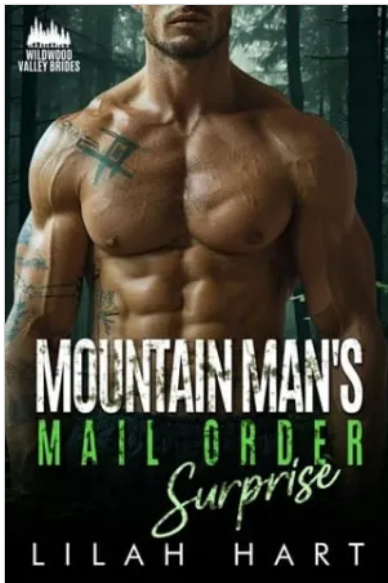




Mountain Man's Mail Order Surprise (Wildwood Valley Brides #2)

Author: *Lilah Hart*

Category: Romance

Description: She's here to marry him. He just doesn't know it yet.

He has no idea hes my fiancé.

Ive packed up my belongings and traveled halfway across the country to marry him, but he thinks hes just picking me up from the airport.

Problem is, Im undeniably drawn to him. And Im pretty sure he feels the same.

By the end of the night, maybe I can convince him that Im the woman for him.

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Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 7:40 am

brIDGET

E leven minutes late. I had a feeling I was going to be a jilted bride.

Did it count as jilted if you had never even met the guy you were marrying? I wasn't sure. All I knew was Bobbi, the woman behind the front desk at the inn, assured me my groom would be here at seven for our first date. First meeting. First everything.

Actually, that wasn't entirely true. We'd talked—well, I'd never actually heard his voice.

It had all been through text. But that was how the guys my age communicated.

Sure, this man was thirty-five, which meant we weren't even the same generation, but did anybody really talk on the phone these days if we didn't have to?

I looked back over my shoulder through the glass doors of the Wildwood Valley Inn. Bobbi was still nowhere in sight. I'd expected her to be behind the desk, but she was gone, and the parking lot was completely empty aside from my silver sedan.

She had to be somewhere in that hotel watching, probably on camera. But if that were the case, where was her car? There had been several vehicles here when I arrived, but now, they were all gone.

The unmistakable whir of tires on pavement pulled me out of my thoughts.

It was a sound I hadn't heard since I came out here a full twenty minutes ago.

How was that even possible? A street with an interstate exit, a diner, an inn, and a pancake restaurant—and no cars passing by for twenty-four minutes?

It was like something out of a sci-fi movie.

By the time the big black truck crested the hill, it was already just feet from the turn-in for the inn. I thought the driver was going too fast, but somehow he managed to slow the truck just enough to make the turn without it becoming reckless.

He pulled right up to the curb, passenger window rolled down, and asked, “Bridget?”

I nodded.

“Hop in.”

I couldn’t tell from his gruff expression whether that was an order or a suggestion. All I knew was this date wasn’t getting off on a good foot. I expected a husband who opened the passenger door for me on our first date.

But I couldn’t really be picky here. I was in Wildwood Valley for a reason. Marriage was just a means to an end.

I opened the door and stared at the seat.

There was no step to help me get into this gigantic megabus, and I was only five-foot-four.

How the heck was I supposed to do this? Especially in a pencil skirt that was already close to bursting at the seams, thanks to my “thunder thighs,” as my so-called high school friends used to call them.

“I don’t know how...” I said, mostly to myself.

But then I realized how pathetic that made me sound. Come on now. I was a strong, independent woman. I could do this. I didn’t need some man to rescue me.

I shifted my purse, placed both hands on the passenger seat, and hoisted myself up. My groom, Reilly, had popped his door open, ready to climb out and help, I assumed.

“I’m okay,” I rushed to say, freezing his movements.

Finally, I was settled in the seat. That was when I got a good, solid look at the man I was supposed to marry.

Holy shit. I didn’t even cuss, but this guy was worth a few profanities.

Until now, I’d had one picture to go by, and it had been blown up from a much smaller image, so it was kind of blurry. But even through the haze, I could tell he was hot.

This was next level, though. He had muscles for days. In fact, his bulging biceps threatened to burst the seams of his dress shirt sleeves like my hips were doing to my skirt. At least we had that in common.

“You’re Reilly, right?” I asked.

I knew that was his face, plus he’d called me by name. But I had to make sure he wasn’t a mass murderer while my passenger door was open and I could still escape.

“Yep,” he said.

I closed the door and fastened my seatbelt, suddenly realizing a mass murderer would

probably lie and say yes to that. But before I could give it much thought, he'd already shifted the truck into gear and pulled out of the lot.

I kept my hands folded in my lap as I stared straight ahead. The seat was warm, and the truck smelled faintly like cedar and leather, which matched the man in the pictures somehow. The one I'd spent the last three weeks imagining, anyway.

"So..." I said, keeping my tone light. "Do you always open conversations with 'Bridget?' or is that just reserved for the women you're marrying?"

He flicked a glance at me—more of a side-eye than a real look—and said flatly, "I'm not marrying anyone."

I blinked. "You're kidding."

"Nope."

"But..." I sat up straighter in the seat. "You're Reilly Clark."

"Yeah." He said it like a question he was tired of answering.

