



Blindfolded Innocence

By Alessandra Torre

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"I'm not sure what you have been told about me, but I'm not nearly as bad as they make me out to be." His deliciously deep voice carried a little bit of ego.

I'm sure you are exactly as bad as they make you out to be....

Brad De Luca is used to getting whatever and whomever he wants. The premier divorce attorney in town, he's a playboy who's bedded half the city--including his own clients. And when the newest intern at his firm poses a challenge, his seductive prowess goes into overdrive.

Pre-law student Julia Campbell is fresh off a failed engagement and happy with her new independence. Even if she weren't warned away from Brad at every turn, she'd know he was bad news. The last thing she needs is a man who could destroy her job prospects, not to mention her innocence. But before she knows it, the incorrigible charmer has her under his spell. His deviant tastes plunge her deep into a forbidden world of sexual exploration...but her heart may not survive the fall.

This is the first book in the Innocence trilogy. It can be read as a standalone.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Alessandra Torre is a stay-at-home wife and mom in the southeast United States. *Blindfolded Innocence* is her first novel. When not writing, Alessandra enjoys reading, traveling, and spending time with her family.

You can find out more about Alessandra and her upcoming books at www.alessandratorre.com, or through her Facebook page.

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Four months earlier

I decided to break off my engagement on a Wednesday night at 2:20 a.m. I was drunk past the point of walking a straight line, but not yet to the point of slurring my speech. Drunk wasn't the best mind-set to be in to make a lifealtering decision, but a thin curtain had finally been ripped away and a truth that I had evaded for the past two years now stood front and center in the middle of my head, waving its arms and screaming.

Luke was not the one for me.

I met Luke as a sophomore in college. At the time I was emotionally vulnerable, recently dumped by the first "love of my life" two weeks after he took my virginity. That asshole ditched poor deflowered me to run off with a seventeen-year-old blonde, pink-toenailed California princess. Luke was different-quiet, brooding, a sensitive soul who seemed absolutely terrified of me. I was bubbly, beautiful and determined to get over my heartbreak the college way-partying myself into oblivion. I hunted Luke down the way a lioness would a defenseless baby antelope, making my sole occupation getting him to fall completely and hopelessly in love with me- which he did, putting me on a pedestal and worshipping daily at my whim.

I demanded a proposal within six months, which he gave me willingly-I think-and we began to plan a life together. This life plan was hampered slightly by the fact that Luke was a dreamer with high goals but little follow-through. He enjoyed spending time with me, and not much else. He worked in construction-not in a management capacity, as I had originally thought, but as a laborer. My bubbly persona started to turn into more of a nagging mother role. It wasn't long before my subconscious started poking me with a sharp, pointy stick. I ignored the annoying pokes for twelve months, then my subconscious had enough of waiting.

It is weird the things that enter your head during a breakup. I sat on my bed with Luke sitting next to me, and I wondered why I had never purchased a chair for my bedroom. I had a desk and the typical bedside table, but no chair. A chair would have made the situation easier. Sitting next to Luke on the bed was too intimate-his pain was too close-and I knew I would have to fight to keep from reaching over to comfort him.

I stood up, wobbled slightly and turned to face him. I took a deep breath and delivered the bad news. I think my dramatic breakup speech was hampered slightly by the fact that we were both drunk, but I tried my best to be compassionate, coherent and firm. I accomplished at least two of those objectives.

Luke turned out to have a streak of stalker in him. Despite all the poking and prodding that he had needed to bathe, balance a checkbook and show up for work, it turned out he needed little or no encouragement to

spend every waking moment trying to convince me to come back to him. In retrospect, maybe I should have spent less effort trying to get him to fall in love with me. I might have overshot that objective.

After two weeks of avoiding my home, work and anyplace I had frequented during the past two years, I decided to leave my crappy apartment and even crappier job and start fresh. It was good timing. Intern season was starting.

My internship at Clarke, De Luca & Broward began on a Monday morning at 8:00 a.m. I sat in the Human Resources offices with eight other interns and waited for my attorney assignment. Our internships would last for one semester. During that time we would be assigned to an attorney and, for the most part, would be their personal bitch for the next ten weeks.

I had heard the stories. Liz Renfield, one of the junior partners, once made an intern cover her gynecology appointment. The intern had to sit in the cold stirrups and undergo a full exam just so Renfield could make a deposition and continue her birth control uninterrupted. Hugo Clarke was apparently the dream assignment. He was known to take interns under his wing and pretty much guaranteed them a salaried position after graduation. Brad De Luca was a skirt chaser, Robert Handler a drunk, and Kent Broward drowned interns in work. There were a few new attorneys that hadn't yet built up reputations, but I was sure that they would have them soon enough.

