



Praise Me: Lumberjack

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Description: Hollywood starlet Jenna Fairchild is chained to a tree. Minus her clothing. Why? Her manager is adamant that she ditch her innocent sitcom star image and blossom into a sex symbol in the eyes of the public. Now, however, with the chains biting into her bare skin and a dozen pairs of eyes staring at her, she's scared. Unsafe. Go figure that the only one to notice—and care about her distress is Penn, a mammoth local lumberjack, who is there to cut down the very tree to which she is chained. This single father in flannel is mighty, gruff, twice her size...and fourteen years her senior. But he's the first person who has ever made her feel protected. Safe. Hungry for touch. Penn and Jenna come from two different worlds, though. Will their bond be broken when she returns to LA? Or is theirs the kind of love that can surmount any obstacle?

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CHAPTER 1

JENNA

You're probably wondering how I ended up here.

Chained to an oak tree in the middle of the forest. Naked.

Believe me, I'm wondering that myself.

The bark is digging into the flesh of my buttocks and back. The chains are restrictive and heavy, making it difficult to breathe. My manager, agent, an editorial team and a dozen assistants stare back at me, waiting for me to take the social media shot of the century.

We flew here on a private jet. To commemorate Earth Day.

Even I see the irony.

Maybe being chained to this tree was inevitable, though. Child actors are supposed to go down a wild and confusing path on their quest to be taken seriously, right? The transition is never seamless. It's bumpy and often humiliating. A coming-of-age story playing out under the microscope of judgment.

I played an iconic role on a long-running sitcom called *Hey Betty* and now, unless I do something out of the box to prove I'm an artist and a grown woman—instead of a fifteen-year-old with a catchphrase—I will be irrelevant by next week.

Or so my manager, Dustin, tells me.

“Look passionate, Jenna! You are trying to save the tree from being chopped down,” shouts the photographer. “Dare them to come take it from you!”

“Who is them?”

“Them is me,” booms a voice from the back of the crowd. A collective jolt goes through the group, and they step aside, allowing the speaker to come forward.

And suddenly, the fact that I’m naked takes on a whole new meaning.

It’s one thing for the makeup artist, photographer and manager to see me naked. They’re a bunch of desensitized Los Angeles natives.

But this man, this giant man with a chainsaw, with his robust frame, makes me feel truly exposed in my nudity. Flustered and antsy. My hips automatically drop at an angle, cocked, my back attempting to arch off the tree. An involuntary preen. The chains are covering my breasts and sex, but only barely, and every inch of me besides that is on display. My stomach and cleavage and the highest points of my thighs. My arms are restrained, otherwise I might actually fix my long chestnut-colored hair as this man approaches—he’s that compelling in all his square-jawed, exasperated masculinity.

“Y-you’re here to chop down the tree?” I ask him as he draws closer.

God, he’s so tall. Blends right in with the mighty oaks on all sides of us.

They don’t make men like this in LA.

Not only is he unique in stature, but he’s trying not to ogle me. With all his might.

There's a deep furrow between his black brows, his breathing growing just a hint shallow as that intense gaze sweeps my thighs and tummy. Then he clears his throat. Hard. And turns to address my manager instead of me. "This tree and three others are scheduled to come down today," he says in that low, brusque voice. "Unless you have a permit for this...whatever it is, I'm going to need you to unchain the girl and get the hell out of my forest."

"Your forest?" I ask, blinking. "You own the forest?"

"I'm as close as it gets."

How is it that I feel his voice in my stomach? "Care to explain?"

He sighs. "Ever heard of a lumberjack? I'm here to harvest these trees. Where do you think the wood comes from that built your pretty little house. Out of thin air?"

"I have a condo," I say uselessly.

"Good, Jenna!" exclaims the photographer. "Get pissed. Tell him the tree isn't coming down on your watch. Not on Earth Day!"

My face heats. "Don't you think there are better ways to get our point across?" I call to Dustin.

"Yes," deadpans the man with the chainsaw. "I do."

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“Like, maybe...a donation?” I add, unable to meet the giant’s eyes.

But I feel them on my body, nonetheless.

Reluctantly raking up and down, followed by the sound of him swallowing.

“Okay,” says the photographer, lowering his camera. “We have some great shots of Jenna solo, then squaring off with the lumberjack. What else do we need to get?”

If I blinked, I would have missed the sly look between my agent and manager.

But I didn’t. I saw it. And it causes my muscles to tie themselves in knots.

“Jenna,” says Dustin, floating forward and gesturing with his phone. “We’re here to celebrate Earth Day and that’s all well and good, but we both know there’s a bigger picture. Our goal is to have the public view you as an adult, instead of Hey Betty, right?”

“Jesus,” laughs the lumberjack without humor, dragging a hand down his face. “I thought that was you.”

“You watch Hey Betty?” I ask.

“My daughter watches it,” he corrects me. “The reruns play on a loop in our house.”

Daughter. This man is old enough to have a child? How old does that make him? Thirty? Thirty-five? I just turned nineteen last week and I barely know how to pour a

bowl of cereal, let alone consider having babies. His world is vastly different than mine.

“So...you’re married?”

I don’t know why I ask that. But it seems important, seeing as how I’m naked two feet away from him.

“Divorced,” he grumbles.

“Oh.” I’m definitely not relieved. That would be silly. Right? With an effort, I drag my attention off the lumberjack and refocus on my manager. “You were saying...?”

“Right.” He punches out a quick text. “We’re trying to break free of this Betty image, are we not?” He doesn’t wait for me to respond. “Would it benefit us to...let the chains slip a little? Maybe leak a few shots of you struggling in the chains and...oops, there’s a nipple slip. Or maybe a flash of something...lower? Just a peek, babe. To show everyone you’re not a child actor anymore. You’re a serious artist.”

My heart is pounding a thousand miles an hour. I was chained before, but now I’m trapped. “How does a wardrobe malfunction make me a serious artist?”

“You know what I mean,” says Dustin. “We’re launching you as a sex symbol!”

I’m suddenly very aware of my position. Chained to a tree with a dozen men staring at me, waiting for me to make a decision. They all came here knowing I would be asked to do this, didn’t they? I’ve been played. I’m a commodity. A body. A paycheck. Not a living, breathing human being with a soul.

In this business, people will climb on your shoulders to reach the next rung. Not only in business, though. The same thing has happened in my personal life. My parents

were humble, supportive people once upon a time. Until they were blinded by dollar signs and started draining my bank accounts to make “investments.” Cosmetic surgery, trips to the south of France, shopping sprees at Saint Laurent. Almost like they were in a race to spend my hard-earned money before I got old enough to claim it for myself.

Instead of protecting me from the dangers of this job, they became the danger.

Now my only option is to protect myself.

“I don’t want to catch a wardrobe malfunction on camera,” I whisper. “C-can someone unlock the chains and cover me up?”

“Don’t be precious about this, Jenna.” My manager is rolling his eyes, and I have the strongest urge to cry. “It’s not like we’re doing a full frontal.”

“She asked you to unlock the chains,” rasps the lumberjack. “Do it. Now.”

“You’re not in charge here,” blusters Dustin.

The lumberjack looks him dead in the eye and revs his chainsaw. “The fuck I’m not.”

“Okay. Okay.” My manager backs away, hands aloft in surrender. “Someone get Jenna out of those chains.” Under his breath, he says to the photographer. “You know what to do. Get the shot.”

Helplessness rattles in my limbs, a glopping tear rolling down my cheek, as one of the personal assistants rushes behind the tree to unlock the chains.

I have no control. They’ve taken my control.

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Right before the chains drop away, which will leave me completely naked and vulnerable to the camera—not to mention, everyone’s phones—the lumberjack drops his chainsaw and steps in front of me, blocking me from view.

“I’ve got you, baby.”

CHAPTER 2

Penn

Oh lord.

What have I gotten myself into?

One of the park rangers informed me a film crew from Los Angeles was out here making a ruckus and disturbing the wildlife. When I came to kick them out, this scene was the last thing I expected. A beautiful young woman chained to a tree being exploited by a bunch of men old enough to be her father. Vultures.

You’re one to talk.

Yeah. Fine. At thirty-three, I’m damn close to being old enough to be Jenna Fairchild’s father, too...and I shouldn’t be noticing her long legs and painted pink toes. I shouldn’t be wondering how her belly button tastes. Or how those big green eyes would look staring up at me in the dark. And I’m done noticing. Done. My kid has a poster of Jenna on her bedroom wall, for Christ’s sake.

Fine. She sure as shit doesn't look like that glossy representation anymore.

Not even close.

But she's still young.

Way too young for a broken-down divorced single dad with a hint of a gut.

With that truth acknowledged, I force myself into a purely protective mindset and shield her from view, unbuttoning my flannel shirt to cover her, as soon as those chains drop. But I don't quite have the final button undone when the heavy links drop to the forest floor and there she is, in all her naked glory, right there in front of me.

All perky tits and palm-sized hips. Tan lines in the shape of an itty-bitty bikini.

A pussy waxed clean as a whistle. God almighty.

Not to mention the gorgeous face that no doubt made her a multi-millionaire.

Every inch of her was sculpted by angels.

I only get a brief glance at her perfect curves and soft lines, but it's enough to ruin me for the rest of my life...and now I'm just pissed the hell off, because these men want to show this off to the world against her will? Not if I have something to say about it.

My chest seizes up at the sight of a tear rolling down her cheek, and then I'm wrapping her in flannel, neck to knees, and hauling her up against my chest. "I've got you, baby," I say again, vibrating with rage on her behalf. "Where are your..." I search for the right word. "People. Where are the people who are supposed to be protecting you?"

“I don’t have any,” she whispers, snuggling close to me, hesitating for the barest moment before wrapping her arms around my waist. “It looks like you’ve got the job now.”

“Me?” I’m shocked by the sense of responsibility that crowds my throat. “I’m supposed to be throwing you out of here.”

She leans back, her chin nestled in my chest hair, blinking tearful eyes up at me.

Pouts. Ever-so-slightly.

And my heart starts to knock in a dangerous rhythm.

“Can you take me to my trailer?” she sniffs.

“I...I, uh...”

Damn, I feel like an awkward giant, holding this flawless, young actress when I’m nothing but a laundry list of flaws. A chest full of hair. Faded tattoo sleeves, the beginnings of some love handles. Sure, I’m strong as an ox. I wield a chainsaw and load lumber for a living, but my free time is spent with my daughter, Erin, and pizza is the only food she eats, without fail. In another life, I was on a high protein diet and a strict gym regimen, but not now. I’m not soft by any means, but I’m not the kind of man who’d attract a princess of the screen like Jenna Fairchild.

Most likely, she sees me as the safe, older presence in this situation.

That’s what I’m going to be for her. The way I hope someone would be for my daughter, if she is ever in a bad position like this in the future.

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“Sure,” I say, finally, bundling her closer, trying like hell to ignore the mounds of her tits against my stomach. Her vanilla sugar scent. “Where is your trailer?”

“Not too far away. In the clearing over here.” She nods toward my right shoulder. “Don’t let them take any more pictures of me,” she whispers, her cheek nuzzling between my pecs. Looking up at me like I’m her hero. “Please.”

Without hesitation, I turn my head and lock eyes with the slimeball who suggested she flash the camera. “I’m taking her to her trailer. Snap a photo, I snap your neck. Do you LA punks understand me, or should I talk slower?”

Slimeball pales. “We get the message.” Still, he leans to the right, trying to address the shivering girl in my arms. “Jenna, we don’t know anything about this man. You really shouldn’t be going anywhere alone with him.”

“I feel safer with him than I do with you.” She lowers her voice to a bemused whisper. “Safer than I do with anyone.”

