



# Jealous Mountain Man

## (Seduction Summit Trails #5)

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**Category:** Romance

**Description:** He wants to disappear. She just made him famous.

Im trying my hardest to make it as a book influencer.

So when I see a super-hot lumberjack, shirtless, chopping wood, I cant stop myself. I pull out my camera and start shooting.

Just days later, that super-hot lumberjack confronts me. Turns out, he doesnt want his face spread across the internet. Hes hiding something. I just have no idea what that something might be.

And by the time I find out, it may be too late. I might already be falling in love.

**Total Pages (Source):** 8

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 31, 2025, 6:59 am*

LARSEN

People sucked. That was why I was out here, miles away from another living soul, on my morning off. I'd had a particularly rough week, dealing with customers at the moonshine distillery where I worked, and I just needed some time out in nature.

This trail led to a pond, or so the map said. I didn't trust the cell service out here, so I downloaded the map, old-school style, and saved it to my phone.

But I was starting to get that sinking feeling. The one that came when I was pretty sure I'd taken a wrong turn somewhere.

Thwack.

The sound caused me to gasp as my footsteps sped up. I should be stopping altogether, but instead, I moved closer toward whatever that noise was.

What if it was a murderer, sharpening his knife? All the guys up here were loggers, so he was more likely to be sharpening his axe.

I should turn back. But what if I was lost? If this map hadn't gotten me here reliably, I doubted it could get me back. I was directionally challenged to begin with.

Why had I come out here? At the very least, I should have bought one of those fancy GPS devices that worked without cell service. But it wasn't like I was made of money. I barely scraped by on the hourly wage my uncle paid me at the distillery.

There it was again. Now my footsteps really did come to a stop. It sounded like it was coming from the other side of those trees. Maybe I could quietly creep forward and see what was going on.

I did just that, certain every sound echoed through the air around me. I stepped on a limb, and it broke with a loud snap. At that point, I became so fixated on watching where I walked, I forgot my destination. But another resounding thwack snapped my attention up from the ground.

It was happening just on the other side of this line of trees. Holding my breath, I crept forward. My mind was screaming for me to go back. Run. I'd seen this horror movie, and it didn't end well.

The second I spotted what was on the other side, I grabbed a tree and tried my best to hide behind it. The guy wasn't looking in this direction, but the risk of him catching me watching him like a stalker freaked me out so much, I wanted to be invisible.

This couldn't be real. It had to be a dream. In front of me stood a guy wielding an axe, but he wasn't a murderer. At least, not as far as I could tell. No, this guy was the most mouthwatering chunk of eye candy I'd ever seen.

There was only one thing to do. I grabbed my phone from my back pocket, fired up the camera, and started shooting video. A smile spread over my face as his half-naked body filled my screen.

Oh, yeah. This could definitely go viral. I'd been trying to become a book influencer, but despite daily reels spread across three different platforms, I never could manage to get past a couple hundred views.

Maybe it wasn't my face on the screen readers wanted. A super-hot shirtless guy chopping wood with an axe as sweat glistened in the sunlight? Yeah. That should

definitely get me noticed.

Thwack.

How long should I shoot? I would only use a minute or two of this. But the more footage I shot, the more I could edit for the perfect clip.

Thwack. Thwack. Thwack.

As the clip rolled on, though, one thing became clear to me. Nobody wanted to watch a guy chop wood through the trees. Tree trunks blocked part of the view.

I had to get closer. But I had to do it without being spotted.

Thwack. Thwack.

I had to be careful about this. I looked around, figured out the best view, and waited until he was busy swinging to take a step back, then to the right.

Finally, I got to a pretty decent clearing and stepped into place, stopping the recording and starting over. Yes, this clip was the one that would do it. This clip would help me eventually start bringing in some money.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 31, 2025, 6:59 am*

ENZO

Her screen name was ShelfDestruct, and she was ruining my life.

I pictured various ways I could give her a piece of my mind. She worked at the moonshine tasting place. I learned that from her bio. A buddy of mine owned that distillery, and I immediately pulled up my contacts to call him the second someone sent the video to me.

But my finger hovered over the screen. How was I going to explain my situation?

Nobody knew why I'd come up to Seduction Summit abruptly a couple of years ago.

Not the real reason. They all thought I was just looking for work, like everyone else had after leaving the military.

But I'd given up a good gig as a mechanic in my hometown of Cheyenne, Wyoming.

This had nothing to do with my military service. I was well and truly in hiding. And moonshine girl was in the process of shining a spotlight on me for the world to see.

Another plan had been to confront her at work, but I couldn't do that. She was always surrounded by people. It was too risky. I'd even thought about going straight to her cabin, but that seemed like a good way to get the sheriff called on me, and I definitely didn't want that kind of attention.

Instead, I took a big chance that she'd come back. I even set a trap for her. That was

why I was standing here, at the exact same time a week later, holding my axe with my shirt off. I listened for signs I wasn't alone until it became clear she wasn't going to return.

Sighing, I wiped sweat from my brow, snatched up my axe, and started walking toward my cabin. It was down the trail about a quarter of a mile, and that would give me plenty of time to think through what my next move would be. I had to find her and get her to take down that video.

I just had to stop by her cottage. That was the only choice. I'd knock on the door, tell her who I was, and make my request. The video clip had spread pretty far already, but maybe I could get it removed before the wrong people saw it.

My life literally depended on it.

I was staring at my feet as I walked. I'd thrown on my T-shirt halfway down the trail, feeling ridiculous for thinking this would work. I sensed movement ahead, and my head snapped up.

Sure enough, a brunette was walking toward me. As far as I could tell, she had no idea someone was coming toward her. She wore a baseball cap, and her head was bowed, so I couldn't see her face. But her body was beyond an eyeful. She was freaking gorgeous.

Suddenly, her head whipped up. Her gaze landed on mine, and she came to a complete stop.

It was so sudden, it was almost like she'd hit an invisible wall.

Yes, her face definitely lived up to the expectations her body set.

In fact, her face might even be more beautiful than the generous swell of her breasts and curve of her hips.

But she didn't look happy to see me. I kept walking, only stopping once I was several feet in front of her.

What was I going to say? I was mad, but my first tactic would be to kill her with kindness.

If I had any hope of coercing her into taking down the video, I'd have to sell her on it, not go to war with her.

"ShelfDestruct," I said.

Her eyes widened, but she shouldn't be surprised. She knew exactly who I was. She'd shot at least two minutes of video of me shirtless and posted it on her social media channel for all the world to see.

I should have poked around a little. Maybe I would have noticed just how hot she was. Instead, I'd glanced at the profile photo, which had been one of those heavily filtered ones that made her look like she wasn't a real person, not this all-too-real natural beauty standing in front of me.

"Crap," she said. "You saw it."

"A friend sent it to me."

Actually, it was a girl I used to date. She lived on the other side of the country near Cheyenne. She said it had gone viral. Not that I knew what that meant. I mean, I knew what "viral" meant, but not exactly how many people would have seen it.

“I wasn’t stalking you, I promise,” she said.

Interesting that that was her first defense. Especially since I wouldn’t mind being stalked by this woman. Maybe that was making light of a serious offense, but I’d handled much bigger danger than whatever this beautiful woman could send my way.

“I needed the views,” she said. “I’m trying to become a book influencer.”

A book influencer. What the fuck was that? Someone who influenced people to read? Or someone who influenced people to buy certain books? Was there actual money in that, or was it just for vanity?

“I know what people are always saying about my generation,” she rushed to add. “We just want to get social media famous and not have real jobs. But I have a real job. I do moonshine tastings in the shopping center downtown.”

She crossed her arms over her chest, as though waiting for me to argue with her on that. I hadn’t really argued with her yet, so I wasn’t sure why she thought I’d start now.

“I was hoping I would go viral, but I had no idea it would get this much attention,” she said.

“Correction,” I said. “I went viral. That was me chopping wood.”

Anger. I reminded myself I was supposed to keep it in check. But it was coming through in my voice, and I saw it in the way she reacted.

It was a stark reminder of why I stayed away from beautiful women.

My jealousy almost always got the better of me in a relationship, and I ended up



disconnecting as a result.

I'd exited more relationships than I could count because I didn't like the way jealousy made me feel.

I'd rather be alone than stressing over whether a woman was cheating on me or preparing to leave me for another man.

"Sorry about that," she said.

