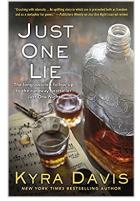
Just One Lie (Just One Night)



By Kyra Davis



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In the instant international sensation *Just One Night*, sensible Kasie Fitzgerald unleashed her passions--and found herself--through an explosive affair. In *Just One Lie*, we meet Kasie's wild and tortured sister, whose impulsivity and lack of self-control has set off a chain of events that changes her family forever.

Melody Fitzgerald is the opposite of the "perfect" daughter. The lead singer of an indie rock band, she is impulsive and creative, with a rebellious streak that both defines her and becomes her greatest enemy. Her lover, the enticing and unpredictable Ash, shares her free spirit and penchant for trouble. On the face of it, he seems to be her perfect match.

So why is she so drawn to her soft spoken, reliable drummer, Brad Witmer? How can a man who wears polo shirts and reads the financial section of the paper be of any interest to her at all? And why on earth does someone like that appear to be so captivated by *her*?

Before she knows it, Melody finds herself on a path of self-discovery, passion, and affairs of the heart. But will a dark secret from her past derail it all? Or will its exposure be the very thing that unburdens her heart and allows her to seek a future with the one man who loves her completely?

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Editorial Review

Review

"Davis creates a fabulous tale of rejection, indulgence and redemption. The heroine goes on a journey to find out who she is and if she like the person she has become. What follows are the intriguing people that she meets and invites in to her life. Readers will be turning the pages wondering what will happen to Mercy next. A great book about a character on a journey of self discovery" (RT)

"Never before have I experienced a style of writing that connects you to the story like this author's does...*Just* One Lie is off the charts amazing!" --The Geekery Book Review (5 stars)

"Just One Lie took me on an emotional ride, unlike any book I've read before." --*Naomi's Reading Palace* (5 stars)

"...a beautiful love story not just about romantic love but finding love for yourself...*Just One Lie* is both exciting and moving, having me alternate between blusing and tearing up several times." --*The Reading Room Blog* (5 stars) "While *Just One Lie* is a romance, it's also a journey of self discovery, heartbreak, love and happiness...Mercy is one of the strongest protagonists I have read" --*After Hours at Lilybloombooks* (5 Stars)

About the Author

Kyra Davis is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Just One Night*, "Just Once More", *Just One Lie*, the Pure Sin series, the Sophie Katz mystery series, and the novel *So Much for My Happy Ending*. Now a full-time author and television writer, Kyra lives in the Los Angeles area with her husband, son, their leopard gecko, and their lovably quirky Labrador, Sophie Dogz. To learn more, visit KyraDavis.com or follow her on Twitter @_KyraDavis and Facebook.com/AuthorKyraDavis.

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CHAPTER 1

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December 31, 1999

THERE IS NOTHING more crushing than the ruin of a perfect moment.

They happen so rarely, those fleeting instants when the energy is sparking and the music is penetrating your heart. And how can the music not be right? I'm the one who's creating it. I'm behind the microphone. It's my voice that fills the rooms of Apocalypse, this little piece of heaven and hell tucked away in the corner of Los Angeles's Sunset and Vine. The crowd is made up of actors and writers and musicians, each one a different vessel for their art, each one moving to my songs, my rhythms, my passions. I can hear Tonio's

guitar holding up the sound, increasing its intensity as my voice rises higher and louder. Brad is setting the pace with his bold and dexterous beating of the drums. Traci's fingers on the keyboard add gentle melody when my vocals get rougher, stronger, when my song demands that everyone here feel my sexuality, my strength, the force of my will.

In less than thirty minutes the twenty-first century will begin, and no one knows what will happen. Some think that Y2K will propel Western society into chaos; others worry about terrorists and psychopaths; some say it's the beginning of the end of the world.

