



*SWEET PUNISHMENT*

*NIGHT OWL ROMANCE*  
*FREE READ*

*CELIA JADE*

# Sweet Punishment

By

Celia Jade

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Title: Sweet Punishment  
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Ella Fairburn hadn't sleepwalked in over two years. It usually occurred when she was upset about something. She frowned as she stared at the empty milk-stained glass on the kitchen counter, proof of her nighttime activity. Nothing had upset her this time around, although she suspected the cause. Her new neighbor. She'd been watching him almost the entire week of his move into the villa next door. Most men didn't impress her by looks alone, but he did. He wasn't a pretty boy like many guys in Los Angeles. He had a down to earth, manly appeal—rugged features, softened only by a wide mouth and blue eyes. She noticed the color of his eyes during her morning jog a few days ago. She'd slowed down as she approached her home and glanced at him while he was talking to one of the movers. He'd noticed her and caught her gaze briefly with a smile and a nod—the smile reaching her instantly, stirring her senses. And his dark brown hair was thick and just long enough so she could bury her fingers in it.

Apparently, her sudden attraction to the man had roused certain dormant emotions, namely sexual. She couldn't remember the last time she'd had sex—even worse, the last time she'd had great sex. She sighed and went about preparing some breakfast, her thoughts straying to her neighbor. Gazing out the window, she noted that the movers' truck had gone. Her gaze slid up to the white stucco building, hidden for the most part within a copse of palm trees. All seemed quiet. It looked like he'd settled in. The second she began wondering what he was doing she scolded herself. It wouldn't do to lust after her neighbor, would it? Neighbors were for times when you ran out of sugar or needed them to watch over your place when you were on vacation.

Actually, the proper thing to do was introduce herself. She chewed on her bottom lip. Something held her back from doing so right away. She allowed herself a self-conscious smile and shook her head. Good thing she was having dinner at her sister's tonight, as it would occupy her mind with other things.

Ella had a lovely time and was in good spirits when she got home. She settled into bed a little earlier than usual with the intention of getting up at dawn to work on her column. The magazine she worked for was running a series of special topics in a future issue and everyone had a tight deadline. Reading a couple of chapters from a novel helped lull her into a pleasant, deep sleep.

The last thing she remembered when she woke up the following morning was a vividly explicit dream involving her handsome neighbor. As always, she had no recollection of walking around the night before. She knew she had because she'd rummaged around the kitchen, leaving cupboards open. The fact that the sleepwalking had returned was unsettling. It was one of the reasons her family insisted she find a roommate or marry. But Ella enjoyed the tranquility of her home. It allowed her to focus on her writing. A roommate was not an option. Marriage...well, that was another thing entirely. She wasn't against it—just hadn't found the right man.

Handsome though he was, she was surprised that a stranger affected her this way. She'd seen him no more than four times, hadn't even talked to him. He had to be the reason, for lack of any other rationalization. It occurred to her then that the lack of sex and the general longing for male companionship was getting to her in a serious way. Perhaps he'd triggered it. She let out a long sigh. At least her sleepwalking was restricted to her house.

When she worked, the hours flew by almost unnoticed. Only the pang of hunger dragged her away from her laptop. She pulled out the bowl of prepared chicken salad from the fridge,

drizzled it with balsamic dressing and started eating. Once again, like a moth to a flame she was drawn to the kitchen window. Her gaze lifted to the upper level of her neighbor's villa and froze. Standing in one of the large windows was the man himself, naked except for a white towel looped around his waist. Ella nearly choked on a piece of lettuce. Unconsciously, she lowered the bowl to the counter and continued staring at him.

God, even from this distance, she could see he had a body to die for. Ripped, tanned muscles from shoulders to waist. A hot quiver ran over her skin. Unfortunately—luckily—she couldn't see beyond the towel because the window ledge came to that height. Heat rushed into her cheeks when she noticed that he was looking directly at her. Her mouth parted in surprise. He was watching her, watching him. How embarrassing! She grabbed the salad bowl and stepped away from the window.

That was probably his bedroom. Why hadn't she noticed any of the previous neighbors standing in that window? Then it hit her. Of course, they'd had curtains up. He obviously hadn't gotten round to that yet. *Wow, what a body.* That was a vision she wouldn't be able to shake for some time.

