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Carolyn Faulkner
Come to Me

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COME TO ME



CAROLYN FAULKNER



UNTITLED

Come to Me

By

Carolyn Faulkner

CHAPTER 1



SHE PULLED up in front of the house in her little beater car, and although she'd long since promised herself that she wasn't going to do it, she just sat there for a long time, looking at the house and determinedly ignoring the jarring presence of the sheriff's car right next to hers. She even jacked up the heat and rolled down her window—even though it was below freezing—just to get painfully deep lungfuls of that familiar New England winter night air.

It was so cold, it was painful to do so, as if those vulnerable parts of her body were being flash-frozen with each breath, but still, she continued to revel in the experience. It was at that point in winter when the air is so sharp and crisp that it doesn't really smell of anything, and she'd always thought—with absolutely no scientific basis whatsoever—that that was probably when it was at its cleanest.

One of the reasons why she was wrong about that began to make itself known not long after, when the acrid smell of wood smoke replaced the previously virginal air.

People still heat with that stuff? she thought, because she was stressed, so of course, she was hanging around outside her

family home like some creep—or worse, coward-insulting the culture that had birthed her. People in cold places still heated with wood, and her brother Bunny was one of those people.

With a deep sigh, she corralled all of the telltale signs of her stress eating into the small garbage can she kept there—the chip bags, the candy wrappers, the soda bottles, and the remains of one ill-fated attempt to eat a small McDonald's meal—and put it behind the passenger's seat, where it fit perfectly. Then she got out of the car, grabbed her bag out of the back seat, and trudged towards the door, looking down at the outfit she was wearing and despairing at the fact that she'd talked herself out of changing when she was home, throwing things into her valise while trying to make it out the door as quickly as she could.

Still, she paused again on the doorstep, finding it odd to have to knock on the door of the house in which she'd grown up, and took what she hoped would be a deep, calming breath, but it didn't work. It never did for her. She tried to convince herself that it didn't matter if he was there, but she still found herself eying the snow covered bushes to her right, not at all sure she shouldn't risk getting frostbite by changing into something nicer looking while using them for whatever cover they might provide.

But then the door opened unexpectedly, and it was too late.

But it didn't matter anyway, because it was Bunny who was standing there in front of her, face lined with worry like she'd never seen it before, eyes red and swollen, looking lost. He was her big brother—in more ways than one—and seeing him look so sad and helpless was really jarring. He'd always been the strong one, the one who looked out for her and took care of her.

But not this time, she was acutely aware.

"Stinkerbell," he whispered, looking almost stricken rather

than surprised. "Why were you sitting in the car for so long?" he asked, then continued, "I'm so glad you came!"

Brea gave him a look that—at any other time—would have told him to really think about what he'd asked and why she might hesitate about coming in. But then she took one step forward, arms open, hugging her brother as tightly as she could. She very much wished that she could hug him as hard as he hugged her, in a way that had always told her, wordlessly, that everything would be all right.

"Of course, Bunny. I couldn't imagine being anywhere else," she breathed, rubbing her hand up and down his back, patting gently. Normally, she would already have ended the hug and bowled her way past him and into the kitchen, chattering away like the magpie he was always comparing her to while they grew up.

This time, though, she clung to him as hard as he did to her, not breaking it off until he showed signs of wanting to do so.

She followed him into the kitchen as he walked—not with the familiar bold strides he usually took—with a slow, shuffling pace, as if he'd aged a hundred years in the past few hours.

"I take it you haven't heard anything more?" Brea asked.

Bunny shook his head as she took her jacket off and put it on the back of one of the kitchen chairs. "And Kay is in the bedroom?"

"Yeah." She took a few steps towards the hallway, intent on going to see her best friend, when he continued, "I wouldn't do that. She's finally cried herself to sleep and I don't want her to wake up any sooner than she has to."

