

*First Two  
Chapters: Mob's  
Seduction*

Alyson Root

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For all the Bookworms in the world.



Mob's Seduction is written in British English.





*Bonnie*

WOOD'S WRITING EMPORIUM, OR simply, "The Emporium", as ninety percent of Twyford, Winchester refers to it, is still dark as I approach. So much for Janice opening up this morning. The woman is as trustworthy as a Nigerian prince wanting to send me twenty million quid via email.

How I wish Clive would hire someone with an ounce of competency. But noooo, old muggins here has to put up with a woman who's older than sliced bread and couldn't care less about running a bookshop—just because Clive nobbled her niece twenty years ago and is still paying for it. Actually, I'm the one paying the price, considering I have to pick up Janice's slack.

Hey-ho, just another wonderful day for me. At least I get to unbox a few new releases today and then read them

this evening. That's enough to get me through the working day.

My phone chirps with a notification from my best friend. It's just a string of emojis I decipher in seconds because that's our language now. Ironic, really, how I work in a place that encapsulates and celebrates the English language, yet I opt for a book, teapot, and film emojis to communicate. I'm an embarrassment to the books I so love.

The gist of the message is: Kelley will come round tonight for an evening of reading, tea, and a film that will only serve as background noise. We are rockstars. Some may say we're losers, but whatever. I'd rather carve my eyeballs out with a spoon than go clubbing or raving. Are those still things people do? Hmm, thoughts like that might be why my other best friend, Pete, calls me old, even though I'm mid-thirties.

Speaking of Pete, he has also messaged me with an old granny emoji. Rude. He knows Kelley and I intend to get our literary fiction on tonight and is unsurprisingly disgusted. He may like to gyrate next to sweaty people while hopped up on sugary alcopops, but that's not me; never has been, never will be.

You may wonder why we are friends. That's easy. Pete is a loveable arse who saved me time and time again

from school bullies. Really, our friendship shouldn't work because we are very different, yet it does. He likes Kelley too. Occasionally, we all hang out, but mainly I see them separately.

I send him a Face with Tongue Emoji in reply before pocketing my phone. There are only ten minutes left until the shop is supposed to be open. Nothing major would happen if I were a few seconds late. It's not like we have customers lining up outside, but I know for a fact we will have a few regular shoppers turning up to grab the new stock soon.

I unlock and go through the morning routine at double-time. As predicted, there are three regulars peering through the window as I approach to turn the sign that currently reads *Closed* to *Open*.

"Is the new Wallace Skipton book in?" Audrey asks the second the door opens.

"Waiting in the back for me to unbox," I reply, smiling.

Audrey is probably my favourite customer. She's completely batty about books. We've spent many a morning conversing about the latest murder mystery or "romantic panty dropper," as she likes to call them.

In the distance, I see Janice wombling up the street like she's not got a care in the world. I can't even say anything because she'll make up some crap about me being ageist or something, which is laughable. I guarantee I act older than her. She just pulls that particular card when she wants to get out of being responsible for something other than putting the kettle on.

Grumbling to myself, I turn and greet the other two shoppers. Melody and Jasmine are two young art students who are part of the local sapphic book club. I always let them know when something interesting comes in and, of course, we discuss it at length.

God, I love my job.

"Morning," Janice calls. She's as fake as her hair colour.

"Janice, you were scheduled to open up this morning."

"Really? Well, bless my soul, I must have got jumbled up."

My arse she did. I smile sweetly. "Never mind. You can close."

"Oh, but..."

"I have a doctor appointment," I lie. "You don't mind, do you?"

Considering we have an audience, Janice smiles with thin lips, her eyes narrowing. “No, Bon Bon, no problem at all.”

I grit my teeth because I detest it when she calls me Bon Bon. Do I look like a fucking hard toffee? No. Janice is just the worst.

Doing a quick breathing exercise, I push Janice and her bullshit to one side. I have boxes of books to unload. We have two new thrillers, one romantic comedy, and one sapphic mafia. I’ll leave Janice to do the thrillers. My sights are set on the rom-com and mafia books. I love both genres, as does Kelley, which is why we pre-ordered a copy of each book.

“Bonnie, is that it?” I hear Kelley squeal. I laugh because I should have known she wouldn’t be able to wait until this evening to get her hands on the new mafia book.

“Yes, it is, and I cannot believe you didn’t even last a couple of hours.”

