



Silhouette®

1094  
August

TIME MENT'S

# BORN OF PASSION

Carla  
Cassidy

## FIRSTBORN SONS



\$4.50 U.S. \$5.25 CAN.

"Carla Cassidy never fails to deliver a fast-paced, entertaining story with endearing characters..."

—Bestselling author Barbara Bretton

# BORN OF PASSION

江苏工业学院图书馆  
藏书章



INTIMATE MOMENTS™

Published by Silhouette Books

America's Publisher of Contemporary Romance

If you purchased this book without a cover you should be aware that this book is stolen property. It was reported as "unsold and destroyed" to the publisher, and neither the author nor the publisher has received any payment for this "stripped book."

Special thanks and acknowledgment are given  
to Carla Cassidy for her contribution  
to the **FIRSTBORN SONS** series.



**SILHOUETTE BOOKS**



ISBN 0-373-27164-6

**BORN OF PASSION**

Copyright © 2001 by Harlequin Books S.A.

All rights reserved. Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilization of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the written permission of the editorial office, Silhouette Books, 300 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017 U.S.A.

All characters in this book have no existence outside the imagination of the author and have no relation whatsoever to anyone bearing the same name or names. They are not even distantly inspired by any individual known or unknown to the author, and all incidents are pure invention.

This edition published by arrangement with Harlequin Books S.A.

® and TM are trademarks of Harlequin Books S.A., used under license. Trademarks indicated with ® are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office, the Canadian Trade Marks Office and in other countries.

Visit Silhouette at [www.eHarlequin.com](http://www.eHarlequin.com)

**Printed in U.S.A.**

# FIRSTBORN SONS

## PROFILE

<b>FIRSTBORN SON:</b>	Kyle Ramsey
<b>AGE:</b>	31
<b>STATS:</b>	6'0"; thick, wavy hair, smoldering gray eyes, broad shoulders
<b>OCCUPATION:</b>	Pilot
<b>AREA OF EXPERTISE:</b>	Top gun navy flier in the air; seductive, fly-by-night lover on the ground
<b>PERSONALITY:</b>	Strong, courageous, certain of his destiny...until a certain strong-willed lady shakes him to the core
<b>FAVORITE SPORT:</b>	Ocean swimming—pitting his strength and skill against the raging waves
<b>MOST CHARMING CHARACTERISTIC:</b>	Smoky bedroom eyes that whisper secret pleasures
<b>BRAVEST ACT OF COURAGE:</b>	Taking down a knife-wielding thug threatening an innocent young woman on a street in Nicaragua
<b>PREFERRED ROMANTIC SETTING:</b>	A candlelit bedroom with a soft bed and the warm, willing woman of his dreams wrapped in his arms
<b>GREATEST PASSION:</b>	Joanna Morgan, the woman with whom he shared one memorable night of lovemaking. The woman he can't forget....

Dear Reader,

As always, Intimate Moments offers you six terrific books to fill your reading time, starting with Terese Ramin's *Her Guardian Agent*. For FBI agent Hazel Youvella, the case that took her back to revisit her Native American roots was a very personal one. For not only did she find the hero of her heart in Native American tracker Guy Levoie, she discovered the truth about the missing child she was seeking. This wasn't just any child—this was *her* child.

If you enjoyed last month's introduction to our FIRSTBORN SONS in-line continuity, you won't want to miss the second installment. Carla Cassidy's *Born of Passion* will grip you from the first page and leave you longing for the rest of these wonderful linked books. Valerie Parv takes a side trip from Silhouette Romance to debut in Intimate Moments with a stunner of a reunion romance called *Interrupted Lullaby*. Karen Templeton begins a new miniseries called HOW TO MARRY A MONARCH with *Plain-Jane Princess*, and Linda Winstead Jones returns with *Hot on His Trail*, a book you should be hot on the trail of yourself. Finally, welcome Sharon Mignerey back and take a look at her newest, *Too Close for Comfort*.

And don't forget to look in the back of this book to see how Silhouette can make you a star.

Enjoy them all, and come back next month for more of the best and most exciting romance reading around.

Yours,



Leslie J. Wainger  
Executive Senior Editor

Please address questions and book requests to:  
Silhouette Reader Service  
U.S.: 3010 Walden Ave., P.O. Box 1325, Buffalo, NY 14269  
Canadian: P.O. Box 609, Fort Erie, Ont. L2A 5X3

***Bound by the legacy of their fathers, six Firstborn Sons are about to discover the stuff true heroes—and true love—are made of....***

**Kyle Ramsey:** When he returns to Montebello on a covert mission, this blatantly masculine Firstborn Son reunites with the exotic beauty he'd shared a night of passion with. Can this restless top-gun pilot reclaim the mother of his child?

