



Hooked On Seth (Hooked #5)

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Category: Romance

Description: Jenna Stone was happy living the solitary single life until she met her best friend, Seth. He helped her step out of her comfort zone and showed her there was more to life than just work. Never once did she imagine she'd ever get hooked.

Seth Reynolds has been in love with his best friend Jenna for as long as he can remember. He's ready to take that leap of faith, but is she?

Will they ever be more than friends? Or will their fears of risking their friendship hold them back?

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“Why can’t they just go away?”

There was pounding. She could hardly stand it.

Jenna wasn’t sure what was worse, the throbbing in her head, the erratic heartbeat in her chest or the frantic drumming at her door.

She didn’t want company. She hated people.

She wanted to take lots of cold medicine and sleep until she wasn’t sick anymore.

Whoever was out there was not going away and it was hurting her head more with each rap of their fist. She’d already called her office and her secretary had threatened that Jenna shouldn’t come anywhere near there before she was partially alive again.

Their only contact was to be through email when she wasn’t nauseated and could sit up long enough to get online.

She threw off her covers, sending wadded Kleenex flying all over the floor.

“This better be good” she squealed to the knocker in question “or whoever is out there will leave my door as sick as me.”

She slowly slid off the security chain, twisted each deadbolt in succession and unlocked the door handle before inching it open.

She really should look through the peep hole first but she was a bit vertically

challenged.

Her best friend Seth ridiculed her endlessly over it. She hated to even discuss it.

Well it wasn't necessary this time; she should have known it would be him. They talked everyday but she was too dead to attempt a phone call this morning. She swung the door open wide to see him fully.

"What in the hell is that smell?"

Jenna stood in her entryway, clad in her worn peach plush robe.

"Seth, I am in no mood for your wonderfully painful humor today. Come in or leave, either way, I'm shutting the door."

"It depends on what that smell is? Fine," he said with a chuckle when she started to close the door in his face. "I'm coming in."

"It's vapor cream rub stuff." She explained as she locked up behind him.

"Well it stinks. You look like shit, what's wrong?"

"I'm sick Seth," she pointed to her red nose, "a cold, probably the flu. Haven't you ever been sick?"

"Nope, you're looking at the picture of health." He smiled his best cheeky grin. "Remind me to never get sick though if that's what I'll have to use."

"You live on a ranch, you smell cows all day. How can my stuff smell worse than that?"

“Hey, smelling stuff on my ranch is salt of the earth, all natural. Besides, it grows on you after a while. I don’t notice it anymore.”

“You make me sick, go away.” Jenna turned from Seth and made her way back to bed where she could die in peace.

She was all snug under her down filled duvet when she realized Seth hadn’t followed her.

Then she heard cabinets slamming in her kitchen.

What was he doing? Unfortunately, she was just too tired to care so she closed her eyes.

She must have drifted off because the sound of his voice, right next to her ear, startled her. “Where are your keys?”

“What?” She slowly peeled open her eyes to look at him. He was blurry, crap she couldn’t even focus.

“Your keys sunshine, where are they?” Seth stood beside her bed with his hand out, palm side up with the sincerest look about his face she had ever seen. When had he gotten so damn cute?

“Why do you need my keys? Wait, I gave you your own key, did you lose it?” “No I didn’t lose it; I left it at home on accident. I took it off my ring when I got my truck fixed last week and they needed to keep it a few days. Come on, hand ‘em over.”

“Fine, I think they’re on my dresser somewhere but you never said why you need them.

” “Well hun, it’s obvious you can’t take care of yourself so I’m gonna to do it for you.

I didn’t see any chicken noodle soup in the cabinet so I’m going to the store and I don’t want to stand in the hallway for another fifteen minutes while I wait for you to answer the door again.

I’ll be back.” He bent and left a quick kiss on her forehead.

Before Jenna could argue further, or be shocked that he’d just kissed her, Seth was gone.

It shouldn’t be that big of a surprise really, they’d basically spent all their free time together the last couple years and he’d given her cute little pecks and hugs all the time.

Something about this one however, just felt different.

Apparently now wasn’t the time to contemplate the meaning because she couldn’t keep her eyes open.

Chills ran through her entire body like she was soaking in a tub of ice and she had yet to get a chance to take any medicine.

She had only enough strength left to propel her body upward, grab for the covers then slam back on to the pillow and she was down for the count.

Jenna woke sometime later to the faint smell of food lingering in her bedroom. She painstakingly opened her eyes to peer at her alarm clock and noticed her room was dark. Good Lord, how long had she slept? And where was Seth?

“So much for his unwavering attention to my health.”

She might have laughed had it taken no energy.