"And you're here to meet me. Seven o'clock. Dinner at the steakhouse in Hartsville. You wrote that in your message."

"I didn't write you any messages."

For a moment, I just stared at him, trying to decide if this was a joke. Or some kind of test. But there wasn't an ounce of teasing in his voice. No hint of a smirk. Just plain confusion and that ever-present frown, like someone had handed him a puppy and told him it was a grenade.

“You’re serious,” I whispered.

He let out a sigh and turned his attention back to the road. “Bobbi said someone was coming to town. She asked me to show you around. I thought I was doing her a favor.”

“A favor?” My voice cracked. “You thought you were doing your friend a favor?”

“You thought I was marrying you?”

I couldn’t speak. I sat there in stunned silence, staring out the windshield at the large stretch of interstate with mountains up ahead. I felt it—this slow, sinking weight in my chest like everything I’d carefully packed, planned, and hoped for was dissolving, one painful second at a time.

“I was told we were getting married,” I finally said. “Sunday. That’s what you said in your messages.”

“I didn’t send any damn messages,” he repeated.

I flinched, then chastised myself. Don’t show weakness. Never show weakness.

He cursed under his breath, shifting his grip on the steering wheel. “Look, I’m not mad at you, okay? I just—this is a hell of a thing to drop on a guy without warning.”

“Yeah,” I said quietly. “Tell me about it.”

Neither of us spoke again until we pulled into the parking lot of the steakhouse. He parked, turned off the ignition, and didn’t make a move to get out or open my door.

“You coming?” he asked.

I opened the door myself, climbed down without grace, and followed him inside, heart thudding like I'd just run uphill in heels.

The waitress seemed to know him. She barely glanced at me and led us to a booth in the back.

We ordered—well, he ordered—and I copied him without thinking.

Meatloaf with mashed potatoes and a sweet tea.

We sat in a weird, clunky silence until I couldn't take it anymore. "I moved here."

He looked up from his plate.

"I sold my car to pay for the plane ticket. I gave up my apartment. Quit my job. Told my family I was marrying a man named Reilly Clark in a town called Wildwood Valley."

His fork paused. "You did all that?"

"I believed it. The messages weren't crazy or creepy. They were sweet. Funny. Thoughtful. You—or whoever it was—talked about your cabin, your land, how you wanted a quiet life with someone who wasn't afraid of getting her hands dirty."

"I didn't write any of that."

"I know that now."

He leaned back, scowling harder than before. "So what, you want me to just go along with it? Marry a stranger because Bobbi played matchmaker behind my back?"

“No,” I said. “I want you to acknowledge that I’m a person. Not just some inconvenience dropped in your truck.”

That landed. He didn’t apologize, but he looked away, jaw tight, like he knew I wasn’t wrong.

“I didn’t come here to trap anyone,” I added. “But I also didn’t come here to be tossed aside like I’m crazy for showing up.”

He exhaled, slow and heavy. “Bobbi told me you were her friend’s niece. She didn’t say anything about a wedding.”

“Because she lied to you,” I said. “And to me.”

He didn’t answer. The waitress dropped off our drinks, and I stirred sugar into mine, pretending my hand wasn’t shaking.

“I’m not asking you to marry me,” I said after a long pause. “I just want to know what I’m supposed to do now. Because I don’t have a return ticket. And I don’t have a backup plan.”

Another silence stretched between us. He looked out the window like the mountains might have answers I didn’t.

Finally, he muttered, “I’m not taking you back to the inn.”

That caught me off guard. “What?”

“I’ve got a guest room. You can stay there.”

“Why?”

He looked at me then. Really looked at me.

“Because I’m not a complete asshole.”

“Oh. Well. You should be proud of that.”

That earned me the barest hint of a smirk, but it vanished as fast as it came.

“I don’t know what Bobbi was thinking,” he said, pushing his plate away. “But I didn’t sign up for a wife. And I don’t need someone in my house trying to play one.”

“Don’t worry,” I said, sliding out of the booth. “You don’t have to worry about me playing anything.”

His eyes followed me as I scooted out of the booth, then he tossed a few bills on the table and stood up. We didn’t say a word on the walk back to the truck. But when I climbed into the cab and caught him glancing at me out of the corner of his eye, I didn’t feel quite as invisible as I had before.

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REILLY

She sat on my couch like she belonged there. Bare knees together, skirt smoothed down, back straight like she was still trying to impress someone. Or maybe like she was bracing for impact.

I didn't blame her. I didn't have the warmest welcome-home energy. Never had.

She'd taken off her shoes at the door without me asking. Now her toes curled against the rug while her eyes roamed the living room—stone fireplace, heavy log furniture, and not a throw pillow in sight.

I fucking hated throw pillows.

"I thought there'd be more plaid," she finally said.

"Plaid's overrated," I muttered.

She smiled at that. I didn't. I couldn't. My brain was busy running back everything I'd seen when she climbed into my truck. Every curve. Every inch of skin that wasn't hidden by that long-sleeved blouse and super tight, knee-length skirt.

I was trying to be decent. Really trying. But I couldn't stop thinking about how she looked in that damn pencil skirt. And I sure as hell couldn't stop thinking about how she thought I was supposed to marry her.