Ella was almost exhausted when she retired that night. She'd worked on her article for nine hours which included telephone calls and painstaking research. She dozed off as soon as her head rested on the pillow.

She sensed that she was walking in her dream, walking quite a bit actually. A cool breeze brushed against her skin and she reached out to pull the sheets over her body, but couldn't locate them. Some remote part of her consciousness guessed that she'd kicked them off the bed. She felt around with her hands, touching solid objects on the way. She couldn't see a thing, yet her feet guided her. Where was she going? Ella tried snapping out of the dream, but failed. It had a good grip on her. It wasn't fear that bothered her—something wasn't right.

Her breathing quickened as she came to a stop. She'd reached her destination. Her skin warmed once again as she stood in the dark room. Not exactly pitch black, she could make out shades of gray and brown. Her ears picked up sound, something like an echo in a bubble. She looked around in an attempt to locate the sound and it got louder. Panic raced down her spine. She felt her heart pounding. Sweat broke out on her skin. A part of her mind was pulling her away from here, pulling her out of the dream. And then she heard it.

A sharp clicking sound. She snapped out of the dream as blood rushed to her head. She opened her eyes wide, let out a frightened cry and crumpled to the floor.

“What the hell...Get up. Come on!”

She turned her head in response to the man's voice, her gaze colliding with the end of a revolver. Her heart jumped straight into her throat. Oh God. This was *not* a dream. She swallowed hard and lifted her eyes, taking in the naked, hard planes of his stomach, the bulge of smooth muscles on his chest, the strong column of his throat...and finally his eyes. Blue and blazing with fury. Her mouth dropped open as reality assaulted her senses. She managed to drag her eyes away from him to assess her surroundings. The room was dimly lit, but she could easily make out a handful of large paintings displayed on the walls. It looked like a small art gallery, most likely a private collection. She was in his house. *How the hell...?* She groaned softly, realizing she'd sleepwalked here.

As she became painfully aware of her situation, she pushed herself to her feet, noticing that she was dressed in only a shimmery silk nightgown, one with a rather flimsy lace bodice. Her hands shot up to cover herself as hot mortification crawled over her skin.

She turned and locked gazes with him again. "I—I can explain."

The weapon was still fixed on her. "I'd say it's rather obvious," he clipped before his gaze raked over her. He raised an eyebrow. "Although I don't get the outfit. Not very burglarish."

Ella managed to steady her voice. "I'm not a burglar. I was—"

"I've seen you around—you're the girl who lives next door." He shook his head. "Unbelievable. So that's what those coy glances were about, right? Scoping out my place... You saw them deliver the paintings."

She shook her head. "No—you've got it wrong."

He motioned toward the paintings with the revolver. "Tell me, which one were you going for? Wills' *Effusion*? Giardelli's *Goddess*?"

Tears of frustration pricked her eyes. "Please, it's not what you think—I sleepwalk," she blurted.

His body tensed, hesitating. Then he let out a bark of deep laughter. "You're a good actress too, but I'm not buying it." He took a step toward her and she retreated nervously. "This is a pretty big house and you ended up in this particular room. You also managed to get through a state of the art security system. Now that's interesting, isn't it?"

His point shocked her. It was one thing to sleepwalk her way here—quite another to enter undetected by the security device. It made no sense. She wasn't a ghost for goodness sake! She shook her head. "There must be an explanation. Check it. Check the alarm," she said, folding her arms about herself protectively, unaware that the motion pushed her breasts together.

His gaze fell to her cleavage and lingered. Male interest flickered in his eyes. "I will." He closed the gap between them and wrapped long, lean fingers around her upper arm. "Come along."

Ella tried to divert her mind from the warm strength of his hand on her bare flesh. Her nightgown swished softly against her calves as he led her through the house, its stylish interior illuminated only by the silver light of a full moon. As they approached the front door, he stopped abruptly. She shot him a nervous glance before turning her attention to the alarm box, located several feet from the door. She felt him tense. He was oddly silent for a long moment. The heat of his gaze brushed over her face but she stared ahead.

"You see that flashing red light?"

She nodded.

"That means the alarm has been disabled," he replied in a level tone. He stepped forward and pressed several buttons, turning the flashing light into a steady green.