She actually shrugged. But this wasn't something she could shrug off. Basically, she'd treated me like a piece of cake on a platter. I'm going to have another yummy meal tonight at my favorite restaurant. Hashtag blessed. Or maybe in my case, it would be a slab of meat on a plate.

I should mind, but the truth was, that part of it didn't bother me at all.

In fact, I kind of liked the idea of this woman seeing me as hot enough to capture and share with the world.

It was the "sharing with the world" part of it that bugged me.

I couldn't have my image plastered all over the internet.

"It's an invasion of privacy," I said.

That was the plan I'd come up with to get her to take it down. I couldn't tell the truth, so privacy was the route I was taking.

"I understand," she said. "But it's too late. It's like trying to put toothpaste back into the tube after you've already squeezed it out."

I shook my head. “No, it’s like continuing to squeeze toothpaste out even though you realize you’re making a mess.”

She tilted her head. A frown took over those delicate features. I definitely needed to explain a little better.

“The longer it stays out there, the more people are going to see it,” I pointed out. “I’ve already had one person I know come across it. That’s enough for me.”

“You were in a public place,” she said, finally dropping her arms to her sides. “You had no reasonable expectation of privacy.”

I narrowed my eyes at her. Was she seriously bringing out the legalities of this?

“Look, I don’t care if you keep the video up,” I said. “Just blur my face. I’m not looking at the camera, anyway, and I don’t think anyone’s paying that much attention to my face.”

“Then what’s the problem?”

“People can see my face. All it takes is someone recognizing me and sharing it with other people I know. I just don’t want that kind of stuff spread around. I’m a private person.”

I couldn’t stress that enough. I’d always been that way, even before I had a reason to hide. I couldn’t imagine any version of me being comfortable with my likeness spreading across the internet.

“Okay,” she said.

My eyes widened. “Okay?”

Really? She was going to agree to this? Not until then did I realize I'd fully expected her to say no. I hadn't prepared for what I'd do about it, but it was a total surprise that she was game.

"I'll take down your video on one condition," she said.

Here it was—the catch. But I couldn't imagine anything she'd ask me to do that would be worse than being tracked down here in Seduction Summit by the wrong people.

There was only one way to find out. I took a deep breath and asked, "What's that?"

"Shoot a new video. In fact, multiple videos. I'll keep your face out of the picture. Deal?"

She pulled her phone out of her pocket and stared down at the screen as she swiped and tapped around on it.

She turned the screen toward me. My image filled it.

My face was clearly visible. It was my profile, but anyone who knew me would spot my signature square jaw.

Not to mention my slightly imperfect nose that still had a bump from where I broke it in fifth grade playing softball.

What choice did I have? Just the sight of that video made me want to relocate to another country and change my name. So I gave a nod and stared at the screen.

"Delete that right now, and you have a deal."

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 31, 2025, 6:59 am*

LARSEN

E nzo could have backed out on his end of the deal. I fully realized that as I was watching him step into the water.

He wore only underwear this time, and I'd promised not to start shooting until he was in the water. Apparently, even when his face wasn't onscreen, he was weird about being plastered across the internet wearing only his underwear.

Okay, yeah, I couldn't blame him for that.

"Ready?" he asked.

We'd already captured a few clips of him chopping wood while wearing only his jeans and tennis shoes. We needed a change of scenery, and that was what had brought us to the pond behind his house.

He squatted down in the water and slowly stood, just as instructed. Once standing, he lifted his arms toward his head. The camera perfectly captured the hard contours of his body as the water cascaded off it. The whole thing was like something straight out of a movie or music video.

I had to focus. I could watch this recording later, over and over if I wanted. Right now, it was all about getting the best shot.

"It feels good in here," he said.

I didn't stop shooting. Was he inviting me to come in? No, he wouldn't do that. He was just trying to get through this to get his face off the internet. For some reason that was something he really, really wanted.

"It's beautiful back here," I said after I tapped the screen to stop recording and lowered my phone. "I haven't had much time to explore the town since I've been here. Just that one trail in front of your cabin."

"How long have you been here?"

"A few weeks. My uncle owns the moonshine distillery in the shopping center. He offered me a job, and here I am."

I gestured wildly, making light of the situation, but there was nothing light about it.

My parents announced they were divorcing my senior year of college.

They didn't even sit together at my graduation.

The whole thing was jarring, and if that wasn't bad enough, rumors had spread like wildfire through our tiny town in western North Carolina.

Uncle Ryan and I had always been close. He was much younger than Mom, and my parents had me when they were older, so we were only twelve years apart. It made sense he'd step in to help me out when I was dreading moving back home after graduation.

"Taking a dip in Grizzly Pond is required," he said. "It's like an initiation."

He had to be full of crap. Or maybe he just wanted to get me into the water with him? He probably thought I was sheltered, like I never did anything on my own. He was

wrong.

“Fine,” I said, tossing my phone to the grass.

That surprised even me. I pulled off my T-shirt and shorts and started toward the water.

Was I losing my mind? I wasn’t the least adventurous person I knew, but this was daring even for me.

I felt Enzo’s eyes on me as I reached the water, so I didn’t have long to really think about it. I closed my eyes and savored the safety and privacy the water provided.

He was right. The water was a huge relief. I’d been sweating my ass off in the July heat, so the chilly water was a welcome change. Plus, it shielded me from his scrutiny.

I didn’t even look to see if he was watching as I rushed in. I just got my ass in and ducked down as low as I could go, leaving only my head above the surface.

Finally, though, I had to open my eyes. I had to look at him. I already saw him out of the corner of my eye, watching me. Probably waiting to see what I’d do next.

“What’s your plan?” he asked.

The question was just polite small talk, I figured, but it left me speechless for a couple of minutes. I found myself reviewing the conversation to figure out what plan I was supposed to have.

“The videos.” He frowned. “Being an influencer. Is that a career?”

I shrugged. “There’s a lot of money in it. For some people. Not for me, unfortunately.”

“You’re hoping that’ll change?”

“I’m hoping that’ll change.”

“So do you just go around shooting videos of half-naked men every day?”

That was a good question. One I didn’t really have an answer for. I didn’t know how this eye candy thing was going to play into my regular posts, but he didn’t have to know that.

“These videos just draw attention to my feed,” I said. “My goal is to become a book influencer, so most of my posts are about fiction.”

He wiped the water from his eyes and lowered himself back down until he was submerged to his shoulders. “How does me chopping wood play into that?”

I shrugged, covering my chest with my arms. It wasn’t like he could see anything, but shielding my breasts made me feel a little better.

“I specialize in romance. That’s where the readers are. You’re straight out of one of the books we read.”

Oh crap. Did I give too much away? I didn’t want to come out and say I was attracted to him. What if he wasn’t even a little bit interested in me? This whole situation was already uncomfortable enough without me seeming like a teen with a crush.

“So you think I’m straight out of a romance novel?” he asked.

Was it my imagination, or did I see a hint of a smile on that gorgeous face of his? To this point, he hadn't shown himself to be someone who smiled. I honestly wondered if his features were locked in a permanent scowl.

"You're exactly what romance readers want," I said. "In fact, you could easily be on one of the covers."

"Maybe I should look into that. How much money is in it?"

I really had no idea, but I also knew he wasn't serious. This guy would not like his face plastered on book covers—even if it was chopped in half like some of them were.

"I'll hook you up," I said, looking around. "Is this a popular pond or...?"

"Only for those who live on it. Anyone else has Betsy to contend with."

I turned my full attention to him, eyes wide. "Betsy?"

Was that a dog? A mean relative who lived with him? A wife with a weapon?

"My Glock 19," he said. "I keep her safely tucked away, but I can have her out and aimed at an intruder in a minute or two."

"Is that a military thing?" I asked. "Are all the guys around here that..." I hesitated, searching for the right word. "Vigilant?"

Vigilant. That was perfect. Like a vigilante.

"Probably," he said. "It makes sense that we'd be on guard to a certain degree. I'm sure your uncle has a firearm."



Did he? As close as we were, I had no idea. He definitely would've kept that safely tucked away when my family visited. Especially with young kids in the house. But it wouldn't surprise me if he had an entire gun collection hidden somewhere in that cabin of his.

"I wouldn't know." I shrugged. "He's been so busy with his new girlfriend, I barely see him anymore. I moved to town to help out, and he got too busy to spend time with me."

Did that sound like a complaint? I certainly didn't mean to whine about it.

