

PRAISE FOR

RIPPED FROM OBSCURITY

RT Book Reviews Top Pick

4.5 stars: “Ashland writes a compelling tale featuring a sexy cowboy who steals a beautiful, spunky author’s heart. This page-turner with swoon-worthy moments, twists, and suspense will keep readers enthralled to the end.”

—*RT Book Reviews Top Pick*

5 stars: “Ashland nailed the push/pull of a great romance while keeping the suspense element tight. Bought it and stayed up way too late reading to the end. Selena isn’t the only one mesmerized by Tucker’s southern charm!”

—*Amazon review – Mar*

5 stars: “I loved this book! The wonderful love story of Selena and Tucker was woven with personal loss and a conspiracy that kept me guessing until the very end. So glad to have found the second installment in the U-District series.”

—*Goodreads review – Sailorswife*

5 stars: “A terrific blend of action, suspense, mystery, and romance. Loved the surprising elements that were revealed as the plotline developed. The intriguing portrayal of Tucker and Selena made them truly memorable and compelling characters. A most entertaining read!”

—*Amazon review – CJR*

5 stars: “Had trouble putting the book down; it was thoroughly enthralling. Characters were very well written and developed. Story very engaging. Waiting impatiently for *Seeking Sanctuary!*”

—*Amazon review – tmb*

PRAISE FOR

SECRETS AT SYNERGY

5 stars: “An amazingly entertaining book that kept me reading until 4 a.m. in the morning to finish... Jodi Ashland does a stunning job on this novel! She kept me intrigued from page one to the end.... The chemistry between Bryce and Jade

was perfect! It wasn't too sudden nor was it dragged out... This book had my heart racing from beginning to end and I absolutely love it!... This is a wonderful mystery and romance story that is a definite must read!"

—*Goodreads review – Sarah J. Y. C*

5 stars: "Loved the pace: got me interested, set the hook and reeled me in. Good combo of action/suspense/romance. Well written and loved the Seattle references. Hunk meter is high—does Bryce have a brother?"

—*Amazon review – M. McDonough*

4 stars: "First off, I don't normally read suspense, but this was so good I couldn't put it down. Loved the pace: got me interested from the word go. [The] scene was set, then hook line and sinker, I was a goner. Good combo to make in my words perfection: action/suspense/romance and red-hot electricity."

—*Goodreads review – Stacey*

5 stars: "Love this book... couldn't put it down. This is my first book from this author... love the characters so much... [It's] a must-buy.... You won't regret [it]."

—*Goodreads review – Lisa G*

5 stars: "Planned on reading a few pages, but sat up all night and finished it!!!"

—*Amazon review – tmb*

4 stars: "I love Bryce! Give me a brooding hero any day with danger thrown in. Great chemistry and tension between Jade and Bryce make this an absorbing read during a hot summer."

—*Amazon review – Happily Ever After Girl*

5 stars: "The sexual tension between [Jade] and her coworker Bryce made me continue reading for hours. Seriously, I kept reading until I fell asleep with the book beside me.... The conflict and romance kept me constantly intrigued, and I would recommend this to a friend in a heartbeat."

—*Amazon review – Skisocks*

ALSO BY JODI ASHLAND

U-District Series

[*Secrets at Synergy*](#)

[*Ripped from Obscurity*](#)

Seeking Sanctuary (coming soon)

Harper Security Series

Seeing Double (coming soon)

SECRETS AT SYNERGY

**U-DISTRICT
BOOK I**



Duvall
Press

JODI ASHLAND

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CHAPTER 1

DAMMIT, EVEN IF IT KILLED HER, she was going to find out who was stealing from her company. From what Gloria Buchanan had found so far, millions were missing. The culprit had to be an insider, someone she'd hired, someone she trusted like family. Her heart raced as she got closer to the truth. Just a few more clicks of the mouse, and she was sure she'd find her answers.

