



Staged

Kim Fielding

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Once the second-prize winner on *My Slave's Got Talent*, Sky Blue has spent the past few years singing at a failing New York nightclub. While Sky has never had control over his fate, his life seems to take a turn for the worse when he's torn from the familiar comfort of performing and sold to a rich and enigmatic man.

Morgan Wallace takes his newly purchased slave to San Francisco, his intentions unclear. On the one hand, he treats Sky with more kindness than Sky has ever known—treats him like a real person. On the other hand, he shares Sky at parties hosted by his sadistic new friends.

A confused slave is an endangered slave, and Sky isn't even sure of his master's real name. Is he Morgan Wallace, wealthy and cruel, or Mackenzie Webster, caring and compassionate? Caught between hope, fear, and an undeniably growing attachment, Sky struggles to untangle which parts are real and which are merely a performance. His future, his heart, and even his life may depend on it.

Reader discretion advised. This title contains the following sensitive themes:

dubious consent

explicit violence

non-consent

Staged Details

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Author : Kim Fielding

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From Reader Review Staged for online ebook

Karla says

This author has been hit or miss for me but this one really wowed me. Recently sold to a new master, Sky does not understand his purpose. His new master Mac is kind to him in private and cruel when at parties. Sky knows there is more going on than he knows, but Mac can't trust him to reveal the truth.

Joseph Tonlet says

Thoroughly enjoyable! I sincerely hope the series continues.

Note: rating is for the series as a whole (thus far, .05, 1, 2, and 3) rather than an individual book.

Bree Cheese says

Loved this. My favorite of the series so far.

Can be read as a standalone book.

Ami says

Hmmm ... I liked it enough but I didn't love it. I finished it; it was able to capture my attention. But, I never really felt that the relationship was mutual -- especially from Sky's perspective. At least Sky didn't tell "I love you" back to his Master *shrugs*. I also kept imagining Sky to be much younger than his 32 years of age, which totally made up for some weird reading when I was reminded that Sky was that age.

I picked this as part of my personal reading challenge; it wasn't as *dark* as I thought it would. Most of the torture scenes are short and not as intense. I liked the *twist* when it comes to the sexual preference in the bedroom.

I'm marking it as 'okay' for now.

Part of my Personal Challenge 2017 ; Category 4: Dark/Dub-Con/Non-Con/Slavery

Dee Wy says

4.5 stars - I can always count on this author to give me a story with lots of feeling and I find myself having a great deal of empathy for her characters. After buying Sky as his slave, Mac warned him that there would be some tough times ahead, but couldn't tell him more than that. As best he could, Mac was apologizing in advance for what he needed Sky to do. To the reader there were clues that Mac was a good guy, but you can't help but be upset at Sky's suffering and pissed at Mac.

It helped the reader accept what happened, knowing the world they lived in was partly to blame. Slaves were often mistreated and suffered greatly while free people felt they deserved what they got. There is also a small BDSM element in the story, but overall, it's a human story in an unkind world. The ending left me with good feelings about both their futures. Great read!

?? Michaelle ♡?? says

4.5 Stars

Oh gawd, this book was everything, *everything* I needed right now.

Adam says

BR with Cupcake!

I haven't read the preceding books in the Belonging series yet, so I wasn't sure what to expect in this alternate universe where slavery still exists in modern Western society. However, 'Staged' works perfectly fine as a standalone. Kim Fielding, as always, does an excellent job with the world-building, portraying this alternate San Francisco and how it came to be.

Though this book revolves around slavery, and readers get a front-row seat to the torture that Sky suffers at the hands of Morgan's friends, it isn't as dark as I thought it might be. This is in large part because Morgan, despite the mystery and contradictions that surround him, clearly does care for Sky, and tries to minimize the pain he suffers.

That care, of course, doesn't make Sky's situation any better, but it does add some hope to the story.

I immediately connected to Sky, and I think it would be hard not to. Despite his circumstances, he has a strength in him that refuses to bend. He knows what he wants, even though he's been told all his life that he deserves nothing. It was difficult to read what he went through, but Sky doesn't let the abuse he suffers break him, and comes out stronger in the end.

Sky and Morgan's relationship takes a while to develop. They begin as master and slave, and then become tentative friends. At home, Morgan doesn't use Sky, and instead treats him like an equal. The two spend a lot of time together - cooking, exercising, watching movies, and just talking. It's during this close proximity that they begin falling for each other.

I thought Kim Fielding did a very good job balancing Sky and Morgan's feelings for one another with the reality of their situation as slave and owner. Both Morgan and Sky recognize that there can't be anything between them while one of them holds all of the power.

Despite that power dynamic and the violent world they live in, Sky and Morgan's relationship is sweet. Both men find in each other someone they can be honest and open with, and around whom they can be who they truly are. It was easy to root for Morgan and Sky.