Pressure catches me in the chest and I’m afraid to explore where it’s coming from, so I don’t waste any time lifting Jenna into my arms and stomping off toward the trailer. She rests her head on my shoulder and gives me that hero-worship look again, her fingers reaching up to stroke the side of my face. Protector. That’s how she sees me. Fate put me in the right place at the right time. That’s all this is. I need to look at her beautiful face objectively.

Not...

Not with this terrible yearning in my blood.

But Jesus, would any man on this earth be capable of looking at this girl and not thinking...what if? What if I was a decade younger?

What if I was worthy of someone so sweet?

You're not.

Up ahead, I spot the white trailer, and we reach the steps within seconds. I yank open the door and turn sideways to carry her inside, letting it slap shut behind me.

Pink.

Everything is pink.

Dainty and flowery and fragile.

"Hell. I feel like a bull in a china shop in here. I'm afraid to break something."

Jenna's laugh is muffled by my shoulder. "Anything you break, I can replace. Except my heart." Her eyes sparkle with a hint of humor, to let me know she's joking. Obviously. "How is it that I feel so safe with you and I don't even know your name?"

"Penn," I say gruffly, hating how much I love her wrapped in my shirt. "Penn Holland."

"Penn Holland," she repeats in a murmur.

And to my horror, my balls get tight. Really, really fucking tight.

I'm thirty-three. A father to a seven-year-old. I just witnessed Jenna being horribly exploited. I should be ashamed of myself for getting stiff.

It has been way too long since I had sex. Years, I reckon.

Of course, this world-famous beauty that I just saw naked is getting me worked up. That's all this is.

Sure.

Explain the lump that thickens in my jugular every time she bats her eyelashes.

Quickly, I search for a place to set her down. "I should go now. Let you get dressed."

"No," she blurts. "No, don't go. Please? I was hoping..."

"Hoping, what?"

She wets her lips, and I barely stifle a moan. "I was hoping you'd cuddle with me?"

"Cuddle?" I fairly shout at her, my cock starting to pulse like a son of a bitch. "What the hell for?"

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“To make me feel better.”

“Christ.”

Say no. You’ve got to say no.

But I don’t have a denial in me when she turns those hopeful eyes on me.

Beyond fucked, is what I am.

“Only for a minute.”

Her resulting smile almost drops me to my knees.

No wonder she’s a star. She’s a force of nature.

“My bed is in the back,” she says quietly, her fingers threading through my beard.

“We’ll be most comfortable there.”

Comfortable?Ha.

I can feel the teeth of my zipper biting into my erection.

“How old are you?” I ask, carrying her toward the rear of the trailer, where I can see a full-sized, pink, frilly bed. Such a pretty spot to doom myself.

“Nineteen.”

“For fuck sake.”

“You?”

“Too old to be cuddling you, baby.”

With that, I lay her down on the bed and stand bare-chested over the A-list actress, her dark hair spread out behind her, her arms lifted to receive me. As if I’m not a complete ogre compared to her. “What is this, Jenna?”

“I want to feel your safety all around me,” she whispers. “I want it to press me down and anchor me.” When I hesitate, she takes a deep breath. “Please, Penn? I’ve been floating. Come tie me down, just for a little while. Hold me.”

Saying no to her authentic plea is impossible.

So I do the unimaginable. I lay my heavy body down on her petite one and listen to her gasp with astonished pleasure in my ear...and I funnel every ounce of my concentration into not fucking the most beautiful creature I’ve ever seen in my life.

CHAPTER 3

Jenna

I’ve been pampered. Gotten every massage under the sun.

I’ve been buffed and trained and coiffed.

Yet this is the most spoiled I’ve ever been in my life.

With this man’s hard, bull-like body on top of me.

His penis is hard. Extremely so. But this isn't like that one time on set when my costar accidentally got a boner during a kissing scene with me. No, this is far different. Penn isn't a conceited, spray-tanned actor. He's a grown-up. Like a full-on man.

Is it his authentic maturity that is turning me on?

Growing up on the set of a television show and being paraded like a show pony in front of movie producers, of late, I've learned to view men as dangerous. They don't look at me and see a career-driven woman. No, they are too busy assigning dollar signs to my body parts. But this man hasn't filled me with a single trickle of fear.

He makes me feel...loose and sexy and daring.

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Safe to be that way.

Yes, he's much older than me. But that only seems to magnetize me more.

He releases another portion of his weight onto me, and I whimper, pressing my open mouth to his sizeable shoulder, lapping at the saltiness of him. He smells like pine and sweat, and the combination causes some undiscovered muscles below my navel to flex in the most sinful way. What is my plan here? I have no idea. This man has a child and is probably quite experienced in bed. Meanwhile, I have no clue what I'm doing.

I'm feeling my way in the dark.

But the safety of him makes me unafraid.

Eagerly, I analyze his face in an attempt to decipher his thoughts, surprised when I find his ears are red, his Adam's apple trapped beneath his jaw. "If you lick me like that again, Jenna, I'm going to humiliate myself."

I can't hide my confusion. "What do you mean?"

His throat muscles shift with a swallow. "That pretty tongue shouldn't be anywhere near an ugly bastard like me. And you know it."

"I don't know anything about how to use my tongue," I confess in a hushed tone. "And how dare you call yourself ugly. L-look at you!"

“How am I supposed to look at anything but you?” He drops his head forward on a curse. “Dammit. Forget I said that.”

“Why?” I ask, utterly breathless.

Have I ever been paid such an authentic compliment?

“You must get that flowery bullshit all the time. You deserve it, too. You’re...” He shakes his head. “God, I can barely look at you, you’re so remarkable. But I’m here to make you feel better. Not make you uncomfortable or—”

“You aren’t making me uncomfortable.” I lean up and brush our mouths together. “At least, not in a bad way.”

His breath hitches. “I’m afraid to ask you what that means.”

“It means I like you on top of me.” I part my thighs, slowly winding them around his huge hips, moaning over the full pressure of his denim erection against my mound. “A lot.”

For several beats, he struggles to get himself under control. Then, “Baby, what you’re feeling is gratitude. I helped you out of a bad situation and now you must...feel like you owe me a pity fuck, or something.” He shifts his hips low, then high, dragging the flannel of my borrowed shirt up and over my sex, exposing that flesh to his zipper. “That’s all this is.”

“No. That’s not it at all.”

“I’m way too old to bang you, Jenna.”

“Normally I would agree with you. Everyone older has mistreated me. Stolen my

money and exploited me. You must have read I emancipated from my parents when I was seventeen, right?” A shiver passes through me remembering the lowest point of my life. The loneliness that has eaten away at me since then. “It was a whole court trial, and the paparazzi were relentless.”

“I work and I raise my kid. I don’t pay attention to celebrity gossip. But...” He seems to debate the wisdom of kissing me, eventually dipping his head to breathe against my mouth, unleashing a mudslide of lust inside of me. “God, baby. I’m sorry that happened to you.”

“You’re older, too, but you’re not like them. Are you? Not like the Hollywood execs who try and run my life. You wouldn’t use your age against me. You’d use it to give me security, wouldn’t you?” I say, tracing my hands up and over the hard slabs of muscle that make up his chest and shoulders. “You wouldn’t let anyone take advantage of me. You wouldn’t that happen to anyone who is important in your life, would you?”

His jaw snaps. “Hell no.”

I draw my knuckle down that taciturn jaw. “I can tell that about you.” Dropping my hands to my sides, I drag open the flannel shirt between us, listening to him groan gutturally when my bare breasts meet with his broad chest. “What can you tell about me?” I ask, trailing my fingers up and down his heaving ribcage. “Can you tell that I’ve had to learn how to take care of myself, but...maybe I need someone to take over the job once in a while? So I can just be...a girl?”

He visibly battles with himself, trying to fight the urge to hump me, but he loses the war, pinning me down and grunting through a series of frantic punches of his hips. “If I didn’t know any better, Jenna, I’d think you were looking for...”

“For what?” I gasp, desperate for him to put a name to what I need. A mystery

emptiness I'm trying to fill, no idea what to use. What or who to seek for help.

Penn leans up on his elbow, groaning as he looks down at my arched body, my high breasts and splayed thighs, all flushed from his weight. "Ah, hell, baby. You're looking for a big, mean Daddy to protect that A-list pussy, aren't you?"

I cry out under the sudden, infinite strain. The sheer force of my orgasm.

When he realizes I've catapulted over the peak, he bears down with his hips and I scream louder, forcing him to cup a hand over my mouth, but I can't stop. I can't stop wetting the bulge of his jeans with pleasure, my shaking legs kicking around his hips, before I eventually bury my heels into the bed, arching my spine involuntarily to combat the earthquake wreaking havoc below my waist, moisture seeping out of me, so much that I start to worry I'm peeing, the relief is so intense and complete.

"Oh my goodness! I've never...I've never..."

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“Never?”

I shake my head frantically.

“Christ.Christ.” He wraps a hand around my throat and squeezes, his expression a mixture of red-hot lust and awe. “Imagine that. A sweet little thing like you needed a big, hairy motherfucker to make her cream. So much cream, baby. All over Daddy’s jeans.”

Another wave of pleasure rocks me, and I look up at this man, while my flesh constricts on repeat, knowing he’s the only one who will ever make me let go like this. Knowing it with confusing intuition. He’s going to be permanent in my life. There’s no way I can live with any other outcome.

Somehow, I knew it the minute I saw him.

“Penn,” I moan, overcome. “More of you. I want more. I need all of you.”

I’m hit with a terrible case of denial when he shakes himself, almost violently, and retreats off the bed, his damp fly distended in an unnatural way, burly chest puffing up and down. “Jesus,” he heaves, raking both hands down his face. “What the hell am I doing?”

“Come back,” I whimper, sitting up, the flannel falling around me.

“You’re too young, Jenna,” he rasps. “All the shit you’ve been through made you believe you want...this. A Daddy to come in and be everything you’re missing. But if

I took advantage of that, I'd be as bad as the rest of them."

"No, you wouldn't," I whisper.

"Yes, I would."

His gaze is rife with hunger and yearning as he looks at me, but somehow he backs away, his shoulder ramming into my closet, his hip knocking into a lamp.

A bull in a china shop, for sure, because he's already breaking my heart.

And then, with a final tortured look, he's gone.

CHAPTER 4

Penn

I'm not surprised when Erin beats me twice in a row in tic-tac-toe while we're waiting for our pepperoni pizza to arrive. My concentration is shot. Every time I blink, I see Jenna. I smell her vanilla sugar scent on my clothes. I feel her incredible body beneath mine.

I've never been a believer in love at first sight, so I don't know how to explain what happened this afternoon. I can't explain the feeling of being dumbstruck the first time I saw the actress, the painful ripple that went through my chest, like I'd been pierced by an arrow. I can't explain why we ended up humping in her trailer ten minutes after meeting. That kind of thing simply doesn't happen—and especially not to me.

Erin's mother and I were in the service together. We bonded over our dedication to our post and slowly became friends. It was natural to get married when we got home. We had all the same friends, the same history. Once we'd been home for a while,

though, with no tours on the calendar, all our similarities seemed to fade and the fighting started. It makes me feel guilty to say this, but hell, the physical attraction I used to feel for my ex pales pitifully in comparison to whatever happened today. Today was...a lust cyclone that swept me up and shook me, right down to my boots.

Enjoy the memories, you bastard, because it isn't happening again.

That girl needs someone to protect her from the vultures circling her. Maybe, briefly, she thought it could be me. But I'm sure by now she's come to her senses. She's probably laughing with her manager about the coarse, horny lumberjack who thought he had a shot with the sexiest starlet in Hollywood.

"I'm going to run to the bathroom, kid," I say to Erin. "Don't open the door if the pizza comes. Just holler for me and I'll get it. Okay?"

