

# FREEDOM FROM INNOCENCE



STELLA GRACE

BLUSHING BOOKS

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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

## UNDESIRABLY SICK



Caroline lay in bed, wide awake. She'd naturally woken up when the sun peeked through her blinds and wasn't able to get back to sleep; however, she did notice an intense wave of fatigue that she attributed to stress. She lay there staring at the white ceiling as her mind slowly woke up. She pushed the fatigue aside and focused on the only thing on her mind at the time. Mr. Hawk, the uncle of one of her students who had unexpectedly entered her classroom yesterday afternoon. Caroline was still trying to wrap her mind around the hunk of a man. He'd explained over a drink last night that he was in Helen to help his sister through a divorce. How she ended up at the bar with him was still confusing but she couldn't deny the immediate attraction she felt when he'd asked. Her thoughts wandered back to his incredible eyes and how his husky voice caught her attention. He had captivated her, almost to the point she was borderline gawking. He was gorgeous. His short, black hair was recently cut, with a hint of length on top. That length led to a 'just messed around' look, which played perfectly to his appeal. Caroline almost melted when he walked toward her, his handmade, brown, leather shoes screaming

money and asked if she'd join him for a drink after he dropped his nephew off at home.

She had their conversation at the bar on repeat, wondering why she agreed to a drink to begin with and even more, why she'd agreed to a date the following night. She wasn't ready to date and didn't have any intentions to date for a while. Not after her last relationship. But Caroline found herself intrigued when he talked about his nephew and sister and how concerned he was for their wellbeing. The sincere sympathy had shifted Caroline's feelings. If a guy that hot could be so compassionate, she had to give him a try. Plus, his sister and nephew were Caroline's neighbors.

Now, anxiety poured through her veins, forcing her to get out of bed. It was Saturday and she struggled to stand. She went straight for her phone, disconnecting it from the plug on the wall.

"Jenny, you've gotta help me!" She spoke before her best friend and only family close by even said hello. "He asked me out and I have no clue what to wear or what to do." Jenny had noticed him too, she practically came running into her room the moment the door shut wanting to know who he was.

"Caroline, it's seven in the morning. Couldn't you wait another hour so I could sleep in?" Jenny responded with a groggy voice.

"I know, I know. I'm sorry. I'm just so... out of practice. I'm freaking out," Caroline explained as she wrapped her legs under her and sat back down on the bed. She toyed with the ribbon drawstring on her fleece pajama pants.

"I can tell. Look, let me wake up and I'll call you in a bit." Jenny's voice was a great relief to the building stress in Caroline's body.

"Please. You're the best!" Caroline bounced back up again, pacing her bedroom.

"Caroline, you'll be fine. Just let me wake up." Jenny always had the best advice. That's why Caroline called her. She ended the call and tossed the phone on her bed, turning toward her full-length bedroom mirror to assess what she had to work with. She didn't feel on top of her game and the woman who stared back at her in

the mirror showed that. Why did she look so pale? And why did she have horrible bags under her eyes? She looked so... sick. Plus, to top it all off, her stomach was a little crampy. There was no way it was from 'that time of the month'. She was on birth control that prevented periods all together. She wrote it off as nerves and made her way into the kitchen to cook breakfast. Maybe food would help soothe her nerves.

Except, the healthy egg omelet with veggies didn't really help at all. She actually felt light-headed and weak after eating. Caroline started to worry. Could she be having a panic attack? She had a student who suffered from them and that student had some of the symptoms Caroline was experiencing: nausea, headache, dizziness and weakness. Maybe she just needed to take her mind off her date and focus on something else.

Music. Music always soothed her and helped her focus. She went to the TV and turned on iHeartRadio, surfing through her programmed channels until a song piqued her interest. Katy Perry. She could listen to her. Her songs were upbeat and full of positive messages. She hummed the words to *Roar* and made her way back to the kitchen. She tried to clean up, singing the words she knew while scrubbing her frying pan and plate. Just that simple action of scrubbing was wearing her out. She rinsed the dishes and laid them on the counter to dry, then braced herself on the counter. It had to be nerves. She just needed to sit down and relax. Once Jenny got there things would be better. Caroline labored her way into the living room, grabbing her phone from the bedroom before she sat down on the couch. Gosh, she was feeling really unsteady. What was wrong with her? She brought her legs up and laid her head down on the armrest, closing her eyes for a moment until Jenny called. However, several exhausting moments later she succumbed to fatigue and fell into a deep sleep.

The day sun moved from the East side of the apartment, shining in her bedroom, to the middle of the living room. The painful

sound of her ringtone woke Caroline four hours later. Her head was heavy and it was challenging to sit up.

"Hello?" she answered the phone very dazed.

"Caroline? What happened? I've been calling for hours," Jenny's alarmed voice was too loud and Caroline pulled the phone away from her ear. "I'm on my way now."

