

MY HUSBAND. MY TORMENTOR.



VOW OF DECEPTION

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

RINA KENT

VOW OF DECEPTION

DECEPTION TRILOGY BOOK 1

RINA KENT

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To every one of us who defied logic and fell in love with villains.

AUTHOR NOTE

Hello reader friend,

If you haven't read my books before, you might not know this, but I write darker stories that can be upsetting and disturbing. My books and main characters aren't for the faint of heart.

Vow of Deception is the first book of a trilogy and is not standalone.

Deception Trilogy:

#0 [Dark Deception](#) (Free Prequel)

#1 [Vow of Deception](#)

#2 [Tempted by Deception](#)

#3 [Consumed by Deception](#)

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BLURB

My husband. My tormentor.

The most notorious man in the city offers me a job.

Act as his dead wife.

Adrian Volkov isn't the type of person who takes no for an answer.

He commands with an iron fist and all his orders are met.

When he approaches me with the offer, I have two options.

Go to prison or put myself under his wrath.

I choose to have a roof over my head. What's so hard about acting, right?

Wrong.

The moment I step into his wife's shoes, everything spirals out of control.

My only way of survival is through Adrian.

Or is it?

PLAYLIST

Snuff – Slipknot
Demons and Angels – LOWBORN
Darkness in Me – Fight The Fade
I Don't Know What to Say – Bring Me The Horizon
Designer Drugs - FNKHOUSER
Virgin – Manchester Orchestra
Simple Math – Manchester Orchestra
Pale Black Eye – Manchester Orchestra
Warning Sign – Coldplay
Hemorrhage – Red
Crawling – Dream State
Ashes – Claire Guerreso
Survivin' – Bastille
Heavy Rain – Solence
Apprehension – Manchester Orchestra
Mighty – Manchester Orchestra
Flares – The Script
Haunted – Acacia Ridge
In The Shadows – Amy Stroup
Under Your Scars - Godsmack

You can find the complete playlist on [Spotify](#).

PROLOGUE

Death can come in the form of a doppelgänger.

There's this myth as old as time that says when you meet someone who looks just like you, one of you will die.

Who is the question.

Who would die first? Me or *her*?

According to the myth, the first to see the other one is bound to meet their end. In the same decade. Same year. Perhaps even the same day.

I lift my trembling hands and stare at the blood coating them, intertwining with my fingers and crawling under my nails.

Oh.

I think this means I saw her first. I made eye contact first.

What bad luck. But I guess I've never had the good type. Not when I was born, and certainly not when I was shoved into this life.

My attention remains on the deep crimson covering my hands like a second skin. It's thick, sticky, and its dark color burns in my head. I rub my palms together to wipe it off, but that doesn't make it better. If anything, the fresh, warm blood smears further, as if it's already chosen my hands as a permanent place of residence.

I screw my eyes shut, dragging in sharp intakes of air. The sound is raspy, guttural, grating on the surface of my lungs with long rusty nails.

That's okay. When I open my eyes, I'll wake up. This isn't real. It's only my wild imagination and my superstition joining forces to torture my mind.

It. Is. Not. Real.

My lids feel like they've been glued together when they part from each other.

The blood is still the same—warm, sticky, and almost black due to the lack of light. I clench my fists, my body turning rigid as a taut whip.

Wake up. Wake the fuck up.

My nails dig into my palms, but nothing I do pulls me out. Nothing stops this nasty cycle.

I lift my head and study my surroundings. Savage trees envelop me like a cocoon. They're so tall that the dark sky is barely visible through the small opening overhead.

Clouds condense over the moon's silver hue, and I shiver. The thin sweater over my cotton dress barely protects me from the chill.

Feeling the cold should be a good sign, but it isn't. It's not a clear indication of whether or not this is real.

The blood on my hands won't disappear and neither will the tremor shooting through my body.

He is after me.

If he finds me, he'll kill me.

I squeeze my eyelids together and count aloud, "Three, two, one."

When I open them again, the trees are the same and so is the chill. The blood is colder now. Thicker. *Stickier*. Like a demon's possessing my mind and is starting with my hands.

