



# Explosive

*Tori St. Claire*

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## **Explosive** Tori St. Claire

A man on the hunt...

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A woman on the run...

Ten years ago, a brutal attack forced Alyssa Martin into a world of solitary darkness. She threw herself into her career, but now her work has led her back into the nightmare of her past and thrust her into a deadly game. When her roommate employs Jayce for her protection, memories compound. She's never forgotten their shared desire, and her body still craves his masterful touch. Yet Jayce is determined to break down her protective walls, and confiding in him is more frightening than the shadows stalking her. But someone else is determined to control her. To survive, Alyssa must trust in Jayce and bare herself completely.

## **Explosive Details**

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Author : Tori St. Claire

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## From Reader Review Explosive for online ebook

### Sophia says

I love reading Tori's stories about her skilled operatives who run coldly lethal when on the job, but heat up the sheets. Each new installment in this series offers up another example of a delicious twisty tale to make me hold my breath in suspense or make me fan my heated body after a passionate scene. I could tell from the outset that this one was going to be a little different from the others when it tells more of a personal story for one of the Black Opals. Not that it was lacking in the suspense department, but the suspense was not as strong of an influence on the story as the relationship that started in Jayce's past.

The story opens with Jayce, the Black Opals' demo specialist, taking his enforced leave by going home for his sister's wedding. This puts him in a lousy mood that just gets worse when the woman who walked away from him with no explanation walks through the door of the bar right into the arms of his ex-bestfriend.

Alyssa can't believe it. Jayce! The man she never stopped loving is there in front of her with all the pain of her betrayal in his eyes to see her in the arms of Brice. Just the sight of Jayce threatens to bring back all that she hid away in her mind from ten years ago, but he is a sight for sore eyes that she can't help desiring more than ever. She wants just one more night with him and by his expression he still wants her too.

Jayce can't believe that he agrees to be with Alyssa and not just her, but a shared experience with Brice. He'll do this just once because he still wants her, but then he needs to get away from her before she manages to crush his heart into rubble a second time. Unfortunately, their night though passionate and wonderful only complicates matters and his plan to distance himself is nixed too when he discovers that Alyssa is in danger. Her office and home have been broken into and she is being threatened. It could be her shady client that sits in prison or the mobster that Brice works for or even an unknown. Least ways, he takes Brice up on his request to deal with their home security issues and calls in Kane, one of the Black Opals for help. And then things escalate both in Jayce and Alyssa's fiery contest of wills over their past and the danger threatening Alyssa. Jayce may save her life, but only she can save their second chance at a relationship.

Alrighty- my thoughts on this book. I am really torn over what to say. Well first of all, the plot was tight like the others, the characters were intense and engaging and the romance/relationship was smoking hot. The suspense elements were a tangled bunch that left me surprised by the twists that were revealed in the end. In fact, that one twist that Jayce's boss sprung on him was set aside and I hope it continues in the next book. The story is told from both Jayce and Alyssa's perspectives.

Now as to what had me torn from giving this one my complete stamp of approval, it pretty much came down to how much I despised the heroine's character and her choices and oh, let's not forget the weak, enabling best friend, Brice. She was one of the most selfish, insecure characters I have read in a long time that wasn't a villainess. It wasn't just that she was flawed (I actually like reading about flawed characters); it was what those flaws are. For over 275 pages, she refused to do anything, but cry, wring her hands and jerk people's hearts around. Alyssa had a terrible thing happen to her in her past, her parents blamed her as a result though it wasn't her fault and that will do ugly things to a person forever. She made a stupid decision in her past to push Jayce away because her head wasn't on straight. I get that too. But...its her present actions that disgusted me. She's had ten years (yes, ten) to get things sorted, but she's still a huge hot mess that is so far up the River Denial about her issues. Until she took care of the past and her issues, she had no business dragging Jayce's heart and feelings through the wringer a second time. She loved him so it was okay to take, take, take and give a pittance. She could see what she was doing to him- saw it and acknowledged it, but

