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Virginia Kantra

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Jack Rossi is Dare Island's new police chief. The laid-back North Carolina community is just what he needs to recover from a rocky marriage and a big-city police department. He's learned his lesson: no more high-profile women or high-pressure jobs. The last thing he wants is an unconventional alt girl rocking his world.

Grad student Lauren Patterson made headlines when she kept a bank robbery from going bad. She's fled to Dare Island to clear her head and focus on writing her story. However, sexy Jack Rossi is a distraction that's too hot to ignore, and it's igniting an affair too combustible to resist—or quit.

But when their pasts come looking for them, Jack and Lauren find themselves fighting for the future they deserve, whatever the price.

Carolina Blues Details

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Author : Virginia Kantra

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From Reader Review Carolina Blues for online ebook

Stephanie says

Carolina Blues by Virginia Kantra: A Counselor in Need

Original Post 3/30/15 <http://fangswandsandfairydust.com/201...>

This was a thoughtful examination of how love and experiences, especially traumatic ones, can affect and change our life, and the goals we've set. Indeed, the couple has a pretty in-depth look at their wants and life goals. It also looks at Lauren's personal crisis in writing, her guilty feelings and her inability to move on. And Jack looks at his career goals and whether he likes the close knit police department on Dare Island or if he is more interested in the high-pressure Philly environment.

I love the unlikely mix of characters drawn to each other: Lauren, a pierced psychology grad student who negotiated hostage release and the surrender of the robbers in a bank robbery and the new, "not from the island," police chief, Jack Rossi. Lauren is not limited by conventional ideas of dating and commitment in choosing sexual partners; Jack is a little more traditional, but, he's a guy, attracted and, well, he's a guy.

An old boyfriend's dad was a shrink and my guy used to say that it was like the cobbler's kids going without shoes. In other words, he thought his own family was in need of counseling. I feel that way with Lauren who is nearly finished with her degree. She needs to really communicate; not hide behind words spoken in anger and frustration to get in the way of relationship. In a sense it is the set up of the relationship and of both assuming it hasn't changed when they get closer that causes issues. Using the bad communication and exterior obstacles tropes, Kantra positions the two to be separated by their words and their jobs.

One thing Kantra excels at is writing some hot love scenes. Especially on a boat. That's always been one of my fantasies; then again I think of the shower/head combo and maybe not so much. But that is part of the romance novel – those fantasies that reality would get in the way of seem much hotter and more romantic in a book.

Another skill Kantra possesses is the ability to weave the next book's characters and story line into the one you are reading. So, I want to know what happens to Jane, the Island bakery owner, before I am halfway done.

This all happens on one of those islands where there are plenty of residents and a lot of tourists. It's a pretty romantic set up and makes me want to jump on a plane to the Carolinas!

Lots of fun and very hot, this sets me to a boil – a low-country boil!

Jess says

HOT SHERIFF JACK ROSSI.

That's it, that's the review.

Ami says

The good news is the story of Dare Island citizens continues without the Fletchers as main characters. The bad news (at least for me) is the story continues *without* the Fletchers as main characters.

Okay, let me try to explain...

I really loved The Fletchers (the three siblings that were the main characters for the previous three books). I was quite invested with their love stories. I admit that when I saw that there would be a 4th book in this series, I was a bit, uhm, skeptical? I wondered if Ms. Kantra would be able to bring forward the same charms with different characters from Dare Island (just like Jill Shalvis does with her Lucky Harbor series). She did introduce police chief Jack Rossi in Luke's book (book #3 – Carolina Man) and hostage girl turned author, Lauren Patterson, in Meg's book (book #2 – Carolina Girl). So it's not like these characters were totally new, right?

Unfortunately for me, it felt like the magic was gone once the Fletchers stopped being in the main spotlight. I guess what made the previous three books a good series was that the Fletchers were a unit, a family. The books were about them – how they were working together to tackle their issues (Tess's accident, Luke's daughter) was what pulled me in. Jack and Lauren felt like outsiders, and I couldn't develop enough interest with the both of them or their road to love.

See, Jack felt flat compared to Luke, for example. He was just a nearly 40-year-old guy, a divorcé, who wanted a different kind of woman compared to his ex-wife. While Lauren ... her back-story should be interesting (she negotiated her way out with other hostages from a bank robbery gone wrong) but that kind of situation also felt slightly over the top – like it could only have happened once in a lifetime, which resulted in my feeling detached from her. I couldn't connect to Lauren's back-story at all. Her wanting to just have a hook-up also didn't work with her characterization.