I cleared my throat and grabbed two bottles of water from the fridge. "You want

anything else? I don't have much in the way of dessert. I have peanut butter and milk. Not sure if that helps."

"I'm good," she said, catching the bottle I tossed her.

We sat in silence, the air between us loaded with things I didn't know how to say. I'd let her into my home, but I still hadn't figured out what the hell to do with her.

"I can sleep on the couch," she offered after a while.

"You're not sleeping on the couch."

"Well, I'm not sleeping in your bed."

"Didn't ask you to. I told you I have a guest bedroom."

She nodded, then looked at me. "You really didn't know?"

"Nope."

"All this time, someone else was pretending to be you?"

"Seems like it."

She leaned back against the cushion and exhaled like she'd been holding her breath since the moment we met. "Well, I'm here now. And I'm not going back."

I raised a brow. "You're not?"

"No."

“That’s it? Just...no?”

“That’s it.” She lifted her chin and stared at something slightly to the right of me.

“I left for a reason. My mother—she’s the kind of woman who arranges your entire life before you’re old enough to drive.

Debutante balls, charity luncheons, business school I didn’t want to attend.

If it were up to her, I’d already be married to some perfectly polished bore with a Rolex and no backbone. ”

“So you came here for a lumberjack with a temper?”

“I came here for a chance to breathe.” She sighed. “And yes, I wanted a husband. I wanted someone who didn’t care that I’m not Ivy League or Stepford material. Someone who chops wood, builds things, maybe fixes his own truck.”

She paused, eyes returning to my face. She waited for a few seconds, like she expected me to interrupt. I didn’t.

“I wanted to get married, start my little business here, and finally figure out who the hell I am without my mother pulling the strings,” she said. “Do you know I’ve never been given the freedom to date who I want? That’s why I’m still a virgin.”

All the air seemed to have left my lungs as I took in that announcement.

This woman had never been with a man? She looked to be in her early twenties, sure, but I was guessing twenty-three or twenty-four.

It’d been more than a decade, but when I was that age, the women I dated were at

least a little experienced.

But I didn't comment on that. First, because I didn't know what to say, but also because it would most likely make her feel self-conscious about it.

I leaned back, arms crossed. "You figured this town was the answer?"

"I figured a fresh start was. I figured you were."

There it was again. That quiet, unapologetic certainty. She said it like it wasn't crazy. Like it wasn't completely insane that a woman would fly halfway across the country and walk into a stranger's life with her heart gift-wrapped and ready to go.

"I'm not going to marry you, Bridget."

"I know."

"I mean it."

She nodded. "And I said I know."

"You say that, but?—"

"I'm not asking for a fairytale, Reilly. I'm asking for a shot. We can date, and if you decide you don't want this, we'll end it. No fight from me."

I just stared at her. She said it like it was a business deal. Like we were swapping rings to start a car wash or buy a duplex. Except she didn't look like a woman making a cold decision. She looked like a woman trying not to get hurt by one.

"You're serious," I said.

“Yes.”

“And you’re a virgin.”

Her cheeks flamed, but she held her ground. “I wanted my first time to mean something.”

My jaw tightened. I shouldn’t have asked. Shouldn’t have let that mental image in. Her in white lace, cheeks flushed, mouth parted, soft and untested and waiting for me to show her what it meant to be wanted.

I shifted on the couch, trying not to think about how fast I’d close the distance between us if she even hinted she wanted my hands on her. Just one hint would be all it took.

“This isn’t how life works,” I said.

“It’s how mine works now.”

I rubbed the back of my neck, feeling ten kinds of wrong for even letting this conversation continue. But I couldn’t make myself end it. I couldn’t make her leave. And I sure as hell couldn’t ignore the part of me that didn’t want to.

“You’re not making this easy,” I said.

“I’m not trying to.”

I looked at her again, really looked at her. The nervous girl in my truck had straightened her spine and drawn a line in the sand. She wasn’t just here for some backwoods fantasy. She was fighting to get her life back. And for some reason, she thought I was part of that.

Bobbi had set this up. I didn't know whether I wanted to strangle her or thank her for it.

"You can stay," I said finally. "But don't confuse that with agreeing to anything else."

She smiled just a little, and it punched something deep in my chest. "I never confuse hospitality with a proposal."

"Good," I growled. "Because I don't play house."

"No," she said, standing up and stretching, her shirt lifting just enough to tease the edge of her soft stomach. "But you are sharing one with me. Tonight, anyway."

Then she padded barefoot toward the guest room, hips swaying, like she hadn't just turned my whole damn life upside down.

And I sat there on the couch, completely and utterly screwed.

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brIDGET

We were sleeping under the same roof. I couldn't get that thought out of my head.

All I had to do was open the door, tiptoe through the living room, and I'd be at his bedroom door. What would happen if I opened it and crept in? Maybe climbed into bed with him? He was my fiancé, after all.

Okay, so maybe he was resisting the idea of marrying me, but we didn't have to be officially engaged or married to sleep together. I had plenty of friends who'd proven that to be true.

With a sigh, I kicked off the covers and sat up, throwing my legs over the side of the bed. It was clear I wasn't going to be able to sleep tonight.