Kelley smiles brightly, her massive curls surrounding her bespectacled face. I’ve never met someone with such wild hair. It’s also the blackest black I’ve ever seen. I’m pretty sure it actually absorbs light. I was just flipping through a new art book about the mafia-level artist feud over the

rights to use the blackest black, but honestly, I still think Kel's hair could give Anish Kapoor a run for his money.

"Momma needs to touch those fresh pages," she says seriously. I roll my eyes before handing over her copy. Of course, the first thing she does is bring the thing up to her nose and take a big whiff. "Oh, yeah!"

"It's like book crack," I joke.

"Butt crack?" Audrey enquires as she rounds the corner. Her arms are already five books deep.

"Book. Book crack," I repeat. "You know, when you get a fresh one and have to smell it?"

"Oh, yeah, totally," she answers. "There is nothing better."

Straight away, I imagine what Pete's reaction would be to this conversation. It makes me laugh.

"Anyway," Audrey continues, "Janice just left. Told me to tell you she suddenly felt squiffy."

My arms drop to my side. She's got some bloody nerve. I look at the giant clock above the cash register. Janice has literally been in the store for less than twenty minutes.

"Whoa, Bonnie, your face is like a really unnatural red."

"I need to make a call," I seethe. Clive is in for an ear-bashing.

“I’ll watch the register,” Kelley comments, already moving towards the vintage till.

It takes seven minutes of arguing and me threatening to quit before Clive finally gives me the go-ahead to hire a new store assistant. Janice can suck eggs. I’m the one who runs this store on the daily. Clive knows he would be up shit creek if I left—not that I would. I was totally bluffing. I love the Emporium and hope one day, when Clive retires, he’ll make me a partner so I can continue the store’s legacy.

Feeling my blood pressure drop slightly, I stride with purpose to the cashier’s desk where Kelley is finalising Audrey’s sale.

“Everything okay, sweetie?” Audrey asks when I stop by her side.

“Perfect. Did you get everything you wanted?”

“Oh, and more. Kelley pointed me in the direction of a new fantasy series I can’t wait to get stuck in.”

We say our goodbyes and then I twirl in place and face Kelley. “Do you want a job here?”

Kelley’s eyes grow wide. “Are you serious?”

“As Clive’s stamp collection.”

“He finally gave in, huh?” She laughs.

“I told him I would walk out. So yes, he crumbled.”

“Then, yes. I mean, let’s be fair, I work harder than Janice in this place, anyway.”

“That’s what I said to Clive when I told him I wanted you on board.”

“Well then, it looks like you have a new store assistant.” We high five, naturally.

Kelley is an artist. Specifically, she draws comic books, and she’s brilliant at it. With it being a freelance job, she tends to be in the bookshop a lot, so this is a perfect setup. Janice will work a few shifts because I couldn’t get the old bat fired; I’m not horrible. But at least I now have a chance to really make this place into something. Kelley shares my vision and love of books. We are a winning team. I can feel it!



We didn’t last until the close of day before both Kelley and I cracked open Selma Peterson’s *Mob’s Seduction*. The title needed work, in my opinion, but the story is as gripping as I thought it would be. Plus, it’s all about the sapphics, which ticks my box.

“She can’t marry her,” Kelley gasps.



“She will. It’s the only way to save her brother,” I respond.

“But the MacLeans are awful.”

“Obviously, but Riley doesn’t have a choice.”

“What about Todd?”

“He’s a secondary character. Riley will marry Leah to secure her brother’s safety, and then she’ll become the consort to Leah and take over the family business!”

“I couldn’t do it,” Kelley says, shaking her head. “I mean, sure, mafia queens are hot! But to marry one? No, I don’t think so.”

“Not even to save your brother?”

“I haven’t got a brother.”

“Hypothetically, you wouldn’t marry a hot mafia boss to secure your family’s safety?”

Kelley puts down the book and tilts her head. She’s doing some deep thinking, which leaves me a few minutes to collect the receipts and put them in the till.

“No,” she suddenly says. “I mean, what would my family be doing anywhere near a bunch of mobsters? It’d be their own fault. Why should I give up my freedom?”

“Cold,” I laugh, “but you’d still fall in love with the mob queen. That’s the whole point of it!”

She shakes her head. "I just don't believe it. In books, yeah, obviously, that's why it's fiction. In reality? No way."

