



Into the Shadows

Carolyn Crane

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He's working undercover for the good guys. That doesn't mean he's one of them.

HE'S A KILLER.

Thorne McKelvey knows exactly how Nadia sees him—as a brute and a killer just kinky enough to play her sexy games. And that's how it has to stay. Leaving her was the hardest thing he ever did, but his undercover mission could blow up at any second. No way will he drag Nadia down with him.

SHE CAN'T RISK HER HEART.

Maybe it was foolish to fall in love with her late father's deadliest henchman, but Nadia Volkov's not sorry; without Thorne she wouldn't have their beautiful little boy. There's nothing she won't do to protect Benny, which means she must hide his identity—especially from his father.

Now Thorne has burst back into her home, searching for clues to a gangland mystery...and stirring a hunger Nadia hasn't felt in two years. But Benny's identity isn't the only secret she's keeping, and things are turning deadly. Can Thorne and Nadia trust each other long enough to stay alive and have a chance at happiness?

Into the Shadows Details

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From Reader Review Into the Shadows for online ebook

Suzanne (Under the Covers Book blog) says

Thorne has given up everything he has to continue his undercover mission for the Associates, even if all he had was Nadia, the Party Princess whom he loves fiercely and was blissfully happy with for a brief span two years ago. Even if she only thought of him as a low life thug and someone she could use to play out her fantasies with, he loves her anyway. But, he never expected his life would bring her back in his path and he never wanted it to as with him he only brings danger and death. Nadia's heart was broken when Thorne left her, especially as she pregnant with his child, a child she never got to tell him about before he left. Now he is back, but can she really take the risk on Thorne again and potentially not just lose her own heart again but her sons as well?

Wow. I loved this book! This is one of my best books of the year and has reminded me why Carolyn Crane is one of my favourite authors. With Into the Shadows she has crafted a book that was emotionally intense, full of action and hot as hell. Plus, look at that cover! This is definitely my favourite installment so far of The Associates series.

What always sets Carolyn Crane apart is her style; the way she puts a little twist in everything she does or takes a slightly different view on something tried and tested to create something uniquely hers. In The Associates series each agent has a talent that sets them apart, from logistics to linguistics, it hardly makes them sound like badasses but Crane twists it and turns it into something exciting, sexy and new. In Into the Shadows the hero, Thorne, is an expert fighter and styles himself after Bruce Lee and damn, Thorne was hot, not just because he was all tattooed and muscled, but because he had this brutal, honest intensity about him. You feel his personality shouting out from the page and it made me want to climb into the book and snuggle the crap outta him.

"I'm the brute and the asshole who will never deserve you, but I'll always protect you. They could destroy me within an inch of my life and I'll still lay waste to heaven and hell to help you."

If you like your books with a fair bit of action in them as well, then there is a few heists and a couple of gun fights that keeps the excitement flowing. This book does an excellent job of keeping the tension up, as you struggle to see how Thorne and Nadia could possibly be together and still keep themselves alive. What I mainly read this for though was the romance, which ticked all my boxes, it was passionate, it was emotional and it was sexually charged. Nadia and Thorne led us on an emotional journey and I loved every second. And I couldn't resist adding my favourite quote of the book, which I think shows you perfectly the intensity of their romance:

He thought she was out of his system, but even now he could feel himself turning back into the lovehating brute she liked him to be. His lovehate made a wound in him. His lovehate for her was a prison and a heaven.

Rejane says

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Enough said. Well said. Hate the plot.

Cristina says

2.5 stars

Pure fluff. Enjoyable, if predictable.

Coco.V says

? FREE on Amazon today (12/16/2017)! ?

Ash Wednesday says

3.5 STARS

"There are so many layers to our fucked up layer cake, I don't know how to untangle it," she said.

"You don't untangle a cake, baby," he said. "You eat it."

Weeeeeellllll....

For all the love I have for Carolyn Crane's Disillusionists Trilogy, I'm a little ashamed to admit this is my first of hers outside that series. While this didn't necessarily disappoint, I'm hard pressed to call the high points winning over the lows. It was good in the sense that the things I didn't agree with didn't make me want to quit but still left an aftertaste that wasn't all that pleasant.

After finding the truth about her mother, Nadia Volkov has made it her mission to find her, dismantling her deceased father's illegal operations in the process. Standing in her way is Thorne, one of her father's former henchmen, current number 2 of one of the gang who inherited the spoils of her father's downfall and the unknowing father of her two-year old son, Benny. So Thorne gets the nondisclosure punishment because he essentially called Nadia a hotel soap and he's a robot with a lot of enemies who want to hurt him.

When actually, he's an undercover agent of The Associates, tasked to take the leadership from The Hangman's psychotic leader Jerrod who was part of the group who killed his sister years ago. Two birds, one Thorne and all that. But that's okay since Thorne's still smarting from the hurt of hearing Nadia offer him to her hot sister Kara for some sharing time.

