

Lie To You
By Joely Sue Burkhart

A free read prequel to
HURT ME SO GOOD

Available 10/5/2010 from Samhain Publishing

Victor Connagher stared at the nearly nude woman squirming against her bonds and felt nothing but boredom.

Silken, Dallas's exclusive bondage club, was packed with eager, fawning submissives and spectators alike. A few Dominants mingled in the crowd, but only two that he knew, and they were both already involved. Oh, there were posers who flapped around and crowed like roosters in the hen house, but if they obviously couldn't control themselves, they wouldn't be getting too serious with anyone.

The owner would be desperate for an unattached Dominant to give a real show tonight.

Victor knew he ought to leave, no matter how much he needed to do something, anything, to ease this brutal need. There was no way in hell he'd play it cool enough to pull off a demonstrative scene, not when he felt this raw and out of control.

Once upon a time, he'd been able to put on a pretty good show. He'd drawn out every sweet cry of his submissive, taunted the audience to a fevered pitch, and endured the torment of his own unanswered needs. Even that denial had been a secret pain that he'd enjoyed.

Nobody had known he'd been playing a game. Lying. To himself and everyone.

A pained gasp drew his gaze back to the bound woman. Her lover—because if that moron fumbling with a velvet flail was a *Dominant* with a capital D, then Victor would eat his own crop—landed a blow to her buttocks that wouldn't have killed a fly. She squealed dramatically, and Victor clenched his jaws to keep from letting out a derisive laugh.

So fake. So scripted. So boring.

He glanced at the sweating, eager faces watching so avidly and he wanted to scatter them with a few well-placed blows. Bored out of his skull and pissed that he'd lied this game for years, he turned around to leave but jerked up short.

His ex-fiancée, Kimberly, stood in front of him, twisting her delicate hands together with anxiety, as beautiful and fragile as he remembered. She'd never kindled any true passion in him, which is exactly why he'd chosen her. Another lie, that he could pretend long and well enough that she'd never find out what he hid beneath the constant mask he wore.

I can't believe I was stupid enough to date her so long, let alone ask her to marry me.

The man she was with wrapped an arm around her waist. Victor tracked that male arm up to his face and bit back a curse. Ryan, the owner of the club, boomed a welcome. “Victor! It's so great to see you again! We've been wondering where you'd been lately.”

At least Victor's boredom was gone, but his stomach churned with a multitude of emotions, shame and regret leading the charge. He tried to think of something he could say that didn't make him sound like a jealous asshole, because he really wasn't jealous. Not even when Kimberly turned more into the other man's embrace, clutching him

frantically like she thought the big bad wolf was going to eat her whole.

Eyes bright with hope, Ryan asked, "Could you do a scene for us tonight? You'd bring the house down!"

For the briefest moment, blinding terror flashed in her eyes, and Victor knew she must be remembering their last night together. The illusion that he could be a loving, protective husband had been shattered that night, when he'd hurt her so badly that she'd fled, still babbling her safeword.

He felt his face freeze into a cold, empty, and terribly familiar mask. "No."

Ryan said something else in that jovial blustering way of his but Victor didn't hear him. Without another word, he turned away. He strode to the exit, his pace measured but determined to get out of there as quickly as possible. He didn't let them see the terrifying need hammering away inside his body, or the disgusted shame burning like acid up his throat. He didn't let them see him run. Another lie, because he fled into the night.

Only when he made it to the privacy of his car did he let the rage bubble free. He trembled with the force of it. God, he'd been such a fool. He'd deliberately hidden his true nature from the woman he professed to love and honor. He'd lied to everyone, especially himself. There was no way in hell he could ever step foot back in that club and pretend to be a normal, sane Dominant having a little fun with a willing submissive.

Not with this darkness clawing inside him.

He reached beneath his seat, fumbling a bit until he found what he was looking for. In the shadowed parking lot, he couldn't see the details

of the crop, but the leather wrapped around the shaft bit into his palm. He cast a furtive glance to make sure no one was around, and then he brought the crop down across his thighs. The steering wheel and close quarters hampered his blow, but blissful pain still cut across his skin.