No.

I dig my nails into the long scar on my wrist and claw at the skin as hard as I can, intending to remove it and peer under it. To see the blood actually flowing, to differentiate this nightmare from reality.

If there's no pain, then this is not real. It's only another cruel manifestation of my subconscious and another self-punishment. Soon, it'll be all over and I'll wake up, safe and sound.

My skin breaks under the assault of my nails and searing pain explodes on the injury.

My mouth parts and a tear hangs from my lid.

This is real.

This is not a nightmare. I didn't sleep and wake up in hell. I went there with my own two feet.

No.

No...

My dry lips tremble as a few droplets of blood fall from my wound and join the massacre on my hands.

This much blood can only mean one thing.

I took a life.

My demons finally won.

They're silent now, not even attempting to whisper those malicious things, those thoughts that have plagued me day and night. They rose in volume, crashing and clawing at the confines of my head until I heard them.

Until I made their wish come true.

"I'm not a murderer. Not a murder..." I murmur the words to myself. Maybe if I keep doing it, I can undo what happened.

Maybe I can go back and change it.

I stare up at the gloomy, bleak sky, tears clinging to my lids. "If there's someone out there, please let me go back to change it. I'm not this person. Don't let me be this person. Please..."

Only the howling wind answers me, its sound echoing in the empty forest like vengeful spirits with yellow eyes and gaping mouths.

"P-please..." I beg. "Please stop torturing me with my own self. *Please.*"

I know my pleas have no effect whatsoever, but it's the last hope I can hold on to. The last thread that can save me. Because I desperately need saving right now.

And I don't trust myself to do it anymore. If I try, I'll just make it worse. I'll spiral out of control and slide down the path of no return.

Next thing I know, I'll be my own demons.

I'll be my own downfall.

I'll be the thing I've run away from my entire life.

“Please make it stop.” My voice chokes and I sniffle. “Please. I’ll do anything.”

This time, the wind isn’t my answer. The shuffling of footsteps comes from around the trees.

My feet falter and I stop breathing. My demons couldn’t have found me this soon.

Though...*wait*. This is reality. My demons don’t show up in reality. That means the footsteps belong to someone more dangerous than them.

I spin around and sprint ahead, elbowing the low branches out of my way. The fallen leaves crunch under my flat shoes, but I don’t stop to think about the sound I’m making—which gives a clear indication of where I am. That’s not important right now. If I’m caught, I’ll be killed.

Actually, my fate will be a lot worse than death.

Live. You’re a fighter. You were born to live.

Mom’s words echo in my head, charging me with a large dose of adrenaline. I have to live and stay that way for both of us.

I need to live.

The footsteps grow closer with every passing second until their thudding is right behind me. I don’t look back or even try to. Instead, I use the trees as camouflage, dashing between them so fast, my tendons cry out in pain.

If my pattern is irregular, he won’t find me. If I’m unpredictable, I’ll be able to escape death’s clutches.

I was taught to never take the short end of the stick or have less than what I deserve. It’s ironic that *he* taught me that but is now coming after me.

So ironic.

The trees clear out and I come to a screeching halt at the top of a cliff. Pebbles escape from under my feet and roll down over the huge boulders and finally to the dark, murky water that’s crashing against the rocks. The sound of raging waves echoes in the air like a symphony of death.

The sky is completely cloudy now, casting a gloomy shadow on the angry sea.

As I peer down, a strange yet familiar thought plays at the back of my head.

It would be so easy to end it. So easy.

One step is all it takes. One step and I'll drown my demons with my own hands.

One step and I'll kill them once and for all, so they'll never come out again.

"Do it."

A shudder zaps through my spine at the sinister voice coming from behind me.

He found me.

I whirl around so fast, I lose my footing and swing backward. I reach out to him and grip his arm with both hands, nails digging into his shirt. Blood smears on the light gray cloth as evidence of my desperation to live.

He's motionless, like a cold statue, as I remain suspended in mid-air. His face is shadowed and I can't see anything except the contours of his jawline and hair.