She's busy drawing the next tic-tac-toe grid. "Okay, Pop."

My heart tugs at the way her fist is clenched so tightly around the pencil, her knees gathered up beneath her on the chair. I wasn't sure I could be successful at this full-time father gig, but Erin's mother decided to go back on active duty and she's away for the foreseeable. It's just me and Erin for the next couple of months, at which point we'll go back to our joint custody arrangement. I'm doing all right, aren't I?

On my way into the bathroom, the poster on Erin's wall catches my eye.

Jenna beams back at me from the one-dimensional surface, but it's a far cry from the Jenna I saw naked today. Nah, she sure as hell doesn't look like the stylized girl on the poster anymore. They aren't even the same person. But the fact remains that Jenna is only nineteen to my thirty-three. Living a whole different lifestyle. On another planet.

Can you tell that I've had to learn how to take care of myself, but...maybe I need someone to take over the job once in a while? So I can just be...a girl?

I enter the bathroom and close the door, turning to press my forehead to the cool wood. Her words continue to ring in my ears, churning up all kinds of instincts I didn't know I had. Do I have fatherly instincts? Sure. Yes.

The instinct to be Jenna's Daddy? That is an entirely different ball game.

One that I never considered playing. One I never even thought about until I recognized the need in her this afternoon and filled it, as natural as can be.

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As right as can be.

It seems that being a Daddy is about dominance and sex and care. A romantic kind of tenderness. Protection and fulfillment.

But I meant what I said on the way out of her trailer today. She's been taken advantage of by too many men. Men I'd be very happy to kill with my bare hands. That's the only reason my ugly ass looks like a viable option. She's confused. Aching for the male figure she didn't have growing up. What kind of sick fuck would I be if I filled that role for her knowing it came from an unhealthy place?

My phone vibrates in my pocket.

Sighing, I take it out and look at the screen.

My friend Zander is calling.

"Yeah," I answer, hearing the stress in my tone.

"Penn!" It's loud in the background, which means he must be working. Zander does logging work for me on a freelance basis, but he also bartends a few nights a week at the local watering hole. The only local watering hole. "Bunch of LA folks here tonight, and boy oh boy, they can't shut up about you! Ruined their little photo shoot this afternoon, did ya?" He lets out a peal of hysterical laughter. "Good for you, buddy. Good for you."

I grunt as something occurs to me. Something that flips my stomach over like a

pancake. “Is she there?”

“If by ‘she’ you mean Jenna Fairchild, yes. She’s definitely here.” He whistles long and low. “Never seen anything like her in my life. I didn’t believe in angels until tonight, I tell ya. The local boys are foaming at the mouth.”

My pulse is hammering violently in my neck. “Is someone hitting on her?”

“The LA visitors just arrived a few minutes ago, but I reckon it’s only a matter of time before one of the locals shoots their shot with her.” He clucks his tongue. “Poor girl is crammed up in the corner, holding a Diet Coke like a weapon. It’s like she knows they’re all about to descend on her like wolves.”

I come very close to putting my fist through the wall.

In fact, I would have, if my daughter wasn’t in the next room.

Of course Jenna is terrified. She’s in a strange place with people who don’t have her best interest in mind, unless it makes them money. Why are they bringing her to a bar when she’s apparently uncomfortable being in one?

“I’ll be there in fifteen minutes, Zander. Don’t let anyone approach her.”

“What? How the hell am I going to do that?”

“Tell them Penn Holland said she’s off fucking limits.”

Again, he whistles. “That ought to put the fear of God into them.”

Nice to know my reputation around here carries the weight it should. “Good.”

“You aren’t...interested in this girl, are you, Penn? She’s half your damn age.”

As if I need reminding.

I like that you’re older.

Her confession from this afternoon has been whispering itself through my mind for hours. How she’d said it with that little pout, nudging the new, dangerous instinct inside of me. She wants a Daddy. She needs one as we speak. And I can’t seem to stop myself from being that for her. Just for now. Just for tonight.

I won’t let myself take it any further than that.

Hanging up on Zander without answering, I dial Raleen, Erin’s sometimes babysitter who lives closer to town. Thankfully, she answers right away. “Raleen? Mind if I drop Erin and a pepperoni pizza off for a few hours? I’ve got something to handle in town.”

CHAPTER 5

Jenna

I’m trying to keep a smile on my face because yeah, people are not being very covert in snapping pictures of me on their phones. My back is to the wall and my Diet Coke is sweating in my hand, a lot like me. The music is too loud, the bar is too packed. My manager, agent and the entire crew are pissed off at me for not bending to their will today, so they’re pointedly ignoring me. Loneliness weighs me down. So far down.

There is a group of men on the other side of the bar making no mystery of their interest. One of them looks directly at me now and adjusts his crotch, and my scalp

prickles with apprehension. How many times can I be put into these kinds of situations before something irreversibly bad happens? At least when I'm in Los Angeles, I have bodyguards, but they didn't come on this trip. Being in a remote mountain town, Dustin didn't think they would be necessary.

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I should go back to my trailer.

No.

Someone is going to follow me.

I feel it in my bones...and those bones start to shake.

I want to go home.

You don't have a home.

At least, not a place that truly feels like one.

I close my eyes and remember the safety and strength of Penn's arms around me, wrapping me in flannel and holding me to his massive chest. That felt like home.

But I guess I was wrong.

When I open my eyes again, Crotch Grabber has broken from the pack and is cutting through the crowded bar like a shark, veering in my direction. I pray that my manager notices what's happening and intercepts the guy, but he's already had three drinks and isn't cognizant of his surroundings. I press my back harder into the wall, my heart cramming into my throat as he gets closer—

“Hey,” snaps the bartender to my left. “Penn Holland said she's off limits.”

Crotch Grabber stops in his tracks, some of the color draining from his face. “Ah, hell. Penn said that?”

“Did I stutter, boy?”

A sob of relief wells in my throat as my pursuer turns around and slinks back to his group of friends. The bartender nods at me warmly and walks away. And I practically break into a tap-dancing number, my chest squeezing like a fist around a soaked sponge.

Penn Holland said she’s off limits.

A sound leaves my mouth that I can only describe as a giggle-gasp, my hands pressing to my stomach to calm the butterflies. He made me off limits. He thought about me. He guards me better in his absence than any of these people on my payroll.

He’s my Daddy.

As if I willed him to appear, the door of the bar slams open, bashing off the adjacent wall, and there is my magnificent lumberjack, outlined in a combination of moonlight and neon, courtesy of the Coors Light sign blinking in the window. He sweeps everyone in the room with a murderous glance, cracking his knuckles against a giant palm, that chest—which I know to be covered in glorious black hair—heaving with irritation.

My sex wells with moisture and soaks my panties before he’s taken one step.

I’m hot. I’m hoteverywhere.

It takes all my self-control not to run across the bar and leap into his arms, but...

No.

No, I came onwaytoo strong earlier.

I'd only just met the man, and I asked him to be part of my life! Hello? Could I give off any more of a psycho, wanna-be girlfriend vibe? I made it clear I wanted something serious from him, which only led to him leaving. Therefore, I can't do that again.

Play it cool.

You just want a fling.

At least, that's what I'll let him think.

Honestly, though, if a fling is all Penn can offer me, I'll take that, too. There's virtually zero chance of me finding another man who has this effect on my body. Another man who makes me want to offer up my virginity on a silver Tiffany platter.

Penn has almost reached my side of the bar, and I tug anxiously on my skirt, shifting in my high heels. No idea what to do with my hands. So awkward.

You're an actress. Act like you're cool.

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I swallow a pinecone. “Well,” I say, striving for breezy. “Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, he walks into mine.”

He stops in front of me, raising an eyebrow.

Idiot. “I quoteCasablancawhen I’ve had too much caffeine.”

He grunts. “You planning on being this fucking cute all night?”

A giddy sensation ripples through me. “Is that going to be a problem for you?”

That sharp gaze sweeps down to the hem of my miniskirt. “Yup.”

My tummy freefalls, like I just dropped from the highest height of a roller coaster. “Too bad, I guess,” I say, totally breathless. “Hi.”

“Hi.”

Drag me out of here into the dark and use me. Any part of me. Use it.

Can’t say that out loud, can I?

“Get up,” Penn says, yanking the closest crew member off his stool, tossing him to the side. “Weren’t you taught to offer a lady your seat?” He hauls the stool out and angles it into the corner. Then he picks me up and settles me onto the warm leather, blocking me from the rest of the patrons. “There, baby. You’re okay now.”

I hiccup once and dive into his welcome flannel chest, twining my arms around his tree-trunk waist. Not playing it cool at all. Whimpering my pent-up fear into the hard wall of his body, letting him absorb the feeling and replace it with security.

“You smell like the forest,” I sigh.

He clears his throat. “That’s where I spend most of my time.”

“Because you love being a lumberjack? Or is it just a job?”

“Nah, I love it. Giving the trees a noble send-off. Knowing they’re going to be immortalized in someone’s home or framing a piece of art in a museum. Planting the next generation in the earth and watching them stretch for the sky. It’s humbling.”

My pulse skips. “That’s beautiful, Penn.”

He grunts.

“Where is your daughter tonight?”

“Babysitter,” he answers, rubbing my back. “She can stay there as long as it takes to get you home safely, Jenna. But goddamn, you shouldn’t be here in the first place. It’s obvious you’re not comfortable.”

I soak up his intuitiveness. His care. “They’ve been bringing me to parties and clubs and bars since I was fifteen. I saw a lot of things I was too young to see.” I swallow. “I guess I should be grateful I never got used to them. Being uncomfortable means I’m not numb. Yet.”

“Fifteen?” Penn turns his head long enough to pin someone with a look of pure malice. “I’ll be having a word with your manager while you’re in town.”

Why do I get the feeling that “have a word” means physical harm?

I tip my head back all the way, the ends of my hair tickling the small of my back. “Okay. But you should know that...I could fire my manager tomorrow and I’d end up with someone else just like him. This is the industry. Young girls are expected to be savvy enough to fend for themselves. There’s no instruction manual. We’re just...thrown into the lion’s den. And we’re only taught to do one thing—get the part. By any means necessary. Stay relevant. Be seen a certain way. Be seen at all. The things that used to ground us slowly begin to fade away until we forget what it’s like to be grounded at all.”

His fingers push into my hair to massage my scalp. “What kind of things used to ground you, Jenna?”

“Old movies. The treehouse in my backyard growing up. Cup stacking.”

Penn’s lips quirk at one end. “Cup stacking?”

“I was really good,” I whisper wistfully.

“Hmm.”

He’s looking at my mouth, and I can’t help it, I open my thighs a little on the stool, my eyes fairly glazing over when he inches his big hips between them. Even if he’s grumbling and shaking his head, as if he knows our proximity is a bad idea.

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“What grounds you, Penn?”

“Splitting logs. A big Sunday breakfast. My kid.”

“What’s her name?” I ask.

“Erin. We were having a tic-tac-toe marathon when Zander called and told me you were in here, looking like a deer in the headlights.”

“I often do.” I wet my lips, scooting a little closer to the edge of the stool and watching his eyes darken. “I heard the bartender tell someone I’m off limits. That Penn Holland said so.” I reach between us and play with the button of his jeans. “Am I off limits to everyone but you, Daddy?”

His thick chest shudders up and down. “Don’t do this to me in public, baby.”

“Only in private?”

He swallows heavily, his hesitation plain.

Play it cool. Don’t come on too strong again.

“I was a little...overwrought earlier. My emotions were all over the place and I might have m-made you think I wanted something serious. Like a relationship.” I tease the line of his zipper with the tip of my index finger, tracing the gigantic bulge all the way down to the root, setting his teeth on edge. “But all I really need is one memorable night.” I shake my hair back. “Don’t you want to give that to me?”

