



Seduced By Fire (The Submissive Series)

By Tara Sue Me

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As their sizzling connection heats up, Daniel is ready to take Julie fully under his command. But when the dangerous side of their play rears its ugly head, Julie will have to decide if she trusts him enough to surrender completely—or if she should escape before she gets burned...

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for *Seduced by Fire*

“Tautly written, with smart, three-dimensional characters and scorching love scenes...A fantastic love story.”—Christina Lauren, author of *Beautiful Stranger*

Praise for the Submissive Trilogy

“Well written and certainly entertaining.”—Dear Author...

“This book is going to make you say ‘Fifty What of What?’ ...[Me] is so talented and captivating.”—Southern Fiction Review

“For those *Fifty Shades* fans pining for a little more spice on their e-reader...*the Guardian* recommends Tara Sue Me’s Submissive Trilogy, starring handsome CEO Nathaniel West, a man on the prowl for a new submissive, and the librarian Abby, who is yearning for something more.”—*Los Angeles Times*

About the Author

Tara Sue Me is the international bestselling author of the Submissive trilogy, including *The Submissive*, *The Dominant*, and *The Training*. She lives in the southeastern United States with her family, two dogs, and a cat.

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Chapter One

According to Julie’s best friend and business partner, Sasha, men only bought flowers for two reasons: to get in your pants, or to get back in your pants. While Julie didn’t think that to be an absolute truth, once Sasha made up her mind, she didn’t often change it.

The front door of Petal Pushers, the floral shop they owned together, opened with a melodic ring. After seeing the two customers walk in, Julie decided to make her case once again.

“Look at those two,” she said with a whisper, making sure the customers couldn’t hear. “I highly doubt he’s trying to get into her pants.”

Sasha looked up from the computer where she was placing an order for next week’s stock. The “he” in question was tall, with sculpted angular features, and dirty blond hair, but the woman by his side wasn’t the usual trophy girlfriend. She was an older woman, dressed for the chilly weather in Wilmington, Delaware, in a winter white coat that probably cost more than Julie made in a year.

“Never know these days.” Sasha punched a few keys on the computer. “I need to make a few calls. Can you handle these two?”

Julie waved her to the back office and turned her attention to the couple still standing by the door. This time

she noticed how expensive the guy's coat was while he talked on his cell phone. The woman with him admired a floral arrangement displayed for an upcoming wedding.

"Good afternoon," Julie said. "Welcome. Can I help you with something?"

The older lady smiled. "My great-granddaughter has a ballet recital tonight. I wanted to pick up some flowers." She turned to the guy, still on his phone. "Daniel, do put that away and come here."

The man at the door spoke a few more words before disconnecting. "Sorry, Grandma. It couldn't wait."

She rolled her eyes. "It never can."

"I heard that." His voice was low and deep and as he approached, his gaze met Julie's. Blue steel was her first thought when she saw his eyes. Hard and immovable. She actually squirmed under their scrutiny.

For a second, she thought he realized the effect he had on her, because something in his expression flickered with understanding. Just as quickly, though, his mouth upturned into a soft smile. "We're looking for something to thrill the heart of a five-year-old ballerina."

Julie stood and told herself to focus on the sale, not the customer's eyes. "Your daughter?"

The older lady laughed. "Heavens no, dear. Not Daniel," she said as if the idea of Daniel having a daughter was the most humorous thing in the world.

Daniel appeared unaffected by his grandmother's words. He only raised an eyebrow to Julie and proceeded to take off his leather gloves.

He pulled one finger at a time free, and for whatever reason, Julie found herself unable to stop watching the mundane task. His fingers were long, and as he took the last glove off and kept it in his fist, she admired the elegant but subtle strength in the way he moved. Her mind drifted, imagining those fingers brushing her skin. Those hands on her . . .

How would his touch feel cupping her chin, trailing downward, across her breasts? Lower, brushing her hips, inching closer—

He smacked the gloves against his palm.

"The five-year-old in question," he said, eyes lighting at her startled expression, "loves ruffles, ponies, and all things princess."

Focus, she scolded herself. Flowers.

"Sounds like she would love pink roses."

"Pink roses. Excellent suggestion, Ms. Masterson," he answered with a whisper and a glance at her name tag. "That's exactly what I thought, but Grandma thought wildflowers."

