

---

# UNGUARDED

Steel and Desire - Book Three

---

KENDRA GREENWOOD



Published by Blushing Books  
An Imprint of  
ABCD Graphics and Design, Inc.  
A Virginia Corporation  
977 Seminole Trail #233  
Charlottesville, VA 22901

©2020  
All rights reserved.

No part of the book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. The trademark Blushing Books is pending in the US Patent and Trademark Office.

Kendra Greenwood  
Unguarded

EBook ISBN: 978-1-64563-278-8

vi

Cover Art by ABCD Graphics & Design

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.

---

## Chapter 1

---

March 30, 1993

**L**ightning flashed. Thunder crashed. A baby bawling. Her heart pounded, *thump-thump-thumping* in her ears. She rushed to the baby, wrapping her small hands around the crib slats and pressing her face into the space. “Shush, baby. Don’t be scared. I’m here.” Outside, an OPEN sign for the corner store pulsed, illuminating her brother’s precious face in green flashes. He stopped crying the second he saw her, sitting up in that wobbly infant way.

“Mama.” He smiled, snot smearing his face.

“Mommy will be home soon.” Their mother had to go to work but promised she’d hurry home. “Are you hungry, baby?” She should make him a bottle. “I’ll be right back. Don’t cry.” She ran to the small refrigerator. Lightning illuminated the tiny colorless room and thunder boomed again, but she wasn’t afraid. It was the angels bowling—*strike!* She lifted the milk carton and sniffed. The smell made her gag. She’d have to go across the street and buy some. Her brother’s cry made her stomach hurt. She needed to feed him. Now.

She slipped into her yellow raincoat and matching rubber boots, snapping the gold buckles, then opened the door to the pouring rain. From the side table, she pocketed the key with the big number five. Money, she needed money. She dragged a kitchen chair to the counter and climbed atop, searching the cabinet for the jar where her mother kept dollar bills. Standing tippy-toed, she reached near the back and grabbed a few dollars, tucking them inside her pocket.

The blinking green sign across the street beckoned. She pulled the hood over her tangled red curls, locked the door and stepped out into the damp darkness. The door to the mini-mart proved heavy. Using both hands, she managed to open it. She headed toward the glass case. Barely reaching the handle, she gave a tug.

“Can I help you?” came a soft voice from above.

She glanced up but the hood blocked her line of sight and she pushed it back. Blonde ponytail lady in a black pantsuit stood next to her... she froze... a gun hung on her belt.

The pretty lady crouched down, eye-to-eye. The bright silver star on her chest had the numbers 495 on it. She smelled nice, like vanilla cupcakes. “My name is Sarah. I’m a police officer. What’s your name?”

She wasn’t supposed to talk to strangers, but this was a police lady. She’d seen one on TV and police were nice, mostly. Didn’t they help people? Haltingly, she said, “I’m Jamie.”

“Nice to meet you. How old are you Jamie?”

She held up four fingers.

“Four years old?” Police Lady’s eyes brightened.

“And a half.”

“You have gorgeous red curls.”

Everywhere Jamie went people said nice things about her hair, but she thought she had clown hair. She wished she could have Princess-y locks like Police Lady.

“Where’s your mommy?”

“At work.”

“Your daddy?”

“Mommy says he better be dead, if he knows what’s good for him.”

Police Lady’s eyebrows lifted, eyes wide. “Oh my.” She opened the refrigerated case. “Need some of this?” she asked, retrieving a milk carton from the shelf.

“My little brother is hungry.”

“I see,” Police Lady said. “I’ll help you.” She grasped Jamie’s hand and escorted her to the checkout. Jamie fished out the crumpled bills and laid them on the counter.

Police Lady asked the clerk, “Do you know this child?”

The man with the black towel on his head leaned over the countertop and gazed down. “She’s been in a few times with her mother and a baby. I think they’re staying at the motel across the street.”

The man accepted the money and offered Jamie a few coins, which she tucked into her pocket. “Thank you, Mister.”

Outside, a policeman leaned against his black and white car. Moisture tickled the air, even though the rain had stopped. “What do we have here?”

“John, this is Jamie. I’m helping her get milk for her brother.”

Officer John chuckled. “Protect and serve, protect and serve.”

Police Lady said, “Do you live across the street, Jamie?”

She nodded.

Officer John clasped Jamie’s other hand and they walked over the double yellow line together. Strange and nice having her hands held by the two police people. She felt... *safe*.

They entered the small room and Police Lady strode to the crib and picked up Jamie’s screaming brother. She wiped the tears and snot off his face with a tissue and put him against her shoulder, patting his back. The baby calmed, a relief to Jamie’s ears. She offered, “The bottles are in the sink.”

Officer John asked, “Are you home alone, Jamie?”

Jamie nodded again. “But my mommy should be home any minute. She had to run to work.”

The police officers glanced at Jamie and then at each other. “Call it in,” Police Lady said.