I was grateful he gave me this job. He'd also helped me get into one of the cottages next to the shopping center.

The rent ate up most of my paycheck, but if I could get this influencer thing going, I'd eventually be able to move to a bigger cabin.

Even with a roommate, that would be the dream.

"So what else do you have in store for me?" he asked.

His question pulled me out of my thoughts. Wait—what? He expected me to have things planned out?

The truth was, I had all the video I needed. I could always use more, but right now, I was done. I could tell him that. We'd head to the bank, get dressed, and I'd go back to my cottage.

But today was my day off, and I had no plans whatsoever. What was I going to do? Sit on my sofa alone, watching movies on my phone because I couldn't afford a TV?

“I’d offer to take you to dinner to thank you,” I said, “but money’s kind of tight. I could cook for you. Do you have food?”

He didn’t answer for what felt like forever. He just stared at me, leaving me wondering if I was being too forward. Maybe his question had merely been a cue for us to go our separate ways.

“I have a freezer full of meat and a grill out back,” he finally said. “I’ll fire it up and make us some dinner.”

It was midafternoon, but I’d skipped lunch. Come to think of it, aside from coffee and water, I hadn’t consumed anything all day.

“That sounds like a plan,” I said.

Neither of us moved. Our eyes met and held in a stare that hit me deep inside. It seemed to push past the wall I’d put up to keep myself safe.

Sure, I knew I was attracted to him, but this was the first time I’d let down my guard enough to feel this almost magnetic pull toward him. This could be dangerous.

What was my plan exactly? To develop a crush on a guy who was probably friends with my uncle?

An uncle who definitely wouldn’t be happy with me getting romantically involved with someone he knew?

And that was assuming this guy didn’t laugh in my face at the idea that I could ever have a chance with him.

After a long silence where we just stared at each other, it hit me that he wasn’t sure

how to get out of the water. To be fair, neither was I. I was wearing only my bra and panties. I couldn't guarantee the now-soaked cups weren't completely see-through. What if he got a glimpse of my nipples?

"I'll close my eyes," he said. "You get out first and get dressed. Then I'll grab my stuff and head back to the house."

With that, he turned his back, and I assumed he closed his eyes.

As I walked out of the water, though, I felt a tingling sensation all over, and I had to admit to myself that I kind of liked the idea of him ogling me.

In fact, if he turned and peeked while I was getting dressed, I wouldn't mind that at all. I would even like it.

What did that say about me? I wasn't sure, but I had a feeling by the end of the night, I'd be a changed woman.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 31, 2025, 6:59 am*

ENZO

I t had been a long time since I'd brought a woman back to my place. Actually, I'd never had one at this cabin, which was weird—but maybe not so much, considering the way I'd been run out of my hometown.

It wasn't that much of a surprise. I had other things on my mind—like staying alive. Getting laid was the last thing I was thinking about.

Until today. Suddenly, that was all I was thinking about.

It wasn't even three o'clock in the afternoon, and I was firing up the grill and waiting for steaks to defrost in the sink. Larsen was going through my pantry and preparing side items. I had no idea what the result would be, but whatever it was, it would be delicious.

Larsen was at the counter when I went inside to grab the steaks, slicing potatoes on a cutting board I didn't even realize I owned.

This cabin had come completely stocked. Turnkey, the real estate agent had called it.

That worked fine for me since I'd only packed up as much as I could carry in the back of my pickup when I moved here.

“How's it going out there?” she asked, pausing her humming to look back over her shoulder at me. She didn't stop chopping. That could be dangerous.

“Great. How’s it going in here?”

“Perfect,” she said. “You’re going to love this. Do you have any sour cream?”

Sour cream. That would not have been the request I would have expected. She was making potatoes, but they wouldn’t be baked—at least not judging by the way she was chopping them up.

“Can’t say I do,” I said. “I could run to the market and grab some.”

“Oh no. It was just a thought. They’ll be fine without it.”

Something was bugging me as I headed back outside to throw the steaks onto the grill. It was an unsettled feeling. Halfway through cooking, I figured it out.

The coziness I’d felt inside had taken me by surprise.

It was something I’d looked for all my life.

A warm, loving home filled with family members who cared about each other, parents who cooked for their kids and made sure they got off to school with a packed lunch and everything they needed...

In just a few minutes in the kitchen, I felt more of that than I had in all my years growing up with parents and two siblings.

What the fuck was that all about?

When I finally headed back inside with a platter full of steaks, I found things had gotten warmer and cozier. Larsen was in the process of setting the table. She’d set a big plate of potatoes in the center and, next to it, a bowl of green beans she’d pulled

out of the pantry.

I'd forgotten those were in there. Hell, I hoped they hadn't expired. That would be my luck—give both of us food poisoning at our first meal together.

"They smell delicious," she said as I set the steaks next to the potatoes.

"Thanks."

I headed into the kitchen and opened the fridge and paused, surveying its contents. The last thing I would have expected was company today, so I had absolutely nothing to drink but beer.

"I poured a glass of ice water," she said, coming back into the kitchen. She snatched up a glass that was next to the stove and headed to the table.

I grabbed a beer and followed her. A smile threatened to shove away my frown.

Frowning was my go-to expression. I'd been told I didn't smile enough, although not in those exact words.

People would jokingly call me a grump or ask me if I ever smiled.

That had very little to do with my recent past. I'd simply grown up in a household where smiling wasn't an everyday thing.

Larsen was still standing as I approached, waiting for me, I assumed. It was nice of her, but it was more of a gentleman's move. I definitely would've wanted her to sit without me.

We both settled into our chairs, and I waited for the uncomfortable silence to stretch

between us. We'd have to make small talk, like on a date. I hated small talk.

But instead, she spoke, surprising me with her bluntness. "So I guess you're probably used to women ogling you."

My eyebrows shot up. "Ogling?"

I reached for my knife and fork and began slicing off a piece of steak. She was doing the same. I held my breath, hoping she'd like the results of my hard work.

"Weird word, I guess," she said. "I just mean...you know, the whole eye candy thing. I didn't mean to objectify you. But women were going a little bananas over you in the comments."

Bananas. Interesting way of putting it.

"I don't pay much attention to that stuff," I said. "I keep my head down and live my life."

"This is amazing," she said after swallowing the bite she'd just taken. "Maybe I should shoot some video of you cooking."

Oh, hell no. I wasn't going to shoot a video in the privacy of my own home. That would be like inviting the world into my kitchen.

Before I could come up with a response, she blurted out a question. "So, do you date?"

Wait, what? We were actually discussing my sex life—or lack of one? No, sex hadn't come into the conversation. This was about dating, and if this beautiful woman wanted to know my relationship status, was I really going to complain?

“Not recently, no,” I said. “This town isn’t exactly full of eligible women my age.”

“Plenty of people my age, though,” she said.

I’d stepped right into that. She was not my age. She was younger than me. In fact, her uncle was my age.

I shrugged and said, “I haven’t met anybody that interested me until now.”

Her expression told me I’d slipped up. I winced inwardly at the “until now” part. I’d basically just blurted out that I was interested in her.

“Until meeting me?” she asked.

I could deny it. I could backtrack. But no, I didn’t want to do that. I wanted to be honest with her.

“Meeting you showed me that my libido is still alive and well,” I said. “Most women I’ve met just haven’t sparked my interest.”

Maybe that was too honest, but I couldn’t remember the last time I’d felt this kind of attraction toward a woman. Had I ever?

No, definitely not. I was battling the urge to go around this table, pick her up, and kiss her until both of us were out of breath.

My hands would start wandering—as would hers.

Maybe we’d shove all these dishes aside and do it right here on the table.

I had to suppress a groan at the image of her naked, legs spread, as I thrust into her,



sliding inside that wet pussy like my life depended on it.

“It’s the same for me,” she said. “I’ve had that issue all my life. I’d meet a guy and something just wouldn’t be right. I even had a couple of kisses, but I couldn’t let it go any further because I wasn’t feeling it, you know?”

“Wait a second, what are you saying? You never let it go further than a kiss with anyone?”

“I’m twenty-three years old and still a virgin,” she said. “Is that weird? I feel like it is. You probably think something’s wrong with me.”

“Nothing’s wrong with you,” I managed to choke out. “You’re perfect.”

This wasn’t the first time a woman had told me she was a virgin. It was, however, the first time someone told me that and I didn’t look for a way out. In fact, I didn’t want to go anywhere.

