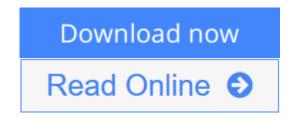
Triple Dare (The Art of Seduction)



By Regina Kyle



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Lights. Camera.

And a whole lotta action...

Globe-trotting fashion photographer Ivy Nelson is home to help her family out of a jam. When she donates her services to a charity calendar, the last thing she expects is hunky firefighter—and object of all her hottest fantasies—Cade Hardesty to walk through the door. Cade is ready to get naked for a good cause, and the heat Ivy feels is anything but professional.

When a sexy dare turns into a scorching kiss, they can't help but give in to their desires. But Cade wants Ivy in his bed for more than one night. Can the hometown firefighter convince the photographer that her wanderlust should lead her into his arms for good, or will one of them run before they both get burned?

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Triple Dare (The Art of Seduction) By Regina Kyle Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2791711 in Books
- Published on: 2015-11-17
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.56" h x .59" w x 4.23" l, .24 pounds
- Binding: Mass Market Paperback
- 240 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Regina Kyle writes the funnest, sexiest stories. I'm addicted!" - USA Today bestselling author Samanthe Beck

"Quick and well-established characterization will lead this sexy pair straight into readers' hearts. Their hot encounters will no doubt send single ladies looking for their own fella to play house with." - *Romantic Times* (4-star review)

"Regina Kyle writes smokin' hot heroes! If you don't fall immediately in love with firefighter Cade Hardesty, then I give up on you. Triple Dare is best read sitting in a snowbank so you don't spontaneously combust! " - New York Times bestselling author Vicki Lewis Thompson

"Fast-paced with very likable characters." - Smexy Books (B review)

"A real page-turner." - Cocktails & Books (4.5-star review)

About the Author

Regina Kyle was destined to be an author when she won a writing contest at age ten with a touching tale about a squirrel and a nut pie. By day, she writes dry legal briefs. At night, she writes romance with heat, heart and humor. A lover of all things theatrical, Regina lives on the Connecticut shoreline with her husband, daughter and two melodramatic cats. When she's not writing, she's singing, reading or watching bad reality television. Find her at www.reginakyle.com.

Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. "Cade Alexander Hardesty! Get your half-naked ass out here before I come back there and strip you myself!"

Cade stared at the outfit in his hands. If you could call a red satin G-string an outfit. Did Ivy seriously expect him to wear this? He figured she'd photograph him in his turnout gear, maybe shirtless with his bunker pants unbuttoned and riding low on his hips. After all, the "Hunks of Burning Love" calendar was an annual institution, featuring Stockton's finest firefighters in various states of undress, each year for a different charity. This time it was the local animal shelter, a cause he supported 100 percent.

But a G-string? What the hell did she think he was, a Chippendales dancer?

"I'll be way more than half-naked in this thing." He dangled the undersized jockstrap from a finger and held it over the top of the changing screen.

"I'm not kidding, Mr. December. I haven't got all day. Put it on and get out here."

Cade groaned and kicked off his sneakers.

"You've got to the count of three. One..."

He stripped off his T-shirt. "Two..." His pants and boxer briefs hit the floor.

"Three."

Cade stepped gingerly into the G-string. *Shit*. The ridiculous scrap of fabric barely hid anything. He tried adjusting himself without much success.

"Uh, Ivy? We have a problem."

"Damn straight we do. I distinctly heard myself say 'three' and you're still hiding back there like a whore at a church social."

Cade chuckled in spite of his predicament. Ivy had always been able to make him laugh. They'd done lots of crazy things together as kids—him, Ivy and his best friend, her twin brother, Gabe. Sticking crayons up their noses in kindergarten. Smoking behind the high school gym. Stealing their football rival's mascot, an uncooperative goat they tried—and failed—to hide in the Nelsons' treehouse.

Okay, so the last two had pretty much been him and Ivy. She was fearless, willing to take any dare they threw at her if it meant she could tag along. Hell, she'd even seen him naked. Of course, they'd been six at the time and running through the sprinkler in her backyard.

"All right, big guy. Ready or not, here I come."

"I'm ready, I'm ready."