"I don't know what's wrong. I feel horrible, like I was hit by a truck. I must have fallen asleep," she explained, struggling to bring her body into an upright position. The simple act brought a pounding to her ears that became so intense she needed to lie back down.

"Don't tell me you're getting sick." Jenny's voice sounded worried.

"I hope not. I've got to get ready for my date," she answered as she tried to sit up again, only to lie back down.

"Are you sure you're up to it?"

"Um, yeah. Let me hop in the shower," Caroline spoke into the phone as she tried to sit up a third time and the room started spinning so she grabbed the corner of the couch to steady herself.

"You sure?"

"Yeah." She stood on her wobbly legs, ignoring the dizziness.

"I'll be there shortly." Jenny disconnected the call and Caroline put her phone on the table next to the couch, grabbing onto the edge for support. She was utterly exhausted. She hoped it wasn't the flu. Several of her students had the flu.

She tried to take a couple of steps and make her way into the bedroom. The room was slowly spinning and everything seemed to move like the mirrors in a fun house. She reached out for the walls to support her. She just needed a shower. That would make her feel better. It was her nerves. She couldn't be getting the flu now. Not right before the first date she'd had in years. Step by step she made her way to the bathroom. She reached into the shower and used all her strength to turn it on then took a seat on the toilet while she waited for the water to get hot. As steam filled the small room, she

slowly pulled her shirt over her head and threw it into the corner, then stood to pull her pants down, flumping back down onto the toilet. After a moment, she reached into the shower to test the water and stepped inside when it was satisfactory. The heat felt great on her tired and over stimulated skin. She stood for quite some time, allowing the warmth to sink deep into her muscles. She struggled to keep upright, exhaustion threatening to take over but she forced herself to shampoo and condition her hair, then lather her body with soap. She got out once she rinsed and braced herself on the vanity, taking her time to dry off. She fought the feeling of agonizing cold, her body tormented with uncontrollable shivering as she pulled on some warm and comfortable clothes.

She heard Jenny come through the front door and she walked into the bedroom just as Caroline's body fell victim to violent chills, sending her body into a fit of uncontrollable shivers.

"I think I have the flu," Caroline told her most trusted friend as she sat down on the bed, pulling the covers snug around her for warmth. Jenny reached over and put her hand on Caroline's forehead.

"You've got a fever," she stated, shaking her head in sympathy.

"I know. I have no way of contacting Mr. Hawk. I forgot to get his number," Caroline explained as she nestled deeper into the covers.

"I can go down to Melissa's and tell him. It's her brother, right? Justin's Uncle?" Jenny asked, keeping her distance for obvious reasons.

"I don't know if he'll be there. He said he was staying somewhere else. You can try." Caroline's speech was lazy and exhausted.

"All right, I'll be right back. You need anything else before I go?" Jenny spoke as she went into the bathroom, cleaned her hands and returned.

"Not at the moment. Thanks."

"Okay. I'll be back," Jenny called out as she left.

Caroline heard the front door open and close before she lost the

battle to fatigue again. The room grew darker as the sun moved exclusively onto the West side of the apartment.

“Caroline,” Jenny’s whispered voice brought Caroline out of her dizzy sleep. She struggled to open her heavy eyes.

“Yeah?” She’d forgotten where she was for a moment.

“He wasn’t there, but I told Melissa to check on you,” Jenny explained. She placed a glass of ice water on a coaster on the nightstand.

“Okay, thanks.” Caroline gave up opening her eyes.

“I’m going to leave. Just call me if you need anything. I’ll be back later with something for you to eat. There’s water right here,” Jenny explained as she pointed to the glass on the nightstand.

“Thanks.” She rolled back into sleep, her body aching so deeply she couldn’t lift her head to watch as Jenny departed. She didn’t even have enough strength to turn her body over. She bundled herself deeper into her comforter and drifted off again, deep into unconsciousness.

Her phone rang several times and the calls went unanswered as she slept, slipping deeper and deeper into unconsciousness. The sun shone entirely into the living room then settled beyond the horizon as Caroline slumbered. Someone knocked on her door and it went unanswered. Caroline stirred a little when she heard Jenny and a deep male voice exchanging conversation.

“I’m sorry and you are?” Jennie questioned as annoyance rose in her tone.

“I’m her date. Clearly, she isn’t well. We need to do something.” Mr. Hawk’s voice was stern and business like. He was not to be swayed.

“I think I’m capable of helping her,” Jennie said as her voice grew louder.

“I don’t doubt you but I’m strong enough to hold her in place,” Mr. Hawk answered, then Caroline heard ruffling next to her bedside. She was too weak to open her eyes to see what was happening. He barked orders to his nephew who responded with



haste. She felt him wrap his solid arms around her small frame and lift her from the bed. She was limp and unable to hold her head up. She didn't know where he brought her and slipped back into unconsciousness.

She didn't hear the sound of the bath running or Mr. Hawk instructing Justin to call an ambulance. She wasn't aware of anything until her burning skin made contact with the ice-cold water in the bathtub.