Gloria pushed her almond latte across her desk. It had grown lukewarm and left a bitter taste in her mouth. As she scrolled through a spreadsheet filled with transactions, a record jumped out, and she checked it against what she'd written down on the pad in front of her. The dollar amounts differed by almost thirty percent. She circled the number with her gold pen and pursed her lips.

This is how they're embezzling funds.

Who would do this to her? She'd been good to her people.

As her breathing became shallow, Gloria rubbed her throat and scanned through more invoices looking for another discrepancy. More than one would prove it was no mistake, and then she could involve the police. She didn't want to burden her granddaughter with this mess when Jade inherited her company. The doctors had given Gloria less than a year to live. In the time she had left, she needed to figure out who was stealing from her and bring them to justice.

Gloria breathed in deep. She tried to take another breath, but oxygen wasn't making it into her lungs.

My throat is swelling shut—

Her eyes grew wide as she stared at the almond latte. It hadn't tasted right. Why?

Not almond. Peanut. Real PEANUTS!

The racing of her heart and the shortness of breath meant only one thing. She'd experienced it for the first time when she was seven years old and had eaten a peanut butter and jelly sandwich at a friend's birthday party.

She was going into anaphylactic shock.

Gloria picked up the phone to page her assistant, who was sitting at the desk outside her closed office door. "Marge," she wheezed before her throat clamped shut.

Someone is trying to kill me.

The phone fell from her hand and spilled the latte across her desk. Clutching her neck, Gloria sucked in air as hard as she could manage. Only a small amount made it into her lungs.

Her purse in the bottom drawer of her desk held an EpiPen. It had been over sixty years since someone had first injected her with epinephrine. When she reached down, the executive chair rolled out from under her. Her cry was silent as she fell to the floor. The room spun and her vision blurred.

Gloria rolled onto her back and felt for the leg of her desk, then reached up to the drawer. She found the leather strap of her purse and tugged, lacking the strength

to pull it free. Her one-year battle with cancer and recent chemo treatment had sapped most of her energy.

A white fog was taking her under. She almost welcomed it. Anything was better than her lungs struggling for air and her heart racing. One last pull on the purse, and it fell upside down on the floor beside her.

She fumbled through the contents, trying to locate what she desperately needed. She reached for the EpiPen.

Marge ran into the office and tripped over the purse, kicking her medication out of reach. “Mrs. Buchanan, oh dear.” She picked up the phone and dialed. “I need an ambulance.”

Gloria couldn’t speak. She clutched her heart as it stopped beating.

Marge pressed two fingers to Gloria’s neck, checked for a pulse, and then carefully tucked a gray curl behind her ear. “Go peacefully, Gloria.” Her voice hitched. She returned the spilled contents to Gloria’s purse. “I’ll clean this up for you.”

Gloria was slipping away. In her last moments, she wondered if she would have made a different decision, had she known then what she knew now.

No.

Her plans had already been set in motion. She expected her granddaughter to step up to the challenge and find the courage to fight. Otherwise, everything she had worked for would be lost.

This was it. Her time was up. Ironically, she wasn’t going to die of cancer after all. Perhaps the killer had done her a favor.

But Jade—Jade was now in danger.

CHAPTER 2

HE STOOD OUT LIKE A POLAR BEAR in California. Jade didn't need her photographic memory to pick out the man with the navy blue suit and yellow tie a block away. The closest thing to business attire at Stanford was the khaki pants her professors wore.

She'd first caught sight of him just outside her dorm and then again as she'd gotten on the shuttle bus. His eyes had grown large in surprise then, and she could've sworn he'd looked right at her. But he didn't follow her on, so no biggie, until there he was again, leaning against a column in the outdoor Main Quad hallway—right in front of her Managerial Accounting class.

One of the chattier girls, who normally sat a couple of rows behind her, groaned. "Thank goodness we won't have to carry this book around anymore. The thing weighs a ton." She shoved the textbook into her pack.