Secret Baby!
Misunderstanding!
Sexual tension!

See where this is going?

Though the story was a little predictable I found Thorne quite unique. Initially, I had a lot of gripes and issues against his incessant quoting of Bruce Lee and the constant use of these cheesy sound bite worthy comebacks in casual conversation. Then I realize its part of the complexity of his social maladjustment, learning how to interact with people through watching films, having no role model growing up etc. His character offered something different and fascinating in a genre overpopulated by the cookie cutter, juiced, Alpha Male heroes. His pathos was almost Aspergers-like and his efforts to compensate was a good source of emotional wattage when the story chooses to.

Yet I still wish Crane went a bit deeper into how he came to be, because while the tension between him and Nadia was quite delicious, something felt lacking in their backstories to sell the chemistry to me.

Though I think that was mostly Nadia's fault.

I had great difficulty understanding her motivations and some of her thought process veered towards disturbing. The shift from Party Princess to Human Trafficking Crusader was addressed a little too casually and I thought the conflict between staying safe for her son and risking her life to rescue her mother warranted more introspection than this afforded. Especially since her fervent efforts to keep Benny from Thorne was supposed to shield him from the violence of that world.

"I don't want somebody in Benny's life who thinks its cool to be associated with gangs that run sex slaves and sweatshops."

"Hangman doesn't run sex slaves and sweatshops."

"They're friends with gangs that do," she said.

Meanwhile, she's running around with mercenaries freeing her father's victims and crushing his operations while finding her mother. True it's expected to have some unorthodox moral compasses and standards among people with her background, but it still felt a little like pot calling kettle black.

Their role playing was simultaneously hot and heartbreak, **most of the time**. Usually when Nadia doesn't lapse into these awkward ruminations about how much Benny looks like Thorne while having sex. Maybe my mind has gone too dirty to not feel awkward over that situation and for that I am truly sorry.

Almost as sorry for the awkwardness of certain turns of phrases that stuck out like a sore thumb considering the wealth of heart-tugging moments and exchanges this is armed with.

People didn't realize the things they hated about themselves were often the coolest.

'Coolest'? Really we're going with that one? This coming from the author who coined "Cucumbery Cock" which was a favorite of mine.

I would've gladly overlooked these few episodes but here were also lapses into Valley speak ("like") and abuse of cringe inducing words (is "lovehate" really a word?) which again maybe explained by the kind of people these characters are emulating but was still something that took me out of the story and back into my critiquing-bitch seat. But for the love of God, STOP SAYING THORNE WAS RAISED BY SCORPIONS BECAUSE **TECHNICALLY HE REALLY WASN'T**. It came across a pathetic attempt to make him more intimidating, maybe make his past more dramatic and action hero-worthy, when he really didn't need to be.

I'm going to park the snark bus here because I really did like it but I had to overlook a lot of things to keep myself from cringing long enough to actually see its strengths, and discussing them further might make me change my mind with the rating.

Review Copy courtesy of the publishers for this late review (sorry).

Also on Booklikes.

? Irena ? says

3.5

Thorne is introduced in the previous book as a ruthless killer and a deep undercover agent. He is awesome here. His heartbreak history, the reasoning behind his actions could save this book even if it didn't have a heroine as great as Nadia.

One of the best scenes in this book involves Thorne and the first time he gets together with other Associates and tells them about Benny.

I really enjoyed this book. It has almost everything one could wish in a romantic suspense.

sraxe says

It's funny that I went into this book absolutely disliking Thorne, but came out of it disliking Nadia so much more. I thought she was pathetic at first...but by the end? Well, she's still pathetic, no change there...but then I realized what a POS she was on top of it all. Unless there's a damn good reason (yes REASON, not excuse), I will think you're a POS for hiding someone's child from them.

Nadia had Thorne's kid and didn't tell him about it. Why? Because of some bullshit excuse. She says that she didn't want to tell him because he's still involved in gang activity and she doesn't want Benny to be a target. Which seems fair, right? Except not. I had many issues with the flimsy excuse that the author provided for why she utilized the "secret baby" trope.

First off, Nadia is the daughter of a former mob boss. She judges Thorne for being in the life, except she was born into it herself.

She told them how she loved him, even though he was in this gang, and that there was something good inside him, even though he was in this life.

She loves him...even though he's in a gang? There's good inside him...even though he's in this life??? Look, she was raised in this life, she rolled around in it until about two years ago, when it was taken from her. Who the hell is she to judge anyone when it comes to that?