Brea had to forcibly turn herself back towards the kitchen, pausing for only a second before putting her hands on her hips and asking, "Is there anything you need me to do?"

"Well, you could say hello to Pace over there. He's been here almost since the moment we called her in as missing. He's doing everything he can to help. I know he's not your favorite

person, but the least you could do is acknowledge his presence, Brea."

"Yeah, Brea. The least you could do is say hello to me," the subject of their discussion agreed laconically—because, of course, he would.

Her, "Pace," could not have been any more clipped or obviously annoyed.

In contrast, the big man inclined his head towards her, saying her name in a way that extended it imperceptibly, as if he wanted to savor every second of it, "Brea."

The sultry, sexual manner in which he said it made her clit twitch in her pants. Under normal circumstances, Bunny might have said something about how inappropriately overt Pace was being towards his sister, but her brother had better things to be concerned about.

"When you get a chance, Brea, I have a few official questions for you."

"Really?" She couldn't keep the sarcasm from her tone. "You think I masterminded my own niece's disappearance—from New Jersey, no less?"

His eyebrows rose. "Stranger things have happened."

It was impossible to refute that. Wanting to get it over with, she pulled out her chair and sat down. "Shoot."

"Well, I don't think we should do that here." He stood, heading for the door as if he expected that she would follow him, as if she were a cocker spaniel. "Let's take a drive around town." Pace stood, holding the door to the mud room open for her expectantly.

As much as she didn't want to do as the other man asked, Brea wasn't about to cause a scene. She didn't want to add to Bunny's misery. Instead, she rose and looked at her brother. "Will you be all right for a little while?"

Bunny nodded. "Yeah, go. I have Kay's phone and mine, in case she tries to call."

"When I get back, I'll make you both dinner, or bring you something you can nosh on when you want to. She'll call soon, Bunny, I know it."

He gave her a wan smile as she shrugged back into her coat and stood next to Pace, who motioned for her to go through the door ahead of him, as always.

"I'm going to head home when I'm done inter—quest—talking with your sister, Benny. I'll let you know if we hear anything at all."

They hugged—the two biggest guys in town—hugged each other, like the chosen brothers they were.

"I'll do the same. Thank you so much for," Benny's voice choked there, and he ended his sentence in a tragic whisper, "everything."

"Of course. It'll be all right. She's a smart girl, and she knows how to take care of herself. Have hope."

She knew that low, soothing tone from the times he'd used it on her, most notably on the night he'd taken her virginity, not unlike the conquering hero she always thought of him as. A lot about Pace was anachronistic. He was a big, strong, tough guy—a straight arrow, stand-up guy, as honest as the day was long, who, in another era, might have been a gladiator or a Viking warrior, or a commander of a huge Army, leading his troops bravely into battle. But his manners—especially with woman—had always been above reproach, which would have made him at ease in the drawing and ball rooms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He looked amazing in a tux—he'd worn one to Kay and Benny's wedding—and that sight had Brea spending many a night fantasizing about what those impressive shoulders of his would have looked like when encased in a well-tailored waistcoat.

He didn't look bad in his sheriff's uniform, either, though.

When he had her settled in the passenger's seat and was sitting behind the wheel, he glanced at her while she diligently

avoided meeting his eyes. But when he started the car, without either of them having said a thing, they both knew where he was taking her, and it wasn't for a drive around the small Vermont village they'd both grown up in.

"Did you have anything to do with your niece's disappearance?" he asked at the town's only four way stop.

"Of course not," she said with a frown.

"Did she confide in you about anything that could help?"

Brea closed her eyes. "Pace, if there was anything I could have told you about Ivy, I would have called and told you before I left New Jersey."

When she opened them again, he had put his hands up in the air, as if he was being arrested. "I know, but I have to ask."

She nodded.

Five minutes later, they were at his house. Ten minutes later, they were standing in his kitchen, with him looking at her like a drowning man who's going under for the third time looks at a life ring someone's tossed him.