Her heart fell. She shook her head and looked at him. "It can't be. There must be some mistake."

The anger had disappeared from his eyes, replaced by an unreadable emotion that brimmed in the dark blue depths. "Only one. Letting yourself get caught." The deep timbre of his voice swept over her like a hot caress.

She stared at him for a long heartbeat before raising a hand. "Now hold on. I told you the truth about my sleepwalking."

“Enough said.” His gaze dipped to her mouth. “You’ve chosen the wrong man to try to steal from, honey.”

Panic stabbed her. She tried to twist out of his grip. He brought his head close to hers and she picked up his scent—clean and woodsy. It roused her senses sharply.

“I’ll give you a choice. Either you play a little game with me or I turn you in to the police.”

This wasn’t happening. The phrase kept repeating itself in her mind. If it wasn’t for the firm grip of his hand, she’d swear she was still dreaming. Despite the circumstances, a current of sharp awareness flowed between them. Her physical senses were taking over at an alarming rate, stamping out any rational thought. *What was happening to her?*

“I promise not to hurt you. I don’t hurt women.” He paused and regarded her intently. “I’m Maximillian. You can call me Max. And you are...?”

*A total fool to be standing here, wanting to press my body against yours.* “Ella,” she said almost breathlessly.

“Ella...very nice.” He slid his hand down her arm and clasped her hand. “Come with me.”

Her inner voice was screaming by now, but she paid no attention, more interested in the game he’d mentioned. She wasn’t naive, of course, recognizing the desire in his eyes. He wanted to play an adult game. It was preferable to being questioned by the police. However, she was honest enough with herself to admit she wanted this man—this complete stranger. And she wanted him now. It was insane, but she’d suffer the moral embarrassment later.

He took her upstairs to his bedroom, obviously the master suite by size alone. It was almost twice as large as hers with an angled, high ceiling. Her gaze shifted to the curtainless windows, still finding it hard to believe she was in his house. They stood near the foot of a king size bed. She should have been nervous, but any feelings of distress had vanished. The only uncomfortable feeling was the tight ache between her legs.

She felt his breath fan over her temple, making her own breath hitch. She turned to him slightly, her nostrils flaring as they inhaled his woodsy scent, longing to press her lips to his skin. “Are you going to punish me?” she asked.

“Mmm, that depends on what you consider punishment,” he replied huskily.

“What are you going to do?” Her voice nearly trembled with anticipation.

He swept her hair away from her neck and brushed his mouth against her throat, sending tingles across her skin. “Make love to you,” he murmured.

She sighed, tilting her head to the side. “That’s not punishment.”

His teeth grazed her throat lightly before he lifted his head and pulled her against him, pressing the hard muscles of his body against her, the swell of his erection rising hot against her belly. “It might be...when it involves a bit of this...” His palm descended fast and firmly on one of her butt cheeks, the tender flesh smarting underneath.

A startled cry escaped her. She’d never been spanked before. Her former lovers had always been conventional in bed and she’d never broached the subject of kinky sex. Suddenly, it had a wicked appeal. Still, she didn’t know him and thought it wise not to encourage him too much. “I see what you mean,” she responded.

He chuckled while soothing the round curve of her cheek with a soft caress. “I can’t let you off the hook so easily, hm?”

Ella tilted her head back to meet his gaze, aroused even further by the thought of yielding to him. It would go against her proud nature but she was in the grip of something primal and too potent to conquer.

When she didn't respond, his hands cupped her face, one thumb brushing over the curve of her bottom lip. "It's obvious there's something between us. We both want this." His gaze moved over her face. "God, you're beautiful. Everything about you...especially this plump mouth."

He dipped and captured her mouth in a slow, sensual kiss that made her insides melt. With an involuntary whimper, she leaned into him, clutching the solid curve of his shoulders. He slanted his mouth against hers, pressing harder, deeper. Her lips parted and he moaned, thrusting his tongue into her mouth. His cock had little restraint within the thin fabric of his pajama pants and it pushed against her full and hard. She gasped at the size. Their tongues danced together, exploring eagerly. She sighed as his hands moved down her body, circling around her, pulling her tighter against him. With one hand at the small of her back, the other slid up to the nape of her neck. His fingers grasped her hair and tugged gently, tilting her head back.