He snags my wrist before I can give his arousal a full-on massage. “Goddammit, Jenna. You are—”

“Too young. I know. I can’t help that.” Straightening as much as I can, I let a warm breath out against his hard mouth. “Can’t you turn off the lights and try not to think about the year on my driver’s license?”

A strangled moan comes from deep in his chest. “Baby, if we were to fuck, every light in the house would be on.” He gives a sharp shake of his head. “If I was to keep the lights off, it would be for your benefit. Not mine.”

My brow knits. “What does that mean?”

He huffs a humorless laugh. “You might catch a glimpse of this old, battle-scarred bull pumping for broke between those toned thighs and wonder what the hell you were thinking.”

The raw image projected by those words causes me to gasp and tingle, another round of dampness soaking into my already sodden panties. “Don’t say things like that to me unless you’re going to do them,” I say haltingly. “Was your ex-wife the same age as you?”

He’s as caught off guard by the subject change as I am. “A year older, actually,” he says slowly. With caution. “An appropriate age.”

Red flashes in my vision. “Wow. Good for her.”

I glare up at him like a petulant brat, trying to twist away. I’m not sure how this jealousy snuck up on me so fast, but it’s potent and biting. Impossible to overcome, too, so I slide off the stool, fully intending to stomp out of the bar like a child—but Penn’s giant hands lock around my hips, and my ass is slapped back down onto the

seat with no warning and no nonsense, his forehead plastering itself to mine.

“You stay where I put you, little girl. Is that understood?”

“Yes, Daddy,” I sob, shaking uncontrollably on the stool.

Need this. Need this. Need this.

“I’ve never wanted anyone the way I want you. Never been this hard, this horny. Never needed to hold someone almost as badly as I need to fuck ’em.” He fists my hair and tugs it back, baring his teeth against the underside of my chin. “You’ve obsessed me top to bottom in a matter of fucking hours. I’m losing it over you. Is that what you need to hear?”

My nod is vigorous, my fists twisting in the front of his flannel. “Yes. More.”

“You want me to bring you back to your frilly pink trailer and give you a spanking for trying to storm off on me?” I can’t even answer, my intimate muscles are twisted up so tight, so I just moan, my neck basically powerless. “Because God help me, I am dying to yank up the back of that dick tease skirt and give it a backhand.”

“I can’t feel my legs,” I whimper.

“Don’t worry, little girl. I’ll carry you.”

And that’s exactly what he does. I’m carried out of the bar in a sea of lifted phones that are no doubt recording me, while I’m being whisked away by a much older, much bigger lumberjack. I have the presence of mind to bury my face in his neck, so it won’t be seen, ignoring the alarmed calls of my name coming from my manager.

But there’s nothing but this.

Nothing but him. Penn Holland.

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This man who balances domination and affection as if he was given the exact recipe to my libido. When I need to be manhandled, he does it. When I seek reassurance, he gives it. When I'm scared, he calms me. Protects me.

I won't survive without him.

But I might only get one night.

I'll worry about a potential goodbye tomorrow.

Tonight, I'll think of nothing but giving myself to Penn.

My body. My soul. My heart.

And praying he doesn't shatter the latter.

CHAPTER 6

Penn

Lord help me, I'm stiff as a board climbing the steps to Jenna's trailer, her ass swaying side to side five inches from my face. The skirt rode up when I carried her out of the bar with those wet dream legs hugging my waist and she hasn't bothered to fix it, giving me a view of her tight cheeks from beneath. The silky pink thong separating them. I'm giving myself one night to live this fantasy, aren't I? Yeah. No choice. I can't stay away...and that freedom I've allowed myself causes me to snap while she's unlocking her trailer door, pushing the skirt up and burying my ugly face

between the buns that have been personal trained within an inch of their life, baring my teeth and reveling there like an animal. And wouldn't you know it? Her asshole smells like fucking candy.

Jenna whimpers and drops her keys.

"Pick them up," I pant, knowing my demand comes with a risk.

Sure enough, when she bends over to pick up the keys, I'm given deeper access to the heaven that is Jenna Fairchild's ass...and I have to bear down with all my might to keep from exploding like a teenager in my pants, even as I sniff everything I can reach, grunting like a warthog, my hands climbing the backs of her thighs to draw those cheeks apart as much as possible, the tilt of her hips showing off her pussy now, too.

"Goddamn, this thong is soaked." I tuck a finger under the saturated material, pull down and let it snap up against the lips of her cunt, flooded with heat when she sobs hungrily, her knees turning to air. But I surge to my full height, catching her against me, before she can fall. "Maybe it's your pussy that wants the spanking," I say into her hair.

She tilts her head back all the way, moonlight spilling across her fallen angel face. Down her throat to her juicy little tits. "I don't know what I want," she murmurs, biting her lip. "You have to show me."

Now, it's my turn to almost collapse, because the honor of what she's handing me is so heavy. So much more than I deserve. "I'm going to be firm with you, Jenna. But I'm also going to treat you like a princess."

Her eyes flutter closed, and she arches more, plumping her tits in the neckline of her tank top. "Y-yes. Yes, please."

My neglected balls throb with a warning. “Open the door before your body makes me come all over these steps.”

She nods, her breath shallow while doing what she’s told.

I pant after her ass into the pink trailer, reluctantly stopping to lock the door, my gaze glued to Jenna as she strips off her tank top, turning to give me the full view of her high, rosy tipped breasts, a shy, but excited blush spreading along her cheekbones. “Will you take your shirt off for me, too, Penn?”

My fingers are working the buttons free before she finishes making the request. If she asked me for the sun, I’d do everything in my power to trap it in a jar for her. “I don’t have a sexy body to look at. Not like yours.”

A shudder rocks her as I’m peeling the flannel off my shoulders, letting the garment drop. “I strongly disagree,” she whispers. “You’re what a real man looks like.” My heart is pounding in my throat, watching as she kneels on the small, pink, built-in couch. Facing away from me, she bends forward and braces her hands on the arm of the furniture. Thighs splayed, her upturned ass offered to me like a meal. “I’m ready for my spanking, Daddy.”

How many times can I hold back the tide of sperm hanging between my legs?

I don’t have the answer to that. I can only stumble forward like a man who has been offered water after braving the desert, skimming my palms over her butt in wonder. “How in God’s name are you real, Jenna?” I knead her buns, and she pushes them into my grip with a hitched breath, wordlessly asking for more, while I marvel over the tautness of her flesh, the slim, pale, tan line that runs down the center of her cheeks.

Her thong is so drenched that it drip, drip, drips her need onto the couch, the cadence

increasing with every rough massage of my hands.

“Hell, I can’t spank you, baby. You’re too good of a girl.”

“I am?” she asks, flipping her hair over one shoulder to look at me with hope, with vulnerability—and I know I’m making the right call. Maybe there are times where she would need a firm hand, but tonight isn’t one of them. Not after being scared in the bar. Not after being surrounded by abusive vultures for so long.

Nah, she needs the princess treatment tonight.

“You’re so good, getting this wet for me.” I plant a knee on the couch behind her, drawing her hot, young ass backward into my lap. “If you weren’t a virgin, I’d slam you just like this. Deep and meaty.” I tilt my hips and roll them, yanking her tight to me at the same time. “You’d have to replace the upholstery on this couch afterward, I’d drop so much filthy come between these golden thighs.”

She makes a strangled sound and attempts to squeeze her legs together, but I don’t allow that. No, I hold them open and watch the moisture coat her inner thighs, her sides shuddering in and out. “P-P-Penn.”

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“It’s uncomfortable to be that horny, isn’t it, baby?” I hike her skirt up the remaining distance to her waist, then slip the sodden thong down to her knees, blood surging between my legs at the reveal of her virgin slit that continues to produce proof of her arousal. And miracle of miracles. It’s me she’s hot for. “Believe me, I know how it feels, baby. My dick has been made of marble since I saw you chained to that tree. It could prop up a Roman fucking palace.” I spit down the crack of her ass, watching my saliva slither over her rear pucker and lower to her pussy. “Put your cheek on the couch.”

Jenna follows instructions eagerly, and the new position gives me exactly what I need. Access to the front. Access to the part of her that has me salivating.

“There’s that pretty cunt,” I rasp, sliding the pad of my thumb through the smooth valley of her flesh and listening to her wrench a cry when I find that button, tickling and teasing it. Rubbing it lightly until her thighs inch wider in an involuntary request for more.

But I’m an extremely tall man, so I do what’s necessary to get my tongue where it needs to go, sliding my arms between her thighs, hooking them out and around her hips. And lifting her lower body to a forty-five-degree angle, that sweet ass in the air, her whimpering face pressed to the couch, allowing me to eat the best meal of my thirty-three years. I feast on her wet, candy cunt, and I’m not going to lie, I fucking slobber all over it. I rub my face against her slippery holes and lash her with my tongue, saying prayers of thanksgiving in my head over this incredible fortune.

“Oh, my goodness,” she whines, wiggling against my face, her thighs shaking like leaves every time the tip of my tongue finds her clit and makes it swell with quick

strokes. Quick, fluttering strokes that get deeper, deeper and make her moan. “Oh, my goodness!” she screams again—her pleasure like a deluge, sweetness invading my mouth and trailing down my chin, her body convulsing, thighs in a shaking flex.

I have no recollection of getting up from the coach, but there I am, striding to the back of the trailer with a limp Jenna over my shoulder. I lay her down gently, like a princess, propping her legs up so I can stare at her beautiful cunt while I unfasten my jeans. Post-orgasm, she’s still staring up at the ceiling blindly, her petite body still locked in the aftershock, but I am a dying man. I’m a beast falling on top of beauty and pushing her thighs as wide as they’ll go, looking her in the eye and slowly plowing her full of cock.

“Say Daddy.”

“Daddy,” she gasps, her eyes glazing over more, more, with every inch I give her, and when I’m fully seated and she’s strangling the fucking life out of me, I flex my hips and move them in a circle to break her in, leave no corner untouched. “My tummy!”

“What about it, baby?” I say, thickly.

“It feels so crowded...and ticklish. All of me does.”

I grit my teeth to keep my balls in check, but hell, they’re pressed up against her ass crack and throbbing with urgency. “Do you hurt?”

She nods solemnly. Pouting out her bottom lip. Requiring that princess treatment. Craving it. And I’m already obsessed with giving it to her.

“Poor little girl,” I say quietly, slanting my mouth over her much sweeter one, sweeping her into a deep, hypnotic kiss that causes her pussy to spasm around my

swollen cock...her muscles releasing their nervous clench, little by little. “You know I wouldn’t hurt you if I could help it, baby.”

“I know.”

“You chose a big, horny man for your first fuck.”

“I know,” she whines, trying to lift her pinned hips, her pupils beginning to expand. “Oh no, Daddy! I...I’m tooticklish now!”

My abdomen hardens like a drum, putting me on the edge of an explosion. “Your body is starting to accept mine. Let it happen for me. Oh God.Please.” Her walls wrap tighter to my shaft, and she shifts experimentally, gasping in pleasure, and it requires superhuman willpower to hold onto my seed. Jesus, Jesus. She’s so beautiful that my chest is going to burst wide open. “I can’t believe you let me inside you. Can’t believe how wet you are for me.” I’m being attacked on all sides by blistering lust and her sweet, trusting eyes are only accelerating the flames. “Tell me when you’re ready for me to move.”

“I want it. I want it!”

