

## ***DIRTY COOKING MEDIA KIT***

- I. Press Release*
- II. Author Biography*
- III. Book Photo*
- IV. Sample Q&A*
- V. Book Synopsis*
- VI. Sample Chapter*
- VII. Blurbs & Testimonials*

## I. Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Steamy New Romance Offered by Literary Wanderlust**

Denver, CO, June 1, 2019—Literary Wanderlust is offering a steamy new romance, *Dirty Cooking*, in summer 2019. This story of a broken-hearted chef tempted by her hot new boss is the debut novel of author Carley Mercedes and is sure to heat up readers.

*Dirty Cooking* is the story of Melanie, a chef who loves fine food, but who's stuck at a diner where grease is the main ingredient on the menu. She's desperate to get a new job, and when her best friend calls her about an opportunity as a live-in chef, Melanie jumps at the chance. She never considered that her boss might be hotter than her oven.

Erik grew up poor in the foster care system, running from an abusive foster father with his foster brother at age 15. Now the owner of a successful app development company, Erik has more money than he knows what to do with. He has a huge home, fast cars, and even faster relationships. Then he hires Melanie. This little chef makes Erik's blood sizzle more than the oil in her frying pan.

The fire between them burns hot, and though they try to resist the delicious temptation, the attraction proves to be too much—even though they don't fully trust one another. Will Melanie and Erik overcome their past fears and embrace what is bubbling up between them? Or will their romance flop like a ruined soufflé?

*Dirty Cooking* is for readers who like their boy-meets-girl stories on the hot-and-heavy, NSFW side, with a generous serving of whipped cream for good measure. — Colorado Book Review

*Dirty Cooking* will be published on July 1, 2019.

#### About Carley Mercedes

Carley Mercedes is a romance writer who lives in Missouri with her husband. A sucker for love and happy endings, she started writing HEAs (Happily Ever Afters) when she was in high school. You can find out more about Carley's work at [www.carleymercedes.com](http://www.carleymercedes.com).

Carley can be found on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/CarleyMercedesWrites/](https://www.facebook.com/CarleyMercedesWrites/) and on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/CarleyMercedes](https://www.twitter.com/CarleyMercedes).

#### About Literary Wanderlust

Literary Wanderlust publishes well-written novels and short story anthologies in the romance, science fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, women's fiction, and mystery/suspense genres, as well as nonfiction. Visit us at [www.literarywanderlust.com](http://www.literarywanderlust.com).

## **II. Author Biography**

Carley Mercedes is a romance writer who lives in Missouri with her husband. A sucker for love and happy endings, she started writing HEAs (Happily Ever Afters) when she was in high school. With a need for caffeine and bookshelves stacked to the ceiling to inspire her, she writes best in libraries and coffee shops. She's happy to be a writer cliché, but when she's not working she enjoys painting, plays racquetball, and travels.

You can find out more about Carley's work at [www.carleymercedes.com](http://www.carleymercedes.com).

III. Book Photo



#### **IV. Sample Q&A**

##### **Can you describe what your book is about in one sentence?**

Sparks fly when recent culinary graduate, Melanie, finds a job as a private chef for a handsome, though troubled, entrepreneur, Erik.

##### **What is the theme of *Dirty Cooking*?**

Love requires trust to flourish.

##### **How do you develop your plots and characters?**

I usually write in hope of creating something I'd want to read myself. My plots generally evolve out of situations I personally find entertaining. I start with a quirk or something distinctive about a person and work from there to flesh out a character.

##### **What was your favorite part of writing *Dirty Cooking*?**

Everything related to food! Eating is such an intimate part of our lives and our eating habits can be very revealing. It's a multi-sensory experience that I really enjoy writing about.

And I loved writing about the diner! But I suppose that's related to food too.