She felt no better now than when she’d fallen asleep.

There was a familiar screeching of her water pipes and a quiet overtook the air as she tried to breathe.

Was it foggy in her bedroom? Was that her shower running?

Did she sleepwalk and turn it on to take one herself?

“Did you holler at me? I’ll be out in a couple minutes.”

“Holy shit,” she whispered softly. Was Seth using her bathroom? He’d taken tons of showers in her apartment before but always in the guest bath.

“Oh, for heaven sake Jenna, who cares? He’s your best friend,” she said to herself. Exhausted from thinking too hard, she let her body fall back into the pillows and drift off again.

Seth took his time climbing from the shower and wrapping his wet body in a towel. Jenna always told him to dry off in the shower before he stepped out onto the bath mat because it got all wet but wasn’t that was it was for?

He could have sworn he heard her voice and if Jenna was awake, his ass was grass.

She’d never let him do anything in her bathroom before, ever.

He could only pray she was enough out of it that she wouldn't notice.

Not that it would matter now, he was already done so it was too late. What could she really do to him?

When he first went in there, he'd left the door propped half open when he turned the shower on to see if she would stir but nothing, so he'd gone for broke.

She was out cold and with the door ajar, he could safely peek around the door without moving it since everything in her apartment creaked.

Yep, still asleep. He relaxed a bit and went through the storage bins in her bathroom in search of a brush to tame what little hair he had.

Ten minutes later Seth emerged dressed and ready to do battle.

Wouldn't be much of a battle though, Jenna was really a pussy cat behind her tiger facade.

Today he'd noticed a little fire in her attitude but she was sick so that might explain her hostility.

He felt bad for her. He'd never seen her in that bad a shape before but he was determined to take care of her.

Didn't look like there was much he was gonna be able to do tonight.

It was late and she was sound asleep again.

He thought for sure he'd heard her talk while he was in the bathroom but maybe she was feverish and hallucinating?

If she did wake up again, he would give her a dose of the nighttime cold and flu liquid he picked up at the store.

He'd also had a few words with the pharmacist who recommended a steam vaporizer for her bedroom to help control her cough and congestion.

It was designed to loosen the congestion that's built up in the lungs so one can better cough it up as well as sooth the throat if it's dry.

On the plug-in machine he purchased, after filling it with water, it had a little slot to fill with a menthol liquid that will be filtered into the air and help open the sinuses to breathe better.

He'd learned a lot on his outing and if Jenna had been awake, she would have teased him for making a big deal out of it.

I'm fine, quit fussing , she would have said to him.

What she didn't know though is that she'd helped him through more than a few rough patches in his life over the last few years by just being there and it was time he returned the favor.

Besides, a day without Jenna in his life...

well it made him miss her. He didn't like the feeling in his chest when she didn't light up her world with sarcasm and smiles.

So, he would do for her, everything she couldn't do for herself right now.

Then she could ride his ass about it later and he'd take the ribbing in stride because she meant well.

The thing about Jenna was, she was really a pussy cat and he secretly loved it.

Sometimes he would make her mad on purpose, just so she would scold him.

She was playful when she wasn't trying to be.

He especially loved how her jaw twitched when she was grinding her teeth while she was angry, even though her anger was never really that bad.

She talked with her hands too which was funny but he tried hard not to laugh.

After loading the washing machine with all the dirty clothes he found scattered around her apartment, he checked on her again but she was still sawing logs.

He found some chemicals under the sink and cleaned the entire bathroom before he moved to the kitchen.

He didn't even do any of that in his own place but then, it was a bachelor pad and she never came there so he didn't need to clean.

He really didn't like to clean either but it was okay because it was for her.

Admittedly though, the toilet in her place was way cleaner than the one at his place.

Just looking at it from a distance when he'd climb from his shower was enough to make him sick to his stomach.

Eventually he would need to hire someone to come into his place before things started to grow life.

It was getting late but he didn't want to leave her alone and helpless.

Maybe he could sleep on the couch and be there when she needed him.

It was the weekend so he didn't have to worry about work and no way was she going anywhere in her current state.

Then if she woke up, he would give her the meds he bought.

When morning hit, he would make her scrambled eggs.

His mom had always made them for him when he was little because they were mild she'd said.

He hated it then because his favorite was dippy eggs but as an adult he understood.

He left the bottle of nighttime liquid on the coffee table with a bottle of water for her and went in search of a clean blanket from the linen closet to cover up with.

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Jenna hadn't been able to smell anything in days but something horrible and in close proximity was burning her nose hairs and she couldn't place what it was. Her head was too fuzzy. Was this another side effect of her illness?