I use the pulsing connection of our bodies to push her up the bed, slowly, slowly, putting a pillow beneath her precious head and kissing her forehead, before I start to buck like a goddamn marauder. I have no idea where to look, because every inch of her is utterly gorgeous. The stretched pink slit taking my cock. Her titties, bouncing fast and furious. That expression of hero worship on her face while I essentially fuck the virginity squarely out of her, sweat slicking my body, my dick in heavenly agony, the mattress creaking, followed by the sound of wood splintering beneath us.

A beam gives way in the center of the bed, and it drops a solid six inches, my weight landing hard on Jenna, the gravity of the drop causing my cock to ram her even more

roughly—andshe screams, thrashing through another flood-like orgasm, tears rolling down her temples, blood on her mouth from biting her bottom lip.

“I have to blow, baby. Whatever stamina I have doesn’t mean shit when the pussy is so sweet for Daddy.”

“Come inside me,” she babbles, gripped with pleasure. “Come anywhere you want.”

When I thrust into her now, it sounds like I’m juicing a ripe orange and all that succulence is drenching my pumping cock, urging me on, my grunts and curses peppering the air while the pace of my hips kicks into overdrive, and then I’m snarling into her neck and pressing those knees up to her shoulders, railing her like a fuck doll while she whines and rakes ribbons down my back with her nails.

“Sorry, princess. Should have chosen a prince if you wanted a man who comes quietly.” I plow forward until I bottom out, leaning down to kiss her hard, before breaking away. “Get your fucking knees up and take this sperm.”

She squeaks a cry, a third climax running her over like a semi-truck, and she’s too green to handle another assault on her untried flesh, so she goes limp underneath me for this final ten thrusts, her eyes glassy, body and face flushed, jaw slack while I squeeze in and out of her incredibly snug hole, absolute rapture taking me over as the come finally, finally, releases from the pit of my loins, frothing into her in endless waves while I’m above her stiff and bellowing my gratitude, my ass in painful flex, her hands stroking my face lovingly, worshipfully, then raking into my chest hair, her purr of contentment causing me to jerk and let out another spurt. Another, another, until I’m finally on empty.

I fall heavily onto the bed beside Jenna, and she snuggles into me, giggling breathlessly, planting kisses all over my face...and shock permeates my every thought.

Thirty-three years and I've never come close to feeling this light, this sated after sex.

This...fulfilled.

It's her. It's this wonderful girl who somehow formed a bond with me, despite my best effort to do what's best for her. Anddamndid I bond right back.

It's impossible to tell myself the Daddy-little girl roles are bad for her when I can see firsthand how much pleasure they give her. How much security.

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Source Creation Date: August 15, 2025, 10:33 am

Lord. This angel is mine. Every blessed inch.

How do I stop my heart from capsizing under this weight?

How do I let her go when the time comes for her to return to Los Angeles?

“Do you have to go home tonight?” she asks me, kissing my shoulder, her fingers sifting through my chest hair. Those teeth buried in her bottom lip. Anxious princess.

“Yes,” I answer, though I have no clue how I’m going to force myself to leave Jenna.

Naked Jenna who is yawning into my neck and snuggling into my side, right where she belongs. A vital piece of me I didn’t know was missing.

“Can I come too?” she whispers.

“Yes,” I say, without hesitation.

CHAPTER 7

Jenna

I can barely breathe watching Penn carry his sleeping child out of the house, laying her down in the back seat behind me. He’s so many amazing things. A protector, a father, a lover. Honorable, intuitive, honest. Dominant when the moment calls for it. Gruff. Sweet.

“It’s a good thing she’s asleep, because I think she’d probably have a meltdown if she saw Jenna Fairchild in my passenger seat,” Penn says wryly, getting behind the wheel. “Once she’s out, she’s out, though.”

“Maybe...” Maybe I can meet her in the morning.

When I trail off, Penn glances over at me. “Maybe what?”

Stop trying to turn this into a relationship. He made it clear that isn’t in the cards, right? Being too eager is only going to cause him to pull away.

Won’t it?

“Nothing,” I breathe, shaking my head. “How far away is your house?”

“Ten minutes.”

I chew my lip, not knowing if I should ask my next question, but unable to do anything but appease my curiosity. “And her mother?”

He drums his fingers on the wheel, no doubt remembering my jealous display earlier. Still, he doesn’t remind me of my behavior or make fun of me for it. He just gives me the benefit of the doubt and answers evenly. “She’s not far from LA, actually. A town called Ojai. She lives there with her boyfriend, when she’s not overseas.”

“When does she come home?”

“Couple of months. Then Erin will be splitting time between us. I’ll have her for most of the summer. Some holidays and weekends. She’ll have her for the school year.”

“Do you get along with her?”

“Well enough to be good parents and communicate, when necessary,” he says, impressing his next statement on me with a stern look. “We were only ever meant to be friends, Jenna. Nothing more. That’s all we’ll ever be.”

I nod and sit back, resting in the feeling Penn gives me. One I’ve never had in my life. Total and complete safety. Nothing bad is going to happen to me as long as he’s nearby. That certainty coasts over me like cool water, my anxieties unraveling and falling away, all from observing the capable wrist he draped over the wheel, his other hand holding mine on the seat between us, his gaze straying to my breasts every few seconds—and it’s easy to see why. I didn’t bother with a bra after we made love, and the truck is bouncing over roots and potholes, causing them to jiggle and bounce in my strapless top.

“Lord have mercy,” he grunts, shifting in his seat.

I beam back at him happily, turning slightly to give him a better view.

Normally I hate my body being objectified, but apparently, I love Penn doing it.

Because he is careful with me. Because he listens and adjusts his actions to make me happy and comfortable. The way he guessed that it wasn’t the right time to spank me. The way he waited for my body to stop hurting before moving inside of me. The kisses he gave me at the exact right moment I needed them. How he guarded me in the bar. How he saved me from being exploited earlier today.

How he orgasms me like he was born knowing the combination to my pleasure.

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A combination I don't even have myself.

All of it. All of Penn Holland.

There is no end to what I'll give him if he lets me.

We reach the house, and he carries Erin inside, holding the door with his back so I can follow him in. Kissing me on the forehead as I pass. I take in the sweeping, open plan cabin, the rustic décor, the cozy stone fireplace and the finger paintings on the refrigerator. It couldn't suit the man better. It's Penn in the form of a house and therefore, it's magical.

"My bedroom is upstairs, if you want to wait for me there. Erin's is downstairs." He jerks his chin. "I'll just go tuck her in."

"Okay," I whisper, watching him carry Erin to the rear of the lower floor, before I slowly make my way up the stairs, turning down a short hallway and ending up in the most masculine master bedroom I've ever beheld. Grays and blacks and forest green. A heavy rug and a gigantic four-poster bed. A cedar chest at the foot of that bed, a desk tucked into the corner. Untied boots, size one million, resting on the ground. His closet door is ajar enough to see an endless array of flannel. It smells like him.

I'm in heaven.

With a quiet giggle, I take a flying leap and land in the center of the bed, doing a snow angel on the soft, green comforter, squeaking when Penn's deep voice reaches me from the doorway.

“Again, I ask. You planning on being this fucking cute all night?”

I roll over onto my tummy and prop my chin on a fist. “I still haven’t decided.”

He takes a long, heavy breath. “My god, you’re a beautiful sight, Jenna Fairchild.”

There’s an ominous surge into of me, like maybe my heart has tipped over and spilled its contents. “Thank you,” I manage, rising onto all fours and slowly crawling to the edge of the bed where he meets me for deeply emotional kiss that shakes me to my core. “Will you cuddle with me?” I murmur against his mouth.

“Thought you’d never ask.”

Penn goes to work on his buttons for the second time tonight. “Ooh!” I bound off the bed, carried by the buoyancy he gives me. “Can I undress you?”

Even in the muted lamplight, I can see the tops of his ears turn red. “Sure, baby. Although...I’d rather just get my giant ass under the covers as quickly as possible.”

“Not me.” I slide my hands up the front of his flannel, shaking my hair back dramatically. “I want to marvel over you.”

His chuckle is low and warm. “Fair is fair, I guess. I never stop marveling over you.”

“Mmm.” We should get married, I almost blurt. It’s what my heart wants to say. “I’m going to take my time, if that’s okay with you.”

“When you’re with me, you do whatever you goddamn please, Jenna.”

I press my face between his pecs and inhale with gusto. “Thank goodness I left my phone back at the trailer. I’m sure Dustin is blowing it up right now.”

“Why?”

“Why?” I begin the slow journey of undoing the buttons on his flannel, starting beneath the notch in his throat. “I don’t know if you’re aware of this, but a six-foot-six lumberjack kidnapped me from a bar earlier this evening.”

“Six foot seven,” he grumbles.

“I stand corrected.” I have three buttons open now and I lean in to kiss his forest of chest hair, recalling how it felt to be pinned down beneath that thick pelt, the broad patch of coarse hair abrading my nipples while he moaned hoarsely, driving himself between my legs. “I hope...you won’t be upset when the internet gets a hold of the story. There could already be leaked video from the bar circulating. Tabloids trying to track down your identity and speculate if you’re my new boyfriend or just a one-night stand...”

He makes a low-pitched sound when I use the word “boyfriend.” After that, the word drops between us like a heavy wrench and we meet each other’s eyes momentarily, searching. How does this end? I desperately want to ask him, but I don’t want to ruin our night. Especially if it’s the only one we’ll have together. “Maybe it’s a good thing if we end up on the internet.”

“It’s never a good thing. Why would you think that?”

“When you see what the public has to say about this, you’ll come to your senses.”

I pause in the act of tugging his flannel out of his denim waistband. “What the public has to say about what?”

“The differences between you and me. Our ages, how different we look...”

I've repeatedly told Penn that I find him wildly attractive, but my reassurances aren't working, are they? I'll have to take a different tack. "No doubt they would rather see me with a lead singer with a big pile of hair on top of his head, but none on his chest. Or maybe a prima donna co-star who I secretly loathe but is excellent for my career." I circle around behind Penn and drag the flannel off his giant shoulders, and I go to work, planting open-mouthed kisses all over the warm strength of his back, tracing muscles with my tongue.

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Meanwhile, my palms skim around the thick circle of his waist, meeting at the bulge atop his thighs, my right hand stroking him through the denim.

“Do you think those boys could ever make me as happy as this does?”

“I don’t want to think about you dating anyone,” he rasps.

“Me either,” I whisper, flicking open the button of his fly. “If by some chance people couldn’t recognize the perfection of you, I would tune them right out, because they obviously have no taste.” Carefully, I lower his zipper, and his broad back starts to heave with the shallowing of his breath. “My Daddy does things to me they can only dream about,” I whisper, slipping my hand into his open fly to fist his sex, pumping it twice while he groans like a big, hungry bear, then bringing the fullness of him out into the open.

Leaving it resting in the denim V, while I saunter around back in front of him.

“Anyway, I don’t want to form relationships with people simply because they’re good for my acting career.” My steps falter as his turgid erection comes into view, sticking straight out in front of him, his balls tucked up juicy and tight beneath the stalk of pulsing flesh. “Um...I want to be taken seriously. I want to be known for my acting, not simply for being famous. My manager refuses to understand that. Hence him wanting to show my nipples to the world.”

Penn bares his teeth with a dangerous growl.

“I know, right?” I say, pleased when he allows me to guide him over to the chest

positioned at the end of his bed, urging him without words to sit down on top of it. Holy moly, even with him sitting down, I have to tilt my head back slightly to maintain eye contact. “When I get back to LA, I’m auditioning for the lead role in the Musetrilogy. I’d be playing an assassin. A very grown-up role, compared to my last one. That’s why everyone is so frantic to present me as a sex symbol. Not that it excuses their methods.” I wet my lips while searching his expression. “Do you think I’ll ever be taken seriously in Hollywood, Penn? Or am I just going to be that girl from Hey Betty my entire life?”