Jade laughed. "Tell me about it. If I didn't think I could get fifty bucks by selling it back, we'd be roasting marshmallows over it." She kept a close eye on the man as they walked along the arched portico, her sandal catching the edge of a red brick paver and making her trip.

"Hey, you okay?" The girl grabbed Jade's arm to steady her.

"I'm good." Jade hopped on one foot until the pain in her toes faded. "I'd swear that guy is following me."

They both stopped and peered around the sandstone column. "Blue suit, yellow tie, tall with black hair?"

"That's him."

"He's probably into you."

"Yeah, right." Jade smiled. "See you at finals." She cut across the expansive oval lawn toward Old Union to her next MBA class, which started in fifty minutes. She checked behind her; the suit didn't follow. Nothing was wrong, other than her overactive imagination. She dropped her pack to the ground and sank into the grass with her elbows propped up to draw in the sun's rays.

Early June was hit or miss in Seattle when it came to sunshine. But here in

California, she got a strong dose of Vitamin D every day. Just when she'd fully relaxed, her phone vibrated in her backpack. Jade scooped her cell out of her bag.

That's weird.

Mom had left her three messages. She'd have to call her back. Jade picked up, "Aleks?"

"Hey, Jade."

"What's up? Aren't you in class right now?"

"We got out early. I am so freaking out about finals."

"You'll do fine."

"Easy for you to say, Miss Eidetic Memory. You just have to read something once and you remember it. If I don't study something over and over again it just goes—poof—out of my head."

Jade imagined Aleks running a hand over her multicolored hair when she said that.

"So, when are you coming home?" Aleks asked.

"I'm not." Jade leaned back into the grass. "I got a temp job working at a small company to help move their financial data to a new IT system. One of my friends said I could crash at her place this summer."

"Ohhhh, that is so not fair. Summer won't be the same without you. And Bryce is here..." Aleks dangled the solid-gold carrot.

Bryce, the man Jade had lusted after since she was sixteen years old, since the first day her grandmother had introduced them in Gran's office. When it came to Bryce, Jade remembered every single detail, and she still had the nasty habit of comparing any man she met to him.

Jade stared past the students hanging out on the lawn, past the red roofs of the Spanish-colonial buildings, and past Memorial Chapel, until the image from a memory was so vivid, she could see the muscles in Bryce's forearm flexing while he played with some coins in his pocket. There was an adorable little birthmark the shape of Iowa on his wrist. His black trousers hung low on his hips, and when he smiled, her insides melted like chocolate fondue.

Bryce was intelligent and charismatic, and his coolheadedness commanded the respect of the employees, even her grandmother. In Jade's eyes, he was damn near perfect, which was why Aleks was using him to get her to come home.

"It doesn't matter," Jade sighed, "Bryce doesn't look at me that way. He still thinks of me as the silly teenager who couldn't say a word any time I was near him. It was mortifying."

"You're totally hot now. I bet when he sees you, he'll take notice."

Maybe. But even though she'd hoped for that, a reunion with Bryce wouldn't be happening any time soon. "Gran won't let me work at Synergy again until I finish college."

"She still hasn't budged?"

"No. I'm not a kid anymore, yet she's *still* forcing decisions on me. At least she can't stop me from working here this summer."

"It's so not fair. I know how much you love working at Synergy."

"Tell me about it." Jade crossed her ankles.

"You doing anything fun tonight?"

“Yeah, I’m going to a party at Phi Kappa Psi.”

“I bet your frat parties are so much better at Stanford than U-Dub.”

“Nope, they’re pretty much the same. The stench of stale beer, sticky floors, loud music, and hot frat boys.”

“Speaking of hot—I met this guy.”

“Ooh, who is he?” Jade pulled a water bottle from her pack.

“His name is Kyle. A bunch of us went to Trinity Nightclub last night in Pioneer Square and we kind of hit it off. He’s going there again tonight so I thought—”

“You’d just happen to be there too.”