"I could be dying but I don't want to go to the hospital."

"You're not dying love, I promise."

She turned quickly toward her bedroom door, the sudden movement making her dizzy.

"Seth." What is he doing here?

He approached her bed holding a little cup filled with green liquid.

"What is that?"

She hated taking medicine but she knew full well that's what he had.

Jenna vaguely remembered letting Seth into her apartment at some point but was currently rethinking her decision.

He wanted to nurse her back to health but she didn't even know which end was up.

She had no clue what time it was or what day.

She could only tell it was dark. She didn't mean to be mean because she loved Seth

but she just wanted to die in peace, which apparently, he wasn't going to let her do.

As she begrudgingly took hold of the liquid he offered, her eyes panned up his body toward his sleepy eyes as she drank, stopping at his bare chest. Had she ever noticed before how well defined he was, and why didn't he have a shirt on?

It shouldn't bother her because she'd seen him that way hundreds of times but for some reason, it made her uncomfortable, just not a stalkerish kind of way.

She'd been off and on warm and cold for the past few days but the warmth she felt was inside her chest and it wasn't the nasty medicine she'd just taken. She made a horrid face as she coughed.

"Sorry, I know it was probably horrible. It looked bad when I poured it out."

"Yeah but I guess it'll help me get better. I could use a drink of water though if you don't mind."

"I would let you but the pharmacist said you should let the medicine do its thing for at least five minutes before you take a drink so it doesn't wash it away before it does any good."

"You talked to the pharmacist?"

"Yeah, I needed to know what was the best stuff to give you. He was pretty nice too, and I learned a lot."

I've never even talked to the pharmacist and I've lived here five years.

"Is that so you know what to do when you're sick?"

“I don’t get sick.”

“Oh but I bet you will. All my germs are floating all over this apartment so I’m afraid you’re not getting out of it that easy.”

“Dang, I never thought about that.”

Seth sat down on the side of her bed and raised his hand to her face. She knew she was giving him a dirty look.

“I’m only feeling your forehead to see if you’re still running a fever.”

Jenna probably should have guessed that but she wasn’t really in her right mind. Besides, with the weird way she was feeling about her best friend, she wasn’t sure she wanted him to touch her. Not that he was giving her a choice.

“Oh my gosh your hand is so warm.” She placed both of her hands over his, holding it on her head.

“Really? Because you feel warm. Do you have one of those glass temperature taker things?”

He was using his free hand to mimic putting the stick in his mouth.

“Do you mean a thermometer?”

“Yeah that’s what it is, I couldn’t remember what it was called.”

That actually made her laugh. He really was a funny guy when he wasn’t trying.

Sometimes his jokes were a little less than funny but he was a naturally outgoing and

energetic guy.

When they went out, he was always the life of the party and didn't really have an enemy.

She loved that about him. He had the ability to bring her out of her shell just about every time.

He was so spontaneous, which was obvious by the way he showed up at her door and took over.

"So where is the thermometer?"

"I guess try the medicine cabinet in the bathroom. I haven't used one in so long I'm not really sure if I even have one."

He hopped from her bed and disappeared into the bathroom. When he returned, he was reading a little box he held in one hand while the thermometer rested in his other.

"Okay miss, let's take that temp and see if your brain is frying."

"Nice Seth. I doubt my brain is actually frying though. But is it ok if I lay down because I'm really tired."

She didn't wait for his answer as she slowly laid back onto her pillow.

"Open up." He started to stick it in her mouth but explained to her that it needed to rest under her tongue and she needed to lay there perfectly still until it beeped.

When she started to talk around the stick, he held up a hand.

“No talking until it’s done. Still, I mean it.”

What was he going to do, paddle her? Holy crap, and why that thought gave her butterflies was beyond her.

No man had ever spanked her but her dad and that wasn’t a pleasant experience.

Even during sex the handful of times she’d been excited to have it, it wasn’t an option.

Would she like it though? She’d read a romance novel or two where spanking actually heightened the experience.

Oh my god, it didn’t matter. Seth wasn’t going to do that to her.

They weren’t sex partners, they were best friends and she needed to stop thinking otherwise.

He’d never made any advances other than friendship toward her and she’d gotten used to that a long time ago.

They were friends, they hung out together a lot. That was it, all she wrote. He probably hated her in any other capacity anyway so it wouldn’t matter. But...what if he didn’t?

Are all women this difficult?

He knew Jenna was her own kind of person and truthfully, it was one of her best qualities.

He loved that she didn't take crap from anyone about anything.

No one did stuff for her and if they did, it was because she'd beat herself up until she didn't have a choice but to ask for help.

Save for her secretary who she adored, she was as independent as they come.