“I’d assume you’d been fending off guys for years,” I said.

She laughed heartily, then paused to slide a bite of potatoes into her mouth and swallow before continuing. “All I have to do is tell a guy I’m a virgin and he runs.”

She was looking at me point blank as she said that, as though daring me to do exactly what other guys had done. I returned her stare, unblinking. I could lie to her and say I’d never be the type of man who would run from that. Maybe even call those other guys wusses.

But that would be a lie. For some reason, I couldn’t bring myself to lie to this woman.

“Yeah, I’ve been that guy,” I said. “Total chickenshit move. It’s a lot of

responsibility, you know.”

Judging by her narrowed eyes, she didn’t know. She didn’t know at all.

“No one wants to give a woman a horrible first time,” I rushed to explain. “It has to be really, really good.”

She shook her head. “A woman’s first time is awful. Horrible. You just push past the pain and hope the next time is better. Everyone knows that.”

I shook my head. “No guy will believe that. We’re all sure we can be the exception.”

I hesitated, but once again I had this unexplainable urge to be honest. “It’s more than that. It’s the pressure of being the first man a woman’s been with. The playing field isn’t level.”

Now her entire face scrunched up. She was frowning at me. She didn’t get it.

“Romantically,” I added. “You can’t exactly have a one-night stand with a virgin.”

“Why not?”

“Well, if it was a one-night stand, you probably wouldn’t reveal your status to the guy. So just telling him that sets up the expectation that it’ll be more than once.”

“What if I wanted a one-night stand with a hot mountain man? Would that be so bad?”

I didn’t answer right away. I was gawking at her again, trying to understand these feelings I was having. The more I was around her, the stronger they got. It was like nothing I’d ever experienced.

“What if I don’t want a one-night stand?” I asked. “Not with you, anyway.”

Her eyebrows arched. “You want one with someone else?”

Crap. I’d just stuck my foot in it again. I was far from the smooth talker I’d prided myself on being when I was younger.

“There’s no way I could, you know, with you, and walk away,” I said. “I’d rather not do anything at all.”

Was I actually saying that I’d give up the opportunity to have sex with this amazing woman—the hottest woman I’d ever met—because she didn’t want more than a one-night stand? That was definitely not like me. Not any version of me, going all the way back to my teen years.

She shrugged. “I don’t want a one-night stand with you. I’m not going anywhere. I live here, remember?”

She said that as though distance would be the only issue in our relationship.

She had no idea what I was dealing with.

I might be fairly safe here, but having my image plastered all over the internet, even briefly, had me remembering how quickly that could change.

And bringing a woman like her into it would be a huge mistake.

I’d never forgive myself if something happened to her because of my past.

No, I had to distance myself from her. We’d finish up this meal, and I’d find a way to get her on the road back home—no matter how hard it would be.

I took a deep breath and prepared to tell her we couldn't sleep together. But before I could get the words out, she said something that stopped me dead in my tracks.

"I want you to do something about it," she said. "Tonight. I want to get naked and hop in that pond and lose my virginity. And I want you to be the man who helps me with that."

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 31, 2025, 6:59 am*

LARSEN

Water. That was all I was drinking—water with ice cubes. So where had I gotten the courage to proposition this guy? I didn't even know if he was interested in me.

As the seconds ticked by with no word from Enzo, I began to have second thoughts about what I'd just blurted out. I was offering myself to him. If he turned me down, I'd be mortified. I'd probably have to spend the rest of my time in this town hiding from him.

That wouldn't be too hard, actually. I had a feeling this guy kept a low profile.

"You just met me," he said.

Those words might have felt like a rejection, but there was heat in his eyes, and his voice had a huskiness that wasn't there before. I had to keep going.

"You say that like it's a bad thing," I said. "Have you never met someone and known right away?"

It had never happened to me before, but I definitely felt it now. I was the inexperienced one. It was understandable that this would be a first for me. But Enzo was clearly in his thirties and had been around the block a time or two.

"I can't say I have," he said.

My heart sank. So what I was feeling was one-sided. It shouldn't surprise me. But it

did.

“Not until now,” he said. “Not until I saw you coming up that trail.”

Suddenly, the most delicious steak ever sat forgotten on my plate. I’d eaten a little over half of it, but now I didn’t want another bite. I wanted to stop everything and drag him to the water, where we’d take off our clothes and do exactly what I imagined earlier when we were out there.

“We can’t do it in the pond, though,” he said.

“Why’s that?”

“Every house down that row has a clear view of it. My logging crew buddies would never let me live it down, but it’s more than that. I can’t expose you like that. If you’re looking for a waterway, though, I definitely know a place we could go. Finish up your dinner.”

I wasn’t sure what he had in store, but I was surprised to find it required us getting in his truck and driving farther up the mountain. My heart was banging against my chest every second of the drive.

“We call this one Lumberjack Cove,” he said.

“Wait, what was the name of the pond behind your house?” I looked over at him. I’d already forgotten. “It was something like that, wasn’t it?”

“Grizzly Pond. One of the guys named it that. It was before my time here.”

As soon as I saw Lumberjack Cove, my heart began pounding so hard I was sure he could hear it. He didn’t say anything, just drove all the way to the edge of the parking

lot and cut the engine.

“You sure about this?” Enzo asked.

“Positive.”

I was more than positive. That didn’t mean I wasn’t nervous, though. This was a big move, and I didn’t want to disappoint him. What if I was really bad in bed? Not inexperienced—just bad. He might find me boring. Or maybe he wouldn’t like my body.

All kinds of things to be insecure about. Luckily, he didn’t give me much time to think about it.

“Let’s go.”

He said that like he was talking to a friend, not someone he was about to deflower.

Maybe that was his way of making this easier on me.

I couldn’t tell. All I knew was my legs were already shaking, and I was still seated.

What if I couldn’t keep myself upright once I tried to stand?

What if I collapsed to the ground, a quivering mess?

He might decide I wasn’t ready for this, after all.

I couldn’t let that happen. So I took a deep breath, climbed out of the truck, closed the door, and started walking, trying to look far more confident than I felt.

I'd only taken a few steps when I saw him up ahead.

He was yanking off his T-shirt, then he undid his shorts and let them fall to the ground.

I'd seen him in underwear earlier when he'd posed for me. It wasn't like this was anything new. But now, knowing what was about to happen, I could hardly breathe.

I should undress. Otherwise, he'd be watching. It would be far easier to do this if he had his back to me.

I yanked off my shirt and unbuttoned my shorts, dropping them to my ankles.

As I had before, I waded in wearing only my bra and panties.

But this time I didn't feel self-conscious when he turned to watch me.

The appreciation in his stare actually made me feel more beautiful than I'd ever felt in my life.

He liked what he saw. I had no reason to feel insecure about my body. But still, I couldn't help but worry I wouldn't live up to his expectations.

"The water's a little colder," he said. "Or maybe it's just that it's not as hot outside."

He was right about that. The second my body hit the water, goosebumps spread across me—head-to-toe goosebumps. I crossed my arms over my chest, trying to ward off some of the cold, but I knew there was only one way to make this manageable. I had to lower my entire body temperature.

I took a deep breath, closed my eyes, and plunged in.



The water came all the way to his chest, so it must be deep enough for me to do that.

Sure enough, I didn't touch bottom, but I didn't dare open my eyes either.

I used my hands to feel my way, swimming in a wide berth around him. I didn't want to slam into him.

Or maybe I did, but I had to play it cool for now.

I only dared to surface once. I was a decent distance from him even then, and I wasn't exactly graceful about it. In fact, I probably resembled a drowned rat. My wet hair clung to my face, and I'd put on mascara that morning, so I no doubt had raccoon eyes.

I swiped my fingertips under each eye, hoping to clear that up. My sunglasses were in the truck. Maybe I should go get them. But the good news was, my feet finally touched ground here.

When my vision finally cleared, I saw he wasn't just looking at me. He was staring. But it wasn't in a judgy way. No, that heat had returned to his eyes. It reminded me why we were in this water in the first place.

"I should try that," he said.

I looked around. "Try what?"

But when I turned back, he'd disappeared underwater. Nothing but a splash signified where he'd once stood.

In the silence that followed, I imagined him swimming over to me. Maybe kissing his way up my thighs as he ran his hands over my body. I closed my eyes and let the

fantasy take over as the water sloshed around my arms and chest.