Brea's feet shifted nervously, without her even realizing that she was doing it. Her mind was too occupied with chanting, "Don't look directly at him. Don't look directly at him," as if he were a solar eclipse or a grizzly bear.

And he definitely more closely resembled the grizzly bear.

"I should never have brought you here," he stated softly, hands uncharacteristically fidgeting with the uniform hat he was holding in front of himself. And she wasn't about to argue with him.

"I'd tell you to take a seat," he began, gesturing in the general direction of the dinette set, "but I'd much rather you sit on my face."

She snickered at that and forgot to chant her warning to herself. Blue eyes met brown ones, the brown ones holding hers—as well as the rest of her body—still against her will, as he took several steps towards her.

"If you don't tell me 'no' right this minute, Brea Michelle," he growled, his warning tone easily trumping her own failed one, "I'm not going to listen to it when you say it a few minutes or hours from now—and you know you will."

Brea knew that her lips had formed a surprised "O", but there was nothing she could do about it. Pace continued to walk slowly, deliberately towards her, one big hand reaching out to form a cuff around her wrist that was stronger than leather or metal would ever be, instantly rendering her weaker and more vulnerable than either of those other methods, merely because he was touching her.

Then he pulled her to him. Try as she might, she couldn't suppress the soft "oh" that escaped her when she crashed against the solid length of him.

"Last chance to object before I relieve you of your freedom to do so for a while," he murmured, looking down at her with every bit of desire he felt for her plain on his face and in the body she was plastered against.

She couldn't keep looking up at him—she just couldn't. Instead, she capitulated silently, pressing her burning hot face into his chest, tears immediately flooding her eyes because of the warmth and comfort she felt as he wrapped his arms around her with an unapologetic tightness he knew she loved, that he knew would soothe her mind and her body, even against her own will.

Not content with her nonverbal reply, he grabbed a handful of her hair, capturing it at the base of her head and using it as a handle to force her to look at him again. Pace nearly relented when he saw the tears in her eyes, but he knew he could do something for her at this terrible moment that no one else could.

"You know what I want to hear you say." His voice was warm and cajoling, but she knew that when he was in this kind of mood—that wasn't really how he felt.

While staring at the second button of his uniform shirt, she asked soberly, "Relieve me of my freedom for a while, please, Pace."

He leaned down to kiss her very gently and lovingly. "I'll make you forget for a while, baby. I promise," he said as he tucked his shoulder into her tummy and used the arm he'd been holding to hoist her over his shoulder and bear her into his room.

Minutes later, she had been stretched out on his bed in a frighteningly efficient manner that smacked of a deep familiarity with her—their likes and dislikes. It was a different bed from the one she'd known years ago—even from the last time she was in a position very much like this, which wasn't so very long ago at all. He was busy with the last step, applying cuffs to her wrists. "Are these all right?" he asked solicitously. "Too tight?" he frowned.

She pulled at them experimentally. "No, they're okay."

"You sure?" Pace asked, as if he thought she wasn't telling him the truth.

"Yes."

"What about here?" he asked, letting his fingers caress the other spots where she was restrained—her waist and her ankles, which were held wide apart by a spreader bar.

"They're fine, too."

"You wouldn't fib to me, now, would you, Brea?" Pace tucked his thumbs into his waist, behind his belt, deliberately making the leather of his thick work belt creak. She shivered when he spoke—not so much the words themselves, but rather, how he said them. The man had an almost dangerously good control of his voice—she'd always thought he should have been an actor, but he had no interest in that, for which she was grateful. She would have hated having to share him.

She had hated having to share him when it actually

happened, and that was only with one other woman, and she still did.

Swallowing hard, Brea answered, "Of course not."

"You remember your rules?"

Even a hundred years from now, in a toothless, drooling, senile haze, she would remember the rules he'd given her when they were still young and foolish and were first exploring these kinds of things together.