went after what she wanted anyway. She even forced him to participate in a menage if he wanted to be with her ignoring that neither guy wanted to be with her and each other that way. Not that the menage was the problem; it was the reason for the menage that bugged me. She wouldn't let him protect his heart and got mad and hurt when he pulled away so it ended up being Jayce who felt sorry for hurting her feelings. She kept grasping for more even as she refused to give him more. She carted her security blankie, Brice, around and that one I just didn't get either. I'm with Jayce on that- she could tell Brice and lean on him for ten years, but not the guy who loved her. Makes no sense. She sobbed all over Jayce and Brice and went to pieces, but she kept holding information back making things harder for Jayce to help. Then when she's in the thick of danger...'I think I'll go for a jog all by myself because I'm suddenly tough girl'. Not.Bright. I got to the point where I thought Alyssa and Brice deserved each other and Jayce deserved a better woman who would cherish his loyal heart and not cram his best friend down his throat. Alyssa, the hot mess and Brice, the supposed friend who was too soft and infective, both drove me crazy. I didn't like her for Jayce and not even the end convinced me. It's a testament to the writer's strong talent that she brought such intense emotions out in me in regard to her characters. Never was I bored or indifferent which is so much worse in my eyes.

Okay, yes, got that off my chest. It probably makes me sound like I hated the story. I didn't. Didn't love it to death, but didn't hate it. I'm still insatiable for more from this series and am chomping at the bit for the next Black Opals.

Before I wrap-up, I do want to warn those who might have discomfort with rape that gang rape is in Alyssa's past. It is not described in detail, but she does have flashbacks to bits and pieces.

All in all, those who love scorching hot and dark gritty romantic suspense where the romance and suspense are equally engaging really need to try this series.

Special thanks to Tori St. Claire for providing her book in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Michel Reinhard (Smut Book Junkie Reviews) says**

Wow....Tori St. Claire writes a sizzling, chilling, erotic romance. The chemistry, sexual tension, and between the sheets romance blows the roof off. The suspense and danger keeps the reader at the edge of their seats.

This series is sizzling hot and worth the time invested! I highly recommend.

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### **Michelle says**

I'm actually kind of mad at myself because I finished this book a while ago but just never had a chance to write a review. Now that it's been a while since I've finished I'm not sure I can explain as well how much I enjoyed this story but I'm going to try. Jayce had his heart broken after high school when the love of his life, Alyssa, disappeared without any explanation. He's back home in Colorado for his sister's wedding and finds Alyssa again but she seems to have moved on to his high school best friend, Brice. Alyssa is a survivor from a vicious attack and never felt she could explain to Jayce what really happened so she thought it was better to disappear from his life forever. The relationship she has built with Brice is really just for physical release and he is one of the only people that knows of her attack. But with Jayce back in the picture Alyssa can't deny the attraction that still lies between them. Will she be able to open up to her past and explain to Jayce what

happened? I really liked the suspense aspect of this story. Both Brice and Alyssa became involved with some shady characters so when trouble starts to hit close to home you never really know who is behind it. I really enjoyed how Alyssa worked in to a relationship with Jayce because it meant threesomes with Brice. I did get a little frustrated with how long it took Alyssa to come clean but in the end that did not hurt my enjoyment of the story at all. Another good read!

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**Amy says**

**Originally posted at <http://fictionvixen.com/review-explos...>**

Black Opals operative Jayce Honeycutt has returned to Boulder, Colorado, to reluctantly participate in his sisters wedding. A bomb specialist for the CIA, he'd pay to be on a mission rather than be back home suffering through the fake yet polite interaction with family and friends. Upon arrival, Jayce can't get to a bar fast enough for a few beers to take the edge off so he heads to the Rocky Mountain Taproom and runs into his childhood best friend, Brice McTavish. Brice is now a successful attorney specializing in criminal law. Jayce uses the cover of working as a consultant in private security for the wealthy. While making small talk and catching up, Jayce notices his best friend is somewhat nervous and quickly learns why. Entering the bar is none other than Alyssa Martin, Jayce's high school sweetheart who left him ten years ago without a word; pregnant with their unborn child. Jayce quickly learns that a lot can change in ten years and the woman he loved and did everything he could to provide a life for is now with his best friend. One thing that has not changed with the passing of time is the immediate chemistry that still ignites between the two with just a simple look or touch. When Alyssa asks Jayce to dance, the hum of desire that permeates her body when pressed against his is undeniable. In that moment, Alyssa decides she wants one more night and memory with the man she never stopped loving. What she doesn't expect but also doesn't rule out is Brice's proposition of a threesome to break the ice. But can Jayce entertain the idea of sharing Alyssa when all he wants is answers as to why Alyssa left and to have her all to himself.