"Miss Campbell," the throaty-voiced receptionist barked, waving her hand, beckoning me. I stood, smoothed my skirt and strode to the front. I was nervous, but tried to appear calm and collected. I came to a stop in front of her and waited. "You will be assisting Attorney Kent Broward," she stated. "After orientation, report to his office, fourth floor." She dismissed me by turning back to her stack of forms and calling the next victim, Jennifer Hutchinson. I turned and walked back to my seat, passing Jennifer on the way. She gave me a tight, nervous smile, which I returned.

I sat down on the plastic-wrapped seat and exhaled, releasing the breath that I had not been aware I was holding. Attorney Kent Broward. I could have gotten worse. Broward worked long hours and expected his interns to do the same, but at least I would get good, solid training. If I impressed Broward, I should have no problem getting a strong recommendation for law school. Word was that Broward was tough, but not unreasonable, and fair. I heard Jennifer's assignment called out in the background. She received Liz Renfield. Tough break.

Orientation passed slowly, a boring drone of questionnaires, forms and informational videos on topics such as equal opportunity and sexual harassment in the workplace. We had a catered lunch in an empty conference room-cold ham-and-turkey sandwiches with chips. I munched on a Frito and listened to the idle chat. The conversation seemed to center around drinks after work and where everyone wanted to go.

"Hops Grill. Julia, that work for you?" Trevor, a lanky redhead, leaned toward me as he asked the question.

I shrugged noncommittally. "Hops works for me, if Broward lets me out in time," I said. I didn't expect to make many happy-hour events, at least not for the next ten weeks. I could probably cross off any social events, period, until my internship was over.

"I'm sure Broward will let you off early today. It is the first day, after all." The optimism came from Todd Appleton, a handsome, athletic type, as he stared into my eyes from across the table.

I smiled at him, trying not to stare at his perfect grin. Hmm...that view will help the next few months pass

quickly. "Maybe. Who'd you get?"

"De Luca," he responded breezily. "Should be fine. The guy apparently parties more than he works."

I glanced at Jennifer. She was typing furiously into her phone, probably updating her boyfriend on her day. "Jennifer, you going for drinks?" She glanced up, nodded and resumed her texting.

Jane, the Human Resources receptionist, a petite white-haired woman, who would have seemed motherly if not for her piercing stare and gravelly smoker's voice, strode into the room. "Okay, interns, let's move!" she commanded, clapping her hands. "Report to your attorneys and bring all of your things with you!" She clapped her hands again and began herding us out. Todd caught up with me on the way out and held the door for me, pressing his hand gently on my back to guide me through the door. I tried not to smile, but felt a flush hit my face. I headed for the stairs and prepared myself for the fourth floor, and Broward.

Broward was in his forties, tall and bald-shaved bald, in an obvious attempt to hide a receding hairline. He looked like a runner, thin and in shape. He had his jacket on and was seated behind his desk when I came in. He stood as I entered and came around the desk to shake my hand. "Julia." He beamed, pumping my hand. "Nice to meet you." I liked him immediately. He seemed intelligent, approachable and trustworthy. Plus, it appeared he had excellent taste in interns. Looking around, he grabbed a set of keys and a stack of files. "Come with me. I'll show you your office and start you working."

* * *

Four hours later, I paused in my typing and leaned back in my chair. I stretched my arms and legs and rolled my head, trying to get the kinks out of my neck. I looked around my office, taking my first real appraisal of the space. It was a nice office, more than I had expected as an intern. Dark wood-paneled walls, plush cream carpet and expensive, heavy furniture- the room had a definite masculine sense, a cigar bartype feel. I didn't mind. Girlie, flowery and pink don't exactly inspire fear in the courtroom.

My desk was filled with legal briefs, all covered with Bro-ward's handwritten notes. They all needed to be summarized and to have his notes implemented. I sighed. Long nights were going to be the norm, mostly filled with menial work that would do nothing to further my work experience. Welcome to the world of internship. I leaned back over the desk and started in again.

An hour later, there was a soft knock on my door and Todd Appleton stuck his gorgeous blond head in. "We're heading out for drinks," he said. "Still room for you, if you're interested." He looked carefree and relaxed, happily done for the day, his tie already loosened.

"I think I'll be here awhile," I said from behind the stack of briefs. "But thanks for checking."

His gaze traveled from my full desk to the crammed cardboard file box on the side of my desk. His smile faded slightly. "All right...I'll take a rain check." He tapped his hand on the door frame twice and then left, closing the door behind him.

I rubbed my eyes and focused again on Britley v. Russell Properties, an exciting legal battle regarding a dispute over water rights on a condominium project. Thrilling. At least Broward was still there also. I could hear him on the phone, his seat creaking occasionally when he stood up, usually to pace. I bet a tr...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Guillermo Behler:

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