I found myself heating up inside as though he were actually touching me. The water acted as a sort of caress—gentle and soothing over my skin.

A splashing sound just in front of me popped my eyes open. Enzo was standing right in front of me—not a few feet, but mere inches. All I'd have to do was lean forward a little, and we'd be kissing. With the way he was staring down at me, we were only seconds away from doing that.

“You're so fucking beautiful,” he said.

The words went straight to my core and my heart at the same time. Again, it wasn't just what he said, but the way he said it—and what I saw in his eyes as he looked at me.

Neither of us moved for what seemed like hours, but finally, my arm thrust forward as though on its own, my hand landing on his right bicep. That seemed to push us to the next level. His hands went to my upper arms, moving toward my shoulders as his lips captured mine.

The kiss started out sweet, taking my breath. He parted my lips with his tongue, his hands settling on my back and gently nudging me against him.

That was all it took. Our bodies seemed to meld into one, my chest pressed tightly against his, my arms going around his waist. I freely explored the ridges and contours of his back, marveling at how solid he was—a stark contrast to my much softer build.

He didn't seem to mind. He began exploring too, his hands wandering over my upper back. One hand moved to the nape of my neck.

I sighed against his mouth as, with one hand, he unfastened the clasps holding my bra in place. I didn't want to break the kiss, so I did an awkward little maneuver to get the bra off. Then my breasts were flattened against his chest. The feel of our bodies together made me sigh.

That was when I got really adventurous. My hands moved over his back and down, sliding under the elastic waistband of his underwear, cupping his ass. He moaned against my mouth, and that sound spurred me on.

With a not-so-gentle shove, I pushed his underwear downward and immediately felt his erection against my belly. He was hard as steel. I hadn't expected him to be that hard already. Didn't it take time? A little more kissing, maybe me touching it?

It only reminded me I had a heck of a lot to learn when it came to a man's body. Hell, I didn't even fully understand my own body yet.

More out of curiosity than anything, I moved my hand between us and wrapped my fingers around him. Another moan let me know I was on the right track.

His hands slid upward, finally reaching my waist. He separated us just enough to skim my nipples with his thumbs. Now I was the one who moaned. I'd anticipated his touch for so long, even the slightest contact lit my body on fire.

When he suddenly broke the kiss, I worried something had gone wrong. Maybe my touch was too amateurish. He was used to being with experienced women. Hell, even men my age were used to that.

He surprised me by putting a hand on each of my shoulders and gently spinning me around. He moved into place behind me and wrapped his arms around me, pulling me against him. My eyes slid closed, and my head tilted back against his shoulder.

His hands went straight to my breasts. He was free to explore now, and he did exactly that, his fingers sliding around each nipple, palming both breasts.

He nudged my hair aside with his chin to plant kisses along my cheek and the side of my neck.

When his right hand began a gradual move downward toward my panty line, I thought I might die of pleasure.

But I hadn't seen anything yet.

He didn't bother sliding my underwear down, as I'd done with him. Instead, he dove beneath the waistband—straight to my aching clit.

“Spread your legs a little,” he commanded.

The gruff tone of his voice made me sigh with longing. It also made me realize I'd had my legs clamped tightly together. I was nervous and scared, but only because this was my first time. I felt safe in his hands. Somehow I knew he'd take care of me. Always.

I gasped as he began moving his finger over my clit in a rapid, rhythmic pattern. I knew that tiny bud was the key to orgasm, but I never dared try to give myself one, and now I wondered why.

All thought was soon wiped out as my body began moving toward something I couldn't understand yet. All I knew was it would be a pleasure like nothing I'd ever experienced.

I didn't even realize I was making a noise until it echoed in the air around me.

We might not be alone. I should be worried about that—but I didn't care.

At this point, the whole world could hear my first orgasm.

All that mattered was what I was feeling right now and this man, with his arms wrapped around my waist, making me feel safe and protected—and wanted for the first time in my life.

I closed my eyes again as sensations overwhelmed me. Sensations I never wanted to end. Eventually, though, they did. And as disappointment set in, something hit me.

This wasn't the end. It was only the beginning.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 31, 2025, 6:59 am*

ENZO

I couldn't do this in the water. Not standing up. And the bank didn't seem appealing at all. So once I'd given Larsen her first orgasm, I led her up the stone steps to the top of the bluff that overlooked Lumberjack Cove.

"This is a little scary," she said.

"Only if you stand close to the ledge."

That was exactly what she was doing. She was on a rock that was perched precariously close to the edge. It made me want to wrap my arms around her and keep her safe.

Okay, I wanted to wrap my arms around her pretty much all the time. And not just to keep her safe.

"We can do it right here," she said.

"That would be a little dangerous."

My eyebrows rose. My girl liked living on the edge—literally. I wasn't one to shy away from a little adventure myself, but I would not put her in danger. No way, no how.

"Come here," I said.

She turned and found me sitting on a rock. The view was perfect from here. We could easily see the water, and our lives wouldn't be in danger. Not that we'd be spending much time appreciating the view. Not that view, anyway.

“Come there?” she asked, her gaze lowering to my midsection.

She was checking out my bulge. I'd pulled up my underwear while I was leading her out of the water, so she still hadn't seen what I was packing beneath my tighty-whities.

“Yup.”

I added a nod to that, like I didn't want to waste energy speaking. Maybe I didn't. I had to save it for what was about to happen.

As she started toward me, I couldn't take my eyes off her. I could clearly remember the feel of those large breasts in my hands. And if I lived to be a hundred, I'd never forget the sound of her gasps and sighs as I coaxed her to climax.

But I wouldn't have to remember it. I was going to keep this woman in my life. Permanently.

That thought was eye-opening. Before I could make this permanent, I had to deal with the issue that had landed me in Seduction Summit in the first place. I had to make sure I was safe—if only for this beautiful woman.

She knelt, pushing my legs apart with her hands as she did so. I wasn't sure what she was planning until she reached up and began tugging on the waistband of my underwear, just as she'd done in the water only minutes ago. That ended the mystery of what was beneath my tighty-whities.

The devilish smile she gave me as she wrapped her hand around my cock was just about the sexiest thing I'd ever seen.

Normally, I'd close my eyes, but I didn't want to miss a second of this.

For someone who was new to this, she was doing an amazing job.

Too amazing, actually. I hated to stop her.

But the last thing I wanted to do was come this way.

"Babe, you're going to have to stop that," I finally managed to choke out.

Her expression only grew more devilish. And then I realized what she had planned. She parted her lips and wrapped her mouth around me. A groan escaped my throat.

Fuck, that felt good. How was I supposed to stop her?

"Okay, okay," I said. "Stand up."

I wasn't sure she would. She seemed to be enjoying what she was doing.

She paused a long moment, then pulled back, releasing me without a word. Pushing herself to her feet, she glanced over her shoulder to make sure we were still alone.

I really didn't give a damn if we weren't alone. If someone didn't want to be around a couple making love on a rock, they should go somewhere else. We were here first.

I thought about ordering her to take off her panties, but I'd already been bossy enough. Instead, I reached for the waistband and jerked them downward.



Larsen smiled. She liked the forcefulness. Using her legs and feet, she scooted them off. And then she was fully naked in front of me, that beautiful pussy ready for my cock.

I nudged her legs apart and kept my eyes on her, sliding a finger inside. She was so wet. So tight. So hot. Slipping inside her would be heaven on earth.

Without taking my eyes off her, I leaned forward. Could I do this? Would the angle work?

I didn't think it would at first, but as I touched my tongue to her sweet clit, I decided all the neck strain in the world was worth it. Especially when she gasped and shifted until one foot was up on the rock.

Oh, yeah. That angle was much better.

I kept my finger inside her as I ran my tongue over her clit. Back and forth, adjusting my movements in response to the sounds she made. This time, she kept her voice down, and I knew it wasn't easy. She was obviously conscious that someone else could be nearby.

That was fine. She'd cry out next time—and there would definitely be a next time.

When both hands gripped my shoulders, I knew she was coming. I hadn't even realized her hands were on me until then.

Finally, her grip loosened and her eyes opened. Orgasm number two, complete.

"I have protection," I said, glancing over at the pile of clothes we'd left at the top of the steps. "I keep it in my wallet just in case. I'll go get it."

I pushed myself to my feet and walked over to my jeans to get the condom. My legs were actually shaking, and nothing had even happened yet. Not for me, anyway.