Maybe I should've kept my room at the inn. Reilly obviously wasn't paying for it, so whoever was up to matchmaking us must be footing the bill. But this guy was the whole reason I was in Wildwood Valley in the first place.

I pushed myself to my feet and eyed my phone on the bedside table. I'd already sat up late, scrolling mindlessly for a while before realizing I couldn't focus. Couldn't think about anything but Reilly. His dark brown eyes, that strong, solid jawline. Everything about him made me warm all over.

I was still staring at my phone when I heard it. For a few seconds, I ridiculously thought maybe I'd left a video playing, and the sound was coming through the tiny little speaker. But no, it was coming from the other side of the door.

A TV. Maybe Reilly was up.

I grabbed the shorts from my bag—Reilly had stopped at the inn so I could get my stuff—and pulled them on. If he was out there in the living room watching TV, I had to join him. I couldn't just climb back into bed and pretend he wasn't on the other side of that door.

Taking a deep breath, I crossed the rest of the distance and eased the door open.

The living room was dimly lit, the only real light coming from the television on the far wall.

Reilly sat on the worn leather couch, his broad shoulders taking up most of the space, one ankle resting on the opposite knee.

He had a beer in one hand, the remote in the other, and his eyes were fixed on the screen like it held the answers to all life's questions.

I stepped into the room as quietly as I could, but it wasn't like I could hide. He was facing me.

His eyes flicked over me—bare legs, sleep shorts, tank top—then returned to my face, his expression unreadable as ever. “Couldn't sleep?” he asked, his voice a low rumble in the quiet space.

I shook my head. “Not even a little.”

He gestured toward the other end of the couch. “Want to join me?”

I crossed the room and sat, curling one leg under me, trying to pretend my heart wasn't pounding. The warmth from his body radiated across the cushions like some

kind of gravitational pull, and I tried not to lean toward him.

The TV was playing a movie I vaguely recognized—some kind of romantic drama. A couple on screen kissed like the world was ending, hands fumbling at clothing, breathy gasps and soft moans rising beneath a sweeping orchestral score.

Of course. Of course, this was what he was watching.

I glanced over at him, trying to keep my tone casual. “Is this what you usually put on when you can’t sleep?”

His mouth curved, barely. “It was on when I flipped on the TV. I haven’t exactly been paying attention.”

But he was now. His eyes stayed on the screen, but I could see the tension in his jaw, the way his fingers tightened slightly around the neck of the beer bottle.

I shifted my attention back to the TV, letting the heat of the scene wash over me. The woman pulled off the man’s shirt, and he kissed down her neck, hands roaming. It wasn’t crude—it was emotional. Raw. Beautiful. I’d always imagined my first time would be like that.

I bit my bottom lip, then released it and turned to Reilly. “I don’t want to wait anymore.”

He looked over, brow furrowed. “Wait for what?”

“For this.” My voice trembled, but I didn’t look away. “For you.”

His eyes darkened, and he set the beer on the end table, leaning forward slightly, elbows on his knees. “Bridget...”

“I know you said you’re not marrying me,” I said quickly. “And that’s fine. I mean it. You don’t have to. But I came here for a fresh start. I came here because I wanted to feel free. To make choices for myself for once.”

“And you think sleeping with me is the way to do that?”

“Yes.” I swallowed hard. “I want my first time to be with someone who makes me feel safe. Someone who makes me feel wanted. Someone who knows what he’s doing.”

His nostrils flared, and he looked away, dragging a hand over his mouth. “This isn’t a decision you make just because you’re trying to start a new life.”

“That’s not it.” I shifted closer. “I’m ready.”

“You don’t even know me.”

“I know enough. I know you didn’t ask for this, but you didn’t throw me out. I know you’ve got this grumpy lumberjack shell, but you’re solid underneath, steady. You didn’t have to invite me to stay with you, but you did.”

He looked at me then, really looked at me, and his voice dropped. “You don’t know what you’re asking for.”

“Yes, I do.” I reached out, placing my hand on his forearm. His skin was warm and solid, the muscle beneath it taut. “I don’t want candles or rose petals. I don’t want some perfect fantasy. I just want you.”

He didn’t move for a long beat. Didn’t speak. I could feel the push and pull in his body, in his breath, like he was at war with himself. And then, slowly, his hand came up and covered mine.

“Bridget,” he said, his voice rough and low, “if I take you to bed tonight, there’s no going back.”

“I don’t want to go back.”

His hand tightened over mine. “Last chance, sweetheart. You sure this is what you want?”

I met his gaze, heart pounding, and nodded. “I’m sure.”

His eyes flared with heat, and then he stood, tugging me gently to my feet. This was happening. It was soon after meeting him, but somehow I felt like it was long, long overdue.

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REILLY

Slow your roll, man. Slow your roll.

Those were the words running through my head as I led Bridget to my bedroom. Bridget, the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen.

And she was losing her virginity tonight—to me .

It was dark in my bedroom, but no way did I want to flip the light switch to turn on the bedside lamp. The soft glow from the hallway was enough. I wanted her to feel safe. I wanted to see her but not overwhelm her.

I turned to find her standing just inside the doorway to my room—barefoot, flushed, and waiting. I could tell she was nervous, even though she was doing her best to hide it.

“You okay?” I asked.

She nodded. “Yeah. Just...don't stop being gentle.”

