



Mountain Man's Mail Order Treat (Wildwood Valley Brides #3)

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Category: Romance

Description: She came to sell jelly, not fall for a mountain man. But one spark changes everything.

My main goal is to sell my jellies at Wildwood Valleys weekend farmers market.

Just a couple of problems with that. One, Wildwood Valley doesnt have a farmers market. The innkeeper plans to set up a table in front of the pancake restaurant for me and only me.

Second problem? The hunky mountain man Im supposed to marry is drop-dead gorgeous. Im drawn to him in ways Id never imagined. And suddenly, my thoughts of exiting town if things dont work out for my business are gone with the wind.

Suddenly, all I can think about is finding reasons to stay.

Mountain Mans Mail-Order Treat is an OTT age-gap romance featuring an alpha hero and V-card heroine. Its a forced proximity ex-military, lumberjack romance with lots of steam thats designed to be read in only 1 hour. If you like short, steamy instalove novellas, you'll love the entire Wildwood Valley Brides series!

Total Pages (Source): 6

Page 1

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:12 am

JARETH

What in the fresh hell had I gotten myself into now?

I could only look for a second or two as I tried to maneuver around a white SUV that had stopped to let someone out. I'd been stuck behind another car as a couple said the longest goodbye in history.

But as soon as the car in front of me jetted around it, I spotted her. And everything that came with her.

Whitley. She was the woman I was supposed to marry, and she was here at the airport, standing at the curb, waiting for me to pick her up. I'd only gotten a glimpse of her, but damn if she wasn't the hottest woman I'd ever seen.

She might be worth it, even if she came with a lot of baggage. Literally.

I rolled down the window as I pulled up to the curb in front of the white SUV. She moved forward to reach my passenger side.

I leaned over to ask, "Whitley Delaney?"

She sidestepped a few feet, then leaned forward, tilting that thick head of golden blonde hair away from her face and making me long to grab handfuls of it while I kissed her.

"Are you my groom?" she asked with a teasing smile.

We'd both seen pictures of each other. I'd insisted on it after I found out that Bobbi, the woman who owned the only lodging in our small town of Wildwood Valley, had signed us up for a mail-order bride situation. Seemed more like online dating but overseen by a woman who didn't ask permission.

She meant well, but had definitely overstepped her bounds.

"Sure am," I said. "Are you my bride?"

"Yep." She nodded. "Pop the trunk, and I'll load this stuff in."

She was out of her mind if she thought I'd sit here while she did that alone. But it shouldn't have surprised me. It had become clear in our conversations that she was an independent woman. She ran her own business, which she started at the age of thirteen.

"It's called the Berry Maiden," she'd proudly announced on one of our calls.

And those two words were written on the three boxes she had stacked next to her four suitcases. Her sweet scent drifted over to me as we worked side by side, loading items into the back of my pickup.

"How did you get all this here?" I asked.

"It cost me a pretty penny in baggage fees," she said. "I probably could've shipped it for cheaper, but it's okay. I'll earn it all back at the farmers market tomorrow."

"Farmers market?"

That had my interest. I was her only transportation, and the closest town to Wildwood Valley was twenty minutes up the interstate. I assumed I was driving her to this

event.

That brought the next question. “How’d you know I’d have room in the back of my truck?”

She stopped everything to stare at me. “Bobbi said you had one of the biggest trucks in town, and she wasn’t wrong. She helped me book my flight and offered me a free place to stay at her inn if, you know, I needed it.”

She wouldn’t need it. We’d already agreed that she’d stay with me. I offered to sleep on the couch, but she said that wouldn’t be necessary. So I assumed I would get lucky with this woman at some point today, which would make me the luckiest bastard in the world.

And that meant nothing could get to me. Not even knowing I’d have to drive twenty minutes each way tomorrow for her to sit at a table selling her jams and jellies for a few hours. Maybe all day—I had no idea how long those things lasted.

I was hoping to spend time getting to know her for our Sunday morning wedding, but it would be fine. We’d spent hours on the phone, so I felt the emotional connection. Tonight, we’d have dinner and work on the physical part.

With both of us working together, it only took a few minutes to get everything loaded into the back of the truck. But I saw in the rearview mirror how badly we’d backed up traffic in the process. I was surprised someone from security didn’t come out to tell us to move it along.

“Ready to meet your new hometown?” I asked as I shifted into drive.

She finished buckling her seatbelt and gave a nod. “I’ve been craving a cheeseburger and fries all afternoon. I can’t wait.”

That brought a frown. “I was planning to stop by the fancy steakhouse in Hartsville. It’s the main town where we get our groceries and supplies.”

There was a feed store in Wildwood Valley, along with a small market, but that wasn’t enough—even for the men like me who lived in our cabins and kept things as simple as possible.

Hartsville had a wide selection of restaurants, including a steakhouse that was perfect for romancing your future wife.

“You don’t have to work to impress me,” she said. “You’ve already done that.”

She looked over at me for that last part, and tendrils of warmth wrapped around my heart.

I hadn’t expected this. Her. The way she moved through the world like she had purpose, even when juggling four suitcases and three boxes of jam.

Whitley was sweet and stunning and smart, and I was already starting to picture what it’d be like waking up next to her every morning in that quiet cabin of mine.

As I headed north on the highway, she pulled a notebook from her tote and started flipping through it.

“What’s that?” I asked, glancing over.

“My to-do list,” she said brightly. “For the next couple of months.”

“Months?”