There's also a mystery angle in this book. I won't give anything away, but I think if you pay attention it's not the hard to figure out what's going in. Even so, the few twists made for a good story.

'Staged' is at times a hard book to read, but I think the ending is worth it. If you're looking for a slave fic that delivers a sweet happy ever after, I'd recommend this book.

Ije the Devourer of Books says

I generally really enjoy this author's writing and I did enjoy this one but not as much as some of her other work.

Set in the Belonging series in a modern-day alternate universe, we meet Sky Blue who is a slave in a world where slavery is legal. This is a dark story but the darkness is presented in a clever way, almost pleasant, sometimes gentle. The story has a really great way of portraying a society in which slavery is the norm all over the world and freemen can condemn themselves to slavery if they commit crimes.

Sky is a singer. He is owned by a night club and entertains customers but this changes when his owners start losing money and he is sold to the mysterious and enigmatic Morgan Wallace who treats him kindly one minute but allows him to be brutalised by others the next.

Morgan Wallace is not like other slave owners or freemen Sky has known. In private Morgan allows Sky a great degree of freedom to learn, to question and to challenge, but in public he allows him to be humiliated even though Sky can see that Morgan is affected by this humiliation and brutalisation.

As Sky ponders his own slavery and his growing desire for freedom, he is deeply perplexed by this man who has two facades, two names and a hunger for sexual submission. He knows there is far much more to Morgan than meets the eye and he also recognises that his private relationship with Morgan is far deeper than a normal slave/master relationship should be.

As time goes on and things come to a head, Sky realises that he will have to step beyond his fears in order to respond to both the public and private faces of Morgan Wallace.

The story is well written and I really liked the two main characters and their relationship together. I just

thought it was a little too predictable for me. I knew what was going to happen very early on. I still enjoyed it and it is a good story, just not one of my favourites from this author.

Many thanks to the author and to Riptide Publishing who provided this copy via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Kim says

This book came about when I read the previous two books in the Belonging 'Verse--an alternate universe much like our own, but where slavery is legal. A huge plot bunny hopped right up to me. His name is Sky Blue, and he once came in second on My Slave's Got Talent. I was thrilled when I received permission to write in the universe, and I had a wonderful time. Now I'm excited to share it with you!

Staged is a bit of a departure from my usual... only not so much. Like most of my books, it features unusual heroes, authentic emotions, and a strong sense of place. And it has romance and a happy ending. It's a slave story and therefore a bit darker than many of my books. But if you've read my Ennek trilogy and The Pillar, you know the consequences of slavery are something I've explored before. This time, I've looked at some of the ramifications of what slavery would mean in modern day San Francisco.

Incidentally, Staged can easily be read as a standalone. But I encourage you to read the others as well--they're amazing.

I hope you enjoy this visit to the Belonging 'Verse as much as I have.

Jo * Smut-Dicktd * says

I find this world endlessly fascinating - and I hope we get more books set in it. This was a really engaging book to read. I liked both MC's and the stark way the world is presented really brought it all home. There is a much better sense for how the world works - which I appreciate. This is dark at times - though ultimately it provides a good ending. I thought the contrasts here were marvelously done - you start to see things from multiple points of view. It's the two guys though that take center stage.

Barb ~rede-2-read~ says

ARC provided by the publisher through Net Galley in exchange for an impartial review.

Caution: This review contains descriptions that *some* readers may consider spoilers.

Sky Blue was born a slave to a slave mother and an unknown father, or at least unproven—his mother suspected that Jonny Walsh, legendary singer, was the free man who fathered Sky. But since a slave has no rights, Sky can only internally cherish the fact that he looks and sings like Jonny, but he can never reveal his suspicions.

His good looks and singing ability have kept him in the entertainment industry for most of his adult life, though his ownership has changed hands a number of times. Shocked when he's suddenly sold once again, he's bought by a handsome older man who doesn't act as if he has a real purpose in owning Sky. The enigmatic, broody, muscular man doesn't even seem to know how to treat a slave—Sky is treated kindly, fed well, and encouraged to exercise, so he's pretty surprised. Even more, when the man encourages Sky to read to alleviate his boredom and later teaches Sky how to use the Internet, Sky is hesitant to trust his reaction to the man, assuming his master is setting him up for a fall.

Morgan Wallace is, in fact, a man on a mission. He simply refuses to reveal that mission to Sky. But when his mission forces him to take Sky to a party hosted by a businessman known to be a sadist, he's concerned about the treatment Sky may receive. And his reservations are well-founded because he has to beat Sky to maintain his cover and then stand by while another Dom uses his whip on Sky's back and then proceeds to rape him.

Bringing Sky back home to his apartment and caring for him as if he was sorry about what happened makes Sky inordinately confused. Who is this man who owns him? How can he revel in Sky's misery one minute and be contrite and caring in the next?