Cade took a deep breath, reminding himself for the hundredth time that this whole thing was for charity, and stepped out from behind the screen.

"Hang on. I almost forgot." He caught a glimpse of Ivy's apple bottom as she darted into the tiny office in the corner of the studio. She'd been in there when he arrived, too, yelling out instructions for him to change and wait for her.

He frowned, surveying the room. Wood floor, bare walls, white backdrop, a few umbrella lights. Her camera sat on a tripod in the middle of it all, ready for action. What else could she need? "Forgot what?"

"The final touches to your costume."

"You mean there's more to this getup than dental floss?"

"Not exactly." She emerged from the office with a Santa hat in one hand and a gray-and-white calico kitten in the other, cradled against her chest. But it wasn't the cat or the hat that had Cade's attention. It was Ivy.

Holy three-alarm fire.

It'd been twelve years since she'd left Stockton. And almost three since he'd seen her on one of her rare visits home.

Those years had treated her well.

"What are you wearing?" His heart rate kicked up a notch as he took in the short shorts and tight V-necked T-shirt that clung to her lush curves. I Like To Flash People was emblazoned across her breasts. Where the hell were the usual baggy jeans and oversized sweatshirt? Even her hair was different, the normally wild, auburn curls restrained in some sort of messy bun that women seemed to think was sexy. He'd been inclined to disagree, until now.

"A damn sight more than you." She handed him the kitten and put the hat on his head, adjusting it so it sat at an angle, away from his eyes.

"Don't blame me. You're the one who picked this thing." He plucked at the waistband of his skimpy G-string with his free hand. The kitten squirmed in the other, its soft fur tickling Cade's palm. He rested it against his shoulder and it burrowed under his chin.

"Actually, it was Hank." Her brows knitted at the mention of the photographer who'd done the calendar for as long as anyone could remember. He'd thrown his back out, and thankfully Ivy had been in town to step in. "I'm just finishing what he started."

"None of the other guys had to dress like strippers."

"None of the other guys has a body like yours." She turned to fiddle with her camera but not before he caught her eyeing his package. Interesting. She'd always thought of him like a brother. Hadn't she? There was that one time senior year.

"I heard they've been trying to get you to pose for years," she continued, interrupting his thoughts. "What finally made you do it?"

He shrugged and stepped in front of the backdrop, where he assumed she wanted him. "My mom wasn't comfortable with the garden club seeing her little boy in the buff. But she and Dad retired to Chapel Hill last year, so."

Ivy chuckled. "What they don't know won't hurt them?"

"Something like that. And if they find out, at least they're a thousand miles away." Although, knowing his mother, she'd find some way to punish him longdistance.

Ivy peered through the camera lens, focusing on who knew what, then straightened, hands on her hips. The movement thrust her already prominent breasts out even farther. *Hot damn*. Had she always been so...wellendowed? Is that what she'd been hiding under all the loose-fitting clothes?

Whoa, slugger. Don't go there. She's practically your sister. Of course, there's a big difference between practically and actually.

"Well." She let out a puff of air, ruffling the loose tendrils of hair that had escaped her bun. "Let's get this show on the road, then."

Cade stroked the kitten with his index finger. "Where do you want us?"

She waved a hand. "You're fine right there for the moment. I have to aim the lights."

He shifted from one foot to the other, petting the cat and trying not to stare at the junk in her trunk while she fine-tuned first one light, then another. "What's the cat's name?" he asked to break the silence.

"Bilbo."

"Someone's a Tolkien fan."

"The warden." Her Chuck Taylors—the lone holdover from her teenage wardrobe—squeaked on the varnished floor as she moved on to the third light. "He's up for adoption."

"The warden?" Cade asked, smirking.

"Bilbo, obviously." Ivy stopped tinkering with the light long enough to shoot him a pleading look over her shoulder.

"No, thanks. I'm more of a dog person. Couldn't the shelter have set me up with a rottweiler? Or even a shih tzu?"

"Nothing sells calendars like a big, strong guy cuddling a cute, little kitten." She finished with the last light and walked back to the tripod. "Besides, the chief got the rottweiler. And they didn't have a shih tzu."