And in connection to having grown up in the life and a father who ran the show at one point, who's to say that that won't come back and haunt her now? You think these gangsters aren't misogynistic fucks? And that her mob boss of a father never had enemies? Who're you kidding. Now that daddy dearest is long gone, they might try and go after his daughters as vengeance. And it's not like she's hidden away elsewhere and they won't be able to find her. She still lives in the same damn mansion her father once lived in! She doesn't know what kind of beef her father might've stirred up with people, or what kind of enemies might come after her now that he's dead because they can't get him. And then, it's only Nadia and her sister Kara there to protect Benny. Although Richard is helping during the book, he's not included here because he's a recent and temporary addition to their group, not someone who's along for the entire ride, so he's out of that equation when it comes to protection. The author doesn't address this, simply concentrating on Thorne's gang connections to keep him in the dark.

And with Thorne, she's making it worse for him by keeping it a secret. The problem with her not telling him that he's got a kid is that the kid is then an unknown variable to Thorne. Nadia says anyone who looks at Benny will be able to see that Thorne is the father. Which, you know...might include his gangster buddies! Except she doesn't bother telling him. If she'd told him, at least he'd have been able to consider what might happen if their connection was found out. But he can't do anything because she doesn't bother telling him that he's got a child out there that anyone will be able to tell is his upon a single glance! She's so stupid, I swear to God. When at one point she calls herself a "bad mother," I honestly kept thinking "Ain't it the truth, ain't it the truth" in Cowardly Lion's voice.

But the biggest reason why the author's provided excuse was flimsy at best? Nadia thinks she can't tell Thorne about his kid because a rival gang might use Benny against him because of Thorne's gang involvement. She says she wants to keep Benny out of the cross hairs of those who might go after Thorne. Uh...honey boo? So are you. And no, I'm not talking about her father having once been a mob boss. I'm talking about how she's a part of the "Co-op pirates" and fucking STEALING FROM GANGS. Her reasons for doing so may be altruistic, but she's still stealing money, drugs, electronics, sweatshop workers...FROM ALL THE GANGS (yes, more than one). You think a rival gang possibly going after Benny to get to Thorne is worse than you inviting the wrath of ALL THE FUCKING GANGS? Seriously? Get the fuck outta here.

I was honestly so pissed off that that was her stupid excuse for not telling Thorne that he had a child. She says that it's a "blessing in disguise" and that she "dodged a bullet" when she didn't tell Thorne that she was pregnant. She's so TSTL, I swear. She makes it harder for Thorne, because he doesn't know about this child's existence and how it could be held against him, she judges him for his gang involvement, yet she has a gang past (and entire life, really) and is also actively stealing from gangs at the moment. Where in the hell does she get off trying to justify not telling Thorne about his child? And the author never acknowledges any of this even once! She simply has Nadia concentrate on Thorne's gang connections, deciding it's her prerogative to deprive him of the opportunity to be in his child's life because why the fuck not, right?

Throughout the book, both Richard and Kara keep telling her to tell Thorne about Benny. She continues to refuse. Even after Thorne goes out on a limb, and against his own gang, and saves their stupid asses, she still refuses. Nadia and Richard are Public Enemy No. 1 to the gangs, but she still doesn't confide in Thorne. I find it hard to believe someone's claim of love (in this case, Nadia's) while keeping such a big secret. She knows Thorne's had a shit life and that he has difficulty believing in people and trusting them. He believes that no one realistically cares for him. She acknowledges that he'd probably believe that Benny does:

She so craved to share Benny with him. She wished he could see how amazing his kid was. And Benny was so affectionate, what would Thorne do with that heady flow of love and acceptance? In spite of all that had happened between them, in spite of the hotel soap bit and everything else, she wanted that love for Thorne. Thorne didn't trust when adults were kind to him, but Benny was pure and good, and never a lie. Thorne would know that.

Yet she still keeps Benny a secret for a large part of the book, using some flimsy excuse. She doesn't even give Thorne the opportunity to accept or reject the child, simply taking the choice upon herself because he hurt her feelings a little once upon a time. She decides she has every right to hide it from him out of spite. And yes, I do believe it was spite because she never provides a believable reason throughout the entire book, other than when she came to tell him about her pregnancy and he rejected her before she could.

(view spoiler)

Anyway. The whole book was stupid, really. The entire problem centres around the good ol' BIG MISUNDERSTANDING. And without resolving anything, she's panting after him and they're falling into bed together within a day (not kidding). She's pathetic. The author should've just cut out any parts that include her token resistances and just have her throwing herself at Thorne's feet chanting "I don't love myself!" because that's pretty much what she did when giving in.

That time he rejected her in the past and hurt her feelings?

Thorne couldn't leave her. "You can't leave me. You can't, you just can't!"

It was then that the coldness had come over him. "I'm already gone," he'd growled.