The doorbell jingles, catching my attention because we are ten minutes from closing. Who in their right mind thinks ten minutes is long enough to browse a bookstore? Crazy people, that's who.

Kelley is still waffling on about how inconceivable marrying a mobster to save a family member and then falling in love would be. My attention is on the three humongous blokes who have just stepped inside.

Without taking my eyes off them, I bat Kelley until she shuts up. She goes to ask me what's wrong but then clearly spots the men, who are now splitting up, each taking a different aisle. Why are they still wearing sunglasses? They're indoors!

Placing my book under the till, I straighten and smile. I'm intimidated by the sheer size of them, but I'll try not to show it. Kelley is not doing such a stellar job either as she steps behind me to hide.

"May I help you?" I call to them.

Silence.

The door jingles again. Tearing my eyes away from the men, I look towards the entrance. I really hope it's a police officer.

It's not.

A woman, clad in all black, with platinum-blond hair slicked back into the tightest bun I have ever seen, stands staring at Kelley and me. The term "deafening silence" comes to mind. It's as though the world outside of the shop has been muted, and the only thing registering is the thick atmosphere these people have created.

"C-can I help?" I ask again, my voice thankfully holding steady—sort of.

The blonde slowly drags her sunglasses off her face. I'm met with stunning eyes; one blue and one green. Jesus, she's like a baddie in one of the thousands of books I've read.

"Bonnie Moorside?" Her voice is rich and deep. Her accent is Italian, I think.

Straightening my back, I pull myself up to all of my five feet and four inches. "That's me," I answer, and then berate myself. Why did I just willingly identify myself to a stranger who looks like she could break my neck with a flick of her wrist?

Her eyes squint ever so slightly, and her gaze roams the top half of my body. I'm sure she'd do a full sweep if the cash desk weren't in the way.

"I've been looking for you."

## *Allegra*

I SIT IN THE back of the Land Rover as it cruises along the motorway, listening to Toni and Mia talk. Like me, they are wondering why we have been sent on this mission. We had a full schedule of appointments set for today, all of which are now cancelled. We never cancel, so I understand their curiosity. It matches my own, although I doubt *their* curiosity has turned to burning anger, like mine.

If it weren't for the fact I am devoted to Don Ferrante, I may have lost my cool by now. I cannot abide being kept in the dark, but murdering everyone I know is a little premature, even though my ire calls for it. Until I know exactly what I'm dealing with, I need to keep my temper under control.

For the past six years, I have led the Ferrante family. I might not be blood-related, but Don Ferrante has always

treated me as a daughter. He personally told me I would become Donna Malgeri once he was ready to officially retire.

Unlike many other families, he never batted an eye over the fact he hadn't sired an heir. Don Ferrante took me under his wing after my parents were killed by a rival family, and taught me everything I needed to know for my future standing, which was crystal clear until today. He hasn't said anything, but I can feel something is off. My future as head of the Ferrante family is in jeopardy.

I've never seen the Don look so worried as he did when he called me into his home office in the early hours of this morning. His health hasn't been the best of late, but I honestly thought I may end up calling an ambulance when I saw how ashen his complexion was.

His only directive was to travel to the middle-of-nowhere England and find Bonnie Moorside. I tried to get more out of him, but it was useless. He clammed up, which instantly raised my hackles. Don Ferrante has always been an open book with me. I know all his secrets, including the one about how he can no longer effectively run the business, hence the reason I have taken up the mantle in the shadows. To the rest of the family, Don Ferrante is still the powerful leader they all know and trust. But I know better.

But back to the task at hand: finding out who the hell this Bonnie Moorside is and why Don Ferrante wants me to find her? I'm not worried about convincing the girl. I'll throw her in the trunk of the car if push comes to shove. I'm eager to know what the hell is going on, and that means she has to come with me.

"Al, we're here," Toni calls, pulling me from my ruminations. I didn't even realise we'd come off the motorway. I hate being distracted—it's dangerous.

The Land Rover in front of us pulls to a stop outside a bookshop: Wood's Writing Emporium. Interesting name, I suppose.

I get my head back in the game. "Toni, take Mica and Hanz to check it out. Remove any customers if necessary."

"Yes, boss."

"Mia, keep the car running."

"No problem, Al."