"Based on what you said, the roses. Definitely pink roses."

"We'll take a dozen." His blue eyes were steady on hers and she leaned closer as his voice dropped further. "How about you, Ms. Masterson, what type flowers do you like?"

“I’m not really a flower-type girl.”

“Really?”

She shrugged. “I guess it comes from working with them all day.”

It wasn’t that she didn’t like flowers; she just didn’t like getting them from men. In her opinion, there were plenty of other more romantic gifts.

“Daniel,” his grandmother said. “Have you decided on something?”

He winked at Julie. “We’re going with pink roses. She’s guaranteed to love them.”

After they left with the roses, Julie tried to decide what it was about him that made her react the way she did. He had a breezy confidence about him, but a lot of her male customers did. There was something, though, about the way he moved that seemed somehow more.

“They leave?” Sasha asked, returning from the back office and running her fingers through her dark spiky hair.

“Yeah. And you were wrong—he wasn’t trying to get into anyone’s pants. He was buying flowers for his niece.”

Sasha flipped through the day’s receipts. “Daniel Covington doesn’t have to try to get into anyone’s pants. Women just drop them at the mere sight of him.”

Julie looked up from the new arrangement she had been working on. “You know him?”

It really shouldn’t have surprised her. Sasha knew everyone. It was one of the reasons the shop had been so successful. Julie was the business-minded one, Sasha the people person.

Or maybe she had dated him. Sasha was known for her ability to run through men like tissue paper. Every other month, it seemed she was on the arm of a new guy. New and improved. Highly disposable. But certainly Julie would have remembered Daniel.

“I don’t know him, know him,” she said. “But I know of him. He’s the senior vice president of Weston Bank.”

Second-largest bank in Delaware.

That certainly explains why he didn’t blink at the cost of a dozen pink roses in January.

“Wealthy and good-looking,” Julie said with a sigh. “The universe is so unfair.”

Sasha’s head snapped up. “Not you, too.”

“Not me, too, what?”

“Wanting to drop your pants for Daniel.”

Julie picked up the flower she’d been trimming and twirled it between her fingers, trying not to remember how she imagined Daniel’s hands and what they’d feel like on her body. “I don’t want to do any such thing.

What's it to you, anyway? You're always telling me to get out more."

"I didn't mean with him."

"Are you telling me I'm not good enough for the senior vice president of Weston Bank?" She pointed the flower at her friend. "Don't make me come over there."

She added the last as a joke, but in reality she was just covering the hurt at the suggestion she wasn't good enough for someone like Daniel. Hurt, yes, but there was also anger at her friend. How dare she insinuate she couldn't date an executive? Besides, who was Sasha to judge? It wasn't like she had a stellar record with the opposite sex.

"I'm just telling you, you're not compatible."

"And I thought you didn't know him."

"I don't," Sasha said in the tone of voice that told Julie the topic wasn't up for further discussion.

Julie tried to decide if she wanted to push it. What did Sasha know about Daniel that made her so certain they weren't compatible? She wondered again for just a second if they had dated.

"Doesn't matter anyway," Julie finally said. "He just came in to buy roses. It's not like I'll ever see him again." Because the universe really wasn't fair.

Sasha looked at her apologetically and nodded toward the trimmed flowers Julie was working with. "On the other hand, people we would be okay never seeing again always seem to pop up. I took a phone call in the back."

Julie dropped the flower. "Mrs. Grant? Again? She's already changed her order twice."

"She read an article."

"Of course she did."

Sasha dug in her pocket and pulled out a ten-dollar bill. "Why don't you go grab us some mochas? I'll handle her this time."

Julie took the cash. "You're the best."

"Don't you forget it!" her friend teased as she left.

The sound of flesh slapping flesh rang out in the otherwise silent room as Daniel watched the couple in his playroom. Ron was his new mentee, a highly coveted position in their local BDSM group. Daniel had held several conversations with the young man, but this was the first time he had watched him with a submissive.

The submissive, Dena, was an experienced sub in their group. A good choice for a Dom in training, which was why Daniel had asked her to join them for the afternoon.