She'd told him he couldn't be gone, and she was just leading into her news when he'd grabbed onto her shoulders and looked right into her eyes, interrupting her. "When you leave a hotel, do you take the soap?"

"What?"

"Do you take the soap that you used?" he asked. "It's a simple question."

She remembered trembling. She knew where he was going with it, but like an idiot, she answered, because she kind of couldn't believe it. "N-no."

"Then why do you imagine I would take you with me?"

Shock settled over her like a haze. Her grief had been warm, but her shock was cold. Angry.

"Why would I ever do that?" he'd asked.

And yeah, he said this for her own good blah blah blah. Except when she falls into bed with him, she doesn't know that. She still believes that this is genuinely how he feels about her. And she's all too happy to pant

after him and roll around with him and lust after him. When she thinks he's being territorial about her, she feels "a ping of hope" at it. And this is BEFORE she knows he didn't mean what he said above! This is before he's apologized or made up for anything! This is while he's still taunting her. And she even feels upset that Thorne might think she's involved with Richard. She literally has zero self-respect.

There was one another part of Nadia's love for Thorne that irritated me. She wonders at one point why she still loves him, and I was wondering the same damn thing. When he was involved in her father's gang, she hypothesizes that he must've known about the sweatshops and prostitution (which was a hidden part of her father's operations). And even thinking that he might've known about it, she still loves him. I'm sorry, but what the fuck? If I found out that someone I cared for was involved in (or even just had knowledge of) sweatshops and sexual slavery, that'd be the quickest damn way to kill my love for them. Yet she's still melting at his touch and lustng for him every chance she gets. Seriously, go fuck check yourself. And at this point, she doesn't know that he's NOT involved, she just feels that he might be...yet she still loves him. Even after knowing that her mother was forced into that same sexual slavery and sweatshop work.

The only positives I have for the book come from Thorne, which was rather surprising because, in the previous book, he was the douche who was willing to hand over an abused spouse to her abuser all for the greater good of mankind! I actually ended up liking Thorne as I read on, but that might be because I felt bad for his entire ~tortured soul~ thing. I was pleasantly surprised that he was celibate for the two years they're apart, saying that "no woman but Nadia was worth fucking" (so poetically put, I know). When he thinks that Nadia had moved on after him and had a kid with another person, he says he doesn't begrudge her that. So I liked that attitude, too.

The only thing I didn't like about him afterwards is this whole "lovehate" thing he said he had going with Nadia. He was like a wounded animal, lashing out at those around him after he felt that Nadia had hurt him. Just like I didn't believe Nadia's love for Thorne when keeping Benny a secret, I didn't believe Thorne's love for Nadia. I just find it hard to believe that a person would be more than happy to hurt the person they supposedly love after they feel they've been hurt, not even bothering to talk to or question them. That's not love to me.

Anyway, just like the other books. The story takes place over a handful of days (probably three, though I didn't keep track) and the heroine is put into a damsel in distress situation. Yes, like always. Which is even more hilarious in this book because she was raised amongst gangs and knows how to use guns and blah blah blah...but the author just had to find some way to put her into a situation that needed saving, didn't she? And more than one at that.

Anyway, things are resolved, no problem, and then they deal with the baddies and things are good. HEA.

The last issue I had with this book was Bruce fucking Lee. Thorne has some sort of weird Bruce Lee obsession. This damn guy kept mentioning Bruce Lee! It was all Bruce Lee said this, Bruce Lee said that, blah blah blah...like, do you even have a thought of your own or what? Can you not function without regurgitating other people's thoughts? He even thinks about Bruce Lee when he's going to jump into the sack with Nadia! Who the hell does that??

And then because of this Bruce Lee obsession, he also does Chinese calligraphy. It's never explained how or

why he started this, just that he does. At one point, Nadia asks if he's learning Japanese, and Thorne corrects her and says "It's Chinese." I found his need to make this distinction hilarious because, later on, he talks about writing the characters, and how "These last ones should be the wildest and most reckless of all, in the tradition of the Samurais going into battle." Which...what the hell? Samurai aren't Chinese! They're Japanese!

Mandi Schreiner says

It's going to be hard for another book this year to impress me more than this one. *Into the Shadows* has great suspense. It has a tortured, broken, scarred hero who is an undercover villain. It has a heroine who is a former party hostess to her villain father who now kicks butt. And it has dirty, dirty sex. A damn fine combination.

Thorne had a very bad childhood, and has turned into a lethal, skilled fighter because of it. His sister was sold by his drugged out father to ten men, who ended up murdering her. Thorne has made it his life's goal to track down these ten men and kill them. There is one left, a man named Jerrod who is the leader of Hangman, a ruthless criminal gang who launders money, and trades in weapons and drugs. Long ago, Thorne met a man named Dax, who is the head of an undercover team of agents called the Associates . Dax needs someone undercover to rise up in Hangman to learn the names of the government officials who are being bribed by Hangman. Thorne needs to rise in Hangman to get close and kill Jerrod – it's the perfect partnership. So Thorne enters Hangman, and works his way up to number two. But Jerrod isn't the top guy for nothing. He is a sociopath who starts getting very suspicious of his number two.

