexpected tidbits here. From ex-wives to Sara cooking to conversations going surprisingly well. :D The hits just keep on coming! But my biggest surprise was the humor...

“I really don’t think we should start pillaging the refreshments for immoral purposes.”

Smiles, laughter, hiccups, and kisses! It was so much fun seeing these two intelligent, guarded, powerful men act like two “hormonally crazed” teenagers. And who would have guessed Toreth even had a gift-giving impulse? The bastard hides his romantic side down deep to avoid the panic, but oh—it is there. It dazzles, shocks, and takes my breath away in ways only Toreth can.

I read this story three times before I could move on to the next one. I wanted to stay right there on the buffet table, behind the curtain giggling, taking, submitting, and listening to Warrick. Being in Warrick's head is a rare privilege and one I savor every time we get the opportunity. Both Warrick and Toreth are so unique in how they move through the world and how they express and share their emotions. They fit so well together! I adore watching it all unfold again and again.