She didn’t notice my tone at first, just kept scanning the page with her finger. “Yeah,

I've got a few goals for the rest of the summer season. Hit at least four farmers' markets, test a new plum recipe, maybe see if Bobbi's got space for a shelf of my stuff inside the inn..."

I nodded slowly. "That all sounds good."

"And if it doesn't work out," she added with a little shrug, "I'll head back home. I mean, not that I want to, but I kept my apartment lease open-ended just in case."

I didn't say anything right away. Just kept my hands on the wheel, staring straight ahead while the pine trees blurred past. It was like cold water had been dumped over my head.

Not that I expected her to come in with a legally binding heart, but damn, I hadn't figured on her keeping one foot out the door.

She smiled and leaned her head back against the seat. "Don't look so serious. I'm not going anywhere yet. I came to meet you, didn't I?"

Yeah, she had. But I came to marry her, and it was starting to sound like she was here to sample the lifestyle. Like I was just one part of the Wildwood Valley experience she wanted to try on for size.

She didn't say anything else, and I didn't ask. Just pressed my foot a little harder on the gas, suddenly itching to get her home. To show her exactly what she'd be walking away from if she ever decided to go.

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:12 am

WHITLEY

I was in heaven. Pure heaven.

When Jareth first mentioned it, I thought pimento cheese on a burger sounded disgusting. But he was right. It brought something to the burger that regular cheese couldn't.

As I swallowed, I opened my eyes and looked at the man seated across from me. Then I tilted my head as I took in his expression. Nobody had ever looked at me like that before. If I had to compare it to anything, it would probably be the way I would look at that burger before I took my second bite.

“This burger was definitely worth the wait,” I said, answering a question he didn't ask.

God, he was gorgeous. I hadn't expected that.

Sure, I'd seen pictures, but they didn't do him justice.

They didn't capture the thick arms and broad shoulders.

And his eyes...they were just piercing. I couldn't tell if they were blue, green, gray, or hazel.

All I knew was they seemed to see right into my soul.

Yeah, I could definitely imagine kissing this guy. And doing more.

We were sharing a bed tonight. And I was beyond ready to lose my virginity. That was on my to-do list—an item I hadn't even mentioned to him.

Of course, he didn't know I was a virgin. If he did, he might not have wanted to marry me.

“Good,” he said. “So this flea market...”

“Farmers market,” I said. “Right here in town. Bobbi said she's going to set me up early. Prime spot. In front of the pancake house.”

His mouth opened, but not to shove more of his cheesesteak between his lips. He was just staring at me, all his movements having frozen.

“There's a farmers market in front of the pancake house? That's a new one on me.”

I frowned at him. “I just assumed it's every Saturday morning or something. Although I guess a town this small might just have it once a month. Maybe even once a quarter.”

Something about the way he was looking at me didn't sit well. He had no idea what I was talking about.

“I've lived here two years,” he said. “Not long, but I've never seen, nor heard of, a farmers market. Or any other kind of market.”

I shrugged and looked out the window. The parking lot was mostly empty. Just a couple of pickups in addition to Jareth's. He'd parked right near the window so he could keep an eye on my stuff, but I had a feeling that wasn't really something we

had to worry about in this tiny town.

“Well, I’ll help you get set up,” he said. “What time do you have to be there?”

“She said she’d have my table set up at eight, but I could feel free to show up whenever I wanted and stay as long as I was getting sales.”

None of this sounded right, the more I thought about it. It was a little too flexible. Plus, she’d phrased it that she was setting up a table for me, not that the market vendors were supposed to show up at a specific time, which had been my experience with farmers markets back home.

“I was so excited, I didn’t really get details,” I said more to myself than him.

“Couldn’t wait to meet me, huh?”

There it was again, that teasing smile. That was when I realized I’d been treating him like an afterthought when really, he’d been on my mind nonstop since we started talking.

But every time I started daydreaming about a future where we had kids, a dog, and a white picket fence, I pulled myself back. I couldn’t risk getting my heart stomped on again.

Nope. This time, I would remain in control of the situation. I had big dreams, and no man was going to get me all caught up in him again, only to dump me the second some super-skinny hottie got her razor-sharp, perfectly manicured fingernails into him.

“Yes,” I said. “I couldn’t wait to meet you. And to get to know you.” I picked up my burger. “Catch me up on everything I’ve missed since we talked last.”

He took a bite as he dragged a fry through his ketchup. “I got up bright and early and went to work. We’re clearing away a bunch of limbs that fell near Bearclaw Pike. That kept my mind occupied until it was time to come pick you up.”

“You needed your mind occupied?” I asked. “You were excited?”

I wanted to know he was excited about it without giving away the fact that I’d barely slept for the past week. That was how excited I’d been to finally meet him. But I couldn’t let myself be vulnerable again. I couldn’t take that risk.

“Of course,” he said. “What about you? How was your day? I know you spent some of it traveling.”

I laughed. “I spent all of it traveling, actually. I’m one of those people who get to the airport four hours early. I was able to get a bunch of work done, so it’s all good.”

As I spoke, I tried not to stare at him, but I couldn’t help it.

He had big hands. Big everything. Still, his hands stood out to me.

I couldn’t help but remember a conversation I’d overheard about a guy’s hands matching the size of his...

more hidden part. Or maybe it was his feet.

I’d have to take a look at those once he stood.

I was suddenly picturing him naked. His erection, thick and hard as steel. I’d seen naked men before, but only online and in movies, never in person. Suddenly, I wanted nothing more than to get Jareth out of his clothes.