The ending was actually kind of sweet though. And I did enjoy anything related to the Fletchers who still made their appearances – like Luke's wedding to Kate (I was so happy that it was included here, considering that Luke and Kate's book was my favorite Dare Island novel). It was a wonderful wedding! In conclusion, personally, it was good but didn't live up to the previous three books. It seemed that the series would continue. I'm just not sure if I'm interested enough to check it out.

A Guest Review for The Blogger Girls

The ARC is provided by the publisher for an exchange of fair and honest review. No high rating is required for any ARC received.

Jen_C says

Almost perfect. 4.75 stars rounded up.

Score! I loved Jack and Lauren's story. They both had backstories that shaped them and affected them and I enjoyed the glimpses into those. I would have like a more fleshed-out glimpse at Lauren's time as a hostage rather than just the random flashbacks. I loved their talks, the way they "got" each other and treated each other (especially Jack's actions/thoughts because his actions spoke more than words most of the time). Lauren seemed *mostly* to sense when Jack needed pushing and when she should just simply "be" with him. He thought about taking her out to dinner because she was worth it, giving her a rose since she never went to prom etc. - all those little random things that show someone is truly trying.

I laughed - **I'm from the Midwest. The suburbs. When somebody dies, you send flowers and a nice covered dish. You don't get a tramp stamp."**

"Do you dance? Or are you strictly a prop-up-the-wall-with-a-beer kind of guy?"

"I dance. But I don't shag."

She laughed. "I think we've just established that you do".

"Not Austin Powers shagging. It's A Carolina thing. A dance."

I got mad - when Jack couldn't/wouldn't say what Lauren needed to hear (a response to I love you, the details of his ex's visit) and when he hurt her with his jack-arse-ery - see page 245.

And okay, I admit, I got teary when Lauren was telling Jane about it & they discussed Jane's situation. **"I'm trying not to push you."**

"Yes, you are". Jane smiled. "But only because you care."

Lauren laughed even as tears stung her eyes. "Thanks."

"Honey, don't cry." Jane said. "If it means that much to you... Of course I'll call Kate. I'll call her tomorrow."

"No, it's not that. I mean, yes, call her, you definitely need to talk to a lawyer, it's just ..." Lauren laughed again shakily, blotting her eyes with her fingertips. "He didn't get it, you know?"

"Who didn't get what?"

"Jack. We were...discussing things, and I was pushing, I know I was pushing, but he won't let me in. I just wanted to help, I care about him, I love him, and he won't accept my help. He says he doesn't need my help."

"Or he doesn't want to need it," Jane said.

Lauren stared at her. "That's it. That's it exactly."

Anyway for this to have been a perfect 5 stars, I needed the last chapter to be a bit more detailed. I wanted to know Lauren's thoughts on kids. We knew Jack was 38 and wanted to have kids before he was gonna be too old to teach them/do things with them, because he thought it, but Lauren and he never discussed it....and he is not getting any younger. I needed to know Jack's thoughts after the talk at the office. It was so condensed and rushed and then ended so abrupt it *felt* like a mini cliffhanger HFN and I needed a HEA, although I can understand, since this is a series, that I can't have that - yet. It was great, but an epilogue or more details would have made it perfection.

Saly says

I really wanted to love this book but for some reason I couldn't, it lacked a direction and interesting characters for me. The hero is the new police chief who came to start over after a nasty divorce, the heroine is a writer who has a bad case of writer block. She is a therapist and famous as the 'hostage girl'. The heroine propositions the hero for a fling and he is more than happy to take her up on the offer. Now, see here is where the problem starts, the characters hardly spend time together, yet fall in love and marriage and I just couldn't buy it.

Brandy Painter says

I was worried about whether or not the series would be as good moving outside of the Fletcher family, but I shouldn't have been. This is an excellent book. I really liked both Jack and Lauren, the issues they brought to their relationship, and how they worked through those. Kantra does a great job of showing how real people work out real problems. Again, the community of Dare Island plays a huge part in the novel and the Fletchers are still very prevalent. (Fletcher wedding in this one!) I especially enjoyed seeing the camaraderie developing between Jack and Luke and the one other officer at the police station. I'm looking forward to seeing where else this series is going.