“Sweetheart,” I said, stepping close, brushing a strand of hair from her cheek, “I'm not in a hurry. We'll go slow. You tell me what you need.”

She exhaled shakily and gave me a little smile that damn near leveled me. And that was when I knew I had to kiss her. I had to feel those lips against mine.

I wasn't sure who moved first, but we met halfway, my arms going around her and her hands locking behind my neck. She rose on tiptoe as my tongue parted her lips, deepening the kiss as my hands slid up her sides, taking in her curves beneath the thin fabric of the tank top.

I needed her naked. Now.

I took my time lifting the hem of her tank top, giving her space to stop me if she changed her mind.

She didn't. I pulled it over her head and dropped it to the floor.

Then came her bra—hooked in the front, which made it easy.

Her breasts spilled free, and I couldn't stop myself from leaning back to look.

“Jesus, Bridget,” I breathed.

I ran my thumbs gently over her nipples, and she gasped, her whole body arching closer to mine. I kissed her again, deeper this time, one hand at the back of her neck while the other skimmed down her spine and settled on the waistband of her sleep shorts.

Her hands fumbled with the hem of my shirt. I helped her, dragging it over my head and tossing it aside. She ran her palms over my chest like she needed to feel I was real, and then nodded like she'd made up her mind.

“I want to feel you,” she whispered.

I slipped my fingers under the waistband of her shorts and slowly eased them down, kneeling as I did. I kissed the soft curve of her hip, her thigh, her knee as she stepped

out of them.

She was naked in front of me, trembling a little.

“You’re perfect,” I murmured, standing and pulling her into my arms. “Get under the covers. I’ll be right there.”

She climbed into my bed while I grabbed a condom from the drawer. I dropped my pants and briefs, then slipped in beside her. My body was already tight with need, but I shoved that aside. Tonight wasn’t about me.

“Let me take care of you,” I said, brushing my fingers along her side.

She nodded and opened her legs slightly, eyes on mine. I kissed her—her lips, her jaw, the sensitive skin just below her ear—while my fingers explored gently, learning her. I stroked between her thighs, finding her wet, and she gasped.

I circled her clit, slow and careful, until her hips started moving against my hand. When I eased one finger inside her, she stiffened.

“You okay?” I asked.

She nodded, breath shaky. “Yeah. Just...intense.”

“You’re doing perfect.”

I tested her wetness, then shifted my attention back to her clit. Her body clung to me, tight and untried, and my chest ached at how damn much I wanted to make this good for her.

“Reilly...”

Her voice was a breathless plea, her fingers digging into my shoulders as I moved over that swollen bud with slow, deliberate strokes.

I could feel her body responding—her hips lifting, her thighs trembling, her breath coming in soft, uneven gasps against my lips.

Every sound she made, every shudder that ran through her, sent a fresh wave of need crashing through me. But I held back, focusing only on her.

I kissed her again, swallowing her soft moans as I increased my movements on her clit. Her back arched off the bed, her nails scraping lightly over my skin.

“Oh—God—” Her voice broke, her eyes squeezing shut.

“Look at me,” I murmured, moving over her clit in fast, steady circles. “I want to see you.”

Her lashes fluttered open, her gaze locking onto mine. There was so much trust there, so much vulnerability, that for a second, I couldn’t breathe.

Then her breath hitched, her body tensing beneath my touch. “I—I think?—”

She didn’t finish the sentence. She didn’t have to. I knew.

Her hips jerked, her thighs clamping around my hand as the first wave hit her.

A broken cry tore from her throat, her entire body bowing off the bed.

I kept my touch steady, guiding her through it, watching in awe as her face transformed—lips parted, eyes glazed, cheeks flushed.

She was fucking beautiful like this, lost in sensation, completely undone.

And just like that, I was a goner.

Something cracked open in my chest, raw and terrifying. This wasn't just lust. Wasn't just heat. It was something deeper, something I wasn't ready to name.

Her breath came in ragged gasps as she collapsed against the pillows, her body still trembling. I eased my hand from between her thighs, pressing a kiss to her inner thigh before shifting up to gather her against me. She curled into my chest, her heartbeat wild against my skin.

"Holy shit," she whispered, voice dazed.

I chuckled, brushing her hair back from her face. "Good holy shit?"

She let out a breathless laugh, tilting her head up to look at me. Her eyes were still dark with pleasure, her lips swollen from my kisses.

"I didn't know it could feel like that," she whispered.

The wonder in her voice did something to me. Made my chest tighten in a way I didn't recognize.

I kissed her forehead, then her nose, then finally her lips, slow and lingering. "That was just the beginning."

She shivered, her fingers tracing idle patterns over my chest. "What now?"

I smirked, moving away from her. "Now," I said, reaching for the condom on the nightstand, "I make love to you."

Her breath caught, her legs parting instinctively as I rolled on the condom. I took my time, kissing her until she was breathless again. Until her hands were clutching at my back, her body pliant and eager beneath mine.

Finally, it was time. I positioned myself between her legs, holding my weight off her with one arm.

“This part might hurt,” I said softly. “But I’ll go slow. You tell me if you need me to stop.”

“I won’t,” she said, fierce and sweet and vulnerable all at once.