*"If he had to seduce the truth out of her, he would understand why she walked out on their dream, only to gift it to McTavish."*

And now with Brice having connections to the mob and one of Alyssa's clients in prison possibly making threats, there is danger directed towards Alyssa and Jayce knows he cannot turn his back on her safety regardless of their unresolved past.

There was so much in this story that didn't work for me. I've always had a difficult time buying into menage relationships. I don't mind reading them but I tend to enjoy m/m/f when all three characters have a physical and emotional connection to each other as opposed to two men that are focused solely on the woman. What I don't like is investing in a series that has been strictly a male/female couple and then the author decides the next installment is an attempt at a menage relationship between the protagonists. What I have enjoyed so much about the Black Opals series is the prior male/female couples have been strong, kick ass characters and couples.. The chemistry and intensity that Ms. St. Claire brought to Natalya and Brandon from *Stripped* was truly astounding. It was hands down my favorite book of the series and one I've re-read. The second book, *Lie to Me*, had a solid, engaging couple and intense human trafficking plot as well. *Explosive*, by far, has the weakest characters of all three books. Combine that with a lackluster plot that barely takes flight and you have the making of a disappointing story.

Alyssa is the type of heroine I want to backhand across a room. She's weak, selfish, insecure and she uses both Jayce and Brice for her peace of mind and personal desires. Although Alyssa lived through a terrible assault that caused devastating consequences upon her life, ten years later she still fails to take responsibility for confronting her mistakes regarding Jayce and refuses to share with him why she left without an explanation. But what is most ridiculous and absurd is Alyssa believes she cannot rekindle a sexual relationship with the love of her life, Jayce, without a security blanket; namely Brice.

*"She had a perfectly amicable, dependable, steady and safe arrangement with Brice. He made no demands on her. Accepted that she had no desire to settle down."*

*"But Jayce? He was everything Brice wasn't, and she was playing with fire by entertaining even a miniscule portion of the attraction that somehow, someway, hadn't died."*

While Alyssa and Brice have experimented with threesomes before, Jayce faces an internal struggle where he cannot imagine sharing the only woman he has ever loved with his former best friend. He is also angry because Alyssa refuses to discuss why she left and what happened to their baby. But when it's Alyssa and it's sex, Jayce can easily toss his anger aside for another taste of her and if Brice wants to participate, so be it.

*"It shouldn't make a difference. Sex was sex. Alyssa had extended the invitation to pleasure, not asked him to settle into a menage a marriage."*

Obviously my biggest issue is with Alyssa. She is just so pathetic in her thinking and her actions. Alyssa's internal dialogue is constantly referring to Brice as second best and someone she will never care about like Jayce, yet she still believes she needs him in order to not risk crossing the line of intimacy with Jayce. Alyssa also had several too stupid to live moments throughout the story and I kept thinking this heroine is nothing like what I expected in this series and honestly I don't want her with either man.

*"Arousal might still flicker in her bloodstream, but Brice McTavish was never going to get her there at this point. Not when she'd turned to him out of habit and sheer companionship, and he hadn't been who she wanted in the first place."*

*"Brice didn't have her heart. He never would. Jayce owned it."*

Brice's character felt like a wet dishrag. He lacked sex appeal, he ran scared when faced with danger and overall he felt like a third wheel. You never feel a spark or connection between him and Alyssa. I laughed every time Jayce made a comment when he felt threatened by Brice and Alyssa's relationship because it was so obvious that Alyssa was using Brice and their friendship in order to keep an emotional distance between herself and Jayce. Then to beat it all Brice tells Alyssa after they participate in the threesome that he's been waiting on her to kick him to the curb and go after who she has always wanted. That it's never been him, it's always been Jayce and she needs to give him a chance.

Another issue is the plot. It lacked a cohesive flow and balance of both romance and action. The prior two books had major suspenseful moments that would draw you into the action as much as the characters but I never felt the anticipation or excitement in this story. A few break-ins, threats and a bomb which naturally I suspected giving Jayce's profession. There were no edgy, riveting, lip biting moments because the suspense or lack of took a backseat to the relationship of the three characters.