**Joanna Morgan:** Out of self-preservation, this headstrong military attaché has been keeping a precious secret from her globe-trotting lover. For she yearns for the one thing an adventure-seeking Kyle can *never* give her—a place to call home.

**Major Edward Ramsey:** Though he's raised his boys to be all they can be, his rebellious Firstborn Son will be the one to follow in his footsteps....

**King Marcus:** His kindness and compassion are legendary. But this formidable ruler's kid gloves come off when his country and his kingdom are threatened!

**Prince Lucas Sebastiani and Sheik Rashid Kamal:** To the dismay of their families, these royal heirs are still missing in action....

A note from prolific author Carla Cassidy:

Dear Reader,

I was thrilled when I was asked to participate in another one of Silhouette's exciting continuity series. This one, **FIRSTBORN SONS**, was especially fun, because it deals with a powerful covert organization, handsome, daring men of action, and women strong enough to love those men.

*Born of Passion* begins with a one-night stand that my hero, Kyle Ramsey, can't forget and my heroine, Joanna Morgan, desperately wants to forget. One delicious, unforgettable night that stirs in these two strong people a passion that will make them fight the odds to find a lasting, forever kind of love.

I have been writing for Silhouette for the past nine years, and in that time have written over fifty books. I've been a Romance Writers of America RITA Award finalist and have won a variety of awards from *Romantic Times Magazine*.

I hope you enjoy reading *Born of Passion* as much as I enjoyed writing it.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carla Cassidy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

## *Chapter 1*

**I**ntoxicating.

Kyle Ramsey drew a deep breath, discerning the tang of lemon, delicate citrus blossoms and exotic spices among the many fragrances that rode the warm air that surrounded him.

Montebello. The sounds and smells of the Mediterranean island seemed to welcome him back as he grabbed his duffel bag and hopped into a taxi.

“The U.S. Embassy,” he said to the driver, then settled back in the seat.

It had been three months since he’d been here, and while on the surface Montebello showed no change, Kyle knew there had been changes...changes that threatened the fiber, the very heart, of the beautiful island.

He brushed at a tiny piece of lint on the sleeve of

his naval uniform. He'd flown on a transport plane to Montebello and could have taken military transport to the embassy. But he'd opted for a taxi instead, needing time alone to think and to prepare himself for whatever responsibility lay ahead.

His commanding officer had been vague about Kyle's exact mission when he'd given him the orders to return to Montebello. He'd simply explained that the ambassador in Montebello would fill Kyle in when he arrived.

"You've come to the prettiest island in the world," the cabbie said, his dark eyes looking at Kyle through the rearview mirror.

"Have you been here long?" Kyle asked, recognizing a slight East Coast U.S. accent in the man's voice.

"Ten years. Came out here to visit a friend for a week, but somehow I never left. This island is as bewitching as a beautiful woman. Once it gets you in its grasp, you never want to be released."

The cabbie's words instantly evoked a memory in Kyle's mind—the memory of a single night with a local Montebello woman...a single night of the most mind-numbing, searing passion he'd ever experienced in his life.

They had met in a local bar, and she'd said her name was Marie. They'd spent the evening flirting outrageously with one another, performing an intense dance of courtship that had culminated in a nearby hotel room.

Although three months had passed since that crazy night, her bewitching image was still as sharply

etched in his mind as it had been the first moment he'd spotted her.

Her dark brown hair had been a spill of silk to her shoulders. Her rich nut-brown eyes, with their sinfully long lashes, had flirted and danced. She'd had a heart-shaped face and full lips that had tantalized him.

Clad in a lacy white dress that emphasized not only her slender curves and long, shapely legs, but also the dark olive of her skin, she'd caught his eye the moment he'd walked into the place.

Their lovemaking had held an edge of wildness, as if they had indulged in foreplay for years instead of mere hours. When he'd finally fallen asleep with her in his arms, he'd had the feeling that for the first time in his thirty-one years, life was about to make some kind of sense.

In the morning she'd been gone, like a desert mirage that shimmered brightly in the sun, then vanished. He'd been shocked—bewildered—and surprisingly devastated.