When I turned and started back toward her, I saw she was seated on the rock, palms flattened behind her, legs bent. They were tightly locked together, but I'd take care of that.

I ripped open the packet with my teeth and withdrew the latex circle, sliding it onto my erection as I walked.

I couldn't help but notice her eyes were fixed on my cock as I approached.

Was she wondering if my size would bother her?

It was sure to hurt, but that would be the case no matter how big or small I was.

It took some adjusting, but after a couple of awkward minutes, we got into a position that worked for both of us. The rock surface was hardly comfortable beneath my knees, but any pain I might've felt vanished the second my tip came in contact with her wet, slick entrance.

I stayed right there, watching her carefully for signs of pain. Impatience was a better description of what I saw on her face.

"Fuck me," she said.

I bit back a growl at that command. Nothing in my life had ever been sexier than this woman saying those words to me.

Larsen wrapped her legs around me and nudged me deeper, wincing as the pain finally hit her. Damn, she felt good. I had to shift my mind to something else if I

wanted to last any decent amount of time.

When she shoved me a little deeper, her cry of pain nearly gutted me. If her legs hadn't been around me, I would've pulled out. Anything to keep from hurting this woman. How was it possible I already cared about her this much? I'd just met her.

Her eyes stayed closed, and I worried that was her attempt to battle through the pain. Maybe she was thinking happy thoughts, going to her safe place just to get through it. That bothered me more than anything. I didn't want her to have to suffer, even for a second.

But then she moved her right hand to the area where our bodies joined, sliding it over her stomach first. That left her balancing herself only with her left hand.

I had to close my eyes as her finger reached her clit. I couldn't watch. It was just too damn hot. For the next few minutes, I focused on not going too deep, which was an effort in itself. Every cell of my being wanted to plunge into her.

I was so caught up in restraining my inner urges that at first I didn't realize she was breathing heavily. She was actually starting to enjoy this.

It started with a gasp, then a sigh. A whimper even escaped as she touched herself. Her lips parted, her head tilted back slightly. Oh God, she was giving herself pleasure. I kept my eyes tightly closed to avoid that image toppling me over the edge.

Just a little longer. I wanted to see if she'd come again.

Just when I started to think there was no way I'd make it, she let out a series of gasps, then a whispered, "Oh yes. Oh yes. Oh yes."

I dared to open my eyes. She was clearly in the throes of her third orgasm. That was

enough for me.

I let myself feel. Let all my senses kick in—taking in the sound of her heavy, rapid breaths and those beautiful tits as she sat with her spread legs surrounding me.

My plan had been to come quietly, but that didn't happen. Instead, I let out a sound that was somewhere between a growl and a roar. As I pumped the last of my seed into the condom inside her, I finally went silent. Only then did I realize just how much noise I'd made.

I sure as hell hoped nobody was nearby. But if they were, and they knew it was me, I'd just shrug it off. No one would blame me for bedding the beautiful niece of my buddy. No one but him, actually, and he was dating someone Larsen's age himself.

No, I had a bigger problem than that.

As I pulled out and looked down at the woman I was already starting to love, fear washed over me. I would die if anything happened to her, especially if it was because she was involved with me.

I had to keep her safe, whatever it took. It was a vow I made to myself. I had to do everything in my power to protect her. And if that meant not being with her, I'd do it.

But first, I'd try everything I could to fix my issues so we could be together.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 31, 2025, 6:59 am*

LARSEN

After we'd made love, Enzo was slightly distant—probably not something I would've noticed if I wasn't so tuned in to his reaction to every word I said. But it had now been four days with no word from him.

“Can I try a little more of that one?” the customer asked.

He was a middle-aged guy, but nothing like the normal group of tourists who came through this tasting room. He looked like something out of a cheesy movie—a stereotypical bad guy who wore all black and had dark hair.

“Only one sample of each per customer,” I said.

“That's a rule?” the guy asked. “Like a state law or something?”

“Just our policy.”

He reached for his wallet, and I knew what was coming next. “How about a little paper cash incentive?”

We were the only two in the store, and I was starting to regret that. I looked back over my shoulder toward the back room.

“My boss watches on camera,” I said. “I don't want to lose my job. Besides, you can buy a whole bottle of the stuff minus the five dollars you'd pay for the tasting anyway. It's probably not much more than whatever cash you were about to hand

me.”

He held his wallet in his right hand for a few long seconds, studying me. But suddenly, he folded it up and shoved it into his pocket.

“Before I go, maybe you can help me,” he said. “I’m looking for a friend of mine who moved to this town. Name’s Enzo Osgood. You happen to know where I can find him?”

My mouth fell open. This guy was looking for Enzo. My Enzo. Well, judging by the way he’d disappeared on me, I couldn’t really call him mine. But one-sided or not, I had serious feelings for Enzo already, and this sketchy-looking guy didn’t seem like someone who needed to know where he was.

“I’m new to town,” I said. “I don’t know anyone just yet. You ready to check out?”

I did a sort of half-twist, preparing to head to the cash register. But he didn’t budge. And something in his glare froze me in place.

“You know Enzo,” he said. “You want to know how I know?”

Oh crap. He didn’t have to say any more. I knew exactly how he knew I knew Enzo.

“I just shot some video of him and shared it online,” I said, trying to sound calmer than I felt. “If that’s what you’re talking about.”

Okay, that was a lie. But if I was going to lie, why didn’t I just stick with pretending I didn’t know him?

I had a feeling not only was Enzo in danger, but I was too. Something told me this guy would think nothing of disposing of me if it meant getting to his real target.

“She’s not who you’re looking for.”

The male voice boomed through the small shop, making me jump. The guy in front of me didn’t jump, though. Instead, he burst into a big smile as he turned.

“Osgood,” the guy said. “I’ve been looking for you everywhere.”

“You found me, Chuck,” Enzo said, stepping into the doorway.

My heart beat a little faster. That was saying a lot because it was already at what I thought was peak speed. I let the intense feelings for Enzo wash over me briefly before reminding myself this was serious. One or both of us could get hurt. Or worse.

I could run. I could hide. I could get the hell out of here. But I didn’t want to. I wanted to stay and make sure Enzo was okay.

“Let’s take this outside,” Enzo said. “It’s between us.”

Chuck, now with his back to me, shook his head. “Oh, no. We’re going to do this right here, where nobody can watch.”

“There’s a camera,” I blurted. “It records everything.”

The guy stepped away from the counter, but he kept his focus on Enzo. “You think I’m stupid? You said just minutes ago your boss was back there, watching. It’s pretty obvious now that he isn’t. You lied about that, so I doubt there’s a camera.”

Enzo didn’t even glance at me. He didn’t dare take his eyes off the man in black.

“You had no right to turn me in,” Chuck said to Enzo. “The girl walked out in front of my car, and you know it. So, what if I was drinking? I would’ve hit her if I was

stone-cold sober.”

From the look on Enzo’s face, it was clear he doubted that. I trusted Enzo a thousand times more than this guy.

“You threatened my life, multiple times,” Enzo said. “Both before I enlisted and after my discharge. It’s the reason I settled here instead of Cheyenne.”

The man laughed. “You legit thought I’d hurt you? Dude.”

“You killed a woman.”

“Girl,” Chuck corrected, as though that made it better. “And she walked in front of my car. I think she did it on purpose.”

“I was in the car when it happened. You fled the scene. Until I went to the police, her family had no idea what happened.”

“Did it fix anything, having them know? She’s still dead.”

This conversation was getting nowhere. Enzo could reason all he wanted, but this guy wasn’t going to budge on trying to justify what he did.

So I jumped in. “Why are you here? You came to town looking for Enzo.”

“Good question,” Enzo said. “If you aren’t here to follow through on your threats, why are you here?”

“A buddy shared your little video with me,” Chuck said, looking at me.

That look creeped me out. I had to resist the urge to step back and put some distance



between us. Luckily, he flipped that stare back to Enzo.

“Really, I guess I was just looking for some closure myself,” Chuck said.

“What kind of closure?” Enzo asked.

Chuck shrugged. Suddenly, he didn’t look nearly as scary.

“I guess I’m looking to find out why you did it, man. We were good friends until you ratted me out.”

Enzo straightened, squaring his shoulders. This was a true showdown.

“Correction,” Enzo said, a muscle in his jaw twitching as his eyes filled with fury.