Daniel walked to where Ron had her positioned over a padded table. "Nice location," he said, in response to the spanking the young man had just administered. "But do it again. Harder this time." He ran his hand over Dena's ass. Barely warm. "She's no masochist, but she needs to feel it."

Ron nodded and went back to spanking.

“Watch for signs,” Daniel instructed. Dena hadn’t been commanded to be still and she wasn’t bound. “When she starts to get aroused, she’ll lift up to you. Listen to her. If she’s not required to be silent, you can judge her response by her moans.” He lifted his voice for her benefit. “But I did command silence today, so if she gives so much as a whimper, you can watch me punish her.”

He didn’t miss the hitch in her breathing. He smiled in response and walked to stand by her head. “Don’t get too excited, girl, I call it punishment for a reason. You won’t like it.”

Dena steeled her body and if Daniel were a betting man, he’d guess there would be no disobedience today. He took a step back so he could keep both participants in his sight. Ron was putting more power into his strike and she loved it.

“Run your hand between her legs,” Daniel instructed. “It’ll allow you to see how wet she is and heighten her arousal.”

Ron gave her one more slap on the backside and then slipped his hands between her legs. “She’s soaked.”

“Smack her pussy quick and hard a few times. Tell her she’s been a good girl.”

Ron continued with the lesson, following Daniel’s advice, correcting himself when needed, and bringing Dena closer and closer to climax. While watching his mentee pleasure the submissive orally, he recognized his own need. It had been weeks since he’d played with anyone. Far too long since he’d held a woman’s submission in his hands and showed her the pleasure he could bring her.

Without even thinking about why, his mind wandered back to the petite florist with the long dark hair he’d talked with days earlier. There had been an air about her. Something beyond her physical beauty drew him to her. Maybe the intelligent and self-confident look in her eyes or the unveiled way she’d sized him up. Certainly, there’d been some kind of sexual awareness between them. What would it be like to have her submission? To control her pleasure? It was far easier to picture her on her knees before him than it should be.

Forget it, he told himself. She’s strictly vanilla.

Not that he knew it with any certainty, but he’d learned a long time ago it was best to assume a woman was vanilla until proven otherwise.

He forced his attention back to the couple before him. Ron needed a lesson in how to care for a submissive after play ended. Any thoughts having to do with the beguiling florist would have to wait.

Because as much as he tried to think otherwise, he knew it to be only a matter of time before she joined him in his fantasies.

“Dena,” he said, as Ron left the house. “Would you mind staying around for a bit?”

Dena glanced back at him and nodded, a look of anticipation on her face.

Damn. She probably thinks I want to play.

Not that it would be unheard of. They had played together before. She was an attractive woman and had fully embraced her submissive spirit. He had asked himself before why the two of them had never been a couple,

but never came up with an acceptable answer. Finally, he chalked it up to not being ready for a serious relationship.

Once in the kitchen, he poured her a glass of water and pulled a chair out for her.

“Thanks,” she said, sitting down. She cocked her head. “Everything okay?”

“Yes, of course.” He poured himself a glass and sat across from her. “What did you think of Ron?”

“He has potential. I’ve served worse.” The corner of her lip upturned a bit. “Of course, I’ve served better.”

Her sly comment drew his thoughts to the last time they’d played. Surprisingly, though, the memories dimmed in comparison with the fantasies he’d had of the florist. Unbidden, the image of her on her knees before him beckoned.

Stop! He clenched his fist. He would master his thoughts. They would not get the better of him. He forced his attention on the conversation at hand. “I think he shows potential as well. An eager learner.”

Daniel had lived the lifestyle of a Dom for over ten years, been a mentor for five. In that time, he’d seen plenty of men, and women, who wanted to become Doms or Dommes. Often, it never worked because they saw BDSM as a way to meet their own needs, to control, to exert power over a submissive. And while there was a place for that in his view of a power exchange, so much more important, he thought, was the protective care a Dom took of his submissive. How he graciously took her trust and used it to bring them both pleasure.

His thoughts once more drifted back to the florist. What would it be like to be entrusted with her submission? He pictured her bent over his table in the playroom downstairs: ass facing him, legs spread, her body willing and eager for whatever he chose to do to it.

His cock hardened just thinking about it.

“You seem a bit distracted today, sir.”