My YA loving heart both rejoices and yearns at the glimpses of Josh and Thalia we get in this book again. Thalia is the one featured more in this one and oh my. I want these two to have their own book (or books as I'm practical enough to see they may be not destined for each other, but again, my YA loving heart wants that too). I'm good with it being set later on, just gah! this episodic glimpse every book is KILLING ME.

Guilty Pleasures Book Reviews says

Rosalie's review posted on Guilty Pleasures Book Reviews

4 STARS

Review copy provided for an honest review

With a past that comes back to haunt you, this book shows how to move forward to find a life beyond tragedy and true love.

Dealing with fear from a previous bank robbery where she just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time – Lauren has many demons to battle. After selling a book based on her robbery experience where she talked the shooter down, she is now set to sell the second book on how her life is after being The Hostage Girl. Except her PTSD is getting in the way of her writing...and making friends...and living in general. Moving to Dare Island and staying in her PR's parent's Bed and Breakfast to be able to focus is proving more difficult than originally anticipated. Every shadow is out to get her, every sound is someone trying to hurt her, and she can't decide if the police are her enemy or her haven; until she meets Chief Jack Rossi. This realistic romance shows the give and take in a relationship where not but both partners have dealt with terrible life events and deal with PTSD. The chemistry between Jack and Lauren is undeniable. Jack is the refuge that Lauren needs and the companionship that helps her feel whole again. Even though it is the 4th in

the series, I didn't feel "out of the loop" jumping in on this book with it being #4. Great read!

Shabby Girl ~ aka Lady Victoria says

DNF - disappointing. Couldn't get into it. Didn't feel anything for either the H or the h and thought they were an odd couple right from the beginning. I didn't believe for an instant that the H would be interested in this h and it seemed unlikely to me that what little they did have would be anymore than a short fling, if that. The H would have been interesting if he wasn't paired with this heroine who I didn't get a feel for at all. The author didn't give them any tension at the start, but had them insta interested in each other and off into the sack pretty well right off the mark. They had no zing before they hit the sack and I was bored with them when they did the deed. I put this down and the next day just don't want to go back so I am moving on.

I noticed in all four of the books I've read by this author back to back that she doesn't appear to believe in or know how to write sexual tension and she seems to be more for the insta love and hit the sack right out of the blocks. Might be okay and fun IRL but in a book, booooring.

Haley says

B+ at All About Romance

What is there to say about this book? It's good. It's really good. It's a great addition to an already great series. Of course, just saying that it's good and I think you should read it doesn't make for much of a review, so I'll try to elaborate.

Carolina Blues is the fourth addition to the ***Dare Island*** series and, honestly, holds up as well as any of the predecessors. Normally series tend to flag after about three books, but Kantra has kept the momentum up. Firstly, she didn't attempt to keep trying to squeeze more and more books out of a single family, as many authors have done. Although we get a visit with the characters from the first three books, the focus has shifted away from the Fletcher family and on to two fairly new residents of Dare Island.

Jack Rossi has given up life in the city after a failed marriage, and come to Dare Island to start a new life as police chief. In the six months since his divorce, he hasn't given much thought to re-entering the dating scene. That is, until he meets Lauren Patterson. Lauren is taking a brief break in Dare Island in order to finish her book. She was part of a hostage situation and has now made a name for herself by telling her heroic story. Her second book isn't going so well though, and Jack Rossi proves to be the perfect distraction from her writer's block.

Firstly, I loved this book for the same reason I've loved everything I've read by Virginia Kantra so far; it is

realistic. *Dare Island* doesn't feel like some weird, overblown small town where everyone meddles and each character is more obnoxious than the last. Instead, Kantra creates a place that could be any real seaside town populated by normal people. There is a sense of everyone being in each other's business, which I've never understood. I grew up in a small town and I don't remember things being like that, but I try to be forgiving of that dynamic in romances, since it often serves the story. That said, once things kick off between Jack and Lauren, a lot of that fades away and we're left with two people, who have been scarred by their pasts, trying to make a relationship work.

There is an excellent chemistry between the pair. Jack's interest in Lauren is immediate and strong. Lauren has a bit of trauma related to cops from her experience as a hostage, but she warms to Jack pretty quickly. Probably the best part of this book was seeing how Lauren and Jack helped each other to move on from their emotional baggage. Lauren comes to see Jack as a person and not just a cop, and is eventually able to come to a breakthrough in her writing and in her plans for the future. As the total opposite of Jack's ex-wife, Lauren's openness and sensitivity helps Jack overcome his misgivings about falling in love again.