“We were good friends until you ran over a seventeen-year-old girl and left her for dead. We were good friends until you ignored me shouting for you to go back. We were good friends until you threatened me with your dad’s gun, saying you would use it on me if I said a word to anyone about what happened. ”

“And then you took off for the military,” Chuck pointed out.

“But when I returned home to find the town still talking about it, I finally turned you in.”

“Yeah, well you see where that got you,” Chuck said. “I did my time, and now I’m free and clear.”

This guy was a criminal, but he didn’t seem to be part of some big, organized crime syndicate. That seemed comforting to me, but I wasn’t sure it should be.

“I made a mistake,” Chuck said. “A mistake that cost someone her life. What was it to you, anyway?”

Enzo narrowed his eyes. “I let you slide for twenty years. The family had no idea what happened to Pamela. Your arrest gave them closure.”

“And landed me in the slammer for two years.”

“Two years is a small price to pay, considering you get to walk around while Pamela never even saw her eighteenth birthday.”

“If you really wanted to do the right thing, wouldn’t you have done it earlier?” Chuck asked.

“Not when I was a kid and my life was being threatened. So, what do you want?”

“I said I wanted closure.” Chuck crossed his arms over his chest. “I want to know why you did it.”

Enzo took a step toward him. “Take a look at Pamela’s parents.

Did you see their faces when the verdict was announced?

The relief? They just wanted answers. They forgave you for putting them through nearly twenty years of agony.

You served two years. They have a lifetime without their daughter—not to mention all the friends she left behind who cared about her.

You just left her in the road like she was an old couch. ”

For the first time, Chuck's stance changed. He slunk a little, head lowered. Enzo was getting through to him.

"I shouldn't have come here, man," he finally said. "I realize that now. I ran you out of Cheyenne, and for that, I'm sorry."

"It all worked out," Enzo said, glancing over at me.

It was the first time he'd really looked at me since stepping into that doorway. The warmth in his stare told me things weren't over between us—not by a long shot.

"Coming to this town was the best thing I ever did," Enzo continued without taking his eyes off me. "It's my home. It's where I'm going to get married and start a family with the woman I love."

Was I the woman he loved? Was it possible? I didn't want to get my hopes up. But he was still staring at me. He hadn't even glanced in his former friend's direction.

"That's good to hear," the guy said, thrusting out his hand. "Truce?"

Chuck wanted to make peace, but they weren't exactly going to be hanging out if Enzo ever went back home. Chuck may have done his time, but that didn't erase the damage he'd caused. Finally, Enzo reached out his hand and they shook on it.

"I'll take a bottle of that moonshine," Chuck said, turning back to me.

I rang it up with shaking hands while he grabbed the bottle from the shelf. The whole time, I could feel Enzo's gaze on me. He wasn't rushing out the door. That was a good sign.

"Later, man," Chuck said as he rushed past Enzo, bag in hand.

He seemed in an awful big hurry now that they'd had their discussion. I was thankful for that. But I was even more thankful for the way Enzo turned and flipped the lock, keeping the outside world outside.

"That got a little scary," I said when silence fell between us.

Enzo took a few steps into the center of the store. I didn't budge from my spot behind the counter.

"I was afraid to assume anything," I said. "So I waited to see what happened next. I honestly wasn't sure what that guy would do."

"I've been worried for a while that he'd show up in town with a gun, ready to follow through on his threats," Enzo said. "But I couldn't let your association with me put you in danger too. I couldn't."

"That's why you disappeared for a few days?"

"I headed back to Wyoming to track him down. Couldn't find him.

And finally, his sister told me he'd come here.

He found out about your video. Since your location is on your social media profiles, I figured it'd be easy enough to track you down.

"He paused and sighed. "I rushed straight here. Sure enough, there he was, standing right at your counter."

"I was ready to cover for you," I said. "I didn't know who he was, but I wasn't going to let anything happen to you."

“I would have rather you sent him on his way than put yourself in danger. I’d never forgive myself if something happened to you.”

“I feel the same,” I said. “And that’s why I was doing what it took to protect you.”

“Well, it looks like everything worked out.”

He took another tentative step toward me—I assumed it was tentative because of the tightness of his features. He was afraid I would reject him. He didn’t get that we were both on the same page. Honestly, I didn’t fully get it either.

I glanced at the door, making sure nobody was on the other side of it. Then I stepped out from behind the counter, removing the last obstacle between us.

But I didn’t stop there. I walked straight toward him, not stopping until his arms were around me and my body was pressed against his.

It was like coming home.

“Don’t ever do that again,” I said.

He tilted his head slightly. “Do what?”

“Leave without telling me where you are. I was worried sick. I know it’s early in our relationship, but the silence is the worst .”

“I didn’t have your phone number,” he said.

“I tried to give it to you.”

“Yeah, I was dead set on getting my business taken care of first. You understand?”

“I understand.”

“I’ll never do it again.” He lowered his head, pressing his forehead to mine. “As soon as I finish kissing the hell out of you, I’m going to make sure I have your phone number and you have mine. Then I’m going to take you back to my cabin and make love to you all night.”

I winced. “I have two hours left on my shift.”

He groaned. “So I have to wait even longer.” He hesitated, looking around, then said, “It’s okay. I’ll give you the address to my cabin. You come straight there when you get off work. I’ll have dinner waiting for you.”

That was a plan I could get behind. I knew I’d be grinning for the rest of my shift.

“One more kiss before you go,” I said. “Just to tide me over.”

He smiled. “With pleasure.”

As his lips pressed against mine, I was grateful for a lot of things. But the biggest of all? My goal of becoming an influencer had led me into the arms of this guy, who was worth more than all the money in the world.

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LARSEN

The two bare-chested men in front of me knew I was shooting video of them. That was obvious by the way they flexed.

It was almost funny. The two of them—my Uncle Ryan and my husband—were trying to out-lumberjack each other. It was unofficial, of course. Something the guys around here did to unwind after a long, hard day of work.

I stood in front of our SUV, shooting video for a full five minutes without either of them noticing. There was one big difference between today and eleven years ago. I had no intention of posting this online. No, this was for me and Aunt Gennie, Uncle Ryan's wife.

I nearly drooled as I watched my husband pull the axe way up in the air and hurl it toward the tree stump in front of him.

When he was finished, Uncle Ryan stepped up to stand next to him.

They were discussing something. As I watched, trying to figure out what was happening, they suddenly turned and looked at me, both waving.

I straightened, tapping the screen to stop recording. They were used to me and my camera. In fact, I'd turned each of the loggers into a Man of the Month at some point. One of them—Rafe—had gone viral and attracted more than a few women to town looking for him.

But these days, I'd shifted from being a book influencer to a mom influencer. My "frugal mom" posts had taken off, and I now made a full-time living off paid sponsorships and ads.

"You going to cut our heads off before you share it with the world?" Uncle Ryan asked with a teasing smile.

I shook my head. "Nobody's seeing this but me and Aunt Gennie."

"Yeah, she's more likely to share what we had for lunch than our log-off," Enzo said.

"Your husband's still got it," Uncle Ryan said.

I smiled. "Don't I know it."

He was talking about Enzo's axe skills, but I was referring to the spark that still existed between us, stronger than ever even after eleven years.

Twelve years, technically, since we'd been engaged for eight months before we headed off to our destination wedding in Costa Rica.

That had been the start of an adventurous life together, although we stayed on the safer side now that we traveled with the kids.

"Gotta go get the kids from their party," Enzo said to Uncle Ryan. "See you tomorrow, bright and early."

"Bright and early," Uncle Ryan said.

My uncle was spending a lot more time with the logging crew these days, now that his moonshine distillery pretty much ran itself. I helped out occasionally when they were shorthanded, and even Enzo had gotten in on that action. He was far better at



moonshine tastings than I was.

Or maybe it was just that he attracted more female tourists.

“What’s for dinner?” Enzo asked as he settled into the passenger seat of the SUV.

I’d dropped him off for work this morning because we’d originally planned to pick up our two daughters, aged seven and nine, at the elementary school end-of-year bash and take them to dinner. It was just easier without managing two vehicles. Little did Enzo know the plan had changed.

“Olivia and Amelia asked if they could sleep over at Arya and Audrey’s house.”

Arya and Audrey were Uncle Ryan and Aunt Gennie’s daughters. They were around the same age as our daughters. Sleepovers with all four of them were pretty common, whether it was at their house or ours.