“Sir” was how submissives in their group were to address Doms when not out in public. Daniel had given Dena permission to use his name when they weren’t in a scene, so it wasn’t difficult to see she’d addressed him more formally as a subtle hint of her interest in playing.

He needed to get her focus on something else. “I’ve just got a lot on my mind lately.” Before she could offer to distract him, he continued. “I told Ron to call you in the next day or two, so let me know if he doesn’t. I’d also like your thoughts on areas he needs help in.”

She nodded, unsurprised. She had worked with Doms in training before and knew what was expected. “I’ll e-mail you by the end of the week.”

“Anything that happened today you’d like to talk about?”

She shook her head. “Nothing stood out as out of the ordinary or unexpected.”

“Good.”

“Are you still planning to speak at the next meeting?”

Their local group held meetings once a month, generally before a party, and he was scheduled to speak at the

next one. "Yes."

"Let me know if you need help with a demonstration or anything."

He felt the need for a long, hard jog. It was time for her to leave. He drained the last bit of his water and pushed his chair back. "I think I'll be fine, but thank you for the offer. Come on. I'll walk you out."

She didn't so much as move and her lips curled up into sly smile. "I was rather hoping we could spend some more time in your playroom, sir."

It would be so easy. A simple word, a slight nod of his head, and she would be his for the next hour or so. She offered her body for his pleasure and a part of him wanted to take it. To use it. To use her. But the larger part of him knew he wasn't in the right frame of mind for the playroom. To take her there would be greedy and unwise. So he held his need in check and simply shook his head.

"Not today, Dena." He stroked her cheek hoping to ease any embarrassment on her part. "I need to run and make a few phone calls."

As soon as she left, he changed and went for his run. Afterward, he showered and then flipped his laptop open and scrolled through the e-mails his administrative assistant had sent him over the last few weeks. Something had sprung to his mind during his run and he knew from past experience his mind wouldn't rest until he checked it out. He looked through all the e-mails searching for one in particular.

And there it was.

He skimmed the e-mail and drummed his fingers on the tabletop for just a second or two before sending a reply.

"I can't believe you didn't tell me we had a gig with Weston Bank." Julie slammed and locked her car door as she shot Sasha a nasty look. "Daniel Covington probably thinks I'm an idiot for not mentioning it last week."

Sasha had oh-so-slyly mentioned yesterday that they had a meeting at the bank at two o'clock today to discuss floral arrangements for the black-tie melanoma fund-raiser in two weeks.

Sasha walked beside her. "Seriously, Jules, I'm sure Daniel Covington has no idea who's providing flowers."

Tap. Tap. Tap. Julie concentrated on the sound her heels made on the sidewalk. She couldn't afford to be flustered at this meeting. The benefit was a big event and if everything went well, it could lead to larger jobs in the future. Besides, Sasha had done the right thing. Had Julie known about the meeting, she'd only have worried about it. Odds were, Daniel probably thought flowers appeared out of thin air.

"You're right. Besides, it's not like you knew he'd be stopping by with his grandmother," Julie said, pushing open the door. "This meeting goes well, I'm taking you to dinner."

"Thank goodness, all I have at my place is an overripe banana."

The front desk receptionist took their names and then showed them to a small conference room. "Mr. Covington will be right with you."

Julie's head spun to Sasha. "What did she say?"

Sasha looked just as surprised. “Apparently he has an idea about the flowers after all.”

Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on how she looked at it, Julie didn’t have time to dwell on anything. Within mere seconds, the door opened and Daniel breezed into the room. He wore a light gray suit and a bright blue tie that complemented his eyes. There was a look of momentary surprise as he noticed Sasha, but he was all smiles when he turned to Julie and held out his hand.

“Ms. Masterson, good to see you again. My niece loved the roses.”

Then he looked to Sasha and shook her hand. “Ms. Blake.”

There was a hint of recognition between the two. Julie picked up on it immediately. Neither Sasha nor Daniel seemed to acknowledge it, almost as if they had silently agreed to act as if they didn’t know each other.

Daniel waved toward the chairs. “Let’s have a seat and finalize these plans, shall we?”

Surely a vice president had better things to do than to discuss flowers for a benefit? But it wouldn’t be proper to ask, so Julie did as suggested and sat.

“This benefit is near and dear to my heart,” Daniel said. “My grandfather died of melanoma.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Julie said.