Not that he knew a lot of other women like her but that was okay. One was enough.

The thermometer beeped in Jenna's mouth, and he quickly snagged it before she could get to it.

"Nope, hands off woman, I'm the doctor tonight."

He swatted playfully at her attempt and rose from the side of her bed to see the numbers more clearly in the bathroom light. She'd begged to have her lamp off earlier because it hurt her head.

"Well, what's the diagnosis doc?"

He went back to her bedside and tucked her in with the comforter she'd thrown off of her at some point.

"Your temp is higher than I know it should be. 101 degrees means you will be staying in bed until further notice."

"Ugh really? I suddenly felt the need to clean my kitchen. Oh please let me do it doc."

She was trying to play at being funny even though he knew she felt like shit. It actually was pretty funny though.

“Awe honey, I’m so sorry but I already did that for you.”

Her look of shock made him want to burst out laughing but he bit his lip.

“You cleaned? Wait, what did you do to my best friend because I want him back. You know the bachelor that never takes care of his dinner dishes or his beer bottles on the coffee table. Or wait, the guy that uses the bathroom and leaves the seat up, that one.”

“So are you saying you like it when I do that stuff? That’s nice to know.”

He laughed when she smiled and shook her head.

“Okay so I think its time for an aspirin for your fever, then you need to get some sleep.”

“I hate to take pills.”

“I know but I can’t take it for you.”

“You know what I really liked, that pink liquid the doctor used to give me when I was a little girl. Do you have any of that? It cured everything.”

“Sorry, I don’t. You have to take this aspirin. I promise it’ll make you feel better in the long run.”

She begrudgingly took the pill from his hand and took the bottle of water he’d grabbed from the nightstand.

“See that wasn’t so bad, right?”

“It was horrible.”

Her pouty face was cute but it didn't get her anywhere any other time and this was no different.

“Okay, lights out.”

As he started to move away from the bed, she reached for his arm.

“Do you think you'd be able to lay with me for a little while?”

He didn't know what to say. Her couch is the only place he'd ever slept or even laid down in the past and he wasn't sure laying in her bed was conducive to their friendship.

“If it helps, I promise not to breathe on you.”

“Well if what you said was true, I'm going to get sick from just breathing the air in your apartment anyway, so I guess you breathing on me won't make much difference.”

“So is that a yes?”

“I suppose. Where do you want me?”

He moved toward the bathroom to shut off the light and walked to the other side of her bed, standing still until she gave him direction.

He wasn't about to take advantage of the fact his best friend wanted him to sleep with her.

He wouldn't take it the wrong way in that she only wanted him to sleep next to her.

Any other way would probably be wishful thinking on his part.

Not that he'd had those types of feelings before anyway.

Or at least not that he would ever mention anything to her if he did.

"Seth, just crawl in bed, I'm not going to bite. I'd probably throw up on you before I ever broke skin."

"I'll sleep on the top of the sheet that way I don't accidentally touch you."

"Since when is it bad to touch me? We've fallen asleep on the couch hundreds of times. Just get in under all the covers."

He hesitated, not sure it was a good idea.

He wasn't really worried about how she would react, she was sick after all.

He was worried about doing something dumb on his part but he also didn't want her to keep nagging him so he'd just leave his jeans on and crawl in bed.

Wouldn't take him long to fall asleep so they wouldn't have any worries.

"Seriously?"

"What?" Seth was holding the covers and halfway into the bed when she questioned him.

"Since when do you sleep in jeans? Is something wrong?"

“No, everything is fine, I just forgot I had them on. Guess I’m getting tired”

Seth shimmied off his blue jeans, so he was only in his boxers and jumped into Jenna’s bed, covering himself up to his neck. What he didn’t expect was for Jenna to turn toward him to snuggle into his side and push her arm under the covers and across his chest.

For real, he’d slept with a lot of different women in his twenty some years but never been a fan of the cuddling.

He didn’t even let any of his actual girlfriends get that close.

After sex he always just fell asleep. Of course that’s probably why they didn’t stay girlfriends for long.

Right now, though, he had no desire to move Jenna from his side.

It was like a whole new level of comfort.

Once he heard her breathing level off and soft snores squeaked out of her clogged nose, he turned onto his side so they were nose to nose, careful not to dislodge her arm from around him. He liked it there. He wasn’t sure what that meant for their friendship but for now he’d just enjoy it.

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Jenna woke sometime in the early morning hours as the sun was coming up.

She still had a headache but her nose seemed a little bit clearer.

There was still the smell of menthol in the air and she assumed it was the vaporizer sitting on the window sill.

She started to lean back onto her pillow to stretch but hit something hard.