“Uh-huh. I just hope he goes.”

“Did you get his number?”

“No, stupid move.”

“Well, I hope he’s there and it goes well.” Jade drank from her water bottle and put the cap back on. She was concerned for Aleks. Every time she tried to get close to a man, she’d clam up and push him away. Jade knew how much Aleks wanted to have a relationship again. “Don’t rush yourself. What happened to you takes a long time to get over.”

“Five years is a long time with no s-e-x.”

Jade couldn’t imagine going that long without. “I know... but when you find someone you feel safe with, it will happen again and you won’t have to force it.”

“See, you’re the rational one. This is why I need you to come back home.”

Jade’s chest tightened. She didn’t have siblings, but if she could pick a sister, it would be Aleks. “Well, if you need me that much...” Jade drew it out for effect. “I’ll come home.”

“You’re the best.”

“I just need to—” Jade’s eyes narrowed. The man in the suit and yellow tie was walking right toward her.

“Jade?”

“Sorry, Aleks. I need to go. There’s this creepy stalker dude who’s been following me around all morning. I’m going to find out what this guy’s deal is.”

“Are you sure that’s a good idea?”

Jade shrugged. “Only one way to find out. Call you back in a few.” She threw her pack over her shoulder and walked several feet toward him, then stopped and propped a fist on her hip. Now that she was close, she judged the guy to be in his early thirties.

He glanced at something in his hand, then proceeded to roam predatory eyes from her red tank top, over her jean shorts to her red-painted toenails, and back up again. He’d just totally checked her out.

This isn’t a strip joint, perv.

Jade tugged her shirt down and crossed her arms. “Okay I’m done with the stalker routine. Why are you following me?”

“Jade Buchanan?” The man smiled, his teeth perfectly straight and unnaturally white.

“Maybe. Who wants to know?”

“I’ve been looking for you all morning.” He held up a black-and-white thumbnail image of her high school graduation picture. Her hair had been only

shoulder length back then, and she hadn't been sporting her beloved red tips. Well, that explained why he'd followed her around campus to verify who she was. The fact that he had her picture and knew where her classes were officially creeped her out. Goose bumps ran down the back of her neck as she gripped her cell phone, ready to call campus security.

He held out a manicured hand two shades darker than her California tan. His eyes shot to the four colorful gemstones lining her ear. "I'm Joshua Greenberg from Johansson Tek."

Jade loosened her grip on the phone. She knew the company well. It was a major supplier of her grandmother's company. *Why is he here?* Out of the politeness her grandmother had instilled in her, she shook his hand.

He didn't let go. Instead, he put his other hand on top of hers, adding to the creepoid factor.

Jade pulled her hand away and used it to tuck her hair behind her ear.

"I realize this is a hard time for you, Miss Buchanan. My company wants to help by acquiring Synergy Technologies."

Hard time? Does he mean finals? "My grandmother's company isn't for sale. And even if it was, you'd have to talk to her about it." *Gran would never sell the company. Or would she? Would she sell the company just to make a point?*

Mr. Greenberg's eyebrows drew together. "She, uh... I'm sorry, you don't know?"

Jade stepped back. "Don't know what?"

"Your grandmother."

She shook her head, not wanting to hear what might be coming. His voice took on a tone of sympathy.

"Your grandmother passed away yesterday evening."

"She what... *no.*" Jade's chest tightened while she fumbled to look at her phone. He had to be wrong. She stared at the three voicemail messages her mother had left yesterday after Jade's cell phone battery had died. She'd charged the phone overnight and thrown it in her bag this morning, too late for class to look at it.

This can't be.

She pushed the button and listened to her mother's first call. Jade's pack fell to the ground. Her mom's voice faded as the words began to sink in.

Gran is gone.