##### **Give us some insight into your main character. What does he/she do that is special? What are his/her character flaws?**

Mel has a dream and she's sticking with it no matter the consequences. I love that about her. In a day and age when we're so frequently told to be practical and to think about securing our future, I love to see a woman who bets on herself.

In terms of character flaws, Mel has a tendency to hold on to the past. It makes her a bit too cautious and keeps her from enjoying the present.

##### **If you could spend time with a character from your book, which character would it be? And what would you do during that day?**

I'd spend a day with Hunter. I love playing sports, especially basketball with my husband, but I'm a terrible athlete! Maybe if I spent a day with him, I could pick up some tips. He seems optimistic and patient enough that he could bear with me for a day of double dribbling.

Of course, I'd also love to eat a meal with Mel if she was willing to cook. I have a tendency to eat out a lot, so a home cooked meal from someone who's gone to culinary school sounds amazing.

**Tell us about the conflict in this book. What is at stake for your characters?**

The conflict in *Dirty Cooking* really boils down to trust. If Mel and Erik can't learn to trust someone, they're in for a lifetime of loneliness.

**What was one of the most surprising things you learned in creating *Dirty Cooking*?**

If I had fun writing it, it's likely the reader will enjoy reading it. My readers' favorite sections are often the ones I had the best time writing. It's a good reminder that each sentence, each section, each chapter deserves as much attention as the one before it. The book will be much stronger for it.

**How do you choose which genre to write in?**

I write in a lot of different genres because I find that writing is a fantastic way to explore the fascinating hobbies, jobs, and wonders in the world. But I'm partial to romance writing because I'm a huge fan of stories with happy endings. The world isn't perfect, and people live difficult lives. If I can share a moment of happiness with a reader, I know I've accomplished something worthwhile.

**What makes your book different from other books in your genre?**

This is one of my favorite questions! I've read a lot of romance novels. I started reading them when I was around fourteen and I've been hooked on several authors in the thirteen years since. Frequently books create healthy, dynamic partnerships between men and women, but every once in a while, I'll read a book that glorifies problematic relationship behaviors such as manipulation or even stalking. I don't ever want to write a book that encourages women to seek out unhealthy, or even dangerous, relationships, so I focus on creating relationships that are healthy. Of course, even heroes and heroines make mistakes and face conflicts, but I try to ensure that my characters don't engage in red flag behaviors.

**Of all the characters you have created, which is your favorite and why?**

Angie is definitely my favorite. She's faced the most strife, but she doesn't shy away from life. Despite her home troubles, she wants to be there for her sister, even if she can't seem to get her life on track.

**Tell us about your background. What made you decide to pursue writing?**

I was always a daydreamer. As a young child, I absolutely loved road trips because I could spend hours staring out the window creating worlds and stories in my mind. When I was old enough to write, I always carried a notebook around with me. I started story after story—fantasy, fan-fiction, romance, science fiction, everything. I didn't manage to finish a novel until my MFA, but after that, well, I couldn't stop if I tried.

### **What is your writing process?**

About once a year, I get a nugget of inspiration. I'll see something or experience something, and suddenly an entire story materializes in my mind and then I'm off writing for days or months. The rest of the time, those other 364 days of the year, I have to work to come up with a story. I brainstorm, I draft, I cut, I write a beginning and then I rewrite at least five more beginnings, then I cry and cut some more.

I like developing loose plotlines so that I know the direction of my story and to ensure that there are no gaping plotlines. But making things too regimented will make me feel boxed in. So after a general plotline, I'll write a few scenes and then fill in the next few plot points. Then I'll repeat that process: write a few scenes, flesh out the next plot points, write a few scenes, etc.

### **Tell us about the challenges of getting your book published. How did it come about?**

I'm always raring to start a new project before I even finish the one I'm working on! Once I have a solid draft that I'm proud of, I start the querying process, but frequently I've already moved on to writing something new. Publishing is about the long haul, which is something I have to chant to myself on a daily basis.