Inevitably, the kiss broke and they fought to catch their breath. He moaned as he nuzzled her throat, arching her back. His tongue flicked over her skin, giving her myriad goose bumps and sending her pulse racing. His mouth and hands quickly grew possessive, branding her with urgency. He cupped her backside and lifted her fully against him, carrying her around to the side of the bed. He lowered her feet to the floor and sat on the bed. With a swift yank, he brought her tummy-down on his lap.

Ella gasped in surprise. His hand began a leisurely caress of her body through the slippery material of her gown. She pressed her cheek to the bed and closed her eyes, enjoying the sensual sensation. He caressed her back in circles, the warmth of his hand penetrating the thin material. His palm moved over the curves of her backside before sliding down her thighs. He lingered on her bare calves for a moment and then pushed the gown up her body, exposing her legs. She shifted a little so that he could hitch it above her waist, glad to be wearing a decent pair of black lacy panties.

He made a sound of manly approval as he cupped her bum. Then he pulled her panties down and off her body and she heard them land softly on the bed. The air felt cool against her exposed skin.

"Perfect shape...firm and round," he said, his hand moving over her curves.

Ella felt her sex clench and moisten. Aware of what he planned to do, her pulse jumped excitedly.

He cupped and squeezed her and ran his finger up and down the middle crevice. Instinctively, her backside lifted in invitation. He caressed her a little more before removing his hand. She braced herself and cried out softly as his palm landed on her right cheek. He soothed her briefly before repeating the motion, this time a bit harder. Her teeth sank into her lip. He switched to the other cheek and soon, her skin burned from the impact. She didn't need to look to know that her derriere was pink. The sinful treatment had turned her on. She could feel the liquid heat pool between the lips of her sex.

As if reading her mind, his hand curved over the lowest part of her backside. "Are you wet, baby?" he asked before sliding his fingers between her legs. With her backside perched high on his lap, he had easy access.

She sucked in her breath as his fingers made contact with her sensitive flesh, fondling the swollen lips.

“Oh, you’re dripping,” he said hoarsely.

She clutched the bed sheet tightly as he subjected her to teasing strokes, coating his fingers with her arousal. She barely had time to recover from his punishment when he penetrated her with one finger and then two, and began pumping in and out. A shaky gasp broke from her throat. He resumed spanking her. The combination of pain and pleasure nearly sent her over the edge. Her nails curled into the sheets as her body arched, clamoring for climax. Unfortunately, she never came with finger fucking, but it felt damn good. When it became too much for her, her cries of pleasure turning into whimpers, he stopped.

He gave her a minute to recover, all the while caressing her tender backside gently. “No more spanking,” he murmured. He eased her into a sitting position on his lap, her legs wrapped around his waist. “How was that?” he asked with a note of concern.

She couldn’t help the flush that spread across her face. “Well, I’ve never been spanked before...but I liked it,” an impish smile tugged at the corner of her mouth.

He grinned, making her heart skip a beat. He was so handsome.

“Naughty girl,” he said.

She shrugged. “It seems I have no choice. It’s part of the punishment, right?”

He chuckled, pressing his mouth at the valley of her breasts, where the deep v of the neckline ended. Her nipples instantly tightened. He lifted his eyes to hers, his gaze heady with desire. “I don’t remember ever wanting a woman this much,” he said huskily.

His hands moved over her belly, her ribcage and breasts. He cupped the mounds and squeezed. His fingers located her nipples through the gown, caressing them into hard peaks. Tight pleasure rippled around the buds. He eased the thin straps off her shoulders, peeling the flimsy gown from her body until it crumpled at her waist. She heard his breath hitch.

“So lovely...so perfect,” he murmured and cupped her again.

Ella’s breasts were always sensitive, playing a key role in her orgasms. She tossed her head back as his warm mouth latched onto one nipple. Her fingers dug into the thickness of his hair, holding him close. Her breasts were at just the right level for him. His tongue flicked wickedly over her taut nipple, spreading shivers of pleasure across her flesh. He switched to the other breast while pinching the first nipple, extending it between his fingertips. She gasped, arching against him restlessly. The muscles of her sex clenched, arousal seeping from the parted folds.