A quake from somewhere deep within shook her very core. Guilt pierced her heart, opening a fissure so big she could fall through and never surface. Her knees buckled, and the cell phone slid out of her hand.

Mr. Greenberg picked up the phone when it vibrated with another call. "Hello? No, she's right here, but she's not doing well. No, she just found out her grandmother passed away."

Jade folded her arms around her midsection and rocked back and forth. Her last words to Gran had been heated, and she could never take them back.

Mr. Greenberg held the phone out to Jade.

She didn't take it from him. She couldn't talk right now. She couldn't talk at all.

Aleks's voice came through the phone. "Jade, you need to come home. Now."



SOMETHING WAS OFF. Detective Neal Hawkins leaned back in his swivel chair with his feet propped up on his standard-issue desk. Headquarters was quiet after normal business hours, allowing him the chance to think.

He scanned the King County medical examiner's report again. It killed him to review the crime scene photos in his lap. To see Gloria Buchanan's crumpled body on her office floor. She had deserved to die in peace.

He couldn't shake the image of her swollen face and eyes, even questioned the medical examiner about the EpiPen found in her purse. The ME indicated no findings were present such as rash or hives and the edema of her face and extremities was consistent with side effects from cancer treatment and the prednisone in her purse. Whether she'd died from anaphylactic shock or cancer, neither pointed to murder. And there were no visible signs of a struggle in her office; everything was neat and in order.

So what's bothering me?

Riley, his partner, came up from behind him and dropped two folders on his desk. "I'm heading out, Hawk. This is the last of the paperwork. Give them to Cap for me."

"Will do."

Riley glanced down at the photos. "Isn't that the old lady who died of cancer? I thought the case was closed."

Neal pulled his feet from his desk and sat upright. "It is, but something is nagging at me. If she was that far along, that close to death, why was she working?"

"It does bring new meaning to the word workaholic." Riley slipped his sunglasses over his eyes. "Do you think Cap will let you review the case again?"

Neal doubted it. "I owe her."

"Why's that?"

"My dad was working for her company when he died of a heart attack. I was fifteen at the time. Gloria continued to pay his salary for three years until Mom remarried."

"That's one classy lady. Trust your gut. We call you Hawk for a reason."

"I'm working on it." Neal flipped the crime scene photos face down on his desk.

"I'll be back in two weeks. Don't get shot while I'm gone."

"You're a riot. Don't bring home any STDs from Mexico."

"What fun would it be if I didn't try?"

"Get out of here." Neal waved him off with his hand. When it came to watching your back, Riley was the man. But Neal wouldn't want the guy anywhere near his sisters.

Riley chuckled as he left and Neal shook his head. He needed to get back to the task at hand. Gloria.

I failed her then.

Gloria had asked him to look into the disappearance of one of her employees almost two years ago. Arnie Thompson's body had washed up in Murden Cove on Bainbridge Island.

Neal wiped a hand down his face.

The Port of Seattle PD had jurisdiction, and the medical examiner's report had indicated that Thompson drowned. Rigor mortis and physical wounds indicated

postmortem injuries. No defensive wounds were found. In other words, the case had been classified as an *accidental* drowning.

Neal hadn't bought it then, and he didn't buy it now.

The victim's car had been found at Shilshole Bay Marina, which meant Arnie Thompson had gone out on a boat. His family had confirmed that he'd gone fishing with a friend, but they didn't know with whom. Thing was, no friend came forward to call the Coast Guard or police.

Without a formal okay from his captain, he'd done legwork on his own, but couldn't find a connection between the owners of the boats moored at the marina and anyone who knew the vic.

Gloria had taken the news of Thompson's death hard, and not having a solid explanation as to why he'd drowned made the news go down that much harder. She'd done so much for Neal's family after his father had died. He'd wanted to repay her in any way possible, but now—now she was dead. There was nothing more he could do.

So why am I looking at her file again?