Nadia grew up with a father who was the head bad guy, so to say. Once he dies, the criminal gangs divide into four groups (one being Hangman). As a young adult, Nadia and her sister would play hostess to her father's many parties. She was nicknamed The Party Princess, and would flirt and make all those criminals feel right at home. Thorne witnessed Nadia night after night, and his lust for her grew and grew. But Thorne never feels worthy enough of her attention, until one night he sees her crying on a roof. He approaches her and from here on out they start an extremely passionate and kinky love affair. Until it all goes south, as such passion tends to do.

Now two years later, Nadia is raising her young son and learns her mother might still be alive and horrifyingly, working in one of the criminal gang's sweatshops. Along with her bodyguard, they start raiding sweatshops, freeing the women and searching for her mother. Meanwhile, Thorne tries desperately to make Jerrod believe he is loyal to him, which eventually leads him back to Nadia.....

So begins what is such a suspenseful, passionate, action filled story. Thorne and Nadia start with what Thorne describes as being in 'lovehate.' He lovehates her. He totally loves her, but hates her and the events that led to them breaking up. He doesn't have much self-worth, even when he was with her, so it's almost like he thrives in being in pain. He likes to be degraded and called bad names (in bed). Nadia found this fun and exciting at first, but now a few years later, she feels calling him a low life thug so he will have sex with her just sad.

I think what this author does so well is get us into the characters heads. This book has some extremely tense moments (the villain Jerrod is so creepy). As we sit in Thorne's head as he tries to outsmart Jerrod, the

author brings the reader right into the room. We are right there with Thorne or Nadia as they face danger. And it's realistic danger. Crane sets up the arc so well, that as it unfolds, I did not want to put my kindle down. Seriously, the villains in this book are ruthless. I also love that her characters are not perfect or even want to be perfect. Nadia has moments of not being the best mother, handing off her kid to her sister who loves the kid, but isn't necessarily the best person. Thorne is a killer. He kills bad guys but still, he has no hesitation when it comes to killing someone.

Since Thorne didn't have a mother growing up, and lived with his druggie father, rarely going to school and having to survive on his own, he never picked up on the way families work, or even people in 'normal' relationships work. When he was dating Nadia years ago, when her father was still alive, there were times we saw his vulnerable side:

Thorne was thinking about two years ago, stretched out on the white fuzzy rug in front of the grand fireplace with Nadia, his hand moving over her hip in the firelight, his eyes on her. Three blissful months they spent together. She was the messed-up Party Princess, and he was the lowlife loser.

He flashed on all the stupid things he'd done during that time. Like going to movies alone to figure out how men were suppose to act with women they loved. What shit they would say and do. Because what the fuck did he know about couples? He'd even read one of the Hunter S. Thompson books she loved so much.

Of course, then he starts shooting up the rug they made love on two years ago, so let's just say he still has a lot of issues. He is such a broken hero. And later when Thorne thinks they might be in love but there is a miscommunication and he ends up thinking he is just a plaything for her, his yearning to be degraded grows even more. I think this shows Thorne's romantic mindset well, 'the game' being Nadia calling him a lowlife, loser etc....

Even when things were going badly, if one of them would start the game, there was only one way to finish it.

Because that kind of disdainful talk was like a Pavlovian bell to him, starting up the snarl and hunger inside his heart, and he'd go to her and tear into her and maul her and kiss her, and she'd grab his hair and open to him.

Even after he'd discovered he was an interchangeable part to her, he'd still go to her like that. He could resist kindness because he knew it was always fake, but he could never resist her disdain because it was real and raw.

And it got him hot.

She had daddy villain issues. She was using him. He lovehated her. It was a dark little piece of clockwork they had going. Dark and completely explosive.

Nadia goes from 'Party Princess' to real-life mommy. She becomes responsible, and matures. When she is reunited with Thorne, and he starts asking her to call him lowlife again, she doesn't want to play that game. She wants something more real in her life. It hurts her so much that he can't move past their game. It shames her to go back to it. I think it's tricky to get the ratio of suspense to romance correct in romantic suspense books, but Crane nails it. While I would say this isn't an erotic book, the sex scenes are dirty with a kinky edge. They are gritty and fit the violent world these two live in well. Let me give you an example of Nadia telling a story to her bodyguard, Richard.