On the surface, this story fits into the universe where slaves have no hope of freedom and no right to care or think or act independently. It's a universe first created by Rachel Haimowitz in *Anchored* and Alexander Voinov in *Counterpunch*. But it's below the surface where the real story takes place. Sky is like a flower whose petals are slowly unfurling as he experiences someone caring for and about him for the first time. He's praised and given positive affirmations on his intellect, his singing, and his strength. At one point Morgan tells him: *"God when you hum to yourself or smile, it's like a heavy burden lifted off my heart."* His level of self-perception, his outlook on his environment, and his desire for freedom all grow and expand under Morgan's care and nurturing. And eventually he also discovers that slaves can love and be loved in return.

Morgan Wallace, aka Mackenzie Webster, also changes his outlook during the story, becoming more self-reflective, tapping into a greater inner strength, and ultimately finding his heart has the capacity for unconditional love. He learns that his job does not define him; he can freely give up control in moments of passion; and he can fight for what he feels is best for the man he loves.

A number of words and phrases come to mind to describe this amazing story but powerfully moving sums it up best for me as it engaged both my mind and my heart, interweaving both in a story fraught with intrigue, drama, moments of tender poignancy, and conversely, outright cruelty. It challenged my intellect while it warmed my heart, and though there are scenes of graphic violence, they were kept to a minimum but were necessary to instill the sense of danger and the cruelty of being without a voice in an otherwise free world. And there are many more scenes of each main character's introspection as well as their philosophical discussions and heartfelt confessions of each other's strengths and positive attributes than there are of the negative and violent scenes.

This story reached deep below the surface to yank up those emotions I generally keep well hidden, and I'm grateful for the experience of becoming involved with these characters. I very highly recommend *Staged* to those who are looking for more than a simple romance.

From the blurb:

Reader discretion advised. This title contains the following sensitive themes: dubious consent, explicit violence, and non-consent.

Listed as part of the *Belonging* series, however, this can very easily be read as a standalone as there are no continuing characters from the other books.

Angie Elle says

Thank you to RIPTIDE PUBLISHING and Netgalley for providing a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Just seeing a BDSM novel at this point makes me want to yell my safeword, so I'm not sure why I requested **Staged**. But I'm glad I did. BDSM may have played a small part in this book, but the bigger picture was being trapped in your circumstances with no way out. Sky was an interesting character. In a world where slavery was legal, he'd never known freedom and didn't even know why he was enslaved. With the voice of an angel, Sky was forced to perform night after night for a dwindling crowd. But that wasn't all Sky's slavery entailed. When his owners are in a financial bind, they're forced (I use this term loosely) to sell Sky, and he's taken away from all he's ever known. It's obvious that Morgan was a more complex character than Sky, even without Morgan's point of view – though I wish we'd gotten it. There was enough foreshadowing in this story to know what Morgan was doing (lacking the mystery the author may have been going for,) and I think his POV would have added a lot to this story. It was easy to see why Sky was enthralled with Morgan. He'd really been the only person who had ever shown any kindness to Sky, and I think that adoration may have been what drew Morgan right back to him. I liked the pacing of this story, and while I think each character was fleshed out nicely, again, I think Morgan's POV could have really added depth to this story. Morgan's torment, even through Sky's eyes, was tangible, and his desperation to do what was right made him such a good man. I thought this story ended in a realistic way, and I would definitely go back and read more from this series, and from this author.

This review was originally posted at Badass Book Reviews.

Tamara (?) says

This was... well, it was dark. I usually avoid these kinds of books but it was Kim Fielding so I decided to give it a try.

I don't enjoy reading graphic descriptions of violence and Fielding managed to have just enough so you're aware of and can feel the kind of treatment and abuse the MC's going through without making you want to puke your guts out.

I also loved that there was no Stockholm syndrome and that the MCs were aware they were gonna have to work some things out. Five stars.

Optimist ?King's Wench? & MANTIES Champion says

BR with The Adam!

4.25 Hearts

If you're not familiar with the Belonging Verse, it's AU wherein slavery was never abolished and has expanded to most of the world. Also, slavery has been instituted as a possible punishment for a crime. It baffles me how a government, any government could justify subjugating an entire family because of one person's crime. Then again, what's a "good" justification for enslaving people? That subjugation was more troubling for me in this book because the "BDSM" highlighted the disparity between slaves and freemen to horrify effect.

Trigger warnings-aside from the obvious, explicit violence and rape occur on page.

Mind the content warnings.

Sky is a born slave and was first sold at 8 yrs old. He's been a singer in a boy band and has been making his way most recently as a singer at a struggling supper club when he's sold to Mr. Burgess, slave dealer, who treats all his slaves like chattel. This plot point didn't really make sense to me. I'm assuming he buys and sells people to make a profit, so wouldn't you endeavor to make them more appealing rather than shoving them in a cell in a dark warehouse, feeding them inedible slop, dressing them in threadbare and dingy tunics and not allowing them to bathe?