The sharp crack dissolved some of the desperation shrieking inside him. So sweet. It'd been so long since he'd indulged. *Since Kimberly dumped me months ago.*

He laid the crop in his lap, started his car, and drove home, fingering that leather with anticipation. In record time, he stood in his bedroom. He forced himself to methodically strip and put away his clothes. He yanked out the band holding his shoulder-length hair back so tight from his face and he felt his control falter.

Some days the only thing holding him back was that fiercely tightened hair, the constant dull ache on his scalp reminding him to keep the monster at bay. Tonight, the beast refused to be denied. Yet he still made himself wait, letting his need build in intensity.

He tried to imagine a submissive waiting for him to begin. A woman, bent over the side of his bed, every sweet curve of her body begging for the crop to fall.

He brought the crop down on his right thigh in a whistling blow that made his entire body jolt, but it was her scream he heard. She'd be loud, rewarding him with every cry, curse, and shout. She would be afraid of him...but not terrified. Not disgusted. She would endure the pain because he willed it, because he needed it, and she needed and wanted to please him above anything else in this world.

If he were incredibly lucky—and since this was a fantasy, he might as well enjoy it fully—she'd even get off on the pain, too. No silly games,

no bondage or role play to distract him, only the ecstasy of pain.

He brought the crop down again. He didn't need to slowly build intensity, because the need was always there, digging vicious claws into his spine. He knew exactly how hard he could strike without cutting his skin wide open, but tonight, he did it anyway. He bled. He cursed. And he came with such intensity that his bad knee gave out and he nearly planted his face on the carpet.

He'd punished himself because he had to have pain, and without a willing submissive, his own would have to do. Most of all, he'd punished himself for the greatest lie of all.

There was no submissive out there somewhere, waiting for him, his pain, and his love.

#

After last night's activities, his bad knee hurt worse than usual, compounded by an assortment of bruises and marks on both thighs. Scowling, Victor straightened his legs out beneath his desk. Tendons torn years ago pulled and burned almost as badly as the day he'd blown his knee. The steady ache did little to improve his mood, which admittedly was always bad the morning after he indulged his sadist.

The intercom lit up and made an annoying chime. He stabbed the button. "Yes?"

His secretary had a hesitant squeak of a voice that made him think she was asking questions every time she spoke. "Mr. Connagher?"

He was so not in the mood for timid creatures today. If he wasn't careful, his VCONN partner would yell at him for scaring off another worthy office manager, but good God, couldn't he find someone with just a little backbone? He fought for a gentler approach rather than

throwing open his door and bellowing. “What is it?”

“A new hire is here to see you? Shiloh Holmes? Ms. Kannes sent her to meet you?”

Rubbing his knee, he tried not to sigh like a martyr. “Send her in.”
I'll try not to scare her off on her first day at VCONN.

He stood to round his desk in welcome, but his damned knee was stiff and fragile, as though too much weight on it would make the whole joint shatter. He settled for at least standing politely in front of his desk as the door opened and the new hire walked in.

She marched straight up to him and held out her hand. “Pleased to meet you, sir.”

Surprised by her bold manner, he shook her hand, taking in her wide smile and warm brown eyes. She met his gaze unflinchingly, which he knew was no small feat. He decided to push just a little and see how much it would take to make her drop her gaze. He kept his fingers firm on hers, his gaze as steady and deep as though he sought her deepest secrets.

One brow quirked. Then the other, her eyes widening with surprise. The corners of her eyes crinkled and he suspected she might be laughing silently at him, but he didn't look down at her mouth to find out. Her eyes warmed to molten chocolate, sparkling like she had a dozen secrets all bottled up just waiting for him to yank them out one by one.

She made a soft little sound, barely more than an indrawn breath, but it made his inner demon perk up with interest. It was all he could do not to step forward, bury his hand in her tawny hair, and jerk her mouth to his so he could punish her lips for that delicious little moan.

Too late, he remembered that this woman was supposed to be his new employee. The CEO of the company had no business testing his female employees, and for what? To see if he could break her? He already knew he could. He always did sooner or later.

Abruptly, he released her hand and whirled away. “Welcome to VCONN, Ms...”

Damn it, he couldn't remember her name and pain knifed through his knee at the sudden movement. He was forced to limp the few steps back to his chair and sat down heavier than usual.