“And then his eyes move from the tear to my lips. And I’m thinking, yes.” She waited, let the silence be there. “And then he kisses me full-on...” She could still feel it, all that desperate, magical, full-on passion, like he’d been raised in the wild or something and didn’t know proper kissing or how to be gentle. Maybe just didn’t want to. She’d liked that. “Like a thousand stampeding horses. Like his social mask got ripped clear off and he was just this rawness.”

“Well, that is hot as fuck,” Richard whispered.

“And I grab onto his leather jacket sleeves.” She got onto the bed and grabbed onto Richard’s sleeves. And I pull him to me, and I’m thinking, just...invade me. That was my mood. Fuck me out of myself. Love me. Something. Anything. And the way he looks at me—” She gazed into his eyes, trying to re-create the intoxication of Thorne’s gaze.

“You think it was the crying?”

“Definitely. That’s what drew him. He walks across the roof and...” She gasped out the breath again, re-enacting the re-enactment now. “And I tell him he’s a lowlife, and he fucking mauls me.” She dropped her voice. “It was one of the single most hottest experiences of my life, Richard. One of the single most.”

Richard blew out a breath. “Is it wrong that I want to fuck him now, too?”

You don’t need to read the previous books in this series – each has a separate hero and heroine and storyline. Although I did love the previous book and you briefly meet Thorne.

Into the Shadows is suspenseful, gritty, violent, sexy – everything I want in a romantic suspense.

Rating: A

AH says

Initial Thoughts: Book 3 of the *Associates* series was a thrill ride! Take one strong and damaged operative on an undercover operation in the gangs and add one daughter of a mob boss on a mission of her own and you get sizzling sexual tension.

The Review

Wow. This was a thrill ride. If you have not yet started Ms. Crane’s *The Associates* series, you don’t know what you are missing. This is the third book in that series, however you can read each book as a standalone without really missing any important details.

In this installment, Thorne has infiltrated the Hangman gang and is presently number 2 in control. His deep cover is jeopardized by a series of thefts at some of the gang’s warehouses. Thorne needs to find Victor Volkov’s CD detailing all of his gang businesses. Problem is, Victor’s daughter Nadia found the CD and is using it to find her mother, who is being held in a gang run sweat shop.

Thorne works alone which is probably an asset in his world. He idolizes Bruce Lee and uses many of his idol’s moves in order to prepare and accomplish his dealings. I liked those Bruce Lee moments – they were very Zen-like. Thorne has a damaged past – he watched his sister die and then was left to die in the desert,

surrounded by scorpions.

Nadia Volkov aka The Party Princess has her own agenda. She has assembled a team and they are raiding sweat shops and freeing the women. Each raid puts Nadia closer to finding her mother, yet they also put her in increased danger. Nadia's raids also put Thorne in danger as he is the prime suspect for the raids.

Thorne and Nadia have a torrid past and when they meet again, their attraction is still there. The sexual tension sizzles as the two of them try to deny their feelings. Plus there's secrets!

This was a smoking hot read. Thorne is clearly in love with Nadia, but he is unable to express that love. He calls his feelings for Nadia "lovehate" and he plays all sorts of games where he calls himself a loser. In the past, Nadia played along, but she's looking for more.

If you enjoy romantic suspense novels and have not yet started this series, what are you waiting for?

A copy of this book was provided by the author for review purposes.

Review posted on Badass Book Reviews. Check it out!

SOS Bookshelf Bingo - Armed & Ready Shelf (abs guy is holding a gun)

Anita says

I really enjoyed the first two books in this series, but this one just isn't doing it for me. Improbable situations and over the top characters, not to mention angst off the charts.

Nadia Volkov, aka Party Princess, is a woman on a mission and she isn't going to let anything, or anyone stand in her way. Her father was a gangster in Miami and when he died his empire was split up among other gangs called the Quartet. His empire ran so smoothly that the other gangs just stepped right in, run it as a co-op and didn't change a thing (totally unbelievable). Two years later she finds the mother lode, a CD with the details of how his empire is run. She also finds a picture of a young woman holding her as an baby. Nadia had been told her mother had died, but she was actually a sex slave. Nadia vows to find and rescue her.

Thorne McKelvey was Victor's brutal henchman and Nadia's savage lover. He is also an Associate undercover for his own personal revenge and to help Dax take down the gangs. Their sex games and role play fed a deep need in Thorne until he overhears what he believes Nadia really thinks of him. His own self worth is so low he readily believes what he hears.

A lot can change in two years. Nadia is now a mother to a wonderful little boy and a woman bent on taking down the sex traders who have her mother. Thorne has risen to be the second in command of the ruthless gang, The Henchmen. He has no room in his life for Nadia, in fact it could be very dangerous for her. Nadia knows exactly what Thorne is and he is not a fit father for her son, so she is just going to keep that little tidbit secret. These two bent people are destined for each other and when Nadia really needs Thorne, he can't refuse.