I guided myself to her entrance, heart pounding. The first inch in had her tensing, breath catching. I stopped, kissed her temple.

“Breathe, sweetheart. You’re doing so good.”

She exhaled slowly, relaxing enough for me to push in a little more.

It was like heaven and hell—her body gripping me tight, heat pulsing around me.

The knowledge that I was the first man to ever touch her like this was enough to do me in.

I didn’t deserve her, but God help me, I was going to make this good.

I lifted up and looked down at her. She was so damn beautiful. I moved my thumb to her clit, slowly rolling over it as I watched her eyes widen. She hadn’t expected that, but she liked it.

I moved slowly, carefully, rocking into her in small motions until I was partway

inside. Her fingers dug into my shoulders. She whimpered once, and I froze.

“Too much?”

She shook her head. “Just keep going. Keep touching me.”

I inched farther inside her as I resumed steady movements over her clit. Each movement loosened her just a little more, until her pain shifted to pleasure. Her eyes fluttered closed, and her hips rose to meet mine.

“That’s it,” I murmured. “Just like that.”

I thrust deeper, and she gasped, her legs wrapping around me. Her nails scraped down my back. Her moans grew louder, breathless and broken and beautiful.

I could feel her getting close, so I sped up my movements, not relenting, just continuing to drive her toward orgasm.

“Oh...Reilly...” she cried out.

Her body clenched around me, and I lost it. I thrust once more, hard and deep, and came with a groan, buried in the woman who’d flipped my entire life upside down.

Once it was over, we lay tangled together, bodies slick with sweat and breath ragged. She looked up at me, wide-eyed and glowing.

“Thank you,” she whispered

I kissed her forehead and pulled her closer. “Sleep now. We’ve got time for more later.”

And hell if I didn't already want her again.

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Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 7:40 am

brIDGET

I woke him up with a bang. Literally. Well, the beginnings of a bang.

The sunlight had filtered into my dreams, pulling me to consciousness. I'd pulled back the sheets and found him hard. Morning wood. I'd heard that term somewhere. Probably a TV show. But I liked to think he was dreaming about me.

The cool air from the ceiling fan above chilled my skin as I shifted to a squatting position over him. His cock was so enticing. I just wanted to touch it and taste it and feel it inside me again.

I started with a touch. Just a feather-light graze of my fingertips along his length, watching for any sign of waking.

He didn't stir, so I grew bolder, wrapping my hand around him, savoring the heat and weight of him.

My thumb swiped over the tip, catching the faintest bead of moisture, and I brought my fingers to my mouth, tasting him.

Mine.

The thought sent a thrill through me. I bent down, pressing my lips to the head, swirling my tongue in slow, teasing circles. His breath hitched—just a slight catch—but his hips didn't move. Still asleep, or close to it.

I took him deeper, hollowing my cheeks, my fingers tightening at the base. A low groan rumbled in his chest, and his hand twitched against the sheets. I glanced up just as his lashes fluttered open, his gaze heavy-lidded but sharpening fast.

“Fuck,” he muttered, voice rough with sleep.

I didn’t stop. If anything, I took him deeper, relishing the way his fingers tangled in my hair, not guiding, just holding, like he was afraid I’d disappear.

His hips lifted slightly, a silent plea for more, and I gave it to him, working him with my mouth until his thighs tensed and his grip tightened. Then I pulled back, licking my lips as I met his darkened eyes.

“Good morning,” I murmured.

He didn’t answer with words. Instead, he grabbed my waist and flipped me beneath him in one smooth motion, his mouth crashing into mine. I could feel the hard press of his cock against my thigh. But I didn’t want him on top. Not yet.

I pushed at his shoulders, rolling him back, and straddled him before he could protest. His hands settled on my hips, thumbs tracing circles against my skin as I reached between us, guiding him to my entrance.

His breath stuttered. “Wait. Condom?—”

I paused, hovering over him, the head of his cock nudging at my entrance, breathless and burning with need. “I want to feel you,” I whispered. “Just you.”

His eyes locked onto mine, fierce and searching. “You sure?”

I nodded. “You know I’m clean.”

His jaw clenched. “Me too. Got tested last year. Nothing since.”

A long beat passed. His hands gripped my hips, like he was holding back, thinking. Then he pulled me down for a kiss— deep, consuming, his hand cupping the back of my neck as he breathed against my lips.

“So come here, baby,” he murmured. “Let me feel all of you.”

I sank down slowly, taking him in inch by inch, my body stretching around him. We both groaned at the contact—so raw, so bare. I’d never felt anything like it, the fullness, the heat, the perfect friction of skin against skin.

“God, Bridget,” he choked. “You feel... incredible.”

I rocked my hips gently, testing the angle, the ache giving way to pleasure. His hands guided me, up and down, slow at first, then faster, my breasts bouncing with each rise and fall. His gaze locked onto them, his lips parting, and I arched my back, offering myself to him.

He took the invitation, sitting up to capture a nipple in his mouth, sucking hard enough to make me cry out. The dual sensation—his mouth on me, his cock filling me—was too much. Pleasure coiled tight in my belly, my movements growing erratic.

“I’m close,” I gasped.

He gripped my ass, helping me ride him, his own hips meeting mine thrust for thrust. “Come for me,” he growled against my skin.