Although I enjoyed their story, and I found Jack and Lauren to both be interesting, true-to-life characters, **Carolina Blues** was missing that little extra zing that would've pushed this read up to A-level for me. I like a little more emotional turmoil for my characters (I'm a mean reader like that) in order for me to totally love a book, and I didn't find that here. That said, I think that I can safely say this is a guaranteed enjoyable read for fans of contemporary romance. For those that have followed the ***Dare Island*** series thus far, you will not be disappointed at all.

Carolina Blues is a well done read from Ms. Kantra. I look forward to seeing what she comes out with next because I'm sure it will be great as well.

Beth says

[Because - among other things - in what universe would Jack proposing in public happen? (hide spoiler)]

Keertana says

I think it's safe to say I've found a new go-to romance author. ;)

Anna's Herding Cats says

Reviewed for herding cats & burning soup.

Woots! I read my first audiobook all the way through!! It took me dang near 3 weeks but I made it! And....I kinda liked it. So never thought I'd say that about an audio book. But I really did. Carolina Blues was one of those reads that was just...comfortable. It kept giving me that feeling like...ah, I'm home. If that makes any sense? It was an easy relaxing read as Lauren comes to Dare Island to find her writing mojo and finds one deliciously sexy cop along the way that fires her all up in the best possible ways.

I really enjoyed these two. Lauren is a very likable heroine. She's sweet, likes being busy and helping out and was just pleasant. I liked watching her work through her issues from the past and dealing with her writing career. Seeing her opening up to people and finding her place. And Jack *swoons* I loved Jack. He doesn't play games, isn't a jerk, is thoughtful and when he does flub up he apologizes. I liked his almost innocent ways at times. Hrms, not really innocent...inexperienced? Or well, relearning things? His ex had messed with his head right good when it came to women so with Lauren so often it was like he was doing things for the first time. Getting past how he thought things would go because of his ex. It was just kind of sweet and endearing. He's got a soft spot for kittens too and is just a solid man that you could see feeling safe and sheltered by.

Gah he's sexy too. Things do heat up and while being on audio it was kinda weird sometimes listening to sex scenes and I couldn't help but snort and laugh a little--I swear I am NOT 12 and am 32 lol--I did enjoy the heat and passion between them.

Overall, Carolina Blues, was just a sweet heartwarming read of finding your place in life and the people you're meant to be with. I'm really loving this little island and enjoying all of the characters that live there.

Audiobook:

FB Update: Dammit! All the sudden there's an erection and they're nekkid and I don't know how that happened! Rewind. Rewind. Rewind. ??AudioBooksAreKillingMe?

So...yeah.that was me during a LOT of my first real audio listening experience. ::snort:: I rewound a lot. A whole lot. I do better when listening in the car but at home I get distracted a little too easily. Getting better though.

Since this was one of my first real attempts at audiobooks it took me a little while to get into things. I liked Eastlake's voice overall. It's pleasant and comforting which made the ongoing narration very easy to fall into. While the female voices were pretty easy for me from the start--other than when a bunch of them were together and talking quickly which totally made my head go loopy--the male voices took a little adjusting too. They blended a little too much for me at the start and I had a hard time differentiating them--again it was when in groups--but as things went I liked them more and more and rather got to like Jack's kinda gravely voice. I'd not been sure about a female narrator taking on male voices and if it would work for me but, yeah, by the end it was great. Overall, I was really pleased with the narration and added Eastlake to my list of authors to keep an eye on for future listens.

ETA--I've actually started another by Eastlake that's part of this series and am really enjoying it as well. She's definitely one I would recommend.

Sophia says

I love going back to Dare Island each time there's a new release in the series and even though the characters aren't one of the amazing Fletcher family for the first time, it was still as heartwarming and as engaging as ever. The story shifts to one of the intriguing side characters and the transition worked well as the series continues on.

The book could be read as a standalone or out of order in a pinch since the main story arc is contained in this book, but some of the side threads do have moderate connections to the previous characters in the series.