"Yellow is caution, red is stop. Anything health related is an automatic red. Always tell you if something hurts that's not supposed to, or in a way it's not supposed to, or you'll make something else hurt worse, eventually. Don't lie. Don't sell myself short. Just say 'thank you' when I'm complimented instead of giving you reasons why you shouldn't have complimented me. Do my best."

She rarely lied, so he'd never really caught her out at that. But she did have some consistent problems with some of them. If there was a silver lining to them breaking up—and she'd been hard pressed, at first, to find one, it was that, when she slid from A's to C's and D's while going through college, she didn't have to tell him about it.

He would not have been happy at all about that, and she would have spent entire semesters not sitting comfortably.

But he'd lost the right to be anything with her—except perhaps a well needed distraction.

His smile was boyish, with no small tinge of pride. "I'm still amazed you remember them after so long."

"You weren't on the receiving end of your 'reminders.'"

"I'm glad they had a positive effect on you."

Her own eyebrows rose. "I don't remember using the word 'positive', nor any synonym thereof."

His mirrored hers at that. "You never did really get the hang of the idea that you shouldn't say things like that when you're in the kind of position you're in right now."

"I'm not worried."

She said it blithely, casually, as if it had taken absolutely no thought at all to come to her conclusion. "Oh? Do elaborate, please."

He began to undress, and she was having a hard time talking because of it. They weren't young anymore, but judging by his body, there was no way she could have told that. Oh, he'd filled out some, looked even more masculine than he had when they were together—if that was even possible. He looked more like the man he'd become than the boy he had been. Pace had always been a solid, muscley guy, and he still wasn't in the least fat or even slightly paunchy.

But his body was different—he'd grown into his size over the years. He'd never been a clumsy, gangly youth. He'd just become more... solid... was probably the best way to put it. And, if anything, he was more attractive to her now than he had been then.

She found herself flipped onto her tummy while he was still only half undressed, one leather gloved hand snapping relentlessly down onto her backside while he scolded, "I believe I just told you to do something, Brea."

Her mouth opened, and she tried to draw in a breath, but it was as if there was no air at all in the room. It took her several long beats before she began to gasp and drag air into her lungs, then—while he continued to ravage her slightly wobbly cheeks without the least bit of hesitation—she screamed, "Because you don't spank me for stupid things!" urged on by how badly her skin was stinging and burning from his efforts.

She could tell he was smiling by his tone of voice when he teased, "No, there were always more than enough real reasons you needed to be taken in hand that I never had to get creative."

He continued to swat her urgently for a while after she'd done as he'd asked, then turned her back onto her back. Brea wasn't at all sure that was a good thing, considering that she

was now lying on a butt that she was sure was singeing the sheets—and the mattress beneath them.

"You still believe that?"

"Yes," she answered, unhesitatingly, and he had to wonder whether that was because of the spanking she'd just gotten.

But then, she'd always been almost painfully honest with him.

His, "I'm glad to hear that," was said a bit too softly, a bit too earnestly, and she could feel her eyes filling with tears again, for a different reason, this time and blinked them back determinedly. She did not want to cry in front of him—at least, not because he'd managed, as usual, to strike a chord in her that she'd rather he hadn't.

There was no doubt in her mind that she was going to be crying in front of him before he let her up again—for myriad reasons, but all of them, she knew, would have to do with their mutual pleasure.

Things had gone wrong between them—big things. But none of those things had ever had anything to do with just how explosive they were when they were in bed together. Or swimming. Or driving. Or walking. Or at a party. Or on a boat.

She'd always thought that a large part of their attraction to each other had to do with the fact that they were both young and horny, and that had been some of it.

But, even when they'd gotten together again after a pretty long dry spell, they were still absolutely incendiary together. It was a wonder the very air in the rooms they were in together hadn't just gone up in flames. They were often so caught up in each other that there were several hotels within a fifty mile radius of town at which they were not welcome.