He squeezed her breast firmly as he alternately sucked and licked her sensitive nipple with grunts of pleasure. He pulled it into his mouth, between his teeth, making it harder, longer. By the time he was done tugging with his mouth, the tips stood out like elongated pink pebbles. Tender from his ministrations. He wasn’t done. He caught one nipple between his fingers and squeezed tightly, but not painfully. She watched his tongue flick over the tip. Once, twice...as if testing her reaction. Then he assaulted her mercilessly with rapid flicks. The sensation was intense, heightened by the pressure of his fingers that forced the nerve endings to the tip. She arched her back, grasping his knees for support, while primal sounds erupted in her throat. The pleasure was too sinful to be decent. Everything was indecent...from the very start. She was in the throes of passion with a total stranger and she didn’t care. My God, if he didn’t stop, she’d come very soon.

When Max had sensed that someone was walking around in the house, he'd suspected a burglar, so he'd snatched his revolver to deal with the situation himself. The reaction was instinctive, born of his occupation as a personal bodyguard to high ranking government officials. What he hadn't expected was to discover a scantily dressed, gorgeous woman lurking in his gallery. He'd encountered all kinds of con artists in his life, so her bizarre collapse and mention of sleepwalking only increased his wariness. But when he took her to the security device he instantly remembered having turned it off himself to facilitate the movers. Normally, he would have admitted his oversight and apologized. His attraction to the woman, however, had hit him like a strong blow to the stomach.

It wasn't just the sexy red nightgown that outlined the feminine curves of her body. She had the sweetest face he'd ever seen. Large hazel eyes framed by long dark lashes, a small, straight nose and deep pink, pouting lips...the kind that looked permanently passion-kissed. A natural blush rode high on her cheeks and her silky smooth skin begged to be touched. The long, dark blonde waves of her hair fell like a soft curtain around her shoulders. Within minutes of taking a good look at her, he'd grown hard. The desire—the need to possess had flooded him with surprising intensity. No way would he let her go. Plus, he knew something of women, had read her body language easily enough. So he took advantage of the situation and acted on the pretense that she was guilty of breaking in, paying no heed to his conscience.

Max lifted his head from her full, taut breast and gazed at the beautiful woman in his lap, her head tilted back in ecstasy, exposing her slim throat and body arched, trembling. She was highly responsive to his lovemaking and she was on the verge of climax. His cock throbbed painfully with the need for release. He lifted the nightgown up, over her head and tossed it to the floor. He caught her to him and shifted on the bed, lowering her onto the mattress. Her hair spilled out over the pillow as she gazed up at him with those large eyes, full of anticipation. His breath caught. *God, he wanted her so much it hurt.* Equally strong was his desire to please her.

He got up on his knees to dispense with the rest of his clothing and heard her sharply indrawn breath when his erection bobbed free. Her lips parted in awe as she stared at his cock, fanning his male ego.

He covered her body with his and dipped his mouth to hers. Slowly, he explored her soft lips before stabbing his tongue into the moist warmth of her mouth. Her sweet, feminine scent intoxicated him while the tiny, erotic sounds she made drove his lust into a frenzy. His muscles clenched with forced control. Her fingers curled into his hair while her hips rotated against him, communicating a base need. He needed little encouragement. Breaking the kiss, he nestled between her legs, spreading them. A pained moan escaped him as he took in the swollen pink lips of her pussy, framed by a dusting of soft curls. He reached out and stroked her soft flesh in slow circles, enjoying her sharp gasps. Her clit had protruded from its sheath and he circled over it with pressure, making her hips buck. He looked up as he pleased her, noting the droop of her lids over eyes hazy with passion. His cock pulsed insistently. He brought the head of his erection against her and slid it up and down her wet slit before pushing between her folds. He sank into her with a quick thrust, closing his eyes at the exquisite feel of her silken womb clenching around him.

He moved carefully at first, allowing her to adjust to him, all the while holding her gaze. She was hot and slick. She gasped with every thrust of his cock and lifted her hips to match

his rhythm. Blood surged through his entire body. He took her faster and harder, watching her full breasts shake, the nipples still erect and flushed from his sucking. When he felt her first contractions, he leaned over her and caught one breast in his hand while claiming the nipple with his mouth. She squirmed under him, arching wantonly, pressing his head to her urgently. He switched to her other breast and within seconds her body shuddered with the force of her climax.

