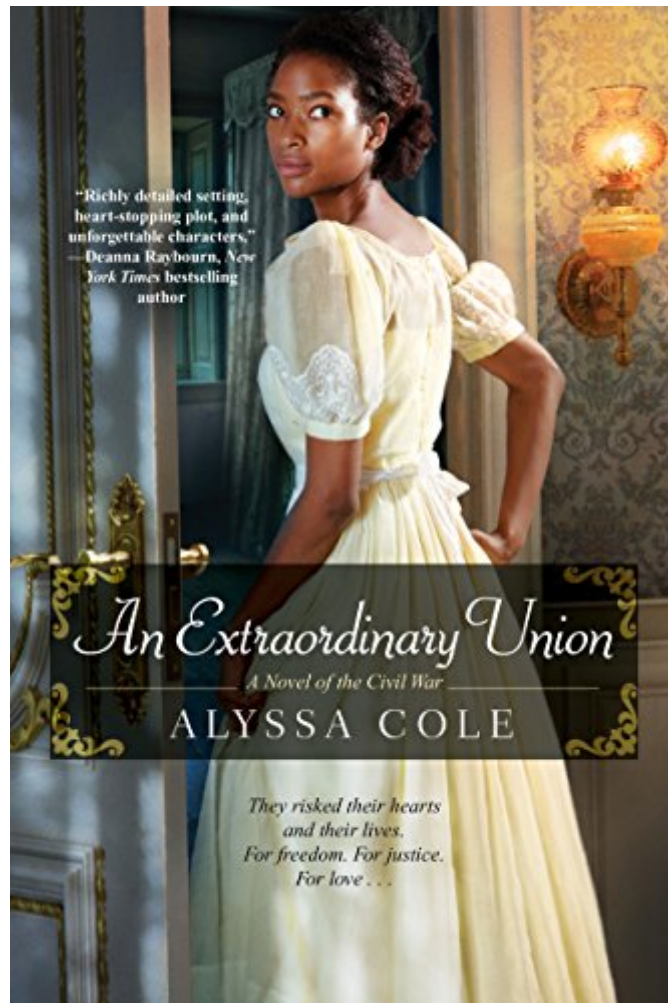




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An Extraordinary Union (The Loyal League)



Synopsis

“Richly detailed setting, heart-stopping plot, and unforgettable characters.”
Deanna Raybourn, New York Times bestselling author
As the Civil War rages between the states, a courageous pair of spies plunge fearlessly into a maelstrom of ignorance, deceit, and danger, combining their unique skills to alter the course of history and break the chains of the past . . . Elle Burns is a former slave with a passion for justice and an eidetic memory. Trading in her life of freedom in Massachusetts, she returns to the indignity of slavery in the South to spy for the Union Army. Malcolm McCall is a detective for Pinkerton’s Secret Service. Subterfuge is his calling, but he’s facing his deadliest mission yet—risking his life to infiltrate a Rebel enclave in Virginia. Two undercover agents who share a common cause and an undeniable attraction—Malcolm and Elle join forces when they discover a plot that could turn the tide of the war in the Confederacy’s favor. Caught in a tightening web of wartime intrigue, and fighting a fiery and forbidden love, Malcolm and Elle must make their boldest move to preserve the Union at any cost—even if it means losing each other . . . Praise for the novels of Alyssa Cole: “Rich in atmospheric details and rife with unexpected dangers.”—RT Book Reviews “Sweet, sensual, and suspenseful . . . rousing and entertaining.”—Publishers Weekly