Taking my time, I open the car door and step out, always keeping my eyes on my surroundings. There is no threat here, but doing it comes as second nature to me now. The bookshop is quite large, considering the size of the town. We stick out like a sore thumb. Three blacked-out Land Rovers with occupants all dressed in black. We defi-

nately don't blend, but that's fine, I don't intend to be here for long.

My guys have had a few moments to scope out the shop. Time for me to meet this Bonnie woman. The doorbell jingles lightly as I shove it open. It takes me just a second to get a visual of the shop's layout. There is a second exit to the left of the cashier's desk. I presume one of the two wide-eyed women currently staring at Toni and the others, is Bonnie Moorside.

The taller of the two shifts her eyes to me. She's...short. Five-four at most. Her hair is deep brown and swept into a low ponytail. Her clothes are...well, wool. She's clad head-to-toe in wool. I don't need to see below the counter to know that. The woman screams "bookworm cat lady". I'd bet my place as head of the Ferrante family she's wearing a woollen skirt with tights.

"Can I help you?" she stammers. Her nerves are plain to see. Good, I want her on the back foot. Sliding my sunglasses off, I take a few more seconds to stare. Cat-lady aesthetic aside, she's a good-looking woman.

"Bonnie Moorside?" I ask. My eyes roam her chest because, despite the wool, I can see she is well endowed.

"That's me," she answers.

"I've been looking for you." She swallows deeply but keeps her composure. It's impressive. I know how intimidated she must be.

"W-what can I do for you?"

I'd like to smile at her effort. Her friend, on the other hand, looks like she's about to piss herself. "You need to close the shop, pack a bag, and come with me."

There is a beat of silence before she scoffs, "Not likely. Now, if you're not here to buy a book, I need you to leave."

She has guts. Licking my lips slowly, I continue my penetrating stare. Her eyes drop to the tip of my tongue as it travels the length of my bottom lip.

"It wasn't a request," I finally say.

Looking at Toni, I give a curt nod. He walks to the door and locks it, turning the *Open* sign to *Closed* and flicking the deadlock. Stalking forward, I take my time. I want her sweating.

"We're going to leave now," I say in a low, smooth tone, "go to your home where you can pack some clothes, and then you *will* come with me."

"Now, hang on a minute," she argues.

Her efforts are noted. Most grown men who have spent time in prison don't make me ask twice.



“If I have to repeat myself, I will take you by the hair and drag you to the boot of my car,” I say calmly.

Her eyes grow even larger with fear. The friend who has been cowering behind Ms Moorside lets out a whimper. I want to laugh. This is turning out to be quite entertaining.

She turns her head slightly and looks over her shoulder, then returns her deep brown eyes to me. “Let Kelley go home, and I’ll do as you say.”

I place my sunglasses on the countertop. My focus is now on Kelley. “Hmm, how can I be sure Kelley won’t call the police?”

“I-I won’t, I swear it.” She’s practically vibrating with anxiety.

Crooking my finger, I beckon her forward. She takes a small step forward. “No. You won’t. Because the second you pick up the phone, Kelley, Bonnie is dead.” Their collective gasps make me grin. “Is that clear?” She doesn’t answer, just nods. “Off you go, then.”

I can see the indecision in her eyes. She wants nothing more than to run far, far away, but she also doesn’t want to leave her friend. Ms Moorside pleads with her eyes for Kelley to go.

“Unless you want to come along,” I say, withdrawing the Glock 20 that’s been resting in the waistband holster attached to my trousers.

It makes a satisfying thud as I place it on the counter. The size is intimidating, which is the intent. There’s no point wielding a pea shooter. My Glock is weighty, just like the threat I pose when holding it. I want people to be afraid. I want to see the fear in their eyes as I rest my finger close to the trigger.

“In fact, I think that’s a much better solution,” I finish, revelling in their anxiety.

It wasn’t in my plan, but then again, I enjoy a bit of spontaneity. I’ll have no qualms dispatching either of them when the time comes.



The two women sit silently in the car. According to her instructions, Ms Moorside’s apartment is only a few minutes away. I hope she is correct because I am ready to leave. I want to be back at the house before midnight.

I smile internally when I catch a glimpse of Ms Moorside's wool skirt from the corner of my eye. I'm always right about these things.

Mia pulls over once again. "We're here," she says.

Turning my head to Ms Moorside, who is next to me, I smile. "You have ten minutes. Toni will accompany you. I'll stay here with Kelley and get acquainted."