Caroline screamed, her mind at full alert as she thrashed her arms, fighting to get out of the frigid water. Mr. Hawk's stable arms reached around and hugged her from behind, holding her in the cold bathwater. Some words registered and Caroline realized he was in the tub with her, wearing only boxer shorts. He held her against his hard body, keeping her submerged in the freezing water. She continued to scream out like a possessed woman as the cold water stung against her scorching skin.

"Shhh... you've got a really high fever. We've gotta get it down," she heard him say calmly in her ear. Her body shivered brutally as the cold water encased it. His tender hands rubbed the goosebumps on her arms. She attempted to climb back out of the tub again but Mr. Hawk held her back, pulling her firmly against his naked chest.

"It's okay. I need you to hold still. We've got to get this fever down," he kept repeating. His arms were strong and they held her body in place under the water.

"I can't. It hurts," she finally managed to say, her eyes filled with tears.

"I know. I'm getting your fever down the fastest way I know how," he said to her, smoothing her hair out of her face. The shivering continued, the cold water sloshing out of the tub.

She was only in the intense water for five minutes but it felt like hours as Mr. Hawk held her. Her body, thankfully, started to acclimate to the cold water and the shivering calmed down.

"There, I think it's down enough to get out." Mr. Hawk simply

stood, lifting her weak body as water poured off her onto the bathroom floor.

“Justin!” he hollered, holding her against his wet body.

“Yeah?” Justin appeared from the bedroom.

“Can you get some towels? I need to dry both of us off and I need to get dressed,” Mr. Hawk directed. He was soaked but didn’t seem bothered by it, his focus solely on Caroline.

Justin started to open the linen closet doors in search of towels but yielded none.

“They’re probably under the sink. Try there,” Mr. Hawk directed as he continued to hold Caroline in his arms, cradling her. She remained still, aside from the shivering.

“Caroline?” he said her name but she didn’t respond, slipping into unconsciousness again.

Justin located the towels, placing one on the floor and draping one over her body.

“Okay, I’ve got it. Can you get my clothes? They are on the bed.” Mr. Hawk’s voice was stern and in charge.

“Yeah, Mom called the ambulance too. They should be here soon,” Justin explained, then bolted back out the door.

Mr. Hawk very gently placed Caroline’s limp body on the floor. She moaned as she made contact with the hard surface but didn’t open her eyes.

“Sorry. I’ll be quick,” he told her, his hands working fast to release her from her clothes. Her body was still shivering as he reached for the waist of her pants and lifted her shirt, exposing her tight belly. He untied her flannel pajama pants and slowly inched them down her hips. He arched her back so that her bottom was lifted off the ground and started to shimmy the cold, wet pants downward. Every curve of her legs was paid attention, as the pants stubbornly clung to them. She moaned again and attempted to curl herself up.

“No, baby. You can’t do that. I’ve gotta get your clothes off,” he

soothed. Once her legs were freed from her wet pants, he laid her back down onto the floor.

“Adam, please stop. We really shouldn’t be doing this,” she mumbled under her breath unaware she was talking out loud.

Mr. Hawk stopped, his hands lingering at the hem of her shirt, “What, sweetie?”

“Adam. I said no. Stop touching me,” she said as she swatted at his hands.

“Caroline, I’m not Adam,” he tried to clarify. She grew silent again and he sat down next to her on the floor to unbutton her shirt from the bottom. He was gentle and made an effort not to touch her skin as he slid his fingers around the first button. His fingers grazed her belly as he worked the second.

Caroline let out a soft giggle. He cautiously moved to the third button, which was just under her breasts. The fabric was a little tighter there, so it was hard to unbutton the shirt without touching her skin, which was now cool to the touch. She took in a deep breath and his fingers grazed the underside of her breast. She giggled again. Then he reached for the fourth button, which was at her breasts. He slowly placed his fingers around the button and started to push. The palm of his hand pressed against her breast, teasing her erect nipple.

“Adam. You must go. This isn’t right,” she whispered.

“I’m not Adam,” he sternly explained.

“Adam, I don’t want this. I didn’t know,” she kept talking.

“Caroline, come on. You’ve gotta snap out of it,” he stated as he pulled her sleeves down her arms. She lay naked now. Her bare skin layered with goosebumps. Jennie returned just as he was wrapping the dry towel around her.

“EMTs are on their way up,” she announced, handing him another towel. He accepted it and picked Caroline up to bring her into the living room, where he placed her gently on the couch.

“She’s delusional. She thinks I’m someone named Adam,” Mr. Hawk told Jennie.

“Adam? That’s her ex-boyfriend. She hasn’t brought him up in a while,” Jennie explained.

“Oh God. Let’s hope it’s not my soon to be ex-husband, Adam,” Melissa answered under her breath. “He cheated on me.”

“I doubt that,” Jennie replied, fixing one of the towels wrapped around her best friend.

The paramedics came into the room and took over from there.