Sky's then bought by Mr. Wallace and it's clear quickly that Morgan Wallace isn't a typical Master. He gives Sky atypical rules with impunity such as always telling the truth and asking for clarification if there's something he doesn't understand. He gives him freedoms he's never had before. Simple things like deciding for himself how to spend his time, letting him use the computer and buying him books.

"Do you think one person's pain makes another person's suffering less important?"

Along the way we get to know Wallace and his history. He may be free but he's suffered throughout the course of his life through poverty, marginalization and survived unthinkable tragedies. Those events have given him purpose, driven him to be the person he is and to fight for what he believes in.

The entire story is told from Sky's perspective and he finds himself attracted to Wallace despite the power differential and the abuse that he suffers at these "parties" held by Wallace's acquaintances who are monsters. Wallace makes it clear to Sky that he despises these people but he has no choice but to attend and bring Sky along, though he does try to bring him infrequently. Not to put too fine a point on it, but Sky's experiences are hellish and these people are psychopaths not sadists.

I won't give anything away because figuring out what was really going on was my favorite part of *Staged*. The plot's well constructed, held my attention throughout and packs a punch with its relevancy. Fielding did a superb job with the inherent power differential and how that precludes having a relationship with any hope of sustainability or longevity.

But that doesn't stop Wallace from falling for Sky.

“Because I want to. Because...God, when you hum to yourself or smile, it’s like a heavy burden lifted off my heart. Because you’re stronger than me and braver than me, and I’m fairly certain you’re smarter than me too. And because I want...I want to do what I can within the cage I’ve built us both.”

The sex is in the medium hot range but it did have a twist that I quite enjoyed. Quite.

“Suffering can be a gift. It can even be beautiful when it’s willingly taken, willingly given. But when it’s stolen, that’s an abomination.”

“You’re mine” [...] “Not forever. But right this minute, you are truly mine.”

The ending is hopeful. It’s not a firm HEA, but I think that’s the genius of Staged. Since it’s told exclusively through Sky, I didn’t feel anything more than attraction and care from him so a tacked on HEA would’ve felt disingenuous to me.

One nitpicky thing-the peeing. There was an inordinate amount of peeing. We all pee it's a part of life and some of it was pertinent to the plot, but I don't need to know every time a protagonist pees.

If the content warnings don't put you off and you're a fan of Fielding this could work for you.

An ARC was provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Tully Vincent says

LOVED this. I’ve not read any of the previous books in this series, but it can definitely be read as a standalone. I never once felt like I didn’t understand anything during reading this story.

I’ve owned book one for a while, but had not yet read it. But when I was offered the ARC of this one, now

way would I turn it down since I've enjoyed every single book I've read by this author. And yep, I loved it. Sucked me in from page one and was one of those rare books that I hated to put down and was almost sorry to see end. This isn't the first book in which this author has ventured to the dark side, but beware that there is non-con, violence, and some pretty horrific torture scenes to be found here.

Sky and Morgan/Mac are two of the most enthralling main characters I've read in a while. Sky is a slave in a world where folks say that slaves aren't like others, don't feel emotions the same, aren't fit to care for themselves. And yet Sky is, as Morgan/Mac says, just the most amazing person. He enthralled me from the beginning. The entire story is written from Sky's POV. Very often in single POV stories, at some point I find myself wanting to get into the head of the other character for more depth and insight, but that was never at all the case here. It was perfect the way it was written.

There were so many feels! It touched my heart and made me say "Awww", then turned around and horrified me. It also at parts alternately had me tears-eyed, irate, on the edge of my seat, and stupidly proud. Sky's personality really starts to unfold and bloom as he's allowed for the first time to experience all of the many bits and parts of life that were withheld from him which exhilarates and confuses him. He experiences TLC for the first time, but is understandably too confused and fearful to be able to trust in it. Watching him find pleasure and joy in small things and living in the moment even when he knows that more bad is coming because he has been warned to expect it. So poignant to see him learn in tiny sips what it feels like to be in control for short periods of time, to make decisions on his own, to read and search the net and learn things about the world. But it wasn't all feeling, as there are also many bits that made me think.

Morgan/Mac, a man who'd never owned a slave but had an awful childhood of his own driving him, also grows a lot in this book as he discovers that all he's accepted about slavery is wrong. And as he begins to lose his heart to a slave. Right from the start, he seems in awe of him. Throughout a lot of story, Morgan is left a bit of an enigma, and yet through Sky's narrations, we see his heart come out, see what kind of man he seems to be.

I'm going to stop as I don't want to go any more into the story. I definitely want to read the other one I own and revisit this world again soon. I just wish I could also revisit these characters—I didn't want to let them go.