I shifted in my seat, trying to clear the image from my head, but it only got worse. Or better, depending on how you looked at it.

His lips were wrapped around the end of a french fry, and I couldn't stop staring at his mouth. Full and masculine with lips that were a little chapped. I bet they'd be rough against mine. I bet they'd?—

“I need you to help me with something,” I blurted.

He paused mid-chew, eyebrows lifting slightly as he reached for his napkin. “Okay. What kind of something?”

I hesitated. My pulse was racing, and my fingers curled around the edge of my tray like it was a lifeline. This wasn't how I planned to bring it up. Actually, I hadn't planned to bring it up at all.

I cleared my throat. “It's kind of a big thing. Personal.”

He leaned in a little, giving me his full attention. “Whitley, you can ask me anything.”

I swallowed hard, my mouth suddenly dry. “Okay. So I came here for a fresh start. A new life, right? I told myself I was going to go after the things I wanted and stop waiting for permission.”

His brow furrowed slightly, but he nodded, encouraging me to go on.

“Well,” I said, voice barely above a whisper. “There's something I've never done. Something I've been waiting to do with the right person. But life's short, and I'm tired of waiting.”

His expression softened. He still didn't get it.

"I'm a virgin," I said.

Now he really froze. He didn't even blink.

"And I don't want to be one anymore." I bit my lip, heart thudding like a bass drum.

"So, if you're willing, I want it to be with you. Tonight."

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:12 am

JARETH

“ I ’ll get these,” I said, handing Whitley the keys to my cabin.

I needed a second to catch my breath. Being cooped up in the truck with her on the hour-plus drive from the airport to Wildwood Valley was overwhelming enough. But then we’d sat in the diner, where she’d revealed that not only was she a virgin, but she wanted to lose her virginity to me—tonight.

I had no idea how I felt about that. About any of it. I’d hoped things would get physical between us tonight, but I never, in a million years, would’ve imagined she was a virgin.

I hated the way it excited me even more.

She rolled her carry-on up my sidewalk toward the front door of my cabin while I unloaded the other three suitcases, carrying two of them and depositing them on the porch before going back and getting the other.

Then I covered the rest of her belongings with a tarp.

It was safe out here, but it would protect her boxes from the elements.

By the time I got into the cabin, she was nowhere to be seen. A surprise, since this was basically one big open room. Well, aside from the bedroom behind a door and a loft holding a full-size guest bed.

“You in here?” I called out.

She emerged through the door to my bedroom, and my dick jumped to attention at the sight of her standing there. She was still fully dressed, although she had left her shoes by the door, so there was nothing unusually sexy about it. It was just her. Everything about her was sexy.

And now she was standing feet from where I slept every night. Where I jacked off to relieve the stress of a hard day’s work. Where, if I was lucky, I’d be coming inside her in the very near future.

“Sorry,” she said. “I made myself at home. I used your bathroom.”

I grabbed the handles of two of her rolling suitcases but didn’t make a move toward her just yet. “You’re still...uh, you’re still okay sharing the bed with me?”

She nodded. No hesitation. No blush. Just that steady gaze of hers that made it damn hard to think straight.

I cleared my throat and rolled both suitcases toward her as she breezed past me, heading to the door to get her last remaining bag.

I scanned the room as I set the luggage next to her carry-on bag near the dresser.

The bed was made—freshly laundered sheets, extra pillows.

I’d thought maybe she’d want her own space, but after what she told me at the diner, space might not be what either of us wanted.

I busied myself with pointless tasks—straightening a throw blanket at the foot of the bed, adjusting the lamp on the nightstand like I hadn’t already turned it just so earlier.

I didn't know what the hell I was doing.

I just needed to keep my hands moving before I did something stupid. Like reach for her too soon. The nervous energy was a buzz beneath my skin. I didn't know if I was more afraid she'd change her mind or that she wouldn't.

When I came back out, Whitley was standing in the middle of the room, looking around like she was memorizing every inch. I watched her for a second—long enough for her to notice.

“You want something to drink?” I asked, rubbing a hand along the back of my neck. “I've got soda, beer, juice... There might be sweet tea in the fridge unless I finished it.”

She smiled. “Water's good.”

I nodded and headed to the kitchen, grabbing two bottles of water and cracking them open before I returned. She took one from me, her fingers brushing mine, light and quick, but still enough to make me feel it in my gut.

Then her gaze lifted as she pointed toward the ladder behind me. “What's up there?”

I followed her line of sight. “The loft? Just a guest bed. Nothing fancy.”

Her brow arched. “Can I see it?”

“Sure,” I said, but my voice came out rougher than I meant it to. I cleared my throat. “Yeah. Of course.”

She started for the ladder, and I followed. No way was I letting her climb that thing without spotting her.

Only once I was standing behind her did I realize I'd gone from gentleman to perv in the space of a few seconds.

The skirt of her dress came to her calves, but it flowed with the air as she rose upward, blowing out just enough for me to get a glimpse of most of her legs.

I took several steps back and waited for her to reach the top before moving to the bottom of the ladder.

"I assume you never sleep up here?"

"No," I called up. Just a few more rungs and I'd be at the top of the ladder. "The loft was already here when I moved in. All the cabins on this street have them. I figured if any of my military buddies ever came to visit, they could sleep up here."

I stopped at the top of the ladder and froze.

Whitley was seated in the center of the bed, legs crossed like she'd made herself at home.

Okay, so there wasn't exactly anywhere to stand or sit.