What was really exciting about the publishing process for *Dirty Cooking*, was that it got picked up through #PitMad, a pitchfest on twitter. I found out about the event the same day it was occurring, so I jumped in and tweeted, "After a failed stint at a diner, a recent grad, Mel, finds a job & more when she goes to work for a young, sexy entrepreneur." Boy was it my lucky day when an editor from Literary Wanderlust 'liked' my tweet. I submitted the manuscript and, hallelujah, they were interested!

### **What is your favorite genre to read?**

I love reading as many genres as I love writing in. I'm a huge fan of romance novels, but I also love speculative fiction and literary fiction.

### **What are some of your favorite authors or books?**

Like many people my age, I owe my childhood to J.K. Rowling and Harry Potter. When I reached adulthood, Margaret Atwood and Octavia Butler changed the way that I thought about fiction. They made me realize that writing can be a social act, that books can change minds. And after a long, stressful day, I'll reach for something by Ilona Andrews or Carly Phillips.

**Who are your readers and why will they love your book?**

My readers are adult women who love hot food and tasty men, or maybe tasty food and hot men. Either way, if you're a fan of contemporary, steamy romance novels with feisty heroines and stubborn, sexy men, this is the book for you.

**What other projects are you working on?**

I'm working towards my Ph.D in fiction and my dissertation is a literary novel set in a border town in Arizona. I'm also working on another romance novel that follows Erik's brother, Hunter. Also—because one can never be too busy—I run a small, experimental press called Partial Press with my husband.

**Do you have a day job in addition to being a writer? If so, what do you do during the day?**

I am a Ph.D student. I take three classes, teach two, and do committee work for the English graduate students. I stay very busy, but I love all of it.

**What motivates you to write?**

I really wish I knew because a good answer might keep my friends from being annoyed when they invite me out to a club and I tell them that my idea of fun is writing in a coffee shop. All I know is that I started writing stories in elementary school, poems in middle school, and novels in high school, and that I've never been able to stop. On a bad day, writing is my way of processing the world. On a good day, I have a deep desire to express my point of view through sharing stories.

**Why did you write *Dirty Cooking*?**

I wrote my first full manuscript in graduate school. After I finished my MFA, I was scared that I could only write in an institution where I took classes that forced me to write and where supportive faculty surrounded me. In an attempt to overcome my fear, I decided to write a book over the summer. What better topic for a summer project than a fun, desert-bound romance?

**Who did you write *Dirty Cooking* for?**

I wrote the novel for myself and other women. I had a great writer's group I was working with and I thought a lot about them when I wrote it. Their humor and their interests were a lot of what I was thinking about as I wrote *Dirty Cooking*.

**Where can we find you online?**

I blog about writing and I've got tips for writers on my website at [CarleyMercedes.com](http://CarleyMercedes.com).

Also, follow me on Twitter @CarleyMercedes.

**What advice would you give to aspiring writers?**

You have to practice writing novels just like you would practice anything else. It's hard to envision such practice because a novel takes so much more time, but you wouldn't write one poem and call yourself a fantastic poet, would you? Practice writing novels, practice finishing them. Don't get discouraged if the first manuscript doesn't get published. Just write the next one.

**What are the most important elements of good writing? According to you, what tools are must-haves for writers?**

Character quirks go a long way. People are full of contradictions and desires and they're so much more fascinating because of it. A quirky character who wants something can really carry a story.

As far as tools, I'm a big fan of Duotrope. I am not an organized person and spreadsheets take me forever. To keep track of my submissions, I use Duotrope. And when I'm writing, I'm a big fan of Scrivener because it does a lot of organizational work for me. Beyond that, give me a keyboard or a notebook and I'm set.

**What question have you always wanted to be asked in an interview? How would you answer that question?**

"What research did you do for this project?"

I researched adoption programs and those in need of foster care in Phoenix, Arizona. I learned a lot about the process of fostering children. I also researched culinary terms and learned how to best reheat several of my favorite dishes.