She was still trembling and moaning softly when he gave himself over to his release. It tore through him fiercely, spilling into the furthest depths of her womb. His body slackened against hers. In the crazy blur of passion, he'd neglected to use protection, something he had never done before. Reluctantly, he pulled out of her heat and rolled over, taking her with him so that she lay on top.

He stroked her hair in silence for a long moment. "Ella, I'm sorry I didn't use protection," he finally said.

Ella raised her head so she could meet his eyes. Somewhere along the way, the fact had registered but she'd thrown caution to the wind, the need to have him inside her squashing all logic. Not wise, but at least she was on the Pill. "I'm fine...and clean. I've had tests."

He smiled. "So have I. It's never happened before. Just looking at you drove me crazy...not that it's any reason..."

Her fingers traced a lazy pattern on his chest. "I know. It was...wild." Heat seeped into her cheeks.

"Mmm..." Their gazes locked for several heartbeats.

"So, are you going to call the cops anyway?" she asked with a touch of humor.

Surprisingly, his calm expression froze. He exhaled sharply. "No, but there's something I should tell you."

She frowned, feeling a pinch of unease. "What?"

"I really thought you'd broken into the house to nab a painting. But, when I saw the alarm box, it hit me that I'd disabled it myself during the move. I played along with the situation because I wanted you so badly." His mouth turned downwards as he observed her reaction.

She should have been angry—a normal reaction—but she wasn't. For the simple reason that's she'd wanted him badly, too. Oh, but that naughty sprite in her reared her little head. Ella schooled her features with a look of disappointment and pushed herself away from him. "You tricked me," she said, injecting the right amount of accusation in her voice.

His entire body tensed as he made to grab her hand but she'd already hopped off the bed.

"Ella, don't be angry. Don't go."

She scooped up her nightgown as he came beside her, his hands circling her waist. Her body instantly stirred.

He placed his fingers under her chin and lifted it so she had no choice but to meet his gaze, the latter surprisingly clouded with regret. A raw emotion tugged at her heart.

"I'm really sorry. I'll never forgive myself if you leave now." His thumb brushed the pad of her lower lip, making it tremble. "Ella, to be honest, if it wasn't today, it would have been some other day—in the very near future. You caught my attention the first time you went jogging by." His sensual mouth curved into a wide smile. "Actually, I'm kind of glad we got the formalities out of the way and skipped to the good stuff."

Her heart fluttered happily as she recognized the sincerity in his voice. She capitulated, not able to keep up the act. Jutting her chin out, she looked him squarely in the eye, but a smile played about her lips. “Well, you still deserve punishment.”

He cocked an eyebrow. “Punishment? Like the kind you just suffered through?” A corner of his mouth twitched.

“Worse.”

“Tell me.”

“You will make it your priority to satisfy my every whim...for the next three days, at least.”

A devilish flicker lit his eyes. “Whatever you wish, sweetheart.” His mouth brushed her temple.

Starting now. Ella let her nightgown drop and took his hand, leading him back to the bed. She paused and glanced up at him, noting his amused expression. “I can be demanding,” she warned.

“I wouldn’t expect any less...after what I did.”

She reached up and traced the sensual contour of his mouth. “Hmm...you have a sexy mouth. Let’s put it to use.” Having said that, she pulled him onto the bed, on top of her.

His gaze moved over her face as his lips hovered over hers, his breath fanning her lips. “Where do you want it?” he murmured.

An excited shiver raced over her skin. “Lower.”

He planted a kiss on her chin and met her gaze. “There?”

“Lower.”

His lips brushed against the base of her throat.

“Lower.” Her voice was now a thick whisper.

He nuzzled the valley between her breasts, his hands brushing the soft swells on either side. She sighed as he looked up at her again and shook her head in response. He continued a tantalizing path down her body, over her belly, pausing at the soft mound of her sex.

Their eyes met. “Lower?” he asked, his voice like rough silk.

“Yes.” Ella closed her eyes as Max dipped his head between her thighs and let out a long, sweet sigh.

Sleepwalking had its advantages, after all.

*The End*

Celia Jade writes in a variety of erotic romance genres.

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