May Mostly Romance says

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Ian says

Thorne is the second in command of a brutal gang that deals in human misery, everything from human trafficking to drugs. When a number of their warehouses are raided, suspicion falls on him and he finds himself needing to hunt down the raiders or end up in a shallow grave.

Two years earlier, Nadia was in love with Thorne. Then after her gangster father was killed he kicked her to the curb and moved on to another gang, the Hangmen. All that is left of him is her 2 year old son and she will do anything to protect him. Then she learns that her mother who she thought was dead is alive and slave

working in one of the Hangmen gang's sweatshop. Together with a group of mercenaries who will take loot as pay and the bodyguard her father assigned to her they begin raiding the sweatshops searching for her mother.

When Thorne shows up at her home searching for a CD containing inside information on the gang's activities she knows the noose is tightening. She steps up her plans to find her mother but also needs to make sure Thorne never finds out about his child. What she doesn't know is that Thorne is deep undercover and working for the Associates. Alone and vulnerable he needs to trust someone if he wants to save the woman he has always loved.

I guess it says something that *Into the Shadows* took so many words to summarise. Carolyn Crane is like that. Her books aren't easily defined. There is a wonderful oddness that comes through her books, even her romantic suspense. Honestly I wouldn't be surprised to turn the page and encounter a giant seismic ray gun that will bring nations to their knees.

She always surprises me and that's why Carolyn Crane has fast become one of my favorite authors. *Into the Shadows* is very good romantic suspense with quite a healthy dose of steamy sexy for those who enjoy that.

Many thanks to CrushStar Multimedia and Netgalley for providing me with this ARC

Jen says

Thorne and Nadia

Seriously, I don't think CC can do wrong in my eyes. I love her writing. It is raw and quirky at the same time. I need MORE of this series. Like tomorrow. Full review on *Fiction Vixen Book Reviews*

Into The Shadows is book three in Carolyn Crane's The Associates series. Into the Shadows is also the continuation of my love affair with Ms. Crane and pretty much everything she writes. As far as I am concerned someone needs to chain her to a chair and only allow writing to happen. Dramatic? Maybe. But that is how I feel about her books.

Nadia Volkov is the Party Princess. Her life has been based on being the flighty daughter of a crime lord. She knew what she was viewed as and she played it up. When Thorne McKelvey came along she saw the first man who might want her for something other than what was on the surface. She fell for Thorne and she fell hard. Thorne did his best to avoid Nadia but eventually he couldn't stay away and they came together fast and furious.

“

“Not good enough for the Party Princess.” He was getting into it too much. He whispered one bit of truth to her after another. “But I don’t care. I’ll pull you and your perfect everything down into the dirt with me. I’ll dirty you up just by being near, like a pit bull, drooling over you.”

Their intense relationship was what made it hurt so much worse when Thorne turned Nadia away. Thorne overheard a conversation with Nadia and her sister and took everything the wrong way. It ended up giving him the strength to leave her when the time came for him to take his place in a long term undercover

operation. Thorne is a deeply buried agent working to bring down the four gangs that were leftover after Nadia's father was killed. What he doesn't know is that when he leaves her, Nadia is pregnant with his child.

Two years later Thorne is back in Nadia's life looking for a disc. He is #2 in one of the four gangs and being accused of multiple heists involving the other three. He is really being framed by his boss, a man who recognizes Thorne's deadliness, and he must prove he isn't betraying his fellow members. The only way he can prove his innocence is to find a disc Nadia's father left in the house where they are living. This will put him back in Nadia's life but he has to survive in order to bring down the gangs.

Nadia is hiding two big secrets, Thorne's son and the fact that she is responsible for the gang heists. Somehow she just knows he won't recognize his child but she doesn't like knowing she is the reason Thorne is being accused of things he isn't doing. She won't give up going after the gangs though because in one of those locations is the mother she was told had died. She will not stop until she finds her and takes her from that awful place. She decides to plant the disc for Thorne to find but what she doesn't count on is the instant connection she again feels with the man upon seeing him.

“

She snorted. “Can you act any more fucked up?”

He sparkled at her, all devilish. His dark lashes gave the effect of pirate eyeliner. Everything about him was disreputable.

With so many things going on Nadia and Thorne have to protect their child, rescue Nadia's mother, keep Thorne from being killed within his gang, bring down the bad guys and find their HEA. How they do this in 300 pages is for the reader to find out!

Into the Shadows was quite a ride. I always look forward to Carolyn Crane books and this one lived up to my expectations. This book was raw, dirty and quirky. It was the perfect mix of suspense and sexiness. Some of the scenes are disturbingly dark but they work so well with the story. Thorne needs Nadia to treat him like trash but this is finally the time Nadia wants to show him what he means to her. The push and pull between the pair is sexy and so well done.