And I don't care about any of that. I just don't. I care about the moment. I care that I now have streaks of pink woven into my dark blond hair and the words Carpe Diem tattooed on the back of my shoulder. I care that the bodies on the dance floor are swaying and shaking, their excitement and approval brilliantly clear in this dimly lit space. I care about the walls of the club that look like they're made of stone and the graceful curvature of the ceiling, arched like a Byzantine cathedral. I can feel the eyes of some of these men on me. That gorgeous black man in the corner, the fair-haired muscle boy dancing so close to the stage, the older gentleman at the bar—they all want me. Because right now I have the dynamism, the control. I have the vitality that everyone wants to touch and share.

It is the perfect moment . . . until I spot him standing near the corner of the room. He's almost entirely in the shadows, his features barely visible, but still, I recognize him. There's something about the way that man holds himself. Right now he's leaning against a beam, his arms crossed over his chest, chin up. Like with a lion, it's difficult to tell if he's on the verge of sleeping or attacking. The first time I saw him—when was that, a year ago? No, over thirteen months since we met—I couldn't stop staring. I loved his high, chiseled cheekbones and his lightly tanned skin that hinted at a possible Native American heritage, or maybe Latino. But then his bright green eyes insisted that the story wasn't so straightforward. Oh, and I loved his tribal tattoos and the way his full lips curved into a slow, sensual smile when he saw me for the first time at that club in Seattle. An aspiring musician is how he described himself, but that night, when he sang to me, I could see that his talent was a lot more than aspirational.

His first name is Ash—maybe it's short for Asher or Ashley, I don't know, and at the time I didn't care. I just recall thinking that a man with a name like that had to have a story to tell, one that involved passion and adventure and yeah, okay, maybe a little destruction. We had talked for hours and I had felt like I understood him in a way that I had never understood anyone else. And then, later, I realized I didn't know a thing about him. All our words and intimacies had left us strangers.

Ash is the stranger who took my life.

One night with him, one night of rapture. That's all it took to put an end to Melody Fitzgerald.

And as if killing me wasn't enough, this son of a bitch has reappeared and he's fucking with my moment!

I pull my eyes away and find Rick, the owner of the club, standing at the edge of the bar. Next to him is a couple. A man with light brown hair and chiseled chin with his arm wrapped around an ironed-straight blonde with the sinuous figure of a runway model. All these beautiful people are here to see me! That's what I have to focus on. Not him. Never, ever him.

And yet, even as I refuse to bring my eyes back to Ash, my mind can't seem to leave him.

The music pushes me forward, forcing me to continue even as I feel my chest tighten. There's not enough air

in here for this. How could I have not noticed that before? Tonio jumps into his guitar solo and I use the opportunity to take a deep breath, inadvertently inhaling the unmistakable scent of marijuana floating up from somewhere on the dance floor. Doesn't matter, doesn't matter. None of this can matter, nothing but the music and what it can do. With new resolve I fall back into the song, attacking it with even more ferocity than before. The crowd hears it and loves it.

And now it's me that's moving, across the stage and back again, running, screaming, and the crowd screams right back. This is everything. But then there he is, leaning against that beam, just . . . watching me. Has he followed me? Isn't one death enough for him? The question stirs up some of the rage I've been trying to set aside since our last meeting. Impulsively I knock the microphone stand to the ground with a smack of my open palm. The crowd thinks it's part of the act and so I go on, finding that I can rejoice in anger as much as any other emotion. As we reach the last stanza, Traci's and Tonio's voices join mine, and the sound is an assault on anyone who would ever dream of challenging us. Maybe tomorrow they'll say I'm a cross between Courtney Love and Fiona Apple. Maybe they'll say the whole band is destined for fame and greatness. Yeah, that's what they'll say, those who are sober enough to remember. But right now they just cheer as our song comes to an end.