Afraid to know what might be there, she slowly stretched out her hand under the covers and found skin.

What the hell?

She rolled over in the opposite direction from the object in her bed so she could see what she'd gotten herself into.

Brown hair met her eyes and as she carefully pulled up the comforter, she revealed a man's body in her bed, a naked body.

However, the military tattoo on his bicep gave away his identity.

The question she had now though, was why her best friend was laying naked in her bed?

She remembered telling him to crawl under the covers but he had boxers on when he did that.

Jenna knew she'd taken the medicine he'd forced on her, but it usually didn't knock her out completely. Was she really that sick?

She sat up in her bed, running her fingers through her hair which was a disaster.

She reached for the hair tie on her night stand and manipulated her nasty hair into a messy bun on top of her head.

If she crawled out of bed very carefully, she might not wake him.

She couldn't shake the feeling she had though.

If he was naked, does that mean they slept together.

Okay yes, they did technically sleep together but she was worried about the actual deed.

She was an idiot, she couldn't even say it.

Jenna moved the covers away from herself to make sure she was dressed.

The t-shirt was her standard bed attire but she didn't have any underwear on which was unusual as well.

"Oh shit."

"Everything okay?"

Damn it, she hadn't meant to wake him and hadn't even felt him move. The man was stealthy.

“Yep all good. I’m sorry I woke you.”

“Oh it’s okay, I was trying to keep myself half-awake just in case you got worse. I felt you moving around though. Are you breathing better?”

This was her best friend talking to her but suddenly she was afraid to look him in the eye. She’d never once since the day they met been worried what he thought of her but what if they did it and she wasn’t any good? She wouldn’t want him to stay out of obligation.

“Jenna, look at me.”

She didn’t want to look at him but she knew he wouldn’t go away and the longer she avoided him, the more he would hound her. It’s just the way he was, she knew that. She also knew she couldn’t avoid him or the situation she was in.

Finally she turned her body to face the man now resting against her wooden headboard.

Thank god, the comforter was covering at least his lower half.

She really did have to give him credit because the upper half was impressive.

It made her all kinds of nervous. She could feel her face heating and it had nothing to do with having a fever.

Truthfully, she felt a little better than yesterday.

She kind of liked the fact there was someone there to take care of her.

She’d never wanted that before and wasn’t quite sure why she felt differently now.

“What’s going on in that head of yours?”

“A lot of congestion.”

“You know that’s not what I mean. Come on, talk to me.”

“There’s nothing to talk about Seth.”

“Did you know that your left eye twitches when you lie?”

He wasn’t wrong but she really wished he hadn’t noticed that. She’d been called out on it before by her secretary. It was one of those involuntary things that she didn’t know was happening but as usual, he didn’t miss a beat.

“Alright fine, have it your way. I’m concerned because you are naked in my bed.”

She looked away because she was embarrassed to even say it out loud, let alone think it.

“Jenna, it’s me, Seth. Seriously, you must know I would never intentionally hurt or take advantage of you in any circumstance.

Especially when you’re sick. I’m not going to say I haven’t thought about it but you said it yourself, we’re just friends.

So, I was here in your bed in that capacity, just like you ordered me to be. ”

“Okay but that doesn’t explain why you are naked. When you crawled in bed you had boxers on.”

“Yes, I did and all I can say is it’s a habit. I don’t sleep in anything at home. It’s too

restricting and I must have taken them off during the night.”

“So, we didn’t do anything?”

“Why do you look disappointed?”

“Oh, um, I’m not, I just wanted to be sure.

“If you say so Jenna.”

“Don’t you believe me?” Does he really think I want to have sex with him? I mean I do but I can’t let him know that. I don’t want to lose a friend.

“Okay, I think you need to relax. I’ll get you another dose of your meds then I want you to lay in bed while I make you some scrambled eggs. By then the medicine should be putting you back to sleep.”

Seth rose from Jenna’s bed, baring his ass, which was muscular and perfect, but he wasn’t even embarrassed to be standing in front of her naked.

She could never do that. No one ever saw her body, she didn’t even like to see it.

She was sad when he pulled his jeans up to obstruct her view.

He disappeared into her bathroom and returned with the dreaded green liquid.

“Okay, take this.” He handed her the little plastic cup filled to the rim with liquid. “I’ll make you breakfast while you relax.”

And then he was gone.

Good god, Jenna was going to be the death of him.

It was weird but he felt like overnight their friendship relationship took on a drastic change.

Truthfully, he wasn't sure how to comprehend it.

She was giving mixed signals that he didn't know how to read.

Who was he kidding, he didn't know how to read any signals women gave.