Picking up on the plaintiveness in my voice, he takes hold of the sides of my face, impressing a stern look on me. “I don’t think you’ll be taken seriously, baby. I know. There is nothing you can’t do. There is a reserve of strength inside of you, waiting to be used. Follow your path and no one else’s...and nothing can stop you from getting where you want to go.”

“Thank you,” I whisper, blinking moisture away rapidly. Involuntarily curling my fingers in the sides of his jeans, my intentions taking clearer shape inside of me. “Could you lift your hips for a sec?”

“Sure,” he says without thinking, but when I pull down his jeans, as well as his boxers, tossing them away, he swallows heavily, his erection jutting up from his lap, mottled and painful looking. “What are you doing?” he asks hoarsely, his upper lip already shiny with sweat.

“Just talking,” I say innocently, before I peel off my tank top—watching his hips jerk, a little spurt of white spraying from the tip of his sex. “Well. Talking topless,” I amend, batting my eyelashes.

The rumble in his chest speaks of desperation, along with his eyes. “Ask me for anything, Jenna. Right now.” His irises are nearly black as he zeros in on my breasts, veins straining all over his herculean body. “God almighty. Standing there with your

hot tits out in a skirt so short, I'd hardly need to lift it to take you from the back. Damn." His chest shudders up and down. "I need to do something to deserve this king's treatment."

I settle my hands on his shoulders and lean close, dragging my tongue sideways between his sculpted lips. "I can ask you for anything?"

"Anything, baby."

I settle my open lips against his ear. "May I please suck your cock so hard that my little girl mouth is sore in the morning?"

"Oh Jesus! Jenna," he growls through his teeth—and he proceeds to masturbate, his fist rifling up and down that beefy, darkening trunk, knuckles white from the pressure he's applying. "I can barely think about you sucking on it without coming, baby. No."

"But you said I could have anything," I murmur, pouting, doodling invisible circles into his chest hair. "I want to give my first blow job. Are you worried I won't be good at it?"

Rivulets of sweat pour down the sides of his face, his fist still stroking in a furious rhythm. "God, no, I'm not worried...about that..." he pants. "I'm worried once you put my cock in that pretty mouth, I'll be walking around with wood the rest of my life." He looks conflicted. "Go down and give it a kiss and watch me blow every which way."

"I want to suck," I whine.

His curse is ragged. "Two sucks. That's it."

I jump up and down with excitement, and he looks near-death watching my breasts

bounce, his hand jacking faster, his big feet shifting on the floor, a lump bobbing in his throat, as if something is coming. Instinctively, I hurry to my knees, taking over the job of milking him, though it takes my two hands, instead of one.

“Oh, my goodness, Daddy, it looks so much bigger from down here.”

His groans brokenly, his mighty thighs starting to quake, his hands searching for purchase, one gripping the edge of the trunk, the other fist capturing my long hair, wrapping the strands tight around his knuckles. “Two sucks. Two. Then get out of the way, baby.”

I slowly plump my lips against his engorged head, kissing and nuzzling. “Why?”

“I’m going to come like a motherfucker,” he says through his teeth. “Oh baby, I’m going to come so much, you could drown if it’s still in your mouth.”

I’ve never given a lot of thought to a man’s spend before, but I’m definitely thinking about it now—in terms of Penn, only. How stimulated he must be for his body to release a flood of pleasure. How I’m the one giving him that stimulation. And when I think about it that way, come is really hot, isn’t it? I want to experience it up close and personally.

So I stretch my lips around his monstrous arousal and start to work my mouth in an up and down massage, pleasure sensors lighting me up like a pinball machine. I moan and scoot my knees closer, the flesh between my legs getting swollen and achy, almost right away, from the raw, salty taste of Penn’s cock. The ridges and textures and how he prays to God in that guttural, shaky voice while I force his inches as deep as I can stand, using my resulting tears as lubricant to give him a tight hand job at the same time, my cheeks hollow with eager sucking.

My Daddy tastes so good, I say to him with my glazed eyes, my mouth full to

capacity. Hurting my lips in the best way.

“Lord oh lord oh lord.” His mountainous torso is shaking up and down, his words coming out slurred. “Get it out of your mouth before you choke to death.”

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I purr around his steely flesh, my right hand cupping his balls and teasing them with skims of my palm, followed by a gentle squeeze—and he erupts.

Whoa.

I don't get him out of my mouth in time—I can't, because he's swelled so much that I fear he's stuck, and now salty fluid sprays the back of my throat, wave after wave of thickness, and I swallow as fast as I can, the taste having a drugging effect on me, because of what it represents. Penn's attraction to me. His homage to my mouth and how it moved on his cock. How I look on my knees for him.

He brays like a beast above me, his legs kicked out and shaking, his hips tilted up at a crude angle, and all I want to do is continue to drink his lust from my perfect vantage point where I have the privilege of watching this strong man fall apart.

Finally, he has spent enough to release him from my mouth, and I fall forward into his lap, gasping for air, while he continues to fountain milky white fluid up onto my face, my neck, my breasts. And the next thing I know, I'm face down over his lap, my skirt being jerked up violently to the small of my back. Cool air coasts over my feverish skin.

"I said two sucks." His palm cracks sharply against my left butt cheek, the sound reverberating around the room. "Nottwo minutes."

"I couldn't stop," I hiccup, getting another rough spank for my trouble, the stunning pain turning my nerve endings into snapdragons. Something is happening. Something I've never experienced before. I want to be walloped. Want to taste his frustration in

the back of my throat in the same place where he put his climax. “I never w-wanted to stop.”

“How am I supposed to live with that image in my head?” He glances his palm off my buttocks, and I let out a throaty moan, feeling myself start to drip inside my thong. A drip that increases slowly until I’ve dampened the insides of my thighs. “How am I supposed to live with this memory? How am I supposed to live a normal life now that I’ve found you, baby?How?”

I’m too overwhelmed by the pressure in my throat and the lust coursing through my body to hold back anymore. I scramble up into his lap, wrapping my legs around his hips and diving into a kiss that couldn’t be more passionate if it was scripted. Because it’s real. It’s real. He kisses me like he knows me and sees the best parts of me.

He kisses me like he loves me—and I kiss him back the same way.

“Don’t let me go,” I gasp when we come up for air.

Penn’s eyes flash with a depth of emotion that makes me cry out, then I’m whimpering on my back because he’s twisted around and thrown me onto the soft bedding, his hearty lumberjack body prowling over mine, his mouth feasting on my breasts, sucking and licking my nipples while his fingers slide up between my legs and enter me, two long, blunt digits that mimic how his sex fucked me earlier in my trailer, fingering me with rough, jiggling pumps that cause stars to twinkle in front of my eyes.

“Go on, you tight pussy’d little girl. Come for Daddy while you’ve still got his sperm on your chin and his handprint on your sweet ass.”

The orgasm arrests every muscle in my body, his mouth stamping over mine just in time to catch my scream, and I’m blinded with bliss, but I can see just enough to

acknowledge the squirt that he juices from my body with his relentless fingers and how much it turns him on, the slack-jawed praise in his expression prolonging the ripples of release, straining my very being until my frame melts down onto the bed and I'm crying like a baby, shaking under the perfect duress of it all.

Penn gathers me up close, cradling me, his hands coasting over my hair, down my back, smoothing my hips and drawing me deeper, deeper into his embrace, until I'm plastered there, fitted to him like second skin, which is exactly where I want and need to be.

If his thundering heartbeat is any proof, it's where he needs me to be, too.

"You're okay, baby," he rasps. "I've got you."

"I know." I draw back slightly, meeting his eyes. "You've got me."

After a thoughtful moment, he nods once, then tucks my head back into his neck. "Sleep now. Leave it with me."

Leave it with me.

Perhaps the most incredible words anyone has ever said to me. It's like a knockout punch to my anxiety and I simply go limp, knowing nothing bad is going to happen.

At least not tonight.

CHAPTER 8

Penn

It's creepy to watch Jenna sleep, but I can't help myself.

She's never anything less than stunning. Lying naked in the morning light in my sheets, however, she could be a Botticelli painting. Her skin is smooth and supple, the light kissing her as though it knows she's a work of art and wants to be worthy of her. Her pink lips, swollen from giving me head, are partially parted, her tits pointing up at the ceiling like delicious fruit, ready to be plucked, her arms flounced overhead.

My dick is fully erect, the throb deepening when I think of her squirting for me, how she looked face down over my knee—a power position I had no idea would turn me on so fucking much. Only with her. Only ever with Jenna. There is a bond between us that defies what I thought I knew about myself as a man. I'm meant to be something unusual to this girl. A lover, a guardian and an authority figure all rolled into one.

I can't let her go.

I can't do it.

Jenna stirs slightly, her mouth opening in a yawn, back arching off the mattress in a kitten-like stretch. She jolts, becoming aware of her surroundings, her gaze seeking me out in a panic, calming when she sees me there.

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“Morning,” she murmurs, flashing me a smile that gets my heart pumping like crazy. “You’re even hotter before breakfast,” she whispers, starry-eyed, pushing me onto my back and straddling my hips, gasping to find me as stiff as a board, giggling into my neck and wiggling her soft pussy in my lap.

Heaven. She’s heaven, pure and simple.

How the hell did I get here?

How the hell do I stay?

“What time is it?” she asks, the words muffled, as she’s kissing her way down my throat and chest. “Do we have time to cuddle?”

“I’m starting to think we have different meanings of the word ‘cuddle.’”

Her head pops up, an adorable dimple etched into her cheek. “What do you think it means?”

“You know.” I take her ass in my grip, kneading that toned flesh. “A hug between two people, only they’re lying down. And it goes on for a while.”

“No, silly,” she says, kissing the underside of my chin, her cunt slicking up the full length of my cock, then riding back down. Pressing. “This is cuddling. It’s when I tease you into giving me what I want.”

“Got it,” I heave. “Now I know.”

“Now you know,” she sings, her smile imprinting on my neck. “I have the photoshoot at nine thirty and I need to be in the makeup chair by eight. I’m not going to be late, am I?”

Taking my eyes off her for a second is torture, but I turn my head to look at the clock on my bedside. “Baby. It’s eight-fifteen.”

Her eyes shoot wide. “Oh no!” She leaps off the bed in an erotic display of limbs and messy hair, and Jesus, Jesus, her body would tempt the staunchest saint. I can only shake my head in awe. “I need to go now. Will you give me a ride?”

“Of course, I will,” I say, sitting up with a wince, thanks to the hungry johnson, ready to go between my legs. I clear the pain from my throat, as much as possible. “Use my phone to call your manager. Tell him you’re running late. They can’t start without you and I’m not dropping you off on an empty stomach.” I stand up and pull her close, kissing the crown of her head, rubbing her shoulders until they relax. “If you don’t want to call them, leave it with me.”

“Leave it with you,” she whispers, swaying toward me, her cheek rubbing in my chest hair. “Leave it with Penn. Those words make me desperately happy.”

“Makes me happy to say them,” I rumble, nearly bowled over by my protectiveness. My responsibility for Jenna. The growing sensation in my chest is so overwhelming, I have to avert my eyes, fishing her panties and skirt off the floor, kneeling down to help her step into them. Handing her the tank top and watching her shimmy into it, her tits plumping in the neckline. I love serving this girl as much as I love her serving me. Damn right I’ll get on my knees for this girl who sighs at me like I’m a superhero. This girl who gave me her virginity. Trusts me. Swallows for me. Needs a guardian.

My thoughts racing a thousand miles an hour, making plans, I take her hand and

guide her out of the bedroom. She looks so angelic in the sunlight that I almost drag her back upstairs—

But a scream comes from the kitchen below and my stomach lurches.