Jack Rossi, new Dare Island Police Chief, starting over after a failed marriage and a resignation from his job as a police detective back in Philly, is settling in to the new world of small town policing. He encounters a stranger at Jane's bakery and is intrigued the moment he sees her. She seems familiar for some reason under the multiple piercings, tattoos, and dark eyeliner, but it isn't until well after their first encounter that he learns who she is and why she is staying on Dare Island. Jack hasn't been interested in a woman since his ex-wife and he's learned his lesson about getting involved, but Lauren is only on vacation. He can do temporary. Only after a while, it doesn't feel like temporary.

Lauren Patterson, grad student psych major, is famous now for being the hero in a bank robbery gone bad into a hostage situation that she helps salvage when she talks down the robbers. Her follow-up book of the experience and her life before make her an overnight celebrity, but now afterwards when she experiences multiple panic attacks a day and seems to have lost herself, the sequel book won't pour out and her deadline approaches. With some understanding her publicist, Meg Fletcher, brings her to Dare Island for some much needed R&R. The stunning hot police chief may be just what she needs to recharge her batteries as long as she can keep her emotions in check and live in the moment unfortunately her treacherous heart just insists on getting involved.

The plot moves along gently at the same pace as the life on Dare Island which in itself is a character in the story along with all its quirky citizens. The story pursues the character growth of both Jack and Lauren along with their developing romance. They set off sparks with both their engaging dialogue and passion, but it's also neat to see them tentatively letting go of the past to reach for something else. I was so won over as much as Lauren by Jack adopting the little rescue kitten and caring for it. I was not impressed by his ex making her play just as Jack starts to get past that mess. Jack and Lauren spend a lot of time analyzing each other because he's a cop and she's a therapist which was a little amusing, but also an interesting facet to their relationship. It made for some rather mature thinking when things could have really gotten angsty and sloppy.

So, it's not the most exciting book though there are a few action scenes and even more steamy ones, but it's still a lovely curl-up and relax feel-good read. I would recommend this one for Contemporary Romance lovers who enjoy a slower-paced small town romance.

My thanks to Penguin Group for the opportunity to read this book in exchange for an honest review.

♥Rachel♥ says

4.5 Stars

Carolina Blues was a story that just sucks you in quietly, but surely with beautiful, understated prose and a passionate romance!

Suffering writer's block and panic attacks, Lauren has come to Dare Island to escape the city and finish her novel, *Hostage Girl: My Life After Crisis*. Lauren negotiated her way out of tragedy during a hostage crisis that captured nationwide attention. The writer's block persists on Dare Island, but soon she's distracted by Jack Rossi, the hunky police Chief. He's darkly handsome, cool and in control, and exudes a confidence and strength that appeals deeply to Lauren.

Jack is on Dare Island after a messy divorce. His wife not only cheated, but did so with his partner on the force. Their work lives and families were so entwined that Jack needed a clean break, a fresh start, and Dare Island fit the bill perfectly. When Lauren shows up on the island, there's an instant spark of attraction between them, but he's hesitant to invest in something that seems like it can only be temporary.

Lauren was honest about her needs and desires, and I appreciated there were no immature mind games. There were obstacles in their relationship; the question of what happens to them once Lauren is supposed to go home lingers over them. But even so they *savored* each other in the moment while exploring their relationship, both cautiously hoping for something permanent.

Oh, I do love a hero man in uniform, and Jack Rossi filled the role nicely! He wasn't the showy alpha-type that can come off as unrealistic in some romances, but he seemed real and very *male*! Lauren was very appreciative! This romance was *steamy*. Parts were languid sensuality, and parts were zinging with electricity!

"I never knew it could be like this," she admitted. "That I could have all these feelings inside. Jack makes me feel..." Cherished. Desired. Safe. "Alive."

Peripheral events play into their story adding a dash of danger with some relationship drama sprinkled in making a **Carolina Blues** a captivating story. I longed for Jack and Lauren to find a way to overcome their obstacles and find a way to stay together, because these two really got each other emotionally in addition to their physical attraction.

Virginia Kantra really impressed me with this installment! Her writing was gorgeous without being overly flowery and she made me feel every emotion right along with her characters. I can't wait for the next story!

A copy was kindly provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

This review is also posted at The Readers Den.

Mandy says

I REALLY love Jack and Lauren. Jack had that intense and rough thing about him that I totally love. Lauren broke through his hard shell and I loved how she actually made him TALK and Jack had such a positive influence on Lauren and her writing.

I've really enjoyed this whole series so far, it's great reading a series that is based in my own backyard (coast of NC). I cannot wait to see what Ms. Kantra has in store for Jane and Gabe. Is it February yet?