## **V. Book Synopsis**

Melanie is a broken-hearted chef who loves fine food, but without any other job prospects, she's stuck at the Jivin' Diner, where grease is the main ingredient on the menu. She's desperate to get a new job so she can start cooking the food of her dreams, and when her best friend calls her about an opportunity as a live-in chef, Melanie jumps at the chance. Not once did she ever consider that her boss would be hotter than her oven.

Growing up in foster care, Erik had a rough start. To save himself and his foster brother, the boys escaped their abusive foster father and ran off to Arizona. Now the owner of a successful app development company, Erik has more money than he knows what to do with. He has a huge home, fast cars, and even faster relationships. His life seems perfect, but something was missing. That is, until he hires Melanie. This little chef makes Erik's blood sizzle more than the oil in her frying pan.

The fire between them burns hot, and though they try to resist the delicious temptation, the attraction proves to be too much. Emotions flare up, but the past hangs around like the smell of burnt popcorn, and neither can fully trust the other. Will Melanie and Erik overcome their past fears and embrace what is bubbling up between them? Or will their romance flop like a ruined soufflé?

*Melanie*

Melanie couldn't believe she'd asked him what he thought of her old uniform. Such a question was an inappropriate thing to ask her boss of all people, and she was not that kind of forward anyway. But the way he was looking at her...she had to know. She bit her lip and waited, trying not to shy away. His dark eyes were trained on hers, and the intensity of his gaze shot electricity through her body.

He inclined his head. She could feel his hot breath against her neck. Tingling started just below her ear and spiraled outward. "Sexy. The outfit was damn hot."

"Sexy?" she asked, her voice breathy.

He leaned back, a small grin pulling at his lips. "This surprises you? You were wearing spandex so tight it looked painted on."

"Oh, yeah, I mean I know how tight it is, I'm the one wearing it after all. I just meant that...I was surprised you found it sexy," she said without thinking. Well, no coming back from her honesty now. The idea that a man as arousing as Erik found her attractive was too heady a concept.

"Why?" he asked, his voice commanding.

She was so immediately persuaded to tell him, she wondered where her self-control was. "You're practically cut from stone. Even with the T-shirt on. I know I get by. I run, and I can't complain. But...I can only imagine how chiseled you are without the clothing."

He raised his eyebrow as soon as she said it. Once again, she'd realized what she said only after she'd said it. She was sure her face must be in flames. "Not that...I didn't mean...oh God. Not that I spend my time imagining you without clothing on. I always imagine

you with some clothes on. All! All clothing. I'm going to try to melt off the counter now."

She squeezed her eyes shut, hoping one of them would disappear, but then she heard a low chuckle coming from the man in front of her. Her eyes snapped open. Her embarrassment sizzled out at the chuckle. Not only was it rude to laugh, but did his chuckle also have to be sexy as heck? It wasn't fair. She glowered and fisted her hands on the counter. "You think this is funny?"

"It's a little amusing." His eyes narrowed.

She would not be intimidated. She would hold her ground. "Uh-huh."

"If you want to think about me while you're not wearing clothes, that's fine with me," he said, his voice husky.

Melanie clapped a hand over her mouth, and she leaned back. "That is not what I meant. I meant that you had only some clothing on, not that I imagined you while I'm naked."

Erik inhaled, his nostrils flaring. "You're making things difficult, Melanie. You're attracted to me."

She blinked at him, uncertain what to say. Was it obvious? She wasn't sure if she wanted a way out of this conversation, or a way to get in deeper. But oh boy, did she love the way he said her name. "Um," was the only thing she could get out. Her tongue wasn't working well.

"I'm going to kiss you until you forget where you are unless you tell me to stop now."

Her breathing caught in her chest. There wasn't anything she wanted more than for him to kiss her right then. She licked her lips, and he groaned. His eyes were molten dark chocolate, and his jaw was clenched.