Erin drops her bowl of cereal, the porcelain shattering on the hardwood floor.

“Oh, my goodness,” whispers Jenna, hands to her pinkening cheeks.

Fuck. I woke up in such a state of dazed euphoria, I didn’t stop to consider what might happen if Jenna and Erin cross paths. Is my daughter going to be upset? Is she going to be scared or throw a tantrum or never look at me the same way again, knowing I spent the night with a woman so young?

“It’s Hey Betty,” she says in a high-pitched voice. “Hey Betty is in my house!”

I remember what Jenna told me last night about wanting to leave her sitcom days in the past, so I study her, wondering how she’s going to handle Erin’s exclamation. But instead of getting annoyed or being disappointed, she transforms into her famous character, right in front of my very eyes and delivers her catchphrase flawlessly.

“If you’re serving up trouble, I’ll take double.”

Erin screams again, but this time it’s piercing and full of joy.

Jenna bounds down the stairs toward my daughter, not with her seductive walk, but with a casual, friendly stride that I recognize vaguely from my television screen. “Hi Erin, nice to meet you,” she says, stooping down and opening her arms, laughing when Erin runs straight into them and bowls her over, landing Jenna on her butt.

“Dad, it’s Hey Betty! Oh my God! What is she doing here?” Her wide eyes tick

between me and Jenna. “What are you doing here?”

“Well.” Jenna pulls back with a brilliant smile. “I’m in town working and I ran into your dad. He told me you were a big fan, so I thought I’d stop by and meet you.” She gives Erin’s hair an affectionate stroke. “You can call me Jenna, if you want. That’s my real name.”

“Jenna.” Erin nods, hypnotized. “Okay.”

I’m in the kitchen now, unrolling half the damn paper towel roll to clean up the spilled cereal, but I can’t take my eyes off Jenna. How natural she is with Erin. How sweet. How Erin looks at Jenna likes she’s her lord and savior.

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We've both got it bad.

Erin climbs into a stool at the breakfast bar and Jenna sits beside her, answering my daughter's rapid-fire questions about being an actress and interjecting commentary when Erin starts talking about her favorite *Hey Betty* episodes, Jenna's eyes sparkling with patience and fondness.

That's when I realize I'm in love with her.

Through and through.

I never would have believed until her that this feeling could hit a man overnight, but then again, I hadn't met Jenna Fairchild yet. Hadn't witnessed her strength and vulnerability and kindness and generosity. Hadn't witnessed her spirit and felt the soft welcome of her underneath me. I haven't just been struck by a single arrow from Cupid, I've been plugged full of holes.

"Will you come with me to school today?" Erin asks, eagerly. "We have show and tell. Everyone will freak out!"

"Honey, Jenna has to work—"

"I can help drop you off and maybe say a quick hello to your friends." Jenna looks at me with hopeful hesitation. "Is that...okay?"

I give her a warm nod. "Better than okay."

Her back straightens, her expression brightening. Does she think I could tell her no?

“I’ll wrap some eggs in a piece of toast to eat on the way, Erin. We’re running late.” I’ve laid the paper towels over the spilled milk to soak it up. Now I’m rummaging in the cabinet for a skillet. “That work for you, too, Jenna?”

“Yes,” she breathes. “That would be amazing, thank you.”

“Jenna,” Erin says, turning in her stool. “Is Wesley here, too?”

“Who is Wesley?” I bark, my neck heating.

“He was my co-star on Hey Betty,” Jenna explains, raising an eyebrow at me, before refocusing on my daughter. “No, he’s not in town with me, but I’ll tell him you said hello!”

“Oh my God,” Erin screeches up at the ceiling. “He’s so cute.”

“He is. Super cute.”

I glower at her from the stove.

“Wesley is like a brother to me,” Jenna drawls, her face a little flush, like maybe she’s enjoying my jealousy. Which is probably a good thing, because I don’t reckon a man could be in a relationship with a woman so beautiful and not suffer from the green monster.

Constantly.

“See that it stays that way,” I tell Jenna.

Gorgeous eyes darken and she nods.

“Why were you in my dad’s room?” Erin asks, splitting an intuitive glance between me and Jenna.

Jenna looks at me, floundering for a moment, answering before I have a chance to help her out. “He was just giving me a house tour.”

“Oh.” A beat passes. “But you haven’t seen my room yet!” Erin throws herself off the stool, wrapping two hands around Jenna’s wrist and tugging her toward the rear of the house. “Come on, I’ll show you my poster.”

“We have to leave, kid,” I call to their retreating backs.

“I know. I’ll be quick!”

Jenna looks back at me with pure happiness, skipping along with Erin, and that’s it.

There’s no going back.

I’ll do everything in my power to keep her.

CHAPTER 9

Jenna

Iforgot this photo shoot was for bathing suits.

To be fair, they're vintage-style with a twist and cover a lot more skin than some I've worn in the past. Still. When I walk onto set in a yellow-one piece that is demure in the front and a high-cut thong in back, Penn pushes off the tree he's been leaning against, a thunderstorm rolling in across his features.

Yup. After an hour in the makeup trailer, I look a lot different than the Jenna who dropped Erin off at school to the deafening squeal of hundreds of kids. Now, my hair is teased into a windblown style, I'm sporting a smoky, purple cat eye and my body has been buffed to a shine. Oh, and I'm wearing white cowboy boots for some strange reason.

"Well halleluiaah. Finally. The talent has arrived," crows my manager...sarcastically? He's had an irritated glint in his eye since I missed my call time and arrived hand-in-hand with Penn. "Let's get this show on the road, shall we?"

"Couldn't agree more," I murmur, planting my hands on the hood of the silver Mustang we're using as a prop. "Can you give me some context?"

The photographer responds, instead of my manager. A different man from yesterday, this one sent fromVogue. "The idea behind the editorial is you're a damsel in distress who took a wrong turn on the way to the beach and ended up with a broken-down car

in the forest. We'll add smoke coming from under the hood in post."

"Got it."

I take a deep breath through my nose and begin to emote, looking stunned, then frustrated. Scared by my unfamiliar surroundings. After I've run the gamut of emotions, I edge into model territory, leaving my expression rather bland, but striking interesting poses, hips angled, eyes distant, wrist cocked. Move. Shift. Angle. Repeat.

"Excellent, Jenna," praises the photographer.

I know better than to look at Penn while I lay face down on the hood, pressing my cheek to the cool steel, my ass perked up in a teasing pose, but I do. I look at him and witness the lust pouring off his tensed frame. My whole sex contracts like it's being squeezed in a fist. His fist.

"Wow. Perfect. You're giving everything to the camera today, doll. Loving it," the photographer says, lowering his camera. "I've gotten everything we need in the yellow suit. We're ready for the next one."

"Great," I say, sliding off the car and landing on my feet.

The faster this photo shoot is over, the faster I can be alone with Penn.

That's all I want.

"Actually, we're thinking of going nude for the next series of shots," Dustin drawls. As if anticipating my protest, he holds up a hand. "They're going to be tasteful, not gratuitous."

With a growing lump in my throat, I scan the immediate distance, counting at least

fifteen men. "I'm not posing naked."

"Oh really?" My manager strikes a domineering stance. "Is there any reason you don't want to capitalize on your behavior last night?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," he stresses, holding up his phone to present what looks like tabloid photos, holding it up for the whole crew to see, including Penn. "You already bucked your good girl image last night by engaging in public foreplay with a lumberjack many, many years your senior, before he carried you out of the bar like luggage. It's all over the internet."

"I don't care," I whisper. "I'd be seen with him any night of the week."

"Isn't that romantic?" Dustin says, followed by an eyeroll. "Lose the suit, Jenna."

I shake my head. "I'll wear another bathing suit, but I'm not going naked."

"Let's go, Jenna. Put Hey Betty firmly in the rearview and pose with your tits out."

One second, my manager is standing on his feet, the next he's flat on his back, clutching a bloody nose and wailing like a baby.

"You had that coming for a damn long while," Penn says, standing over him with a face teeming with fury. "The next one will knock you old cold, motherfucker." Penn rests his king-sized boot on the man's chest. "You don't talk to her like that ever again. Is that fucking clear? If she says no, the answer is hell no."

"All right!" my manager screeches, holding up his bloody hands. "Fine!"

Penn turns to the set, eyeballing everyone in attendance. “There’s no need for all of you idiots to be standing there looking at my girlfriend while she works.” His voice cracks like a whip. “Fuck off and find something else to do.”

“Yes, sir,” a couple of them say, everyone but the lighting guy and a personal assistant to the photographer scattering into the woods and beyond. My manager stays, too, dragging himself to a tree and propping his back against it while he feels for broken bones in his nose.

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Penn nods at me, grunts, and goes back to leaning against his tree.

He called me his girlfriend.

I'm lighter than air on my way into my trailer, changing into the next bathing suit, which happens to be a red, high-waisted Dolce & Gabbana two-piece with balcony cups that push my breasts up, making them high and round. The stylist ditches the cowboy boots and puts me in white satin pumps with a dramatic bow on the toe. And I'm trying with all my might to focus on the editorial shoot, but there are hot shivers racing up and down my spine as Penn's actions sink in more and more. He just knocked out my manager.

He demanded respect for me.

He saw what was making me uncomfortable and eliminated it.

"They want some different glam look to go with this one," explains the makeup artist. "It's going to take me half an hour to apply. Do you want some water?"

"No, but can my boyfriend keep me company?"

I say it breathlessly, because that's what I am. I'm lacking in anything resembling breath, my hair follicles buzzing, my heart galloping in my ribcage.

He just knocked out my manager.

He cleared the set so I'd feel more secure.

Penn Holland is my hero.

“Sure,” says the makeup artist with a knowing wink, before opening the trailer door and calling out, “The talent would like a certain lumberjack to join us...?”

Fifteen seconds later, Penn is ducking beneath the low door frame on his way into the trailer, looking at the array of eyeshadow palettes and hair tools like they’re foreign objects. “You good in here, baby?”

“Yes.” I watch his eyes rake my body in the mirror’s reflection. “Can I sit on your lap while she does my makeup?”

He dips his chin with a grunt, and I spring up, wringing my clasped hands under my chin as he fits his huge body into the chair, then I hop into his lap, giggling, my feet swinging freely, two feet off the ground. Is it too much to want this for the rest of my life? My big lumberjack strumming his fingers up and down my tummy while the artist paints ruby red lip stain onto my mouth? When she finishes and my mouth is free, I turn my head slightly to whisper to Penn. “Thank you for what you did out there.”

“Should have done it sooner,” he grumbles, kissing my shoulder.

“No. You bided your time and assessed the situation, because you’re not some childish hothead. You’re a man.”

I want to beg him to come to Los Angeles with me. To bring Erin, too. After all, his ex-wife lives nearby. It might even be better for their custody agreement! But I don’t, because that would be so selfish, wouldn’t it? Asking him to uproot his life for some actress. To move away from his home and become my personal shadow who always makes sure I’m safe. He couldn’t possibly want that job. Especially when he loves working in the forest so much.

“I loved meeting Erin this morning,” I whisper. “Do you think she likes me?”

“No, I think she worships the ground you walk on.”

Hope stirs in my throat. “I understand where she’s coming from. I feel the same way about her father.” The makeup artist has her back turned, so I rub my bottom in his lap. “I worship the ground he walks on and I can’t wait to prove it later.”

Penn grabs my hips to keep me still, his eyes going black in the mirror. “Easy, Jenna. I watched that yellow thong creep deeper and deeper into your ass crack for forty-five goddamn minutes. My stones are beating like a drum.”

“Ouch.” I lean back, licking his stubbled chin from below. “I’m so sorry, Daddy.”

“No, you’re not.”