The only difference is that this time it was Jenna.

He'd been in love with her for a long time but she'd always kept him in the friend zone.

He would rather that than not have her at all so he learned to live with it.

But last night was an amazing experience.

Even with her being sick, he was lying right beside her, watching her while she slept.

Unconsciously and sound asleep, she didn't have a problem with touching him but he knew it would be different awake.

She wasn't letting herself feel anything for him because she was scared.

He was too but life was meant to be lived, to take risks, then he'd take that risk to have her in his life forever. Only question is, would she?

Seth cracked open two eggs into the bowl, scrambled them with salt and pepper and poured them into the skillet to cook.

He didn't use milk because it always made them too runny.

Cheese was usually his most important ingredient when they were for him but dairy wasn't a good idea with all that phlegm she was still coughing up.

Shouldn't be very much longer and the medicine would be making her tired.

Should he stick around while she slept? He'd already cleaned her entire apartment and he wasn't in the mood to clean his own.

They'd both slept in late so her eggs were really lunch instead of breakfast but at this time of day, he could probably go spend a few hours on his computer checking email and doing a little research at the coffee shop without much interruption.

Then he could pick up groceries for a bland dinner and still make it back before she woke up.

He moved the eggs onto a plate with two pieces of toast and grabbed a fresh bottle of water. Walking into her bedroom, he noticed she was already starting to drift off but she would never get her strength back if she didn't eat regularly.

"Okay sunshine, no sleeping."

He'd scared her but at least she was awake. She moved her pillow and sat up against the headboard.

"Here is your breakfast for lunch and a bottle of water."

Once she was settled with everything in front of her or within reach he moved to leave the bedroom.

“Where are you going?”

“Need to wash up the dishes I just dirtied, then I’m going to head out and catch up on a little work while you sleep in peace.”

He waited at the door hoping she might keep him talking.

“You don’t have to leave.”

“Thanks, but I won’t be gone that long. I didn’t bring my computer so I need to leave anyway. It won’t take me forever, then I’ll be back to make you something for dinner.”

“Are you mad at me Seth?”

Why would she ask such a question?

He’d never seen her play the helpless one so it surprised him.

“Not at all, you didn’t do anything wrong. I just need to work and you need to sleep.”

“Okay, if you say so.”

He really wasn’t mad at her for anything.

Maybe a slight bit disappointed things didn’t go differently but it wasn’t fair of him to even expect anything with her being sick.

Jenna was usually a busy person so finding a time when she was involved in nothing so they could talk was harder than one would think.

He did believe however that it was the right time to explore the option that they could possibly be now or at some point, more than friends.

He was deathly afraid to hear her answer because if she didn't feel the same, it would be hard to go back to friends and he'd truly be lost without her.

He washed up what dishes he used, dried and put everything away.

Once she did start to feel better, at least she wouldn't have to deal with a dirty apartment.

He didn't want to bail on her while she was eating so he kept himself busy straightening pillows, folding the blanket he'd used on the couch and putting magazines away in the basket she had sitting by the television.

He finally heard her set the bowl on her nightstand so he meandered in and fiddled with the vaporizer. It needed more water so he filled it, then poured the menthol liquid into the well and turned it on.

"Thanks for the food Seth, it was good."

"Glad you liked it. Now I'm going to get out of her and I want you to get some sleep. I'll have my phone on me if you need anything before I get back."

He didn't wait for her to answer. He quickly stepped toward the front door, tapping his front pocket to make sure his keys were there, grabbed his sweatshirt and locked the door.

Once he was in his car, he took a deep breath.

The further away from her place he got the more horrible he felt inside.

He shouldn't have been afraid to talk to her but he couldn't trust himself.

He wanted to get into her personal space and tell her how he felt.

He knew it wasn't the right time though.

He would have to just keep telling himself over and over until it sank in.

She needs to be fully functioning to make the right choice.

"I've waited this long, what's a few more days?"

With her out of site, maybe he could keep her out of mind and focus on work for a while. A computer and a hot cup of coffee would have to do.

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Things were becoming more habit than Jenna liked.

She was usually an early riser and made a point to be one of the first ones in her office.

Her secretary was a loyal employee and arrived just after her every day.

She believed in the phrase, the early bird gets the worm.

All her best work was done in the morning hours.

This week though, she was thrown all out of whack, as far from her comfort zone as she could be.

As she laid awake in bed, in the semi-dark, she noticed every single crack in the ceiling.

They'd probably always been there but never once had she noticed them before.

At some point in the last few days, she'd unplugged her alarm clock because the numbers were too bright and hurt her head so she had no clue what time it was.