This room was all bed, with a tiny sliver of space where the narrow nightstand sat, only big enough to hold a small lamp.

"What about family?" she asked. "I just realized you haven't mentioned them. Parents? Siblings?"

I shook my head. Had been shaking it almost from the start, as soon as she mentioned parents.

“None of that.”

I wanted to leave it there. With anyone else, I would have. I was surprised, with as many hours as we’d spent on the phone, that I’d managed to avoid it this long.

“My aunt raised me,” I continued. “She’s dead now.”

Really, was that all I was going to say about her? It sounded cold, like I didn’t love my aunt. But I’d been devastated by her death. It had come just after I’d enlisted, and it had only cemented my decision. A decision that had taken me away from the only home I’d ever known.

But Whitley didn’t look as stunned as I would’ve expected. Instead, she stared at me with a flat expression, her eyes steady and her face completely neutral.

She wasn’t judging me. My guess? She was trying to figure me out.

“My only siblings are the brothers I served with,” I said. “A couple of them live here now—Reilly and West. You’ll meet them.”

It was clear from her expression that she wasn’t thinking about my friends at this moment. Her mind was on me.

I didn’t see pity in her eyes, though. No, it was more like discovery. As if maybe she’d developed an all-new appreciation for me. A soft spot in her heart.

Was she falling for me? Doubtful. Not yet. But it was a good start toward convincing her that I was the man for her.

“I was raised by my nana,” Whitley suddenly said. “My mom got into drugs. Well, I guess she was already into them when I was born. I’m not sure how I turned out

okay.”

She held up a hand and wiggled her fingers as though to demonstrate she only had five. She let out a laugh—something between a chuckle and a giggle.

Now I was the one staring with an all-new appreciation.

We’d already discovered all the things we had in common—our love for the mountains, a good horror movie, and country music.

But the biggest thing we had in common, we hadn’t even discussed.

Our upbringing. Maybe we’d both been deliberately avoiding the subject.

She patted the bed beside her. “You going to sit with me or just hover there like a nervous teenager?”

I let out a dry laugh, but my hand gripped the ladder tighter. “Whitley...”

“I’m not asking you to do anything. Just...come sit.”

I climbed the last few rungs and lowered myself onto the edge of the bed, careful not to sit too close. The mattress dipped beneath me, and the air shifted between us. Up here, it was all close quarters. No distractions. No distance.

Just her.

She turned toward me, legs still crossed. “You’re wondering if I’m really sure.”

“Yeah,” I said quietly. “It’s not exactly something you can undo.”

Her gaze didn't waver. "I've thought about it a lot."

"And tonight? Me?"

"You think I'm making some kind of rash decision?" she asked. "That I'm trying to prove something?"

I didn't answer.

She gave a small shrug. "It's not like I was saving it for marriage or some magical moment under the stars.

I was just...busy. Obsessed with building something.

I've been working nonstop trying to get my jam and jelly business going.

I did festivals every weekend, ran deliveries during the week, taught myself to design labels.

I didn't have time to date. And then the longer I went without, the harder it got to... you know, just casually hand it over."

Her eyes met mine again, softer now. I knew whatever she was about to say would hit hard.

"But you?" she said. "You don't feel casual."

My throat was dry. I couldn't have said anything even if I wanted to.

She smiled, slow and bold. "If I didn't want this, I wouldn't be up here. I wouldn't have told you."

I looked down, gripping the edge of the mattress, trying to anchor myself to something.

All I could think about was getting her naked. Getting my hands on her warm skin. Her bare thighs straddling me, her mouth parting when I kissed her.

I was one breath away from making the worst kind of mistake, or the best kind of memory. And I still hadn't moved.

"I want this," I said finally, my voice low, rough. "You need to know that."

She didn't say anything, just watched me. Waiting.

I continued. "But I also need you to know...I don't want it if it's just for tonight."

Her brows drew together slightly. I kept going.

"I'm not some checkmark on a list. Not your little 'first time' box to tick before you get back to jam jars and farmers markets. I'm in this, Whitley. For real. For life."

I let the words settle, even though they burned on the way out. I couldn't stop now. I had to get it all out. All the stuff that had been bugging me since she arrived in town, obviously more interested in selling her products than marrying me.

"I don't want to be something you regret tomorrow morning. I don't want to be a detour on your way to whatever business empire you're building. I want you to be sure you're not just here because it's convenient or because you think I'll make it easy."

She blinked. Once. Twice. Then she leaned forward, her palm sliding over mine where it still clutched the edge of the bed.

“You think I don’t know the difference between convenient and right?” she asked quietly. “I’ve done nothing convenient in my whole damn life.”

Her fingers curled around mine. The warmth made me feel more secure than I ever had.

“I came here on a whim, yeah. But I stayed because something in me said this place mattered. You mattered. I’m not trying to build a jelly empire at your expense. I’m just trying to live a life that feels real. And you...” Her lips curled into a soft smile. “You feel very, very real.”

I looked down at our hands, at the contrast of her delicate fingers over mine.

“I’ve waited a long time,” she said, voice barely above a whisper. “I’m not waiting anymore. Not when the one thing I want is right in front of me.”

I swallowed hard. That was it. I couldn’t sit still any longer. I shifted on the bed, turning toward her, cupping the back of her neck as I looked into her eyes.

“Then you better know what you’re starting,” I said. “Because I’m not the kind of man who touches a woman like you and lets her go.”

“Then touch me. Because I don’t want you to let me go.”

That was all the go-ahead I needed. It broke down the last of my resistance.