“Holmes, sir.” She replied evenly, not upset in the least by his macho dramatics. “Shiloh Holmes. Are you hurt?”

He jerked his gaze up to her face, but saw only open and honest concern, not ridicule or speculative interest. “Old college football injury. I tweaked it last night and it's hurting today.”

“Ah, that explains all the trophies I saw downstairs.” She gave him a little chuckle of admiration and interest that tightened a fist in his chest where his heart used to reside. Dressed in a velvety suit that matched her eyes, she sat in front of his desk, alert and eager as new employees usually were, but without any hint of nerves or shyness. “Are they all yours?”

“From my glory days. But that was a long time ago.”

“Where did you play?”

He settled back in his chair, amused at how easily she'd turned the tables on him. *Who's interviewing who?* “Texas A&M for four years. What position do you think I played?”

Her lips quirked. “Definitely quarterback. You're the kind of man who'd lead the whole team down the field, refusing to settle for someone

else calling the plays.”

“Oh, I *always* call the plays.” Damned if her eyes didn't smolder. Didn't she have any idea what sort of man she was playing with? “But I think you must have taken notice of the photographs, too. Maybe you even had time to read one of the clippings in the case.”

Her left eyebrow arched. “Not at all.”

She lied and she knew that he knew that she lied and she didn't care, not by the widening smile she gave him. “Really?”

“Would I lie to you, Mr. Connagher?”

Polite flirting had turned much too serious. He couldn't do this. Had he learned nothing all those months, pretending to be safe and normal for Kimberly? *Who's lying now?*

Furious at himself and yes, at her for tempting him, he jerked his hair tighter in the ponytail. The small pain sharpened his control, but not enough, not with this saucy morsel staring at him with those big chocolate eyes. He gripped his right thigh and squeezed that bruised muscle until his cheek ticked.

“So what position have I given you here at VCONN?” Deliberately, he chose rather insulting language to see if he could goad her. Maybe he'd get lucky and she'd quit. Today.

“Associate Producer,” Shiloh answered, adjusting to his professional switch seamlessly without rising to his bait.

“It's an entry level position.” He tried to guess her age without asking for her file, and he put her mid to late twenties. She wasn't a young woman fresh out of college.

As though she knew his line of thought, she explained, “I worked my way through college, so it took longer than usual, and I've had other

jobs.”

“Why are you starting over?”

“I wanted something new.” For the first time, she lowered her eyes, but it was a deceptive move. She still looked at him through her lashes. “I like a challenge.”

Unfortunately, so did he, and she was giving off all kinds of submissive invitation vibes, whether she knew it or not. Giving his leg another painful squeeze, he cautiously waded into more treacherous waters. In a job interview, it wasn't customary to ask about a person's sexual preferences, even if the company was an erotic cable television channel. “Are you aware of the kind of programming that has made VCONN famous?”

“Of course. I did my research before applying.”

He wanted to ask if she'd researched *him*. Maybe that would explain her familiarity and lack of fear...although if she knew more about him, surely she'd be afraid. More, though, he wanted to ask if she was submissive or merely a damned good actress. If she was as attracted as him.

But he didn't dare. It was too late. From the first moment his secretary informed him of the new hire, Shiloh Holmes had been off limits. The CEO could not dally with female employees without opening himself up for sexual harassment charges. *Especially when said CEO is a sadist.*

“I've watched several of VCONN's shows,” she said in a husky purr that tightened things low in his gut. “But I have to admit that my favorite is *Erotic Tales from the Crypt*.”

He couldn't have been more surprised if she'd pulled out a gun and

shot him dead. “That was our premiere. It hasn’t been on the air in years. How did you...”

That show had made Dallas history, earning more via Pay-Per-View than the biggest boxing match of the year. It had shocked the mostly conservative community, yet they’d gobbled it up and begged for more shows about the Dungeon Master’s exclusive torture chamber.

His hand convulsed on his thigh and a small grunt of pain escaped his mouth. If that show had been her favorite...

She had to be leading him on. Maybe she’d been to Silken and picked up some of the nastier gossip about him. Maybe Kimberly had been spreading malicious lies about him.

But they wouldn’t be lies, now, would they?

“When I saw that VCONN was hiring, I called the information desk and asked if I could watch several archived shows. I ended up watching them all.”