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Alyssa Cole has done it again: written a historical IR romance set in a tricky time period and done so with amazing aplomb! I am usually skeptical about IR romances set during the American Civil War. This is due to too many of them romanticising the master-slave relationship in a way that, for me, feels disingenuous. In *An Extraordinary Union*, Cole takes the completely different angle to her story. Instead of giving us the stereotypical master and slave who fall in love trope, we get something far more exciting--two Union spies in the Loyal League infiltrating the household of a Confederate senator. One of the spies is Elle, a free Black woman with the gift of being able to remember *everything*; as a spy, she puts her life on the line by going to Richmond, Virginia to pretend to be a mute house slave to get information that will help foil the Confederacy. The other spy is Malcolm, a Scottish immigrant pretending to be a Confederate soldier who manages to get close to the senator for the very same purpose--to get whatever information he can about the Confederates' plans in order to bring them down. Of course their paths cross in a not-so-meet-cute, but it's exciting and it sets up the story well. We are reminded constantly of the dangerous situation that Elle and Malcolm are in--if they are found out, they will be tortured and/or killed. And for Elle, who has seen the horrors of slavery as a child and has willingly put herself back in the same situation for the sake of the Union, she is not willing to give in to the attraction she feels for Malcolm--initially she does not know he is also a spy, but also because she has seen the reality of her situation face to face--she and other slaves are property, they are seen as breeders, less than human, disposable. And she's seen it from the side of slavery and from the abolitionists, some of whom view abolishing slavery as a mission while not caring about or even respecting the very people they claim to want to help. Malcolm's own experiences in Scotland at the hands of English tyranny have left an indelible mark on his life and that of his family. And while he knows it cannot compare to what Elle has seen and experienced, it does make him more aware of the reality they face and it strengthens his conviction that this is not the sort of world--where men can deem other men as being less than human, buy and sell other men, rip apart families, even kill other men with no fear of the law--he wants to live in. Cole has woven an exciting story that hooked me from the first page. And my skepticism was completely blown away thanks to her writing a story that does not shy away from the harsh realities of slavery and racism. I used to live in Richmond, Virginia--the capital of the Confederacy--so it was

nice being able to picture the story taking place there. Highly recommended! I am definitely looking forward to the next instalment of this series.

In which we meet a daring lass with an eidetic memory and a charming Scots lad both working undercover for the Union in the heart of Dixie. I'll preface this review by stating that I reluctantly read this book. The book is outside of my preferred genre. I find the subject matter distasteful. If there is any period in history I abhor more, I haven't found it. I detest books set in the Americas and particularly the American South. Whew! Now that I have that out of my system, let me tell you how this book shattered all of my preconceptions. This book captured me from the first page. Alyssa Cole's mastery was apparent from the start. She reeled me in with her descriptive prose and entangled me in the emotions of her characters. Rather than devouring this book, which is my usual modus operandi, I slowed down, way down, and savored it. I let the words roll through my mind's eye. I tasted the southern drawls on my tongue as the characters constantly code switched depending upon their audiences. I heard Malcolm's rich Scottish burr in his intimate discussions with Elle. I heard him switch to a charming good ole boy drawl when dealing with Senator Caffrey and his southern belle cum snake of a daughter, Susie, at other times. Simply Captivating! Elle's ruse of posing as a mute, simple enslaved woman was the perfect foil to her natural, tart-tongued, quick witted self. The combination of the two was dynamite. Their joining as a couple was poetry. The plotting of this novel was just right. The drama built inexorably to its ultimate conclusion. Cole captured the suspicion and uncertainty of the times quite well. As the protagonists struggled with their growing feelings for one another they also faced the imperative to accomplish their shared mission. I enjoyed this book immensely. I would especially recommend it to those who love this genre. I may read other works by this author in the future. She is a gifted writer.

OK. I usually don't read Civil War romances because I find them depressing. This is not that kind of book. Elle, the heroine, is an African American spy for the Union during the Civil War. Malcolm, the hero, is also a Union spy. They're both serving in Richmond when they meet up. She's working undercover as an enslaved domestic. He's working undercover as a Confederate soldier. When they meet, sparks fly. It's a romance. You know that they're going to be together, but you don't know how. Y'all. Elle is everything. She's smart, she's brave, and she's loyal. She's the type of woman you want to read about. For me, this book is all about Elle. The cool thing is that Elle is based on a real person in history. As for Malcolm, he's slick by design. Conning folks is his superpower. It took me a little longer to warm up to him. He is loyal to the Union, though. It was an easy read and a quick one.

I look forward to more historical romances from this author. I also hope that more historical romances with black women will be published. It's hard waiting for each one to come out!

I loved this book and see why it got so many great reviews! This is my first Alyssa Cole book and I'm anxious to read the next book in the city. Malcolm and Elle are intelligent and brave--I can't imagine doing anything like they did. They also have flaws and I liked the way they deal with them--Elle was jealous of Malcolm and Susie, but knew these feelings would do nothing to help the Union. I agree with another that we need a book like this today. I learned a lot but didn't feel like I was in a history class. One last thing I want to talk about--the author's writing--it was just wonderful and made me want to keep turning the pages.

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