He'd looked for her for two days, then had been called back to the States.

Now he was back in Montebello, but he didn't expect to have time to dwell on thoughts of a dark-haired beauty who had turned his world upside down for a single night.

He sat up straighter as the U.S. Embassy came into view. The building itself was imposing with thick columns and steep steps leading to the grandiose building. An American flag on a tall pole fluttered in the breeze.

The driver pulled up in front, and Kyle paid him, then picked up his duffel bag and entered the embassy through the front doors.

A metal detector and a conveyor belt instantly confronted him. Both were a vivid reminder of the marvels of technology and the state of unrest around the world. And from what the rumor mill implied, nowhere was unrest more threatening than here in Montebello.

Tensions had risen between King Marcus Sebastiani of Montebello and Sheik Ahmed Kamal of the neighboring kingdom of Tamir. The tension had reached explosive proportions a month before when a bomb had detonated in a civilian square, destroying a restaurant and trapping people inside. The people of Montebello pointed fingers of blame to Kamal, furthering increasing tensions.

After walking through the metal detector, he had his identification checked and signed in for his appointment with Ambassador Nigel Templeton.

By the time Kyle had cleared security, an assistant had appeared to lead him to the ambassador's office. "Joel Mayfield," the young man said, and held his hand out to Kyle. He had the kind of crisp, clean attractiveness that all the people who worked at the embassy seemed to possess.

"Lieutenant Commander Kyle Ramsey," Kyle replied, and firmly shook Joel's hand. With the formalities out of the way, Joel led Kyle down a long hallway to a bank of elevators, past a number of offices buzzing with activity.

"I understand this isn't your first trip to Monte-

bello," the assistant said as they stepped into the elevator and he punched the button for the fifth floor.

"That's right. I was here several months ago," Kyle replied.

"It's a beautiful place, isn't it?"

Kyle nodded, and again his head filled with the vision of the beautiful woman who had given him the most memorable night of his life. He could still recall her haunting fragrance—a scent of exotic spices and a touch of citrus, as mysterious and romantic as this island itself.

Stepping out of the elevator, he shook his head, as if to physically dispel the seductive image. He needed to be clearheaded for his meeting with the ambassador. From the moment Kyle had been commanded to return to the island, he'd sensed something odd going on.

Although he'd previously met Ambassador Templeton, he'd never been in the man's inner sanctum. The assistant led him into a large waiting room, nodded to the secretary on duty at a desk, then knocked lightly on the door just behind where she sat.

Joel opened the door and gestured for Kyle to enter. The office was large and airy, a corner room with windows. Ambassador Templeton rose from behind his large, mahogany desk, his hand outstretched in greeting.

"Lieutenant Commander Ramsey," he said as they shook hands.

"It's nice to see you again, Ambassador Templeton," Kyle replied, then was waved into one of the chairs in front of the desk.

Nigel Templeton had been born in Phoenix, Arizona, though his parents were natives of Montebello. He'd grown up in the States, then his family had moved back to the island, and Nigel had begun a career in diplomacy and politics, culminating in him being appointed ambassador three years earlier.

He was a handsome man, his ethnicity apparent in his rich dark hair, deep olive skin and brown eyes, which radiated not only intelligence and dignity, but compassion as well. At the moment, his gaze was filled with worry, and lines of tension snaked across his forehead.

"Montebello is on the verge of a security crisis," he began. "I know your commanding officer told you that your mission here would be as it was when you were here before—to protect American oil interests in the Middle East. But that's not your real mission."

Kyle leaned forward, intrigued.

"I'm sure you've heard that Prince Lucas Sebastiani is missing," Ambassador Templeton continued.

Kyle nodded. "I read that his plane went down somewhere in the Colorado Rockies a couple months ago, and the search and rescue teams have yet to find his body."

"A tragic state of affairs. As you can imagine, King Marcus is beside himself with grief. Compounding that sorrow is the fact that his daughter, Princess Julia, is pregnant, and the father of the baby is reported to be Sheik Ahmed Kamal's son, Rashid."

"But I would think this good news," Kyle replied.

“A union between Princess Julia and Sheik Rashid surely would end the tensions that have existed between Montebello and Tamir.”

Ambassador Templeton leaned back in his chair. “Unfortunately, Sheik Rashid has disappeared, and since he was last seen in the company of Princess Julia, Sheik Ahmed believes King Marcus had something to do with his son’s disappearance. Sheik Ahmed has let King Marcus know he’s prepared to take by force the land on Montebello that would have gone to Prince Lucas.”