“All?” He winced at the roughness in his voice. The stomach-twisting throb of his bad knee had begun feeding the darker, erotic pain that he’d given himself. Pain compounded with pain turning into desire. If he wasn’t careful, he wouldn’t be able to stand up at the end of this interview without embarrassing himself. “That’s several years’ worth.”

“All of them.” She tipped her head to the side, deliberately showing him the curve of her neck. Making herself vulnerable. Her hands were quiescent in her lap, but she shifted slightly in her chair and he swore her skirt snuck up her thigh an inch. No, two. “I’m very thorough.”

He suddenly wished he kept his crop in his desk drawer instead of hidden in the depths of his closet or beneath the seat of his car. If he brought it out and smacked it on his desk, would she leap from her

chair and flee the building? Or would she hike up that skirt just a bit more as she bent over his desk?

The image was all too easy to build in his mind after last night's fantasy. However, he still had enough blood flowing to his brain to continue that little farce...all the way to her screams of terror. The look of revulsion on her face. The police sirens and the slamming of prison bars when she pressed charges.

His intercom beeped again and he barely suppressed the sigh of relief. He'd been saved from committing a monumental error.

"Mr. Connagher? You have a meeting in five minutes?"

It took all his control to reach out with a hand that didn't tremble in order to respond. "Thank you, Lisa." He took a deep breath and concentrated on putting his corporate face back on. Not the desperate Master in need of a flirtatious submissive who just might not be afraid of a little dungeon play. "And thank you, Ms. Holmes. I hope you have a very successful career here at VCONN."

Disappointment made her bite her luscious lip, sending another surge of lust through his body that he refused to show.

A little dungeon play in a controlled environment was one thing. When you were a woman dating a much larger, stronger man in a position of authority who also had a lust for pain and one vicious crop, it was entirely different. This wasn't a show. No one was going to call time-out and let her walk away, because once the sadist had her in his grasp, he wouldn't unchain her until he'd drained every last scream of pain.

Standing, she held her hand out to him again. "I look forward to working with you, sir."

He deliberately shifted his weight to his bad knee as he stood. His face stiffened with pain, and he saw the flicker in her eyes that registered his withdrawal with resignation. Hopefully she would take the hint and stay far, far away from him. He gave her a brief, entirely professional handshake. “Unfortunately, I rarely deal with the day-to-day duties of handling employees any longer. Ms. Kannes will see to any questions you may have.”

“Maybe we’ll run into each other on set,” she said with a hopeful gleam in her dark eyes.

Coldly, he forced himself to snuff out that flame before it could scorch them both beyond recognition. “I doubt it, Ms. Holmes. Good day.”

He watched her walk toward the door, letting his hungry gaze travel down her spine to her nicely rounded buttocks and hips. Perfect for his crop. She gave him one last glance over her shoulder, her mouth soft, her eyes shimmering, whether with hurt or regret he couldn’t say. It didn’t matter.

Would I lie to you, Ms. Holmes? So dangerous, this attraction, making every muscle in his body tense with the urge to chase her down and drag her screaming to his bed. Absolutely.

#

Read more about Victor and Shiloh in HURT ME SO GOOD, available Oct. 5, 2010 from [Samhain Publishing](#). For more free reads, please visit my [website](#).

Current Series and Upcoming Releases

The Connaghers, erotic contemporary romance from Samhain

Publishing

Conn, DEAR SIR, I'M YOURS, June 2009

Victor, HURT ME SO GOOD, October 2010

Vicki, YOURS TO TAKE, tbd

Mal, MINE TO BREAK, tbd

The Maya Bloodgates, paranormal romance from Carina Press

THE BLOODGATE GUARDIAN, June 2010

Blood & Shadows, romantic fantasy with erotic elements from Drollerie Press

THE ROSE OF SHANHASSON, March 2008

THE ROAD TO SHANHASSON, May 2009

RETURN TO SHANHASSON, October 2010

SURVIVE MY FIRE, July 2007

THE FIRE WITHIN, March 2008

Mythomorphoses, post-apocalyptic science fiction romance from Drollerie Press

BEAUTIFUL DEATH, July 2008

A Jane Austen Space Opera, science fiction romance from Samhain Publishing

LADY DOCTOR WYRE, March 2011