

Sex and Seduction

*Edited by: Cathryn Cooper
Published by Accent Press Ltd,
(Xcite Books) 209 pages*

This twenty-tale collection was one of Xcite Books' first three-title offering back in February this year – the others being *Sex and Satisfaction* and *Sex and Submission*. (I reviewed one of the second trio, *Five Minute Fantasies 1, 2 and 3*, in our second magazine, and *Spank Me*, from the third set in Issue 3). As such, I'm aware of what I can only term a progressive 'learning curve' in range and editorial handling across the series so far. In the more recent books the experience of the previous titles pays off, giving a better pace and contrast from one story to the next – but that's not to say the early stuff isn't good too.

There's a range of tales, set in the UK and the US, with a couple of holiday forays to Greek islands and Australia, and one in an unspecified sci-fi environment in the future. (I did notice, reading as I did straight through from start to finish as opposed to dipping in

here and there, that there were two tales in a row which started with the heroine opting go go off alone on a holiday booked for her as part of a couple because of some physical or relationship mishap.)

The stories embrace a wide variety of writing styles too – the embarrassed confessions of a sacrilegious coupling in a church, the understated English reserve of the tennis secretary's wife who 'plays in' a new member, the US 30's gumshoe case-history of the missing dong, an American college kid's encounter with a Mrs Robinson-style older woman at a pool party and a wonderfully Shakespearean account of a lecturer targeted by a student – and there's the blend of seduction by strangers, lesbian and bi pairings, teacher/student impropriety, threesomes, foursomes (and more). You can read a sample from the collection, *Personal Enquiries*, in this issue's *Erotic Tales*.

So, on the strength of a year of titillating Xcite collections, you could do worse for a Christmas present for a suitably inclined lady reader than to buy her a year's subscription which will deliver a new volume every month. Check the website below for details.

A well-earned 7 out of 10

*With thanks to
www.xcitebooks.com*



Black Lace Quickies 8

*Erotic short stories by women
Published by Black Lace,
(Virgin Books) 123 pages*

I like the short story genre, so I dipped into my first *Black Lace Quickies* collection with gusto... and I wasn't disappointed. The 'Quickies' series are compact little volumes, around 120 pages, of six stories a go – and although I've not sampled any of the previous collections, I'm impressed with the

standard and style of the stories.

'Erotic' fiction – rather than frankly pornographic reading, is very much a women's niche genre, both in writing and reading, and the Quickies are flagged as being by women (widely published authors) – and also, tacitly, for women. These tales are told in the first person – a girl's eye view, and an insight, one senses, into some of the authors' inner desires.

As I read, Londoner though I am, I felt that the bias was leaning a bit too much towards the capital, as the first three of the six stories were based in modern-day London – but then, pleasingly, the settings changed, and there's plenty of variety within the storylines. There are confessions of voyeurism; submissiveness and domination discovered; encounters with strangers and stalkers; seduction in a changing room – and my personal favourite, the episode of the frottage fanatic on the London-to-Brighton

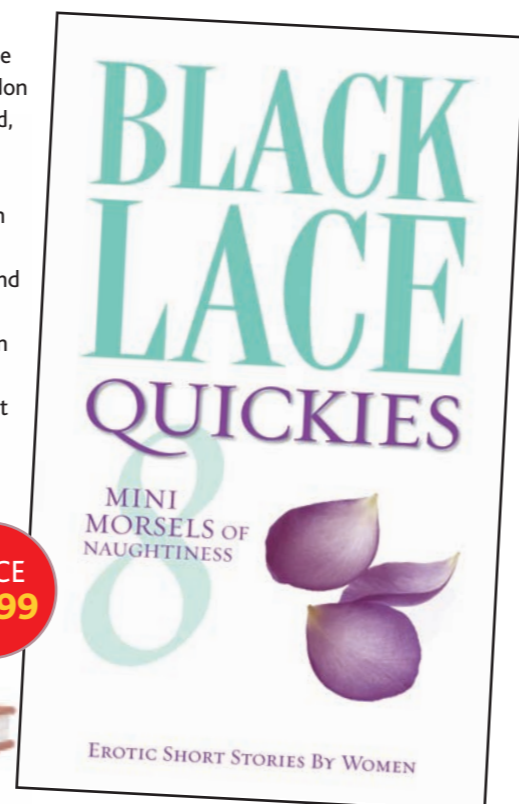
train. To enlarge would spoil the fun – I'll simply say that you'd have to go some to

beat this collection for subtle manipulation of a very horny and ambivalent situation.

You can enjoy these 'mini morsels of naughtiness' anywhere – the cover is non-explicit – and they're just about the right length to brighten up a lunch break or a dull daily commute.

Definitely 8 out of 10

*With thanks to
www.black-lace-books.com*



Ménage

*Author: Emma Holly
Published by Black Lace (Virgin Books)
270 pages*

As you can see, another title from Virgin's Black Lace imprint – unashamedly flagged as erotic fiction for women, by women – and this time a contemporary tale, set in modern-day Philadelphia. Judging by the publisher's lists, Emma Holly is one of Black Lace's regulars, and I can see from this, the first title I've read by Ms Holly, why her writing is popular.

Kate Winthrop (who tells the tale), a divorcee in her thirties, finds herself in that most rare and improbable of circumstances – that of having two (notionally) gay lodgers in their twenties, both of whom she discovers, as events unfold, nurse a secret desire to get into her designer silk knickers. One, Joe, is quite a novice at any sort of sex, having been put off girls by a first bad experience – but even 'gay' Sean has a soft (wrong word...) spot for Kate. So, this highly-charged trio – the ménage – start to interact.

There's a power struggle at first, the dominant Sean quickly moves to establish his status as master – but the sexual balance of power shifts and fluctuates. This gives plenty of opportunity for some bondage, blindfolding, whipping and spanking as Kate's not-so-gay lodgers plot and plan some interesting scenarios for their mutual entertainment.

Cautious (and rapidly becoming more hetero) Joe has no trouble warming emotionally to his 'older-woman' landlady – but the dynamics with the more committedly gay Sean are more complex.

As unlikely as the threesome ménage may be, Holly deals with the real relationship issues which arise, as well as the plentiful and varied sex. There are twosomes, threesomes, voyeurism, role-playing, domination, all among our star ménage – and then there are some interesting cameo appearances by other characters who frequent Kate's 'Mostly Romance' book store and the distinctly shady underground world of Sean and his colourful acquaintances.

Of course, it's optimistic (nay, downright unrealistic) to think that a ménage à trois can last successfully – there's no denying that Kate, Joe and Sean give it their best shot. Although it's a Black Lace title, aimed at female readers, it's a good romance, a raunchy read and well written.

Definitely 7 out of 10 – and blokes might well get off on it too

*With thanks to
www.black-lace-books.com*