Since I know he won't make a move to help me, I try to use my hold on his sleeve to pull myself up.

"You ended a life." His calm yet threatening tone stops me in my tracks.

I shake my head violently. "I d-didn't want to."

"It still happened."

"No, please...don't..."

"Die for your sins." He yanks his hand free and I stumble backward and down the cliff.

I open my mouth to shriek, but no sound comes out. The fall isn't as painful as I expected it to be. If anything...it's peaceful.

After taking one last look at the silhouette peering down on me, I close my eyes, letting the tears loose.

It's finally the end.

ADRIAN

The scent of roses has morphed into the stench of death.

I stare down at the blood gushing from her wounds, at the life stubbornly leaving her body without pause or second thoughts.

The red color is marring her fair skin, painting rivulets down her arms and legs and contouring her soft face.

Her eyes are open, but she's not looking at me. Their blue is blank, vanished, already existing someplace else where I don't belong.

I cradle her head in my arms, gently stroking her dark brown hair. Lifting a wet strand, I inhale deeply, searching for what's possibly my last fix of roses. It doesn't matter if they're thorny and would prick me in the process. The method holds no importance to me as long as I get things done.

What greets me is the furthest thing from roses. It's not even death. It's worse.

Nothingness.

Numbness.

A place where she can't and won't feel me. Where she ended everything just so she could seal her heart and her soul.

Just so she could...disappear.

I sweep her hair away from her face and brush my lips over her forehead. "I'll find you again."

People say death is the end.

For me, it's only the beginning.

WINTER

I think I've stopped feeling.

It's not that I've turned off my emotions, but I'm pretty sure I've lost sense in my hands and feet.

I can almost see the blisters from the cold on my fingers inside my torn gloves and between my toes that are covered with old socks and man shoes that are a size too big, making my feet slouch with every step I take. The frigid air is even moving past the barrier of my four thin sweaters and the coat that's three sizes too big.

Snow season hit hard this year in New York City. I feel like I'm a walking snowman with the weight of the clothes I'm wearing. None of them feel soft or protective enough, but it's better than dying from hypothermia.

It'd be ironic if I died from the cold when my name is Winter.

Is Fate a little too cynical, or what? He must have thought of this moment when he whispered to my mom that she should name me after the coldest, harshest season.

Fate also chose the worst state to throw me in. Not only are the winters here cold, windy, and wet as hell, but the summers are also unbearable with all the humidity.

But who am I to complain? At least here, I can slip through the crowd unnoticed.

As if I don't exist.

Invisibility is a powerful tool. In a city that harbors over eight million residents, it's actually easy for someone like me to go unnoticed.

The cold forces me to stand out more, though. As I walk down the wet streets among the hundreds of thousands of people, I get looks sometimes. They're not always out of pity—oftentimes, they're judgmental. I can hear them say, *You could've done better, young lady.*

But most New Yorkers are so desensitized that they don't give a flying fuck about a nobody like me.

I try not to focus on the people exiting bakeries with takeout, but I can't ignore the divine smells that waft past me. I open my mouth, then close it as if that will get me a taste of the goodies.

If only I could have some hot soup right now or a warm piece of bread.

I swallow the saliva that forms in my mouth at the thought. Whenever I'm starved and don't have access to food, I picture a table full of delicious meals and pretend that I'm feasting on them. But my stomach just believes it for half a minute before it starts growling again.

It's hard to deceive that one.

As hungry as I am, however, what I'd really love is more to drink.

I lift the can of beer that's wrapped in a brown paper bag and down the rest of it. There goes the final drops that were supposed to get me through my day.

It's only the afternoon and I haven't eaten for the last...when was it again? Two days?

Maybe I should go back to the shelter for a meal and a piece of bread...

I dismiss the thought as soon as it comes. I will never return to that place, not even if I have to sleep on the streets. I guess I should search for another shelter where I can spend the rest of the winter or else I'll really freeze to death outside.

My feet come to a halt in front of a framed poster hanging on the side of a building. I don't know why I stop.

I shouldn't.

I don't—usually.