While this story didn't work for me, I'm not totally giving up on the Black Opals. I am still waiting for

Misha's book. I'm hoping this is just a glitch in the road and that Ms. St. Claire will once again deliver the gripping suspense and amazing characters I've come to expect from this series.

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## **Francesca the Fierce (Under the Covers Book Blog) says**

### **3.5 stars**

I fell in love with this series from the get go. Tori's writing is flawless and engaging and the Black Opals have always managed to have a perfect mix of high stakes suspense and action with a scorchingly hot mix of sex.

EXPLOSIVE is a bit like that, except with a lot less suspense. Maybe for me that's why this was not my favorite in the series. It's still a very hot book with a good storyline and some danger woven in between, but I'm used to the highly sophisticated plots the author has given us before and quite frankly, I've been spoiled by that.

But while EXPLOSIVE isn't as suspenseful, I was still invested in Alyssa and Jayce's story. This is definitely a more emotional book. I love second chance romances and this one had miscommunication written all over the reasons why they fell apart. They both have their demons, Alyssa more so because of her past.

The progression of their relationship was perfect. Nothing rushed, even though their attraction was back full force from the moment they laid eyes on each other. Years and what felt like betrayals all fell away and there was just passion. And the passion in this book sizzled!

While Jayce tries to keep Alyssa safe he has to break down Alyssa's walls. Not an easy task given what she's endured and hasn't been able to get completely over. Their love for each other was able to withstand time, separation, another man and a tragic past. And in the end it was that love that pulled them both through.

I always look forward to the next Black Opals story and I'm definitely anxious for the next one, which I'm hoping will have to do with the setup that was laid out at the end of this book.

\*ARC provided by author

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## **Catherine says**

\*\*\*\*\*4.5\*\*\*\*\*

Another immensely satisfying read from Tori St.Claire.

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## Gigi staub says

A man on the hunt...

Jayce Honeycutt never imagined returning to his hometown for a wedding would find him confronting the woman he intended to marry. Nor did he anticipate the passion they once knew would burn as hot and bright as ever. Only now Alyssa's involved with Jayce's former best friend, and Jayce can't bring himself to interfere. When he learns Alyssa may be in danger, however, everything changes. As the threats against her life escalate, Jayce will stop at nothing to unveil the secrets she's hiding. Even if it means risking his heart all over again.

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Review:

This book is part of the Black Opal series, it being book 3, though they are stand alone. There is a lot going on in this story, so let me give a quick synopsis without giving away too much of the story.

This story centers around Jayce, a Black Opal who is told to take leave and goes home to attend his sister's wedding. Jayce has not been home in 10 years because the love of his life left him, which thrust him into the dangerous world of the Black Opals. On Jayce's first night back in town he runs into Alyssa, the woman who broke his heart and his former best friend, Brice and they happen to be a couple or appear to be. The sparks are still there and they can barely keep from stripping each other. But Alyssa is keeping secrets of what happened to their baby and why she left him, and has no intentions of telling Jayce. Brice tries to convince Alyssa to reveal the secrets to Jayce, but she is holding firm. Alyssa somehow convinces Jayce that the only way to be with her one more time is to have a three-way with Brice. Okay, now I want to say Brice, needs to get a backbone and tell Alyssa that she needs to deal with Jayce and without him in the middle. Jayce's trying to keep his distance, spirals out of control when threats are made against Alyssa from the client she is working for and from a secret Brice is keeping. Their past and present conspire to keep them apart, but a explosive event could keep them apart forever.

I liked this story though the feel of the story was different than the others in the series. It was to me more a story of Jayce and Alyssa and the action and intrigue are secondary and the other stories were about an outside incident that lead the main characters to come together. The story is full of mystery, intrigue and some seriously sexy scenes. I did enjoy the story, it was not my favorite of the series, but it kept me



engrossed until the end. That being said I do want to say I want to smack both Alyssa and Brice upside the head...lol First, what is Brice thinking? honestly he made soo many bad choices in this story that I find him hard to sympathize with. Secondly, Alyssa, I understand that she went through a VERY traumatic experience, but she really does come off as not being very likable for part of the book.