“Funny,” Enzo said. “He didn’t mention it.”

“He doesn’t know yet.”

I shifted into reverse and backed out of the parking space. Uncle Ryan was already in his truck and waiting for us to move so he could get out.

“We have the night to ourselves,” I said.

“I like that. Let’s get dinner over with so we can get you naked.”

“I’m already naked under my clothes.”

That sounded ridiculous. Of course I was naked under my clothes.

“I mean, I’m not wearing any underwear,” I rushed to add.

I pulled onto the main road, heading up the mountain instead of toward our home. That made it clear what I had in mind.

“I thought we’d go check out Point of View for a few minutes,” I said. “It’s early on a Friday. We’ll probably have the whole place to ourselves. If not, we’ll find a more hidden spot.”

The point was, I wanted to get him alone somewhere that wasn’t our cabin. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw his mouth spread into a slow smile.

“So, what exactly do you have in mind?” Enzo asked.

His left hand settled on my thigh, telling me he knew exactly what I had in mind.

I wore a long sundress that came just below my knees, but he had no problem bunching up the fabric to pull it toward my aching pussy.

Watching him chop wood had only further incentivized me to follow through on my plan.

When his hand began creeping up my bare thigh, I nearly swerved off the road. Yeah, I’d have to focus extra hard on driving if I wanted us to arrive safely. But I didn’t tell him to stop. No way would I do that.

“Spread your legs wider,” he said.

He was always telling me that. I had a bad habit of pressing my legs together in ladylike fashion. Actually, it was a good habit...except when it came time to get naked with my husband.

Within seconds, his fingertips reached the tops of my thighs, grazing my skin. I let out a sigh as a rush of moisture pooled between my legs.

My lips parted. This felt so good. I couldn't wait to reach our destination.

When he moved his finger to my clit, a sound escaped my throat.

Luckily, we were nearing the turnoff. I flipped on my turn signal, as if that would make us arrive faster.

I just wanted to give in—to close my eyes and surrender to the sensations washing over me.

But I had to divide my attention for the time being.

I was nearing orgasm by the time we arrived, but what I saw ahead put that on pause. The parking lot was packed, and noise filled the air. We couldn't see where the crowd was, but there was definitely a crowd.

"We'll go somewhere else," I said, pressing the brake pedal and reaching for the gear shift.

My plan was to double back and find another spot. But Enzo put his other hand on top of mine where it rested on the gear shift.

"Park at the end of the row," he said.

"We could get caught," I blurted, mostly to myself.

"Yes, we could."

The tone of his voice said it all. The possibility of being caught was part of the

adventure. We'd done this many times in our marriage, but not for a while. Not since the birth of our oldest daughter.

My heart was racing as I navigated to the end of the row and pulled into a parking space. I looked around, shifted into park, and took my foot off the brake.

Enzo was already reaching for his door handle, his seatbelt unbuckled. "Let's get in the back. The windows are tinted, and we'll have more room."

"Good thinking."

We didn't know who was gathered up ahead making all that noise. The last thing I wanted to do was corrupt some innocent young mind who happened upon us.

Enzo had his pants undone by the time I was in the back seat. He wasn't wasting a second. I still found myself glancing out the window, paranoid that someone might be watching. Not a person in sight—just rows and rows of vehicles.

I closed the door behind me and shifted my focus to my husband, savoring the heat in his stare. His pants and underwear rested around his thighs, his cock standing straight up. Yeah, it was no mystery what he hoped would happen next.

I lifted up, jerking the skirt above my hips and revealing my bare lower body to my husband. One last glance around, then I leaned forward, wrapping my hand around his cock and licking my lips. I couldn't wait to take him in my mouth—mostly because I knew how much he liked it.

No sound in this world made me as happy as the guttural moan Enzo gave when my lips wrapped around him and I took him deep—as deep as I could go. I began moving freely, using my hand and my lips to tease him until he threw his head back and closed his eyes.

His hand began running over my back, tugging up my dress and sliding it all the way up until he was touching my breast. Now it was my turn to moan as his fingers teased my nipple.

But before we could really get going, he used his other hand to pull me off him. Without a word, he gestured for me to come over to his seat. I was still climbing on top of him when I felt him yanking the dress upward, toward my head. He wanted me naked. He wanted to see my breasts as I rode him.

Again, I looked out the window. It was definitely tinted. There was no seeing inside—not unless you pressed your face to it. Nobody was going to do that. And besides, there still wasn't a soul in sight. So I let him bare my breasts, right there in a packed parking lot at the top of the mountain.

Enzo's eyes feasted on my naked body as I straddled him, lowering myself into position. As I sank onto him, his thumb went to my clit, stroking gently, while he tucked his head to run his tongue around my nipple.

I began moving slowly, our eyes meeting as he took my full nipple into his mouth, flicking his tongue over it until I had to bite my lip to keep from crying out. He soon switched to the other breast as I barely moved on him, savoring every second.

"Oh," I moaned as warmth spread through my body.

I was so wet for him. I'd wanted him for so long, my body began its rush toward orgasm in just a couple of minutes.

"Does that feel good?" he asked.

"Oh, fuck yes," I nodded. "Keep going."

"You feel so good. So tight and wet. I can't wait to come inside you."

Then he stopped talking and took my nipple in his mouth again. He moaned as he ran his tongue around it, but I was the one getting pleasure. I began moving faster and faster as his thumb increased its pace on my clit. Yes. This wouldn't take long at all for either of us.

“Oh God,” I cried out. “Oh God. Fuck yes.”

And then I couldn't speak at all as my orgasm rocked through me. Some part of me registered that I was gripping his shoulders even tighter as I threw my head back and gasped.

When I finally opened my eyes, I looked down to see him still staring at my breasts. He liked the way they bounced when I rode him.

So I flipped my hair back over my shoulder, then reached behind me, running my fingers over his balls. That forced his gaze back to my face, his eyes wide.

He liked that. So I kept it up, using my left hand to balance myself as I rode him, up and down. Soon, his gaze dropped again to my breasts, his hands cupping them, running his thumbs over my nipples. That was all for him. He liked touching me as much as I enjoyed being touched.

I looked around as I began moving faster, wondering if our motion was making the vehicle rock. But no, we were still completely alone. I had nothing to worry about. That freed me to bounce faster, harder.

His eyes drifted shut, and seconds later, he let out a grunt so loud, anyone immediately outside the van would've heard. Thank God nobody was out there. We could make all the noise we wanted.

“Oh fuck, that was awesome,” he said, pulling me toward him as he remained inside me.

I closed my eyes and smiled. I could stay like this forever.

“I’m going to have to pick you up from work more often,” I said.

“Or maybe swing by for a quick picnic lunch once a week or so. When you have a little extra time. You know what I could go for?”

I sat up and looked down at him, already missing his embrace. “What’s that?”

“A burger from the lodge. What do you say?”

“Only if we can get it to-go. I don’t want to spend an hour sitting in a restaurant. I’d rather be alone with you at home.”

“I like the way you think.” He smiled. “Let’s hop back in the front seat and get out of here.”

I looked around. On the other side of the parking lot, a couple was walking hand in hand, loaded down with food.

He was carrying a cooler, and she had a big tote bag on her arm.

Obviously, they’d been at the gathering up ahead.

They were still way too far away to see us, but I felt self-conscious, nonetheless.

“Let’s go before we get arrested,” he said, clearly seeing the same thing I was.

I grinned from ear to ear as I adjusted my dress and hopped back into the driver’s seat. “I just thought of another reason for us to get the food to-go.”

He’d already pulled out his phone and was preparing to call in our order, but now he

stopped and looked over at me. “What’s that?”

“I’m not wearing any underwear,” I said. “That could get uncomfortable sitting in a restaurant.

“Especially if my hands start to wander.”

He smiled and gave me a wink. Then he dialed and started talking to the person who answered at the lodge restaurant.

I pulled out of the parking space, and we were on our way as the couple reached their car, which was in the row just behind ours. They didn’t even look in our direction, making me wonder why I’d been so worried about being spotted.

Nobody was paying a bit of attention to us. Everyone was in their own world. And that was the way I liked it. The way both of us liked it. We took all the privacy we could get in a small town like this.

Once the order was placed, I rolled down both windows and we blasted the music, singing all the way to the lodge. I felt like I was in my early twenties all over again, falling in love with this man.

It was just another day in our perfect life together.