"So you think I'm big and strong?" He couldn't resist teasing her and flexed his biceps.

"Please." She rolled her eyes. "You've got the entire female population of Stockton to stroke your ego. You don't need me."

He corralled Bilbo, who had climbed over his shoulder and perched on the back of his neck. "You mean Maude at the diner, who celebrated her eighty-fifth birthday last week? Or the librarian, Mrs. Frazier? She can whistle 'Bohemian Rhapsody' through her dentures."

"Gabe says you're dating the new checkout girl at Gibson's Grocery with the amazing----"

"Smile?" He waggled an eyebrow. "Hair? Ability to add four-digit numbers in her head?"

"Yeah, right." She crossed to a table against the far wall. "Put Bilbo down for a second. And stand with your feet apart, arms out."

He lowered the kitten to the floor and crossed his arms in front of his chest. "Why would I do that?"

She turned, a translucent spray bottle filled with colorless liquid in her hand, and sauntered toward him, looking like a lioness bearing down on her prey. Was that some kind of oil? She wasn't going to...

"Duh. Why else? So I can wet you down. Now shut up and spread 'em."

Damn.

Ivy Nelson tried to maintain an air of cool, disinterested professionalism as she strode forward, holding the

spray bottle of water and glycerin in front of her like a deadly weapon. But it wasn't easy. Cade Hardesty in all his nearly naked glory was even hotter than she'd imagined. And she'd done a heck of a lot of imagining.

She slowed then stopped, her legs turned to wax. The hand with the bottle dropped to her side and she swallowed hard. With her free hand, she tugged on the hem of her shirt, suddenly aware of the wide expanse of fleshy, chalk-white skin showing above the waistband of her shorts.

Stop it. So what if you're not a size two-or even an eight? You're not Jabba the Mutt anymore.

She tightened her grip on the bottle, squeezing it so hard the plastic crinkled in her fist, and steeled her resolve. She'd photographed hundreds of models, male and female. Had her hands all over some of the best bodies in the business. Cade was no different.

Except he was. He was her first love, the boy she'd spent her youth doodling about in her notebook even though he'd never seen her as more than his best friend's pesky twin sister, an easy mark for a dare and good for an occasional laugh.

"Are we going to do this or what?" The boy was a man now, the picture of masculine yumminess with his arms crossed over his broad, tanned chest, all hard lines and warm, firm muscle. Years of high school and college athletics followed by a career fighting fires had honed his body into sheer male perfection. Bulging biceps. Washboard abs. Powerful thighs and toned, trim calves. Hell, even his bare feet were sexy. And as for what the G-string was so not hiding.

The hairs rose on Ivy's arms and the back of her neck.

Hell to the yes. We're going to do this, all right.

"Earth to Ivy." Cade brushed a lock of honey-blond hair from his forehead, revealing baby blues framed by impossibly long lashes, perfect for a woman, downright sinful on a man. "I'm freezing my ass off here."

She craned her neck to risk a glance at his backside. Nope. His fine, firm ass was most definitely still there.

"I'll turn down the AC." Her false bravado back in place, she sashayed past him and raised the thermostat until she heard it click off.

Great. She was already burning up. Now she just might burst into flames.

Why did Hank have to hurt his back? And why had she agreed to fill in for him? She hadn't even been home a week. She was supposed to be taking care of her dad after his heart attack, not ogling scantily clad firefighters. Especially ones she'd known since grade school.

Well, she'd be done after this shoot. Then she'd spend the rest of her time in Stockton working in her parents' greenhouse and making sure her dad took his meds and followed a low-cholesterol diet. No time for lusting after her childhood BFF. And slim to no chance of running into him, or anyone else from the so-called glory days of high school. Days she'd just as soon forget.

"Better?" Ivy faced her subject, who had Bilbo in his arms again. The cat's loud purs echoed in the almost empty room as Cade rubbed slow circles on his belly.

Oh, yeah. They'd definitely saved the best for last.

"Sorry." Cade gave her a sheepish grin and her heart flip-flopped. "The little guy was lonely."

"Sure you don't want to take him home?"

"No can do. Like I said, dog person."