"Consequences be damned." He stepped in between her dangling legs and grabbed her waist with his right hand and her nape with the other, and then hauled her to him. She shuddered as she felt the hard planes of his stomach and chest through his shirt.

He tilted his head over her so that his face was an inch from hers and stopped, watching her.

She wanted him to bridge the space between their lips, and for the moment, she didn't give a flying fig that her body strained to get even closer to his. Finally, he bent over her, his lips capturing hers. Heat spread through her in a surge, and she clutched his shoulders. She was sure her nails bit into his shoulder muscles, but she didn't care.

He nipped her bottom lip and her mouth fell open on a moan. His tongue swept between her lips, tangling with hers, robbing her of conscious thought. His hands slid down her arms until they encircled her waist underneath her shirt. He held her tighter against him, and she could feel the wonderful pressure of his hardness against the apex of her thighs. She tore her mouth away, gasping, and he kissed along the underside of her jaw and his teeth grazed her chin.

She moaned, and then he kissed his way down to her collarbone. She writhed against him, her body searching for some kind of relief against his, but there were too many clothes between them. She dragged her hand down his muscular chest, humming in appreciation as her fingers ran along the contours of his abs. Her hands found his belt, and she tugged at the buckle without giving it any thought.

Erik stilled at the action. His lips stopped moving and he caught her nimble fingers with his hands. She heard his ragged breathing against her neck. He leaned back and looked into her eyes, his gaze was so hot she thought the look could burn through metal. "As much as I want to fuck you right here on the counter, I'm not sure it's the best idea."

Melanie blinked a few times trying to take in her surroundings. She looked down at her hands on his belt, and embarrassment flooded through her. She had been about to take off his pants. She didn't disrobe men in kitchens. Although, if she were being honest with herself, she wouldn't have minded trying right

about then. She cleared her throat and looked away, chagrined by the utter wantonness of her actions. He was her boss for goodness sake. Sure, he kissed her, but he hadn't tried to remove her pants.

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*Erik*

A series of emotions flitted over Melanie's face. Arousal was evident in her unfocused eyes and her flushed skin, but embarrassment followed in her pressed lips. Erik frowned. Embarrassment was the last thing he wanted to cause. He was thrilled at her responsiveness. More than anything, he wanted to let her take his pants off. It had taken all of his willpower not to strip her down and take her there in the kitchen. He was her employer, and he couldn't take advantage of her like that.

He took a deep breath and stepped back. His arousal was still obvious, and Melanie was certainly fascinated by that. She followed him with her gaze, staring at his erection. If resisting her weren't so hard, he would have been amused, but as it was, she was making things exponentially more difficult. "You're going to have to stop staring."

Her wide eyes peeked up to meet his, and then she averted her gaze, her face bright red. He shook his head in disbelief. Not two minutes ago she tried to unbuckle his belt, and now he caught her looking, she was blushing again. She was such an intriguing mix of seductive and sweet.

Closing his eyes, he pulled himself together. This couldn't happen again. Kissing her like that wasn't fair to her. She probably wanted things like relationships and love, and he wasn't in a place where he could give her either. He wasn't sure he ever would be. He opened his eyes and she straightened her clothes. "We can't do this again."

She held her arms over her waist. "I didn't start this. You kissed me."

“I know and I’m sorry I did. Now I’m saying it won’t happen again.”

A look of hurt passed over her eyes, but then it was gone, and he thought he’d imagined it. “Oh, okay, I get it.”

Unsure about what there was to ‘get’ he nodded. “All right, good.”

She looked at the ground and turned away from him. “I have to go freshen up,” she said and rushed from the kitchen.

He ran a hand through his hair. How he was going to deal with the temptation of her every day in his home, he sure as hell didn’t know.