“Let’s go to my bedroom,” I said.

I hopped off the bed, which put me directly onto the ladder in just one twist and two steps. But I stopped there, noticing she seemed to have no intention of leaving that bed. In fact, she sat up on her knees.

I nearly fell down the ladder because of what she did next. She grabbed the skirt of her dress and tugged it upward. It was meant to be a seductive move, but the skirt was trapped under her knees, so she had to wiggle around to get it free.

It was just about the sweetest sight I'd ever seen. I had to admit, the whole thing had me falling a little deeper.

Finally, she freed the fabric and tugged the sundress upward, dropping it to the bed next to her. All I could see was the gorgeous body in front of me. Curves for days. Rounded hips. Breasts that threatened to spill out over the cups of her black bra.

"I bought this just for you," she said, following my stare to her chest. "I didn't own any sexy underwear. I had no reason to until I knew I was coming here."

"So you aren't just here to sell your jams and jellies?" I asked, gripping the top of both sides of the ladder.

She looked up at me. "You thought that?"

"You seemed...not all that excited about marrying me." I shrugged. "I thought that was the point of you coming here."

"I'm scared. I know we're supposed to get married, but I went through a pretty bad breakup.

We didn't sleep together. I don't know—he kept pushing, but it just didn't feel right.

We were only together six months." She sighed.

"So I'm not sure why it bothered me so much that he dumped me.

I guess it showed me how much it hurts. Not just my pride, either. ”

I didn't know what to say to that. So I remained silent, watching her, waiting for her to explain.

She swallowed hard. “I guess I saw a glimpse of how much it would hurt if I really did care about someone and he left me for someone else.”

“He left you for someone else?” I asked.

She shrugged. “Yes, and I don't know, they seem happy, so I guess she's sleeping with him.”

“I just need to know one thing,” I said. “Am I a rebound?”

Her eyes widened, and she shook her head. “No. I signed up for the website when I was on the rebound, yes, but then I met you. I've barely thought of my ex since we started talking. But...”

My heart sank. Here was the bad news. I wouldn't sleep with her unless I knew for sure that she wouldn't go back to this moron if his new relationship didn't work out.

“Our conversations have me scared,” she said. “I know what can happen if I open my heart to you. You could hurt me.”

“I'm not going to hurt you. I'll never hurt you. I would hurt anyone who hurt you, actually. I'd protect you with my life.”

I knew that much already. And that feeling would only get deeper the harder I fell.

“Good.” A smile spread over her face. “Now get over here and show me what I've

been missing.”

Page 4

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:12 am

WHITLEY

From the first kiss, I knew this was going to be better than I'd ever imagined. And that was saying a lot, because every time I looked at Jareth, all I could think about was wrapping my legs around his naked body and urging him inside me.

But right now, we were just kissing, him holding himself above me on one arm, hand settled at my waist. I'd fallen back on the pillow, and my hair fanned out around me in a way I hoped was attractive, not messy.

And that was how I knew I was already in this too deep. His approval of my appearance meant way too much to me. That had never been the case with a guy before. Well, not to this extreme anyway.

But then, no man had looked at me the way this one did. Not even close.

His lips brushed mine gently at first, sending shivers through my body. I let him control the kiss as my fingertips explored the contours of his arm. The contrast between his hard ridges and my soft curves made me sigh with longing.

His hands skimmed my hips before moving upward, over my stomach, until he reached my bra. His thumb slid over the curve of one breast, and I moaned against his mouth. It felt so good. If this was any indication of what was to come, I was in for a treat.

The biggest treat of my life.

When Jareth broke the kiss, I couldn't hold in a disappointed gasp. I didn't want him to ever stop kissing me. Not until I took my dying breath.

He'd promised not to hurt me. He'd promised to protect me. And somehow I knew I could trust him on that. My heart was safe with Jareth.

He looked down at me for several long seconds, then shifted, putting himself lower on my body, his head close to my chest. He tugged my bra cup down, freeing my breast. Then he lowered his head and ran his tongue around my nipple, finally flicking it over the beaded tip.

I cried out. Oh yeah, this was definitely a treat, and he'd only just started.

He glanced up at me before moving to the other breast, lavishing attention on that nipple. It just felt too good to be real, especially when his fingers trailed a path over the inside of my thigh.

I shifted beneath him, my legs parting slightly, an invitation I wasn't even aware I was making until his hand settled at the top of my thigh. His fingers hovered just beneath the edge of my panties, sending sparks up my spine with nothing more than the promise of a touch.

His mouth left my breast with a slow, teasing drag of his tongue, and he shifted until he was hovering over me again. His dark eyes locked onto mine as his fingers finally— finally —slid beneath the lace of my panties. My breath hitched, my hips arching instinctively toward his touch.

“So eager,” he murmured, his voice rough with desire. “I love that about you.”

His fingers traced delicate, maddening circles just above where I needed him most, and I whimpered, my nails digging into his shoulders. “Jareth?—”

“Tell me what you want,” he commanded, his breath hot against my throat as he kissed his way up my neck.

“You,” I gasped. “God, just—touch me.”

A low growl rumbled in his chest, and then his fingers were there, sliding through my slick heat, teasing my entrance before stroking upward in one slow, deliberate glide. My back arched off the bed, a cry tearing from my lips as pleasure shot through me.

“Fuck, you’re perfect,” he groaned, his thumb pressing against my clit in tight, relentless circles while his fingers worked me deeper. “So wet. So fucking responsive.”