The Associates series has become one of my favorite romantic suspense series. The good news is there are several characters still with stories to be told and I am especially excited for the head dude, Dax. I cannot wait for more of these stories. Lovers of romantic suspense books should check out this series. You won't be disappointed. Final grade- B+

Favorite Quote:

“

“There are so many layers to our fucked up layer cake, I don't know how to untangle it,”

WhiskeyintheJar/Kyraryker says

4.5 stars

Warning, I liked this book a lot and when that happens, I tend to want to add everything I possibly can to the

review to make others love it too. The consequence is a long review, I tried to edit myself but alas, sorry.

Into the Shadows is book three in The Associates series, would reading book one and two enhance your reading experience of this one, yes. However, as someone who didn't read the previous ones, I never got grumpy over feeling lost; the author does a great job of giving you the facts and backstory without info dumping. If you followed my reading updates, you know the first three chapters had me giddy with how great the writing and story was.

Nadia was a mob party princess but a little over a year ago her father died, she became a mother, and found out the mother she was lead to believe was dead is in fact alive.... working in a sweat shop....that Nadia's father had sold her too. Yep, Nadia's world has been turned upside down. Oh, and hey also, Nadia's baby daddy used to work for her father but is now the number two for another gang, the Hangman, and doesn't know he is the father to Nadia's son. Thorne, the baby daddy, may be the number two for the Hangman but he is also undercover and has been for years. He was recruited by the super secret group The Associates, Thorne was on a revenge mission to kill all the men involved with the death of his sister and The Associates had the name of the last remaining man Thorne wanted. The identity of the remaining man turned out to be Jerrod, the new leader of the Hangman, so in exchange The Associates reveal Jerrod to Thorne, he kills Jerrod, takes over Hangman, and works from inside gathering information about dirty cops or government officials working for Hangman, and gives the intel to The Associates.

Intermission as you process that ;)

Ok, so back to Nadia, she has recruited her bodyguard and a group of mercenaries to hit sweatshops in hopes of finding her mother, after her father's death she discovered a CD that had all this information on it. Turns out every time they hit one of these sweatshops, Thorne has no alibi. This now leads us back to Thorne. Jerrod has been getting some bad vibes from Thorne and decides to frame him for the sweatshop robberies. Thorne thinks the only way to clear his name is to go to Nadia's father's house and search it for information on the sweatshops to try and determine when and where the next sweatshop may be hit so he can catch the actual people committing the robberies in the act. Thus, this brings us to Nadia and Thorne.

As soon as Thorne bursts into Nadia's home saying "Honey, I'm home!" you know the sparks are going to fly and they do. Thorne basically had no family life to speak of, so he doesn't know how to express or understand normal human emotions, trust is as foreign to him as Mars. I was highly impressed with how beautifully and steadily the author portrayed this. He constantly is questioning other people's good intentions toward him and thankfully realistically, never makes a miraculous recovery. The author kept him true to his character and because of this, you just may cry a little on the inside for him (and you may think back to a certain character named Zsadists). Nadia is overshadowed by him a bit but her transformation from a carefree party princess to strong and steady mother and woman on a mission will have you firmly on her side. You'll want to speed read to finally see these two together, have Thorne discover he is a father, and have them get over their Big Misunderstanding (hey it's suspense but it's still romance).

There was never a dull moment in this book for me; really I couldn't have asked for more from a romantic suspense story. As you've read, there is a lot to the suspense arc, not overwhelming though, but the romance side also holds its own with steamy sex scenes that have a dash of dirty talk. There were moments when this story was intensely deep and dark and then the dialogue would have a sense of quirkiness to it. At first, it threw me a little off but I ultimately liked it. The only thing I have a mini complaint about was how awesomely suspenseful the ending was to only have it wrap up so quickly and it felt like it ended so abruptly. Honestly, this could have been a personal problem because I liked the story so much and wanted it to keep going. This is the only Carolyn Crane book I have ever read, so I can't quite add her to the small list of

authors I constantly recommend to people but I'm definitely going back and reading the rest of this series. If you love romantic suspense, this book is a must for you.

I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

Linda says

As reviewed on Read Our Lips:

Thorne's been working undercover for the Associates for years and he's finally getting close to his endgame, the revenge he's been craving for years, when another craving returns to his life.

As daughter to a notorious top dog, Nadia was used to spending time with various henchmen, but one effected her in a way no one else could.

When Thorne left her, two years ago, he did so without knowing what he really gave up on.

Now Nadia's got another agenda, one that will bring changes for everyone.

A kickass heroine and a hero that believes he's lost everything but his urge for revenge. Nonstop action from the first page to the last.

Action, smutty fluff, feelings and one mans redemption.

Awesome series!!

Complimentary copy provided by author for an honest review