Jenna had never had such a reaction to cold medicine before that it made her sleep all day, but she also couldn't remember the last time she'd been so sick.

She could tell her bladder had come back to life because it was begging her to find her way to the bathroom. Carefully crawling out of bed, her legs carried her small

frame across the non-squeaky parts of her floor, closing the bathroom door quietly so as not to alert him that she was awake.

After washing her hands, she realized there was no more dried toothpaste sticking to the basin and the hand towel was hanging from the rack instead of where she left it on the sink.

He wasn't lying when he said he cleaned.

She was shocked. It sounded petty even as she thought it but no one had ever cleaned for her.

She pitied him for the mess he'd had to tackle, especially the shower.

Jenna turned the door handle ever-so-slowly, careful not to open it too far that it would creak, and she tiptoed toward her bed.

"Glad to see you're awake."

"Ahh, shit. Seth don't sneak up on me."

She crawled into her bed, sank low and covered her head with the comforter. She felt the bed give on the opposite side then his face appeared under the covers.

"I never moved, you just don't sneak very well."

"Well you should have let me know you were there when I came out of the bathroom." She closed her eyes and turned away from him, embarrassed that she was caught, because she was trying to sneak.

"My apologies ma'am. From now on when I walk into a room, I will announce

myself so you know I am there and I don't scare you."

She couldn't help but laugh.

"Did you get work done?"

"Yeah I did. The coffee shop was quiet so I got through my entire inbox, even sent several messages out and worked on a few cases for Monday."

Seth was a partner in a private investigation firm in town with one of his buddies from the military. He was the king of sneak, except he did it for a living.

"So..."

"Needle and thread."

"Very funny."

"I thought it was."

She had no clue why Seth put up with her dry sense of humor.

She was only glad he did. She'd be lost without him.

No one that she worked with ever understood her.

Good thing she didn't need to be friends with any of them.

The only exception was her secretary, and she was probably just too scared of getting fired so she laughed at all Jenna's jokes.

She could fully admit they were usually dumb and corny.

It was also probably the reason Jenna never had any dates anymore.

She wasn't very personable and unless she was working, she hated to be social.

Hard to meet anybody when one only frequents two places, home and work.

"Are you feeling any better?"

His hand reached out and brushed a strand of hair away from her eye, tucking it behind her ear like she always did.

"I actually think I am. My head doesn't seem to have as much pressure as before and it doesn't hurt."

"Well that's a start. You don't sound as stuffy either."

"I think the vaporizer was a good choice. I'm glad you went and talked to the pharmacist. Thanks for taking care of me."

Jenna looked at him then, flashing a caring smile his way. Her hand reached out and rested on his chest.

"So, if that's true, will you answer a question for me, honestly?"

"Sure."

"Why have you been avoiding me since we woke up earlier?"

"I haven't been."

“I knew you’d say that but yes, you have. You aren’t getting close, you’re hanging on the door frame just waiting to duck from the room. What changed in the last twenty-four hours because you never act like that?”

“Do I really have to spell it out for you?”

He didn’t need to but she wanted to hear it from him directly. Assuming anything always got her in trouble. She’d learned the hard way, several times that she needn’t move forward until she had all the facts the old-fashioned way.

He hesitated which meant he had a lot to say but was afraid to say it. She nudged him with her fingers on his chest. He covered her hand with his and stared into her eyes. There was barely a hair between them.

“I have feelings for you.”

“What kind of feelings?”

“The good kind, you know, like the ones where I like you as more than a friend and want to sleep with you and stuff.”

“And stuff?”

“Come on Jenna, give a guy a break.

Damn but she might as well have just busted his balls.

He was trying to tell her how he felt and she was up for a game of twenty questions?

Could he reiterate that women were frustrating?

He knew she was feeling the same way about him though because he saw the twitch in her eye.

She didn't often hide her feelings about anything but he could tell whenever she did and he'd suspected for a long while.

He was just too chicken to act on it for fear he was wrong about her.

"Okay fine, sorry."

"That's it?"

"What do you want from me Seth?"

"I want you to admit you have feelings for me too damn it. I know you do. We've been pussy-footing around each other for a long time now and I can't take it anymore. I want to be more involved."

"How much is more involved?"

"Do you really have to know all the details?"

"Humor me okay, I'm not thinking on all cylinders right now."

"Okay fine, I want to kiss you like every time is the first, each day I come home after a long day at work, and waking up to your sleeping face would be the cherry on top. But before you ask, because I know you need to know, I want much more."

He didn't want to talk any more however.

He wanted to show her how he felt and he didn't care about getting sick.

He moved his hands to her face and held her still as he lowered his lips to hers.

He persisted, she returned his advances with vigor.