Something stuck in his craw. Neal couldn't shake the nagging feeling that he'd missed something. He should have pushed for an autopsy, even though her age, her condition, didn't warrant it. And with their caseload, Seattle PD didn't have time to investigate the death of a sixty-eight year old with non-Hodgkin's terminal lymphoma, a death that on face value seemed cut and dried—and clearly not a murder.

Still... two people from Synergy Technologies are dead.

Neal couldn't let it go, despite his captain's orders. As far as he was concerned, the case was still open, and he was going to do everything in his power to find out if there was a connection between those two deaths.

CHAPTER 3

GRAN'S LAWYER INSISTED Jade come today, said it was urgent. Couldn't he understand that grief still bore down on her, its weight so oppressive she could barely breathe? The funeral had been only two days ago, and yet here she was, on the way to a meeting with a damn lawyer.

The soggy afternoon chilled her as she walked through downtown Seattle. Various shades of gray echoing in the worn pavement, concrete walkways, and glass buildings amplified her melancholy. The constant drizzle frizzed her hair and permeated her clothes.

What does it matter anyway?

As she walked inside Smith Tower, warm air confronted her, causing a shiver to ripple up her spine. Jade automatically punched number eighteen on the elevator panel.

When the door opened, her grandmother's lawyer approached her from the hallway. "Jade."

"Mr. Dawson." Her voice was a shadow of a whisper. She wasn't prepared when he pulled her into his arms.

"Your grandmother was a remarkable woman."

Her throat clenched. Mr. Dawson was right. It really sucked she'd been fighting with Gran too much to tell her that.

"Please, come inside." He offered her his arm and led her into the familiar high-rise office.

The floor-to-ceiling windows revealed the murky sky, which deadened the Seattle skyline and the water of Puget Sound. No cheery colors offered the promise of a bright sunny day. No dark, angry thunderclouds filled the sky with sparks of energy. Everything looked dull and lifeless, mimicking the bleakness in her heart.

As Mr. Dawson sat down behind his desk, she focused on the room around her and gasped.

Bryce?

"I'm sorry for your loss, Jade." Bryce took a tentative step toward her with his

arms outstretched and then he stopped. To her disappointment, he shoved his hands in his pockets.

Oh, how she wished he would envelop her in his strong arms and nestle her into his chest. Maybe then some of her pain would ebb.

She hadn't seen him in years, and of course, here she was, looking like crap in jeans and an oversized sweatshirt. On top of that—no doubt—her nose was red and her face blotchy with dried tears. There he stood, all perfect in black dress slacks and a crisp white button-down shirt with a red tie under his suit coat, not a dark hair out of place. Only his hazel eyes reflected her grief.

This is not the way I imagined meeting you again.

She inhaled a deep breath and held it, desperate to hold back the floodgates.

I'm not going to break down, not here, not yet, and not in front of you.

She had to sit. When Jade was sure she could speak, she focused on her grandmother's lawyer. If she so much as looked at Bryce right now, she'd lose it. "I don't mean to sound rude, Mr. Dawson, but what are the two of us doing here?"

Mr. Dawson slid a pair of black reading glasses over his thin nose before opening a manila folder. "As you know, your grandmother left your mother and father most of her possessions. However, she left something for you as well."

"Her pearls?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact, she did." He turned to the locked credenza behind him and pulled out a black velvet case. He placed it on his desk in front of her.

She opened the case, revealing the double-layer pearl necklace with matching pearl and diamond earrings. The set was as stunning and classy as her grandmother had been. A brief moment of comfort warmed her chest.

"But the necklace is not why I brought you both here today."

"Then why?" Jade closed the velvet box, placed it in her lap, and rubbed her fingers across the soft, soothing nap.

Mr. Dawson folded his hands together. "I feel it best to be direct. Your grandmother has left you Synergy Technologies."

Jade's breath caught. "You must be mistaken. Gran would have left the company to my parents."