“Thank you, but it was years ago. The flowers we had at last year’s event were subpar and I wanted to ensure the same didn’t happen again. That would be why we hired you this time.”

“I assure you, the Petal Pushers don’t do subpar,” Julie said.

“That’s what I like to hear.” His smile was easy and gentle, but his eyes held a tinge of desire.

Twenty-five minutes later, they’d negotiated all the floral arrangements and pricing. With a deft sweep of his pen, Daniel signed the contract and smiled.

“Pleasure doing business with you. I can already tell I’m in expert hands.”

As they all stood to leave, he addressed Sasha, “Can you give me a moment with Ms. Masterson?”

A wary expression crossed her friend’s face, but Sasha pursed her lips together and nodded. “I’ll be in the car, Julie.”

Julie’s heart raced and she felt certain the temperature had risen in the small room by at least fifteen degrees.

“Julie,” Daniel said when the door closed. “It fits you. May I call you Julie?”

Determined not to appear as flustered as she felt, she smiled. “If I can call you Daniel.”

“Of course.” Was it her imagination or did his eyes darken as he spoke? “I was wondering, Julie, if you would be at the benefit outside of your professional capacity?”

The tickets were a hundred dollars a plate, nothing she could afford. “No, I’ll be there before it starts, but I’ll leave after everything’s set up.”

He took a step closer to her and her heart raced faster. “Would you come, then? As my date?”

Sasha's words of warning repeated themselves in her head, but she refused to listen to them. There was obviously something, some chemistry, between her and Daniel. She'd felt it the first time she met him and obviously he felt it, too; she'd be a fool not to explore it.

Yet, how could she both set up for the benefit and get ready to attend as a guest?

The simple answer would be to book a room at the hotel it was being held at. The problem with that was the five-star price associated with the five-star accommodations. An image of her on a date with Daniel flickered in her brain and she knew she'd pay it.

"You can say no. I promise I can take it."

Her head jerked. "What? Oh, no. I was actually just trying to work out the logistics in my head. I mean, I'd love to accept."

"Did you?"

No. She had no idea how it would all work, how she'd manage to do everything. She didn't even want to think about what Sasha would say. But one look into his captivating eyes, a glance at his easy smile, was all she needed.

"Not yet, but I will."

"Would it be pushing my luck to ask you out to coffee sometime next week? Before the benefit?"

Two dates in one week? "Thursday afternoon?"

He took a business card from the papers on the table and wrote something down. "Here's my cell. Call me."

She would. She definitely would.

A week later, she was putting the final touches on a funeral arrangement when Sasha came through the door. It was Wednesday. Recently, Sasha had been taking a long lunch on Wednesdays to spend time with her latest boyfriend, Peter.

"How was lunch?" Julie asked. She really didn't have to. Sasha nearly screamed "satisfied woman" the way she strolled into the shop, stopping here and there to touch a petal.

"Now, you know I didn't eat anything." Her eyes grew dreamy and she smirked. "But, since you mentioned it. While I was—"

"Stop it right there. No kinky sex talk in the shop. Someone could walk in."

Julie knew her friend Sasha was a sexual submissive, and she understood a few details of what that entailed. Whenever Sasha played with a new Dom privately, Julie acted as her safety call, waiting a specified time for Sasha to text or call with a secret code so Julie would know all was well. Truth be told, even though some part of her thought there should be something scary about needing a safety call, a bigger part of her had always wondered what it'd be like to submit sexually.

"Just saying," Sasha said. "You can always tell a good one. It's like they can read your mind. Kinda freaky."

"Good what?"

“Good Dominant.”

“The guy in charge?”

“It’s so much more than that. It’s like an itch, an ache. And when you’re with the right Dom, and he scratches it just so?” Sasha sighed with deep satisfaction and simultaneous excitement.

Hearing Sasha talk about it made Julie want to try it all the more. After all, it seemed to suit Sasha. And just because she tried it didn’t mean she had to do it forever. She could just see if she liked it.

But no sooner had that thought passed through her mind than she wondered what it would be like to submit to Daniel. Would he be gentle in bed or was he into taking what he wanted hard and fast?

“You’re sighing,” Sasha said. “What’s on your mind?”