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### *Melanie*

As soon as Melanie got to her room, tears welled up behind her eyes. She was so embarrassed, she wished she could quit the job right then and there. There she was getting all hot and heavy and offering herself to him, and he regretted kissing her. She couldn’t believe she’d thought he’d been into it. Humiliating as that was, she couldn’t give up the job. It paid too well and offered her more happiness—at least, before two minutes ago it had—than her last job. She would just have to suck it up and act professional and aloof. For the next fifteen minutes though, she would allow herself time to feel disappointed at his reaction. She was human after all. She would wallow and then throw herself back into her cooking and jogging, and she’d feel better in no time.

But before any of that, she deserved some sympathy. She slid her phone from her pocket and speed-dialed Sheila.

“Hey, Mel. Hold on a second,” Sheila said when she answered, but her muffled voice continued. “No, they didn’t fire you from the internship because they have a thing against white people, they kicked you out because they caught you on video touching the paintings. Now if you’ll excuse me, I have to take care of this phone

call. Sure, an apology would help. Not to me. To the museum. Okay, bye.”

Melanie smiled despite her embarrassment and frustration. She could always count on Sheila’s work interactions to make her laugh. There were people who had it even less together than she did. It may have been selfish, but it was a relief.

“Sorry about that,” Sheila said.

“No problem.” Melanie lay back on her bed.

“How’s the job going?”

Melanie wasn’t sure how to handle the conversation or figure out where to start. She wasn’t even sure why she was so upset over one kiss. “It’s fine.”

“You can’t even lie over a phone. It’s sad. What happened?”

She rubbed a hand over her face. “Erik and I kissed.”

“Oh no, and it was bad? Is he a slobberer? Too big of a tongue?”

“No. It’s just, I think he was disappointed by it.” She heard the strain in her own voice, and she was disgusted with herself. She wanted to chuck her phone across the room. It was just a dumb kiss.

“Are you sure?”

“He made it very clear he didn’t want it to happen again.”

“What a jackass. Don’t let it get to you. It sounds like he’s a jerk.”

“Okay, but I’m going to go ahead and ask you a dumb question now. Because, you know, it has been a while for me.” And if she was being honest, her ex and she didn’t get it on all that often. She decided to leave that part out. “Is it possible I did something wrong? Is there, like, a thing that guys don’t like that I could’ve done?”

“Did you kick him in the balls?”

“What? No. Of course not.”

“Then no. I’m not saying all guys are like cars, but moan and show some cleavage, and you’ve pretty much turned on the ignition.”

“Okay, I do not believe that. Also, where the heck do you get your metaphors?”

“I might be exaggerating a little. And a student left a car magazine behind. I got bored between meetings with students because they’ve restricted our internet access for a while. Some tool was looking at porn.”

“Eww.”

“No kidding.” They sat in silence for a minute before Sheila spoke again. “Are you going to stay there?”

“Yeah. I don’t want to give up on this job so soon. But will you let me know if you find something else? Just in case.”

“Of course.”

“By the way, I have to go to dinner at my parents’ house this Friday. Want to go?”

“I haven’t seen Mr. and Mrs. Clark in forever. Sure.”

“You saw them last month.”

“Whatever. It was great. I love your parents. It’s like they’re from a different era.”

“They are from a different era,” Melanie said.

“You know what I mean. They’re pretty old.”

She knew exactly what Sheila meant. Her parents were at least ten years older than all her friends’ parents. They’d had Melanie later in life. Her father was retired, and her mother was on a different plane from the rest of humanity in general. Melanie always invited Sheila as a buffer. Her mother tended to be less offensive when others were around.

## **VII. Blurbs & Testimonials**

*Dirty Cooking* is for readers who like their boy-meets-girl stories on the hot-and-heavy, NSFW side, with a generous serving of whipped cream for good measure. — Colorado Book Review

Pretty easy read. Cute little love story. A woman looking for a new chef job that is hired by a hunky man. They get under each others skin but they can't figure out why there is more to it. They make a friends with benefits arrangement that soon turns into more. — Library Thing