I was already trembling, my thighs shaking around his hand as he drove me closer and closer to the edge. His mouth crashed back onto mine, swallowing my moans as his fingers curled inside me, hitting a spot that made me see stars.

“Come for me,” he demanded against my lips.

And just like that, I shattered. Pleasure exploded through me, my body clenching around his fingers as wave after wave of ecstasy rolled through me. I barely had time to catch my breath before Jareth was shifting over me, his hard length pressing against my thigh, his eyes burning with hunger.

“That was just the beginning,” he promised, his voice a dark, delicious threat.

I smiled up at him. “Now it’s your turn.”

And as he settled between my thighs, I knew I was in for the ride of my life.

Jareth’s body pressed against mine, his arousal hot and heavy along my thigh. I could

feel the tension in his muscles, the restraint in every breath he took, and it thrilled me—knowing how much he wanted me, how hard he was fighting to keep control.

His lips found mine again, this kiss deeper, hungrier, as if he couldn't get enough. I tangled my fingers in his hair, pulling him closer, my hips lifting instinctively against him.

Then, just as he began to shift, aligning himself between my legs, I suddenly remembered—protection.

“Wait,” I gasped, breaking the kiss. His dark eyes flickered with concern, but I quickly reassured him, stroking his jaw. “I just... we didn't talk about birth control.”

Jareth stilled, his expression unreadable for a moment before he exhaled sharply. “Shit. You're right.”

He started to pull back, but I tightened my grip on his shoulders. “I'm not on anything,” I admitted, my voice steadier than I expected. “And...I don't want to use anything.”

His brows lifted in surprise. “You don't?”

I shook my head, my pulse racing. “No. I want you. All of you. No barriers.” I swallowed, then added, softer, “And if that means we start a family... I want that too.”

Jareth's gaze burned into mine, searching, questioning. “You're sure?”

“Completely.”

A slow, possessive smile curved his lips. “Good. Because the thought of filling you

up, of putting a baby in you..." His voice dropped to a rough whisper. "Fuck, it's all I can think about now."

My breath hitched at his words, heat pooling low in my belly.

He kissed me again, deep and claiming, before pulling back just enough to murmur, "It's your first time. I'll go slow."

I nodded, nerves and anticipation twisting together as he positioned himself at my entrance. His thumb brushed over my clit in slow, soothing circles, easing the tension, preparing me.

"Relax for me," he murmured, pressing forward just slightly.

I gasped at the unfamiliar pressure, but his touch never stopped—gentle, rhythmic strokes that sent sparks of pleasure through me, distracting from the discomfort.

"That's it," he praised, his voice thick with restraint. "Just like that."

He pushed deeper, and I moaned, my body adjusting, the pain fading beneath the steady pleasure of his thumb on my clit.

"You feel incredible," he gritted out, his hips flush against mine now, fully sheathed inside me.

I arched beneath him, overwhelmed by the sensation of being so completely filled, so claimed. And then his thumb circled faster, his other hand gripping my hip as he began to move.

The friction was exquisite, the pleasure building so fast it stole my breath.

“Jareth!” I cried out as another orgasm crashed over me, my body clenching around him, pulling him deeper.

He groaned, his rhythm faltering as he lost control, his hips driving into me with one final, desperate thrust. “Fuck yes,” he growled.

And with that, he spilled his seed inside me, his release hot and perfect. As I rode out the last of my own orgasm, I couldn’t help but smile at the thought we might have made a baby.

A baby. Jareth’s baby. I suddenly couldn’t think of anything I wanted more.

For a long moment, we stayed like that, breathless, tangled together, his forehead resting against mine. Then he smirked and brushed my lips with his.

“Are you sure you want to start a family?” he asked.

I laughed, breathless, and pulled him down for another kiss. “More than anything. But only with you.”

Jareth eased out of me slowly, his movements tender, and rolled to his side, tugging me into his arms. My head found his chest, my leg sliding over his, as we adjusted into a messy, perfect tangle of limbs.

His hand traced lazy circles over my back, and for a while, neither of us said anything. The silence wasn’t awkward. It was the kind that only came after something real. Something life-altering.

Eventually, he huffed a quiet laugh.

“What?” I asked, my cheek pressed to his bare skin.

“We’re in the guest bed.”

I blinked, then looked around. He was right. We were still in the loft, on the full-size bed. But it was plenty of room for us.

“So?” I murmured.

“I don’t know,” he said. “I just...figured our first time would be in my bed.”

I smiled into his chest. “You mean the one downstairs that doesn’t have you in it?”

His laugh rumbled beneath me. “Good point.”

I tipped my head up to look at him. “I don’t care where we are. As long as I’m with you.”

He looked down at me, that slow, crooked smile softening his whole face. “Then we’re staying right here.”

“Good,” I whispered, pressing a kiss to his collarbone.

Jareth tugged the blanket over us, then wrapped both arms around me like he had no intention of letting go. And I hoped he wouldn’t. Not tonight. Not ever.

His breathing slowed, deepened. My eyelids felt heavy, and the last thing I remembered before sleep pulled me under was the steady beat of his heart beneath my ear...and the warmth of his body wrapped tightly around mine.

Safe. Sated. Completely his.

And for the first time in forever, I didn’t feel alone.

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:12 am

JARETH

This was the very definition of making lemonade out of lemons.

When I returned with lunch, I pulled into the Wildwood Valley Pancake House parking lot, casting a quick glare toward the inn. That glare was for Bobbi—the one who'd promised my girl a farmers market and instead had given her a lone table in front of the pancake restaurant next door to the inn.