She hadn't wanted to, originally, but he had pointed out at one of those times that it made sense for them to use his place.

And now she found herself there again, like she had sometimes over the course of the past ten years or so, lying bound,

naked, and helpless on his bed while he undressed himself—always within her line of sight. He didn't do anything particularly sexy—Lord knew, Pace wasn't the type to go into a strip tease or anything like that, but then, neither would she want him to.

It didn't matter to her in the least that he wasn't doing anything to accentuate how he was getting naked. The mere fact that it was him, was more than enough to make her leak her own juices onto the sheets beneath her—always had been, and it was looking as if it would always be that way for her. He didn't force her to look at him, but he knew she didn't have it in her to look away, either.

She never had, and she never would.

When he was naked, she had to suppress the urge to groan at the sight of him. He was gorgeous—exactly what she wanted in a man, in every possible way—broad shouldered, well-defined muscles, and just slightly hairy all over. Then he bent down to retrieve his clothes, and she got a look at his ass. It had been one of the—many—things that had attracted her to him in the first place. Whereas a lot of boys—and men—couldn't seem to fill out their pants, front or back, frankly, there was no doubt at all in the entire student body that Pace Lawford succeeded—and then some—in both areas.

At that point, she was the only one who could say whether or not they were right. They were, but she wasn't about to tell them that. He had managed to be one of those kids who kind of skated by everyone—he played football, but he wasn't a star. He knew a lot of the kids, but he wasn't what anyone would have called popular. He was just well-liked enough not to get harassed by any segment of a population that usually made it its business to identify someone's weakest point and exploit it in every horrible way possible.

He had always been pretty self-possessed, maturing well ahead of his time—especially as a male. Maybe that had been to

keep him from feeling the wrath of his classmates, that and his size, of course.

Brea got an eyeful when he turned and walked back towards her, too. That thing between his legs had always given her pause. She couldn't imagine how it was possible for her to take him, even now, although it had never been a problem in the past.

"Like what you see?" he asked, and she was surprised at that. He didn't usually fish for compliments. She must've missed a sardonic note in his tone. That would have been more like him.

"Yes, I do," she answered, looking him boldly up and down. "You've always been sexy as fuck."

"So have you."

The impulse to open her mouth and earn herself a second spanking in less than a few minutes—not that it would have been the first time that had happened—but she managed not to and said, instead, "Thank you."

The smile that spread over his face made her nipples peak.

Pace chuckled softly, knowing that, even now, she had had to think hard to remember to do that.

"You're very welcome," he replied seriously, pinching a nipple firmly between his thumb and the side of his index finger, while twisting it slowly.

Brea panted as contrasting feelings flooded her body. She loved him touching her in any way at all, and her nipples were very sensitive. But he was pinching her fairly hard and twisting and pulling it away from her at the same time.

Her breath hissed in, and he let go of one, only to capture and do the same to the other. She whimpered after a much shorter time, and he ignored it, not letting that poor nipple escape his attentions until he was ready.

When he finally let go, she wanted nothing more than to be able to reach down and rub and soothe the poor things, but she couldn't. Her cuffed wrists were linked together above her

head, a very well hidden hook keeping them there. Usually, he didn't make it that easy for her, expecting her to keep them there by the strength of her own will.

But sometimes, he liked to relieve her of the possibility of escape, even though, if—when—she had decided to reach down with those hands, she had been made to thoroughly regret it.

Pace enjoyed stripping her of her autonomy, knowing it was exactly what she needed at the moment. Things were happening—bad things—in her life that were utterly out of her control, when her first response was always to try to control everything.

He enjoyed teaching her that control was an illusion. He knew that what she needed the most from him right now was for him to reduce her to mindless obedience, to drive all practical, mature, sound thought from her and make her think of one thing, and one thing only—when was he going to allow her to come?

Or, more precisely, *was* he going to allow her to come?