"Thank you," I whisper into the mic. I look back at Ash. Even from here I can see that he's clapping, but it's a slow, purposeful movement. He puts his hand to his mouth, kisses his palm, and then extends his arm leisurely toward me. It's not so much that he's blowing me a kiss as he is offering it to me. Inviting me to climb down from my pedestal and take it from him. Again I inhale deeply. "So, I gotta ask you guys something," I continue. "It's the end of an era and you're bringing in the new millennium at Apocalypse listening to a band called fucking Resurrection. Is that tripping anyone else out?" There are yells of approval and at least one person cries hell yes! "By the way," I add, "it's really just Resurrection, only our parents call us fucking Resurrection." General laughter and one woman screams out, "Parents suck!"

Oooh, if these guys only knew how much I agree with that one. "In case you missed it, this stud on the guitar is Tonio." Tonio strums out a few wrenching chords as the crowd cheers. "The hot chick in the leather mini is Traci." Traci plays the opening piano notes of "Sympathy for the Devil." It's doubtful that this crowd recognizes it even as they whistle and scream for her, but I do, and the reference makes me laugh. "And allow me to introduce our new drummer! Brad's only been with us for a week and he's killing it, am I right?" The crowd roars as Brad launches into a drum solo that is so intense, so aggressive, and so beautiful I turn my back on the audience, momentarily forgetting all of them, even my killer, as I lock eyes with this man who must have sold his soul for this kind of talent. His lips curve into a little half smile as his sticks fly across the stretched membrane surfaces. Physically he doesn't seem to fit with the rest of the group—too athletic, too clean cut, too aristocratic—but his viciously beautiful rhythm is downright sinful.

When he ends with a perfectly executed clash, I realize for the first time that I've been holding my breath. The crowd cries out, solidifying the triumph as I match his smile with my own and slowly pivot back to the room. "And of course, I'm Mercy. I..." but I give up on continuing as the crowd erupts again, drowning me out with their cheers, chanting my name.

My new name, a choice I made for myself only months ago, now reverberating through the room: Mercy, Mercy, Mercy. It's on the lips and tongues of everyone in this room . . . except for his. Beneath the harmonious hum of voices, like an insidious undercurrent, I can hear his silent accusations: That is not who you are. You are not Mercy.

I swallow and look into the spotlight, letting the light assault my vision, temporarily turning the entire club into a murky blur as the crowd quiets enough for me to speak again. "So we got"—I turn and point to the

large red numbers projected by a laser clock onto the wall behind my head—"fifteen minutes until the four horsemen arrive. I'm thinking we better stop wasting time and get back into this!"

The crowd cheers again. I spot Rick giving me a thumbs-up as the rugby guy next to him pumps his fist in the air. And again Tonio strums the strings of his guitar. And again my voice rises high then low, elating the crowd and giving me the fortitude to turn my thoughts away from the beast who watches me from the shadows.

And when it's 11:59 we stop midsong. I hold my hands up in the air and point to the numbers. "It's almost Y2K time, people!" I cry and glance back at Rick, who is staring intently at his watch. And then he lifts his hand and begins to tick off the seconds with his fingers as I count them down into the mic, "Ten, nine, eight . . ."

The crowd's counting with me. "... seven, six ..." The pretty blonde has pressed herself against her rugby companion, her lips hovering inches from his. "... five, four ..." The beautiful black man has raised his glass in the air; a young woman behind him scrambles on top of the bar with a small video camera in her hand. "... three ..." The muscle boy is pounding his fist against the stage. "... two, one!"

And the room erupts. Confetti flies everywhere and the kind of fragmented light that comes from a disco ball splashes across the celebrants. Tonio pops a bottle of cheap champagne he'd been hiding in the wings and douses everyone in the band with it before passing it around. I let the bubbles tickle my tongue, then turn back to the microphone and launch into a happier, more celebratory tune. The people standing beneath us have woven together like vines against the wall, limbs tangled with limbs, lips against lips. There is no separation, no individual distinctions. They have all become a snarled mass of exhilaration and lust.

Except for Ash. He continues to just stand there, apart from all of it. He's simply watching me. Waiting for me to come to him and claim my kiss.

And I want it. I want the kiss of my killer.

Users Review

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