I pulled into the closest space I could get and cut the engine. A crowd had gathered in front of Whitley's table. I couldn't even see her from here, it was so thick.

And that was when I realized I should be thanking Bobbi, not glaring in the general direction of her inn. After all, if it weren't for her, I definitely never would've met Whitley. She'd changed my life.

She was my life.

I grabbed the sack of sandwiches I'd bought while I was in Hartsville picking up supplies, then hopped out of the truck. By the time I got to the table, it was clear she probably wouldn't be able to break for lunch. But I could pitch in and help clear this line.

Or so I thought. As it turned out, jams and jellies were much more complicated than I thought. People had questions.

“How sweet is this one?”

“Are there any artificial sweeteners?”

“How long does it last?”

Still, I managed to help a little once I figured out how things worked. I bagged up items and ran some payments through the little app on the tablet she used as a cash register. She called it a POS, which meant piece of shit in my world but point of sale in hers, apparently.

“Thank you,” she said to me once the last of the crowd was gone. “It’s been like that all morning. I didn’t think I’d ever clear that line away.”

She plopped down in one of the two folding chairs Bobbi had set out. I’d insisted at the time that I was off to run some errands, but Bobbi seemed to know I’d eventually be back to help. Or just to hang out with my girlfriend.

“I was mad at first,” she said. “I thought Bobbi had wasted my time with this supposed farmers market. But I’ve never made this much money.”

I sat down and opened the bag from the deli, pulling out a sandwich and chips for each of us. Then I grabbed a water from the cooler I’d set under her table—it was full of ice and drinks I’d packed myself.

“Yeah, I was about to go chew her out,” I said. “But you might be on to something.”

I scanned the parking lot, which was still dotted with just a few cars. Most of the customers were on their way out when they stopped by Whitley’s table.

“I’d say a few other local businesses will probably join you here soon. It’ll become a full-fledged farmers market before you know it.”

She looked over at me. “Do you think?”

I shrugged and unwrapped my sandwich, an ultimate meat sub. “That’ll work for a while, but eventually you either need a food truck or a storefront.”

She sighed. “That’s the dream.”

She bit into her sandwich, closing her eyes as she savored every bite. I’d noticed her doing that last night too. Finally, she opened her eyes and stared across the street.

She was visualizing it. I could tell. If that was her dream, I’d do everything I could to support her in achieving it.

“I think we might need a strip mall over there,” she said. “My little shop, maybe a café where I can grab a fancy iced latte every morning before I open. Also, a great little meat-and-three where I can pick up dinner and bring it home after working all day.”

I chuckled. “Well, as long as you’re looking out for the needs of the community?—”

“This community will grow. You told me two of your friends have already found brides through the same site I used.”

“Well, one did. The other met his match the old-fashioned way. She stumbled into his diner looking for wine.”

“Now that’s a story.” She set down her sandwich. “But my point is, this town’s going to grow fast. You’ll see. And the women my age—the ones coming from suburbs and big cities—we need our iced lattes and to-go food, preferably delivered directly to us.”

Food delivery was a long way off in this town.

First, we needed restaurants. But she was right.

This town was going to grow fast. The tiny elementary school would work for now, but I guaranteed by the time our kids reached middle school, Wildwood Valley would outgrow the small, attached building that housed it.

Her bag of chips crinkled as she reached in to take one. “Do you think Bobbi’s still doing it?”

“Doing what?” I looked up.

She’d reminded me I hadn’t touched my own chips, and half of the first of my two sandwiches was now gone. I opened the bag and chomped on a chip as I scanned the view.

“Setting you guys up with women you’ve never met,” she said. “To marry them.”

She probably didn’t know my part of that story, so it was time to share it with her.

“I was the only one on our crew who sought it out. I’ve always wanted to get married and have kids.

I just needed the right woman. The rest of the crew...

” I shook my head. “We have a lot of guys scared of commitment in this town.”

“So you think she’s done?” Whitley asked.

I chuckled. “Not a chance in hell. I’d say she already has the next bride on her way.”

We both looked over to the right—to the inn parking lot, which was dotted with vehicles.

“She’s probably in there right now.” Whitley nodded toward the inn. “Bobbi’s next victim.”

I grinned, turning my gaze back to the beautiful woman at my side. “You really think Bobbi works that fast?”

“Oh, please. My guess is the bride is checking in at the front desk this very minute, dragging her suitcase upstairs and wondering if this town is as crazy as it sounds.”

I chuckled. “You might be right.”

She leaned in slightly, a playful gleam in her eyes. “I usually am.”

My gaze drifted back toward the inn, where a door on one of the parked cars had just popped open. A woman stepped out, adjusting her bag over her shoulder and glancing around like she was trying to get her bearings.

Whitley followed my gaze. “Maybe that’s her.”

I tilted my head. “Could be.”

She looked young, nervous. Maybe even a little hopeful.

“Well,” I said, “if she is, the only question is, which one of my buddies is about to meet the love of his life?”

We both laughed, but before I could throw out any names, I noticed another woman heading straight for the table. Not a stroll, but a beeline. I felt Whitley shift beside

me.

“Uh-oh,” she whispered. “Looks like business is picking up again. Do I look professional enough?”

“You do,” I said. “You look like a boss.”

She smiled, cheeks flushing just slightly. “You make me feel that way.”

I reached under the table and gave her hand a quick squeeze. “That’s because you are.”

We barely had time to exchange a look before the woman reached the table.