She wants to argue, but doesn't. Smart woman.

Ten minutes and not a second later, Toni escorts Ms Moorside out of her place and back towards the car. I didn't speak with Kelley. Her crying became too irritating, so I had her moved to the lead car. Now I have time alone with Ms Moorside to find out who the hell she is to Don Ferrante.

"Where's Kelley?" Ms Moorside practically screeches.

"In that car," I say, pointing to the other Land Rover. "Now get in!"

I'm over this. I want to return to work—the work that keeps the family at the top of the food chain. My days of doing this sort of menial shit should be long gone. I feel my anger rising again.

Toni throws her suitcase in the boot and then we're finally on our way home—well, the house we use in the UK.

*Home* is in Sicily, where I long to be. We are safer, not to mention stronger, when we are there.

It takes longer than I expected for her to finally speak. “Who *are* you?”

“It doesn’t matter. I’ve been sent to collect you.”

I want to tell her exactly who I am, to judge her response, but it’s better to play it cool for now.

Another few minutes pass before she suddenly starts laughing. She slaps her legs with her hands. “Oh my God, of course,” she cackles. “I can’t believe I fell for it!”

I have absolutely no clue what is happening, so I stay silent and wait.

Her chocolate eyes turn to me. She playfully punches my arm. “Pete outdid himself this time,” she continues, tears of laughter welling up in her eyes. “Where the hell did he find you lot? It was the drama club, right? Of course. Wow, I know he thinks I need some excitement in my life, but this is a bit much.”

“I—”

“Kudos for going the mafia route, though. Quite inspired. Although I didn’t realise he paid so much attention to the books I read.”

“Ms Moorside—”

“God, you are really good as a baddie. Are you a professional actress?”

“Who the fuck is Pete?” I say, my patience waning.

She snorts, “Good one. But you can drop the act. Tell him I’ll try to go out more. I won’t even take my Kindle.”

Grinding my teeth, I breathe out through my nose in an effort to calm myself. “I assure you this is no act.”

“Sure,” she grins, rolling her eyes.

And then my patience snaps like an overextended rubber band. “Mia, pull over.”

She does as I say, instantly. Toni signals the other cars. I haven’t got the time nor the inclination to get her to listen to me, so I might as well alleviate some stress and prove a point at the same time. And nothing helps me relax like shedding blood.

We are alone on a country road, which is ideal. I slip out of the car and hold the door open for her to follow. She does, with a twinkle of humour still in her eyes. I signal for Kelley to be let out of the car.

The second Kelley is out and looking my way, I whip the Glock from my trousers and shoot her in the shoulder. It’s only a flesh wound, but it makes the point. Ms Moor-side is no longer laughing.

She screams, which I expected.

“I am no actor,” I say in a level tone, “and the situation you find yourself in is no joke. Have I made that clear?”

I click my fingers to summon Mia, who picks the now shaking Ms Moorside up off the ground. Toni collects Kelley, who has passed out. The bullet was a through-and-through, so she’ll only need stitches.

I slide back into my seat and watch as Ms Moorside recoils from me. Don Ferrante only told me to collect the woman. He didn’t specify what state she had to be in. Anyway, it’s not like *she’s* the one with a hole in her body. The Don and Ms Moorside should be grateful. If I let my true feelings out, there would be a lot more carnage.

Mob's Seduction is available to pre-order directly  
from my website.

<https://alysonroot.com/available-pre-orders>

# *Acknowledgements*

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## *Other Titles By Alyson Root*

A Dance Towards Forever

Diving Into Her

Always Emilie

Broken Parts Included

Love & Other Wild Things

Finding Molly Parsons

Keeping Carmen Ruiz

The Wisdom of Bug

Sleigh Bells Ring

Risking Immortality

Waiting for Eternity

Fighting for Infinity

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## About the author

Alyson was born and raised in the heart of England. She moved to Paris in 2015 when she met her wife. Together they moved to the west of France, where they now live with their two dogs. Alyson spends her time reading sapphic fiction books, writing and Scuba Diving.

Alyson discovered her love of writing in her mid-thirties. Her debut book, *A Dance Towards Forever*, was inspired by her wife and their very own love story. Alyson wrote *Diving Into Her* and award-winning *Always Emilie*, which added with her first book, created The French Connection series.

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