Their tongues tangled in a dance that he was anxious for their bodies to experience as well.

She never admitted she'd wanted him too but when her fingers dug into his back, she'd pretty much given it away.

She just needed someone to take charge and give her what she was afraid to ask for.

When they broke apart for air, Seth threw the comforter off them both and sat up on his knees to strip his shirt from his body.

Jenna's beautiful green eyes bore into him like daggers piercing his skin and it made him crazy horny for her.

She watched with intensity as he threw his shirt and started on the buttons of his jeans.

Never before had he been so anxious to touch her.

He had to stand on the bed to get his pants off and the control slipped quickly when, as he lowered his pants to reveal skin, he witnessed her tongue slide out to moisten her lips.

He took a step closer then got down on his knees and reached for her night shirt as she sat up.

There were no words needed as she raised her arms above her head giving him permission to undress her.

He probably should have noticed before now but wondered if she'd been without her underwear all along.

He didn't dare try to go there the night before or he wouldn't have been able to stop.

As he worked the t-shirt over her tousled hair, he was hard-pressed to look away from the amazingly perfect breasts before him.

Her nipples were a taut with a light pink tint and his cock ached at the thought of sucking them into his mouth.

Seth moved above Jenna's legs, essentially trapping her, not that she would try to escape.

His hands slid under her back side and slid her body closer to him so that she could lay back.

Then with one knee at a time, he separated her legs until he was situated between them.

His gaze lingered at her core until he noticed her body squirming.

He didn't want to waste even one more precious second as he was already short on control.

He wanted her like there was no tomorrow.

With his head bent close, he took one peak into his mouth and suckled.

Running his tongue around the peak, he lightly pinched the pink skin between his teeth, pulling until it popped free.

As he tended to the other, his hand plucked at the tender nipple he'd recently left.

When he pulled his mouth from her chest, he raised both hands to knead her breasts together, kissing the beautifully malleable mounds.

Shifting himself to match her position, his heat hovered at the entrance and he could feel her shifting below him and rocking into him, silently begging for more.

He kissed her again like it was the first time. He imagined it would feel like that every time after as well.

With no preamble, he nudged until her luscious folds gave way and allowed him entrance.

He didn't go slow; his body wouldn't allow it.

He pushed into her in a slick second, seating him deep inside her warm core.

She moved before he, demanding a rhythm he was all too keen on matching.

With his hands steadfast on each side above her shoulders and his lips locked to hers, he drove into her with reckless abandon.

There was no need to be gentle, she wouldn't want it. She had always been the strong one.

Her fingernails dug into his skin from shoulders to his hips, holding him close. The sight before him when she came was angelic and as her walls gripped him, he lost

what little control he still possessed and plunged with her.

When her fingers finally relaxed, he moved to his side, pulling her with him to wrap her in his arms. With a free hand, he pulled the covers up over them and they both drifted off in peaceful silence.

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Never in her life had Lacie slept face down in the sheets of her bed, but that's exactly how she woke this time.

Alone.

Was last night all a dream?

"If that was a dream, it was the best damn one I've ever had. Even my legs are sore."

She looked around the room, noticing her bedroom door was shut and there was a sparkling beam of light breaking in through the window.

How long had she slept? And where was Seth?

No way was her imagination that fantastic and descriptive.

He'd rocked her world and she was damn well going to believe it. She only had to find him.

There was a chance she was awful and he'd run far away and that would be super sad on many levels she didn't want to think about. Or he could have just woken early and let her sleep. Either way she had to know.

After a visit to the bathroom and a fresh set of clothes, she opened the door to the smell of bacon cooking in the kitchen.

"Morning sleepy head."

Oh no! He was here, thank god, but he sounded awful.

“Is it still morning?”

“It’s just shy of noon, are you hungry?”

“I am but what’s wrong with you?”

“What do you mean?” As soon as he’d gotten the words out, a trio of sneezes wracked his body. She could tell the moment the first word slipped from his mouth. He was sick.

“You poor baby, you’re getting sick.”

“No, no, I can’t be. I have a big case I’m starting next week. I don’t have time to be sick.”

“Sorry to say, but you are. I can hear the nasally sound in your voice.”

Jenna went to Seth’s side, stretching her arms around his waist to hold him close. She was right, it did feel good. Maybe it really would be okay. When she looked up at him, he kissed her sweetly.

“Morning beautiful. I know it’s been said that the morning after is awkward and correct me if I’m wrong but it doesn’t feel like that to me.”

“I agree.”

“So are you okay with this?”

“You mean more than friends?” Jenna smiled. “Yeah, I’m more than okay with more than friends .”

The End