I glanced at my girlfriend—soon to be my wife. “Ready?”

She nodded. “Let’s do this.”

And together, we stood to greet the customer.

Page 6

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:12 am

WHITLEY

I hadn't planned on working on date night. But when you love what you do, does it ever really feel like work? Besides, my husband was beside me, both of us standing at our large kitchen island, with preserves on the stove behind us and various decorative mason jars in front of us.

"This is much easier without the kids," he said.

We often tried to make jelly as a family. Our two middle schoolers loved helping me. We even gave them a dollar for each jar they finished. We never had to pay much because they usually got bored and wandered off a few minutes into the work.

"Okay, this one's ready," Jareth said, bringing over a pot of jelly that had been cooling on the stove for a good half hour.

"If we keep this up, soon you're going to be better at this than I am."

"Never. But you could set up manufacturing for this."

I shook my head again. "No way. What makes it great is that it's homemade. Once you get into mass production...well, it just isn't the same."

Besides, I had a team. A group of high school kids helped me out at the shop, mostly packaging things up and stocking shelves. But gradually, I'd turn this part of it over to a small group of trusted employees that I'd train on my processes.

For now, though, I was making this in my kitchen on a Friday night because we'd sold out of strawberry, the most popular flavor. The annual motorcycle rally was happening next week, bringing hundreds of people into town for the long holiday weekend.

The moment the last jar was sealed and the clink of the lid echoed on the counter, I felt him come up behind me. His arms slid around my waist, fingers sticky with sugar and strawberries. He pressed a slow kiss to the back of my neck.

"We could take a break," he murmured against my skin.

I leaned into him. "And do what?"

His hands skimmed over my hips, then lower, the heat in his touch unmistakable. "I can think of a few things."

I turned around in his arms, my gaze flicking to the still-warm pot of jelly beside us on the island. "You said it yourself. This is much easier without the kids."

His smile turned wicked. "You're thinking what I'm thinking?"

I nodded slowly. "I want you. Right here."

That was all it took. He reached for the hem of my shirt, tugging it over my head in one swift motion. My bra followed a second later. I shivered as the air met my skin. But then his hands were on me, his mouth hot and hungry against my collarbone.

"You smell like strawberries," he said, pulling my nipple between his lips.

"You can thank the jelly."

"Oh, I intend to."

He grabbed a spoon from the counter, still warm from stirring, and dipped it into the pot. I watched, breathless, as he lifted a scoop of glistening red jelly and let it drip slowly onto the swell of my breast. The contrast of heat and sticky sweetness made me gasp.

Then his mouth followed. He licked a slow, deliberate path up my skin, groaning low in his throat.

“Fuck, you taste good.”

My jeans hit the floor, and his weren’t far behind. We twisted around until my back was against the island, laughter mixing with moans as he lifted me, sat me on the cool counter, and spread my legs.

“Don’t move,” he said.

I didn’t dare.

He dipped his fingers back into the jelly, this time trailing it along the inside of my thigh. The heat of it made me writhe, but when he lowered his mouth to lick it clean, I nearly came apart.

“You’re going to be the death of me,” I gasped.

He looked up from between my thighs, eyes dark and glittering. “You started it.”

Then he buried his face between my legs and licked a slow, torturous path through my slick heat.

His tongue was relentless, circling my clit with just the right pressure before dipping lower, tasting me deeply.

The contrast of the warm strawberry jelly and my own arousal sent shivers of pleasure through me, my hips arching off the counter.

“Jareth...” My fingers tangled in his hair, holding him exactly where I needed him.

He groaned against me, the vibration making me cry out. His hands gripped my thighs, spreading me wider as he worked me with his mouth—sucking, teasing, and devouring until my entire body tensed, pleasure coiling tight.

“Oh God, yes!”

My orgasm crashed over me in waves, my back arching as I gasped his name. He didn’t let up, licking me through every last shudder until I was trembling, oversensitive, and gripping the edge of the counter for balance.

Before I could catch my breath, he stood, his cock hard and straining against his boxers. He shoved them down, freeing himself, and I licked my lips at the sight of him.

“My turn,” he growled.

He grabbed my hips and dragged me to the edge of the counter, then lined himself up and pushed inside in one deep, claiming stroke. I gasped at the stretch and the fullness, my nails digging into his shoulders as he buried himself to the hilt.

Then he started to move. Hard, fast, desperate.

The kitchen filled with the sound of skin slapping skin, my moans mingling with his rough groans. Every thrust sent pleasure sparking through me, my body still sensitive from my first orgasm, already winding tight for another.

He leaned down, capturing my mouth in a searing kiss, his tongue tangling with mine

as he fucked me deeper. I could taste myself on his lips, mixed with the sweetness of strawberries, and it only made me hotter.

“Come for me again,” he demanded, his voice rough.

His thumb found my clit, rubbing tight circles, and that pushed me over the edge. I cried out as my second orgasm ripped through me. He groaned, his hips stuttering as he followed me over the edge, spilling deep inside me with a ragged growl.

For a long moment, we stayed like that—panting, trembling, still joined. Then he pressed his forehead to mine, his breath warm against my lips.

“Best batch of jelly we’ve ever made.”

I laughed breathlessly. “We should sell this at the shop.”

He smirked, pulling me close. “Over my dead body.”

And then he kissed me again—slow, deep, and promising. I smiled against his mouth. Maybe working on date night wasn’t so bad, after all.

She’s an adventurer who loves hiking and kayaking. He’s a reclusive mountain man who would rather just hang out and watch TV.