She eyed the kitten, sprawled belly-up across Cade's folded arms, the picture of feline ecstasy with his head back and eyes closed. "Bilbo seems to disagree."

"He'll get snapped up in no time. Probably by some nice family with kids who'll smother him with affection."

Cade had a point. Puppies and kittens practically flew out of the shelter. It was the full-grown dogs and cats that had a hard time finding a home. She'd adopt one herself if she wasn't on the road all the time. But Cade...

"How about an older pet? The shelter has lots of them, and they're harder to place."

"Maybe someday. Right now I'm too busy with work and ... stuff."

"Stuff like the checkout girl at Gibson's?" She wanted to swallow the words as soon as they left her mouth. What right did she have to be jealous? Cade was single, barely thirty and way more than reasonably attractive. He could date anyone he wanted.

Too bad he didn't want her. Oh, well. Qué será, será, lots more fish in the sea and all that crap.

"What is this, a photo shoot or the Spanish Inquisition?" His slow smile took any sting there might have been out of his words. "And I thought Gabe was the king of cross-examination."

"Please." She walked back to the tripod and patted her Nikon D3. "He may be an attorney, but I can expose as much through this lens as he can in court."

"So how about we get started?" He nodded to the bottle still in her hand. "You gonna use that thing or not?"

She stepped back and studied him as impartially as she could, taking off her love-struck schoolgirl glasses and donning her seasoned, award-winning photographer hat. She bit her lip, nodding as she noted the way the light reflected off his well-developed pecs, the dusting of golden hair leading to his navel, the shadowy vee where his hips met his thighs.

"Not." She set the bottle on the floor, plucked the camera off the tripod and pocketed the lens cap. Cade was a full-fledged, red-blooded, all-American male. Every woman's dream. He didn't need phony enhancements or photographer's gimmicks to make him look good. This shoot called for something different. Something daring.

Something...real.

"Turn around."

"What?"

"You heard me. Turn around. And put Bilbo on your shoulder."

He faced the backdrop and draped the cat over his left shoulder. "Trying to get my best side?"

"Something like that." She hit the power button on the Nikon and peered through the lens. "Good. Now look at Bilbo."

Cade turned his head and stared awkwardly at the cat. "Relax." Ivy lowered the camera. "Pet him. Talk to him."

He scratched the cat between the ears. "What do you want me to say?"

"Anything." She brought the camera back up to her face, determined to focus on the interaction between man and beast and not Cade's buns of steel in that obscene thong. "Tell him how cute he is. Regale him with the details of your latest conquest. Recite *Green Eggs and Ham.* Just have fun with it."

"Did you hear that, little guy?" He stroked down the cat's back, pulling lightly on his tail. "We're supposed to be having fun."

Bilbo's loud purrs increased, and his pink tongue stole out to lick Cade's sexily stubbled chin. Cade threw back his head and laughed, flashing a million-watt smile that transformed his already handsome face into a thing of beauty.

"Oh, my God, that's perfect." Ivy snapped away as she moved around him, trying to capture every possible angle. "Don't stop. That look will have these calendars sailing off the shelves."

For the next hour, she posed him. Standing. Sitting. Reclining on a dusty settee they dragged out of the office and brushed off. Of course, that meant she had to feel that hot, hard flesh scorching her palm every time she adjusted an arm or repositioned a leg.

All in a day's work.

Right. Then why hadn't any of the professionals she'd photographed over the years—men as muscular and manly as Cade—made her heart flutter, her breath catch and her fingers tingle with the need to do more than touch?

Fortunately—or unfortunately—she'd had to do less and less touching as the shoot went on and Cade loosened up. He was a natural, better than some of the models she'd worked with. And Bilbo was a regular feline ham, mugging it up like he was born to be in front of the camera.

They were quite the pair. Women would go gaga over them.

Over him.

Ivy snapped the lens cap on the camera with more force than necessary, trying to ignore the ugly pang of resentment that started in her stomach and yanked at her heart.

"Okay." She returned the camera to the tripod and reached for the cat. "I think we've got what we need. And Bilbo has to get back to the shelter before closing time."

"I can bring him." Cade stood, his hold tightening on the wriggling kitten. "It's on my way."

Users Review

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