And I did. My orgasm crashed over me, my body clamping around him as I shuddered, my nails biting into his chest. He followed moments later, his release

pulsing inside me, his groan muffled against my shoulder.

Reality drifted back in like a slow tide.

I blinked and looked at him, brushing damp hair from his forehead. “We didn’t use a condom.”

I met his gaze, expecting panic, frustration—something. But he was smiling.

Not just smiling. Beaming.

“We might be having a baby before we know it,” he said, voice light, like it was the best news in the world.

I blinked. “You’re...not mad?”

He cupped my face, his thumb brushing my cheek. “Mad? No. I’ve been trying to figure out how to tell you that I’m in love with you. That I want to marry you. Spend my life with you.” He laughed, breathless. “Guess this just sped up the timeline.”

My heart swelled, warmth flooding my chest. “I love you too,” I whispered.

He kissed me, slow and sweet, and for the first time, I let myself believe in forever.

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REILLY

Wildwood Valley didn't have a Justice of the Peace. There wasn't a charming little wedding chapel with a built-in minister and events coordinator, either.

But what Wildwood Valley did have was beautiful scenery. There was no shortage of places to get married outdoors. The big question was which hill with a breathtaking mountain view to choose.

Bridget and I picked a piece of empty land by the water, with a mountain view off in the distance. It was toward the bottom of the parkway that ran through town, about a mile from the inn where I'd picked her up. It was a full-circle moment, closing out the two amazing weeks we'd spent together.

"Do you, Reilly, take this woman to be your wife?"

Old Man Coulter read the vows. He ran the feed store, led the church choir on Wednesday nights, and apparently became an ordained minister at some point.

My buddy Jareth said the guy had even run for mayor.

Jareth was standing behind me as I faced my bride in front of a small group of our friends. So was West.

Like me, West and Jareth were ex-vets who'd come to town after leaving the military.

West ran the town diner, inherited from his grandparents, and he'd somehow

managed to find a girlfriend the same weekend I had.

It was a funny story. We still laughed about both women coming to town to meet me, thinking I was the guy they'd been messaging.

West's girlfriend Mackenzie had fallen in love with him before she even saw me.

But it didn't matter. I belonged with Bridget, and she belonged with me. I'd never been so sure of anything in my life.

"I do," I said as Old Man Coulter reached the end of the vows.

Then he shifted to Bridget. She stared into my eyes, beaming with happiness. We would've gotten married two days after we met, but we wanted our families to come. Well, I did anyway. Bridget's parents still didn't know she was getting married. She swore they'd talk her out of it if they found out.

"It's better to beg forgiveness than ask permission," she'd said, reciting an old adage.

"I do," she said, her voice strong and sure.

And just like that, she was mine.

The old man grinned beneath his white beard and nodded, raising his voice just enough for the small crowd to hear. "By the power vested in me, I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss the bride."

I didn't hesitate. I cupped her face in my hands and kissed her like I'd been waiting my whole life for this moment—because I had. Her lips were soft, warm, trembling with emotion. She melted into me, her hands gripping the lapels of my shirt like she never planned to let go.

When we finally pulled apart, her cheeks were flushed, her eyes shining with unshed tears and the kind of happiness that made a man believe in fate.

We turned together to face the handful of people gathered on the grassy hill. My friends. Her new friends. A few of the locals from Wildwood Valley who'd become family in their own way.

My parents were out there too. Not Bridget's family, but that was okay. She'd chosen this. Chosen me.

Her fingers laced with mine, and I felt her squeeze once, gentle but certain.

A gust of mountain air rustled through the trees behind us, sending a swirl of leaves across the grass and tugging at the hem of her white sundress.

It wasn't fancy, but it was her. Simple, pretty, and just enough lace to hint at softness without frills.

No veil or bouquet, just Bridget. My wife.

I looked down at her and couldn't stop the grin that spread across my face. "You're stuck with me now."

She tilted her chin up, eyes dancing. "Good. That was the whole point."

The guests began to clap, a few whooping like their team had just won the big game. Someone popped open a bottle of cheap champagne. Bridget leaned into my side, and I wrapped my arm around her waist, anchoring her close.

It wasn't the wedding either of us had grown up imagining. It was better. Because this wasn't some society-planned, approval-stamped, hundred-person event. This was

ours. Turned out, we hadn't needed a string quartet or a tiered cake or monogrammed napkins. We just needed each other.

She was already talking about painting the front of the old brick storefront downtown—her soon-to-be coffee shop.

Said she wanted it to smell like vanilla and cinnamon year-round.

Wanted a menu that changed with the seasons and a back patio where people could bring their dogs.

Her whole face lit up when she talked about it.

She'd always dreamed of owning something. Creating something. And she was going to make it happen, right here in Wildwood Valley.

And me? I'd keep working on the logging crew. Cutting trees, hauling timber, keeping my hands dirty and my boots worn. Nothing fancy. But honest work, surrounded by mountains and men I trusted.

We weren't chasing a perfect life. We were building a real one.

And as I stared at Bridget—my wife—I knew I'd spend every day making sure she never regretted choosing this path. Choosing me.

Because this wasn't a mistake.

This was a damn miracle.