Had she sighed out loud? She didn’t even realize it. “Just thinking about something.”

“Would that something happen to be a certain vice president?”

“Here lately, it’s always about him.”

“Just be careful, okay?”

But that was the problem. She was always careful. For once she wanted to take a risk.

Daniel was standing inside the coffee shop, waiting, when Julie arrived on Thursday. She took a second to watch him from the window. Having arrived after work, he was wearing a beautiful dark suit that emphasized his blond good looks. He was drawing admiring glances from several women.

Locally owned, the coffee shop was her and Sasha’s favorite hangout. Furnished with plush leather couches and handmade bookshelves, it was the perfect place to spend a winter afternoon. She wondered if Daniel had ever been inside before. Right now he was looking at the far wall, frowning at something she couldn’t see.

Must have been a bad day.

She looked down at the polo shirt she always wore to work and wished she’d had time to run home and change into something nicer. It wouldn’t look like she belonged with Daniel when she joined him. Shaking her head, she pushed open the door. Let people think what they would. For the moment, she was with Daniel and that was all that mattered.

His expression lightened when he saw her and he walked over. “Hey, come on in. Let me take your coat.”

She shrugged out of her winter coat, trying hard not to react when their hands brushed. “Thanks.”

He seemed completely unaffected, hanging the coat on the rack beside the door. “You want to get a table while I order?”

She told him what she wanted, medium latte and a blueberry scone, then found a secluded corner table and waited. He hadn’t been in line long when a young woman approached him. He shook his head at whatever it was she said. The lady reached out to touch him, but he shot her a look that froze her in her tracks.

The look troubled Julie a bit. It had been so cold and stern, and seemed totally out of character for Daniel. At

least, it seemed out of character for what she knew of Daniel so far. Maybe she hadn't read him as well as she thought.

She asked him about it when he found her minutes later. "Did that chick hit on you?"

He placed her latte and scone in front of her. "Yes, some people can't take no for an answer."

"Some people are really bold. I can't imagine approaching a stranger in a coffee shop."

He took a sip from his cup. "She wasn't a stranger."

Did that make her an ex, a friend who wanted more, maybe a business associate? She wanted to ask, but didn't. It was their first date; she had no claims on him and he owed her no explanations.

"I'm very selective about who I go out with," he said.

She raised an eyebrow and he laughed.

"That sounds a bit snobbish, doesn't it?" he asked.

"Slightly. You make it sound like you think the rest of us will date anyone with a basic grasp of the English language and most of their teeth."

"Let me rephrase, then." He sat thinking for several seconds before finally giving up. "Nah. I've got nothing."

"That's okay, I understand. You have certain criteria you'd like in a woman and some people don't make the cut. I'm selective about who I go out with, too."

"I'm glad I fit the bill."

She shrugged. "What can I say, I'm putty in the hands of a man who talks in complete sentences."

He didn't take it like the joke she'd intended; instead, his eyes flashed with desire. "I doubt you'd be putty for just any man no matter how well he spoke."

Damn near every conversation she'd ever had with Sasha about submission ran through her mind, but she pushed them out of her head. She focused her attention on Daniel, trying hard not to imagine being putty in his hands.

"It's a figure of speech. I'm a self-made businesswoman. I'm putty in no one's hands and I don't intend to be."

"Is that so?" His eyes looked so deeply into hers that she wondered if he saw through her words.

"Yes," she said, but even she didn't believe her response. From the look he gave her, she could tell Daniel didn't either.

"That's too bad."

He spoke the words so softly, she wasn't sure she was meant to have heard them.

He changed subjects, bringing up the benefit on Saturday. Julie asked about his grandfather and he was

happy to talk about him. He shared some stories about fishing as a young boy with his grandpa that made her laugh, but also realize the warmth and love that had been between them. Her own grandparents had died before she was born, so she didn't have a connection like Daniel did. She admired the love he obviously felt toward his grandfather, and was moved that he expressed it by organizing the melanoma fund-raiser every year.

She found Daniel easygoing and fun to talk with. He had an air about him that set her at ease. Except for the times—and it happened more than once, so she knew it wasn't her imagination—that he looked at her with those blue eyes and the intensity took her breath.

There was something unusually captivating about Daniel. She just couldn't quite put her finger on it.

Users Review

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