"Your father's a respected orthopedic surgeon and your mother a gifted artist. Neither one has business skills."

Jade's eyebrows drew together. "Who else knew about this before today?"

"No one other than myself and your parents."

So how did Mr. Creepy Stalker know? And why didn't my parents tell me?

It was bad enough they didn't let her know Gran was sick, even if her grandmother had hid the severity of her illness from them until a month ago. And it really ticked her off that Gran didn't want Jade to come home and get caught up in her illness. Once again, her grandmother had taken away her choice. Jade would have transferred to UW or taken a year off school to be there for Gran.

Jade stole a glance at Bryce, whose mouth was open in shock. Clearly, he hadn't known about this before now either.

"Gloria has named you, Bryce Radisson, as chief operating officer. Jade, do you concur?"

"Yes, of course."

Bryce seemed taken aback by her quick response.

Let him try to figure that one out.

“Do you accept this position, Mr. Radisson?”

“Yes... Yes, I accept.” His lips curved into a slight smile.

“Excellent.” Mr. Dawson made notes on the paper in front of him. “She has named you, Jade Buchanan, as chief executive officer.”

“What?” they both said in unison.

“For the company to transfer ownership to you, Jade, you must accept the position within ten business days of the reading of this will.”

“But I—I have finals next week and won’t be ready to run a company in two weeks. I still have another year of college. What was Gran thinking?”

“This is ridiculous,” Bryce said. “She’s too young to run a company. No offense, Jade.”

She glared at him. “And thirty isn’t too young to be COO?”

Mr. Dawson attempted to settle their brief sparring match. “Your grandmother was a very smart woman. She’s been training you for this since you were—”

“Five years old.” Jade remembered Gran teaching her about quality-control measures in their attempt to make the perfect chocolate chip cookie. Still, she’d been meant to work her way up the organization and learn the ropes from Gran. She’d hoped one day in the distant future to take over the company from her parents.

“Since we can’t change the will, let’s discuss stock.” Mr. Dawson pulled out another document.

Jade’s curiosity was piqued when he started talking about preferred company stock, especially when he said that her shares were double that of Bryce’s, and combined they had more shares than the board of directors.

Why would Gran give Bryce stock? What is she up to?

“In the event that you do not wish to continue as CEO after twelve months of service, Mr. Radisson will be named CEO. You will have the ability to earn profits, despite no longer working at the company.”

Jade straightened her shoulders and lifted her chin. It was so like her grandmother to make decisions for her even from the grave. She wanted to refuse Gran’s wishes just to make a point. “And if I don’t want to be CEO?”

“The company will be sold to the highest bidder.”

And there it is.

Jade gritted her teeth. Gran always had a counterattack.

“The hell it will!” Bryce jumped up and started pacing the back of the small office.

Bryce’s display of temper was unusual, but she couldn’t blame him. He hadn’t grown up with a grandmother who had a hidden agenda behind every decision she made. Obviously, Gran wasn’t going to let someone else take over her company. Jade’s gaze drifted down to the black velvet box in her hands.

I can’t think about this right now.

She stood.

Mr. Dawson rose. “Jade, your decision?”

She walked out of the room, leaving the two men staring at her back.



Secrets at Synergy is the first book in the compelling U-District romantic suspense series. If you like corporate intrigue, eccentric heroines, and blazing chemistry, then you'll love Jodi Ashland's high-powered romantic mystery thriller.

Buy [*Secrets at Synergy*](#) to enter the boardroom for a sexy corporate mystery today!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jodi Ashland is an award-winning author of romantic suspense. If you enjoy reading about empowered women who overcome adversity, flawed sexy heroes who love them, and action packed mystery and suspense, then you'll love Jodi Ashland's books. Jodi has a B.S. in Information Systems and an M.B.A. but has pursued her true passion writing novels and poems. She is a mother of two, cancer survivor, kayaker, skier, gardener, camper, and lover of all things outdoors.

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