3.5 stars

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### **Liz says**

Jayce returns to his hometown for his sister's wedding and encounters his ex-fiance he hasn't seen in 10 years. The plot is suspenseful, has some sexy scenes, and a bit of action thrown in.

I genuinely enjoyed this story, but at points struggled to like some of the characters. The story is told from the perspectives of Jayce, a Black Opal, and Alyssa, Jayce's ex-fiance. I adored Jayce from the beginning. I did like Alyssa, but a few times I grew frustrated with her behavior towards Jayce. I also had mixed feelings about Brice. I wanted to like him, but I had difficulty getting past his semi-betrayal of his friendship with Jayce.

I look forward to the next book in the Black Opals series. I hope Jordan gets her own story. I would also be interested in learning what happens with Brice, Kane, and Jackson.

This is the 3rd in the Black Opals series and can be read as a stand alone.

I received an ARC from Tori St. Claire.

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### **gillian (Tattooed Book Review) says**

See this review and more at [www.TattooedBookReview.com](http://www.TattooedBookReview.com)!

3.5 Stars

*"He didn't care about the past, what complications she presented. She had always belonged to him, and touching her was as necessary as breathing."*

Romantic suspense with an interesting relationship twist, *Explosive* has danger, intrigue, mystery, romance, and steamy sex. I applaud the author for bravely tackling a tricky menage that isn't all black and white and threesome sex. The lines are blurred and the waters are muddy, but the emotions are real.

Returning home for his sister's wedding, Jayce is faced with Alyssa, and the passionate feelings he still has in spite of ten years apart and a mountain of secrets and lies the stands between them. Further complicating the scenario is Alyssa's relationship with with Jayce's childhood best friend, Brice. There's still a chance for Alyssa and Jayce to find common ground, but there is so much standing in their way. I wouldn't consider Alyssa to be a lovable character, but I could empathize with her somewhat. She has made and continues to make some selfish and stupid decisions. She really seems like a woman that is simply overwhelmed by all of

the difficulties surrounding her past and present and this interferes with her ability to get it together and make better decisions concerning her life and her relationships. All of that aside, I did want to see things fall in to place for her and Jayce, and for Brice. Regardless of how the reader may feel about the dynamics of the relationships and potential relationships, the chemistry sizzles and the sex is hot.

I really enjoyed the aspects of the story outside of just the romantic entanglements. The danger and intrigue kept me interested. The book is well-paced, perhaps a tiny bit slow for my personal tastes, certainly not hurried. It speeds up at the right points and slows down to highlight the moments that carry the most impact. Overall, a very good book with a unique romance, and plenty of sex, secrets, lies, and suspense.

\*I received a complimentary copy of the book in exchange for a fair and honest review.

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### **? Renée says**

I liked this book - a lot, but there were a couple awkward moments for me – mainly Brice being involved with Alyssa, and then later Jayce feeling like the third wheel. Total red card for the Bro Code violation. Just sayin. I couldn't fully appreciate the dynamic. Not because of the characters, but because of their history – and the secrets. It felt wrong to me. Still ... I loved the emotion, the suspense, the humor, and of course the hot, crazy monkey sex.

I was drawn to Jayce from the beginning. He wasn't all alpha ... he was just real. An honorable man, he was full of cynicism, hurt, and anger; but coming face-to-face with his past gave him a second chance to heal.

Alyssa ... she wasn't the type of heroine I would normally enjoy. Her thought process was questionable – and a little infuriating. Her problems weren't insurmountable – they were just compounded by bad decision-making, anguish, fear, and denial. Despite the sizzling chemistry between her and Jayce, she continued to push and pull – held captive by her distrust in both him and herself. The tragedy and devastation she experienced was heartbreaking, and I can honestly say I don't know how I would respond or who I would become if I experienced what she did. That gave me the patience and perspective I needed to in the end appreciate her character and her journey. I was happy for her – that she was able to find her inner strength, reclaim her life and her love.

Would love to find out what becomes of Brice, Jordan, Kane, and even Jackson. I'll be eagerly awaiting the next in the series!

\*\* I received this ARC from the author in exchange for an honest review. \*\*

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### **Under the Covers Book Blog says**

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