Kyle frowned thoughtfully. If the nearby kingdom of Tamir waged battle against Montebello, the fragile peace of the entire Middle East would be shattered.

Once again Ambassador Templeton leaned forward, his dark gaze intense. “Officially, you are here as you were before, to protect American oil interests. Unofficially, you and your team of top gun pilots will be patrolling the air space between Montebello and Tamir. You will be on a state of high alert, anticipating a potential air strike and invasion from Tamir. You will report to only three people—King Marcus himself, me or any of the Noble Men who might contact you.”

“The Noble Men?” Kyle looked at him in bewilderment.

“They are the ones who brought you here. They are the ones funding the entire mission of protection for King Marcus and Montebello.”

“I don’t understand. Who are these Noble Men?” Kyle felt as if the ambassador had suddenly begun to speak a foreign language.

"I'm only telling you this because King Marcus and the Noble Men agreed you should be told." He stared out the window for a long moment, where the sky was an intense, almost surreal blue. "But first I must have your word that you will keep what I tell you in total confidence."

"Of course I give you my word," Kyle said instantly, his curiosity aroused to a fever pitch.

"Nobody knows exactly who they are, and very few people know of their existence." Templeton looked back at Kyle. "What we do know is that they are a covert organization of wealthy, powerful men." His voice was filled with admiration and respect. "They are peacekeepers and protectors who save lives and restore order, often financing and planning rescue missions in situations where government hands are tied."

Kyle's head reeled with the information he'd just been handed. A covert organization, men wielding power and influence for world peace... It sounded like something from an action-adventure movie, and yet he had no reason to doubt what the ambassador had shared with him.

"You said that these Noble Men were the ones who brought me here. Why me?"

For the first time since the ambassador had greeted Kyle, he smiled. "I can't know for sure, and I wouldn't begin to question the choices the Noble Men make, but I would imagine it's because you are one of the best pilots that the United States Navy has to offer."

His smile faded. "You must understand that, of-

ficially, the United States military is not involved in this operation. Unofficially, they will allow you to use their planes and their equipment, and will provide ground support. I'm placing one of my top military attachés in charge of the ground support unit. She will be available to you day and night, whatever it takes to make this mission a success. Her name is Joanna Morgan."

The ambassador looked down at his wristwatch. "I had hoped she would join us here, but apparently she's been held up. We'd like to get twenty-four-hour patrols started as soon as possible."

He stood and Kyle did the same. "You will be staying in your family apartment?"

Kyle hesitated only a moment, then nodded. He'd have preferred to stay on the base, but apparently that wasn't where the ambassador wanted him.

"Good, then if you'll just have a seat in the reception area, I'm sure Joanna will be here momentarily. She can drive you to your apartment and you two can begin strategizing your mission."

He walked around the desk and once again held out his hand to Kyle. "Thank you, Lieutenant Commander, for being available to serve not only the Noble Men, but the people of Montebello as well."

"I look forward to getting to work immediately," Kyle replied. The two men said their goodbyes and Kyle left the office.

"May I get you a cup of coffee while you wait?" the secretary asked with a friendly smile.

"No thanks, I'm fine." Kyle sat in one of the dark

blue, upholstered chairs, wondering how long he'd have to wait for this Joanna Morgan to show.

Now that he knew exactly what his mission here would be, he was eager to get started. His mind replayed all that Nigel Templeton had told him.

Two grieving fathers—a king and a sheik—both pointing fingers at the other. If war broke out, the consequences would be felt around the world.

The Noble Men. To say that the concept of a secret organization of wealthy, influential men intrigued him would be a vast understatement. Who were they? What had driven them to form such an organization? What made some men become altruistic and idealistic, while others became fat-cat corporate heads, worshipping the almighty dollar?

He shoved away the mental picture of his father that suddenly sprang to his mind. At the moment he had more important things to think about than Edward Ramsey.

He'd given his word that he would not speak of the Noble Men, and his mind worked to figure out just what he could tell his team of flyers and what he couldn't. They needed to know only their objective, to keep the skies free of threat, and Kyle was confident they would follow his instructions without question.

A woman walked in, swiftly crossing the room to the receptionist desk. Although Kyle saw her only from the back, he couldn't help but admire the long shapely legs beneath the short navy skirt, the curvy form of her derriere and the shiny dark hair tied back at the nape of her neck.