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Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 7:40 am

brIDGET

The water had gone perfectly still by the time Reilly stepped into the bathroom.

Candlelight flickered across the tile walls, casting soft golden shadows that danced along the edges of the tub.

Steam curled around my shoulders, and I let my chin rest on my folded arms at the edge, breathing in the scent of lavender and warm water.

I closed my eyes and savored the warmth surrounding me. I was on the verge of falling asleep when suddenly, I felt my husband's eyes on me.

This kind of quiet was rare these days. Rare when your world revolved around a wild eleven-month-old with a personal vendetta against naps. Rare when the only touch between you and your husband was a passing brush of hands during a diaper change or the accidental bump of hips while folding laundry.

So yeah. That quiet, unhurried gaze? I soaked it in like sunlight. Then I opened my eyes.

"You took your time," I murmured, smiling as he stepped closer.

"I was giving you a moment," he said, peeling off his shirt.

"I wanted a moment with you."

His pants hit the floor. “Good. Because I plan on making the most of it.”

I watched him climb into the tub, my breath catching just a little as he sank in behind me.

It wasn’t a huge tub—just the old clawfoot one we’d picked during the bathroom reno—but it was deep enough for him to slide his legs around mine, to pull me back against his chest, to tuck my wet hair behind my ear and press a kiss to my neck.

I sighed and melted into him. “This feels like a dream. No baby to feed. No monitor chirping. No one crying to let me know nap time is over.”

He chuckled low against my skin. “Don’t worry. We’ve got a solid three hours before they call with a potty emergency.”

“Mackenzie promised to only text if it was life or death.”

“Yeah, but West is the one actually on baby duty. To guys like us, potty emergencies are life or death.”

I laughed, the sound light and free. I tilted my head, giving him better access, and he took it, his lips grazing down the slope of my shoulder, lingering like he was relearning me.

His mouth was warm. The kind of warm that made me ache.

“You smell like lavender,” he murmured.

“It’s the fancy bath salts. The ones I don’t allow myself to use on normal days.”

“Nothing about tonight is normal,” he said, and I could hear the smile in his voice.

I turned in his arms, straddling his lap beneath the water. Our skin was slick and wet, my breasts pressing to his chest, my arms wrapping around his neck as I slid my fingers into his damp hair.

“I missed this,” I whispered. “Us. You.”

His chest rose beneath me with a slow, deep breath. “I’m right here, baby. Always.”

I kissed him, soft at first, just tasting him. Then deeper. Wetter. My hips moved on instinct, brushing against the hard length of him beneath the water. He groaned and gripped my waist to steady me.

“You sure?” he murmured against my lips. “We’re not being careful tonight.”

“I don’t want to be careful,” I said. “I want to be pregnant.”

His breath caught.

“Yeah?” he asked, voice rough.

I nodded, locking eyes with him. “I want to give our daughter a sibling. I want you inside me, filling me, claiming me. Making me yours all over again.”

He didn’t speak. Didn’t need to. The groan that tore from his throat said it all.

He kissed me hard, his hands sliding down my back, over my hips, gripping my ass like he couldn’t stand another second of distance.

Then he found the ache between my thighs, sliding two fingers into me with maddening slowness, his thumb brushing over my clit.

I gasped, clinging to his shoulders as my body pulsed around his fingers.

“Jesus, Bridget,” he growled. “You’re perfect.”

“I need you,” I whispered.

He didn’t make me wait. His hands gripped my hips, lifting me just enough to position himself at my entrance.

The water lapped around us as I sank onto him, inch by inch, my breath hitching as he filled me completely.

A low moan escaped my lips, and I rolled my hips, adjusting to the delicious stretch of him inside me.

His hands slid up my sides, thumbs brushing the undersides of my breasts before cupping them possessively. My nipples tightened under his touch, and I arched into him, craving more.

Water sloshed gently as I began to move, rising and falling in a slow, sensual rhythm. My breasts bounced with each motion, the candlelight catching the droplets that slid down my skin.

Reilly’s gaze was dark, hungry, and fixed on the way my body took him. One hand drifted down between us, his thumb finding my clit and moving in slow, deliberate circles. I gasped, my movements faltering for a moment as pleasure shot through me.

“That’s it,” he murmured, his voice rough with need. “Ride me just like that.”

I tightened around him, my thighs trembling as I picked up the pace. The water swirled around us, the heat of it nothing compared to the fire building inside me. His thumb worked me relentlessly, matching the rhythm of my hips, and I could feel my climax coiling tighter and hotter, until?—

“Reilly—”

My voice broke as pleasure crashed over me, my body shuddering as I came hard around him. He groaned, his grip on my hips tightening as he thrust up into me, chasing his own release.

“Look at me,” he demanded, and I forced my eyes open, meeting his gaze as he spilled inside me with a ragged groan. His hips jerked beneath me, his fingers digging into my skin as he emptied himself deep, just like I’d begged for.

We stayed like that for several long minutes, tangled and breathless, water lapping gently around us, our bodies still connected. Finally, I smiled, my cheek resting against his.

“Think we made a baby?” I murmured.

“I hope so,” he said, kissing the side of my mouth. “But just in case we didn’t...”

I laughed. “You’re drawing me another bath tomorrow?”

“Only if you let me join you again.”

“Always.”