Another giggle wracks me, but before I get a chance to respond, the trailer door opens and there’s the photographer. “Are you almost ready to...” He trails off, staring at me and Penn in the mirror with a slack jaw. “Oh, this is something. The nymph and the brute. We need to get these two on film.”

“I couldn’t agree more,” says the makeup artist, fanning herself.

“Are you game to pose for a few frames?” the photographer asks Penn. “It could be fun to have you lurking in the background, like a dangerous presence. Oh, I am really vibing with this. How about you, Jenna?”

“I don’t know.” I snuggle back into Penn. “He’s the opposite of dangerous.”

“The manager with the bloody nose begs to differ.”

“But he’s not dangerous to me.”

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“Of course not. It’s just a concept. He’s...huge, while you’re so dainty.”

I’m trapped between two inclinations. Not wanting to formally introduce my lumberjack to the world, because he’s mine and mine alone. While also desperately wanting something to remember him by when I go back to Los Angeles. “Will you take some pictures with me, Penn?” I ask, meeting his eyes in the mirror. “Please?”

A line ticks in his cheek. “You think I can say no to you?”

“No,” I sing, biting my lip playfully, feeling his sex rise even more beneath my backside. Throbbing in his jeans. “He doesn’t need makeup. He’s perfect exactly how he is.”

“Fabulous,” says the photographer with noticeable enthusiasm, backing down the steps of the trailer. “I’ll go let lighting know.”

Fifteen minutes later, I’m staring down into the engine of the car, bending forward to inspect the machinery with my hands perched above me on the edge of the hood. I’m highly attuned to my body and its positioning, now that Penn is standing in the near distance, holding the chainsaw he retrieved from his truck.

“Oh, this is incredible. Like a classic horror film. He’s coming out of the mist to claim his sacrifice. He’s never seen such beauty in all his life and he must possess her.” The photographer adjusts his angle. “Come closer, Penn. Look at her. You’re going to drag her back to your lair and possess her. You must satiate the beast inside of you. Oooh, rev the chainsaw.”

Penn does as he's asked, and I react appropriately, gasping, seeing my pursuer for the first time. I slam the hood shut, intending to sprint for the driver's side of the vehicle, but Penn is too fast and now I'm flattened face-up on the hood of the car while Penn looms above me, his jaw tight as he leans over me, inspecting my breasts like they're merchandise, his hands closing around the curves of my hips.

"Oh wow," my manager says, albeit reluctantly.

"This is gold on film," enthuses the photographer. "Don't stop."

"I don't know what I'm doing," Penn whispers to me.

"Do what comes natural," I murmur back, molding my hands to his pecs, as if to push him away, but he wrestles my wrists higher, pinning them above my head and causing my back to arch. Growling over me, his hips wedged between my bare thighs. "Good," I whisper. "They want the world to know I've grown up. I want the world to know I can do more than drop one-liners on a sitcom." I tease his lips with mine. "You're helping me do that in a way that finally feels safe. You make everything feel safe."

He looks down into my eyes. "You make everything feel perfect."

"Penn," I whisper, skimming my knees up his sides.

"That's the shot! Yes! Perfection!"

"Need to fuck soon," Penn pants, dropping his face into my neck "You've got me so stiff in your little bathing suits, baby."

"Would you rather come in my mouth or my pussy, Daddy?" I whisper.

“Jesus Christ.” He grits his teeth on a violent shudder. “Please. We need to stop before I cram it in right here in front of all these people.”

“That would definitely make headlines,” I murmur.

“Now, little girl,” he growls into my ear.

“We need a break!”

CHAPTER 10

Penn

This time, instead of returning to the makeup trailer, I carry Jenna to her pink, designer one, trying with all my willpower to be gentle with my girl. Not easy to do when I want to throw her onto all fours in the dirt and fuck her like the sky is falling.

Would you rather come in my mouth or pussy, Daddy?

Those words bash the insides of my skull like stormy ocean waves.

It’s not only her body I need with burning desperation, but also her precious company. All to my selfish self. Her job is to be an actress and apparently to model little cock tease bathing suits while bent over the hood of a fucking car—and I don’t disapprove of her profession. I won’t tell her what she can and can’t do.

But apparently, I will grow steadily more jealous the longer she’s focused on other tasks. I will get agitated by not having her to myself. The kind of agitated that makes me agree to be part of the photo shoot, just to be close to her. Just to get my filthy hands on her delicious curves. I want her smile all to myself. I want her body in my possession. I will put up with her showing it off a little, as long as I’m present. The

supple swells of her ass could spark world peace. Her tits could make men believe in God. I don't have the right to keep the sight of them from people—she's the one who decides how and when she weaponizes her body. But I only have a certain length of rope—and right now, it's about to snap.

When we reach the top of the stairs, she tugs on the handle.

Nothing happens.

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“Oh no!” Jenna gasps. “It’s locked and I forgot my keys.”

I don’t waste a single second backing down the stairs and going around to the far side of the trailer. My balls are throbbing like a son of a bitch, she’s in a bathing suit that looks more like lingerie, and she smells like vanilla ice cream.

I can’t go another second with giving her a fucking pound.

“Where are you taking m—” I drop Jenna to her feet, spinning her around to face the trailer, then I get to work unfastening my jeans. “Oh.”

Lord, she’s got me feeling like the character I played in the photoshoot. A big, bad wolf preying on the starlet, his cock thicker than her forearm, bobbing out of his jeans, like a snake getting ready to sink its fangs into her unblemished flesh. She’s so much shorter than me, I can’t help but feel a touch of shame as I strip the bathing suit bottoms down to her ankles, falling to my knees behind her.

A man in prayer, except he’s not praying to God, he’s giving thanks to the tan line that starts at the top of her crack and disappears inside of it.

Just like my tongue does a second later.

Rubbing and tasting that pretty asshole, memorizing that sugary sweetness, the circular groove that leads somewhere that’s too tight for a man my size, but hell if I can’t appreciate knowing it exists and letting that knowledge stiffen me silly. I moan while I lap at her back entrance, my face buried between her young ass cheeks, slipping a hand through her legs to cup her cunt, juicing it like an orange in my grip.

“Yes,” she whimpers, rubbing against my face. Then, “Lick it deeper, Daddy.”

That plea vibrates through me and now I’m mashing my face up against her asshole now, pinning her hips to the trailer while I slaver all over that pucker, groaning over the taste, sawing the length of my tongue against the unknown, while pumping two fingers into her dripping cunt. Holding them deep and jiggling them, remembering the sound she makes when she squirts and barely surviving the resulting wave of heat.

Then I don’t have to remember at all, I’m getting another example firsthand of how incredible this girl’s body is. She squirts onto the forest floor and the side of the trailer, moisture spraying onto my wrist, my hand. And while she’s whining and shaking, I rise to my full height, heft her a few feet off the ground and impale her onto my spike of flesh, bouncing her like a fuck doll, the smooth buns of her ass raking up and down my stomach, her hands flattened on the wall of the trailer, my lower body keeping her aloft.

“Bent over that car like you wanted your man to come and get it, huh?”

“I always want you to come and get it,” she sobs, writhing her butt slowly.

I flatten her to the side of the trailer, grinding my cock up between her legs and making her scream behind her teeth. “Big man like me is a lot of responsibility for rookie pussy like this. You’re going to go from having no experience to experiencing me every time my briefs get too tight. And baby, they’re always going to be too fucking tight around you.”

“I’m always going to be too fucking tight, too,” she rasps, circling that slickness on me—and I snap, going for broke, rutting her into the side of the trailer while my snarls echo around us, my cock tunneling in and out of the only heaven I’ve ever known, while her nails scratch down the aluminum, cries falling from her lips. Cries

for deeper, harder, meaner. So I give her all three, sinking my teeth into the curve of her neck and jackhammering that pussy in a blur until I hear her knees slam into the side of the trailer and feel the deluge of pleasure she sets loose with my motherfucking name on it, and I pop off, unleashing a flood that blinds me, quaking me top to bottom, my balls spasming in an ancient rhythm while I chant her name. Over and over. The last woman I will ever touch.

“I love you,” I pant against the nape of her neck when we come crashing down. “I love you, Jenna Fairchild. I’m so in love with you.”

“I’m so in love with you, too, Penn.” A sound wells inside of her, spilling out in the form of a sob. “That’s why I’m not asking you to come back to Los Angeles with me.”

Jenna

I’m not sure where I get the strength to tell Penn goodbye.

But I’m pretty sure he’s the one that helped me find that inner strength.

Irony, that.

As I turn in his embrace and find him looking down at me with a stoic expression, my bones are breaking. It’s everything I can do not to fall into a heap at his feet. The girl that still exists inside of me wants to wrap my arms around his waist and beg him to keep me forever. To use whatever weapons I have in my arsenal to lure him to Los Angeles. But the woman I’ve become isn’t so self-centered.

“Jenna—”

“You have a kid—a wonderful daughter. You have a profession you love,” I heave

tearfully. “And you would hate Los Angeles. There are some good things about it, but there are also a lot of people like my manager. Especially in my world. My schedule is hectic and grueling. Maybe...” Pain invades my throat. “Maybe in another life a relationship between us could have been an incredible thing because when I said I love you, I meant it. But part of love is recognizing what’s best for someone and making sure they get it. You taught me that. You taught me a lot of things in only a couple of days, and I’m going to take those lessons with me. I’m going to stand up for myself more. I’m going to—”

“Jenna.”

“What?”

While I was giving my impassioned speech, he’s been fixing his clothing. Now, he patiently and calmly stoops forward long enough to pull my bathing suit bottoms back into place. Once he’s satisfied that the red garment is arranged correctly, he frames my jaw, tilting my head back. “Are you done?”

“Am I done what?”

“Are you done pretending we could walk away from each other and be happy?”

My eyes flood with tears and spill over. “I’ve learned how to live without being happy.”

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“And now you’re going to unlearn that shit, baby.”

I shake my head stubbornly. “Not at the cost of your happiness.”

He seems to be imploring the heavens for calm. “Jenna, I have been many things throughout my life, but foolish was never one of them. That’s what I would have to be to let you go.” He picks me up in his arms, and I cling because my heart demands I do so, locking my legs around his hips and nuzzling his now-familiar neck. “I could come to Los Angeles. I could be the brick wall that keeps any bullshit from touching you. I could take you home every night. Share that home. Take care of you, the way you deserve.”

“I can take care of myself,” I murmur faintly.

“I know you can. Look how far you’ve gotten on your own. You’re a marvel.” He bundles me closer. “But even a marvel, especially my marvel, needs to come home and let her man do the soothing. Are you going to give me that responsibility, Jenna?”

“I...don’t know.”

Without looking at his face, I know his temple is ticking. “Do you want to?”

“If I say yes, you’ll feel obligated to rearrange your whole life,” I hiccup into his neck. “I’ll feel guilty every single day, wondering if you regret doing it.”

“God almighty, Jenna, you blow my mind. It’s like you have no idea what a fucking

treasure you are.” He shakes me, kisses me hard on the temple. “You are a treasure. You think moving to Los Angeles is a steep price to pay for a woman like you? I’d fight endless wars on the front lines for a chance to love you forever. I’d climb a million miles of barbed wire fences to watch the sunrise with you in my bed again. I’ve won, just by knowing you. Ask me to come to LA and be part of your life.” He pauses for a deep breath. “But I need you to ask me, because I...”

“What?” I sniff.

“Hell, baby, I’ll never be worthy of you. I’ll never be as good-looking as one of your co-stars. I’m older and beat up—”

“No, you’re not! You’re powerful and sexy and real.”

He’s shaking his head—and now I’m panicking. “When you were sitting on my lap in that makeup chair, you saw the differences in us. So did everyone else. You’re worried about me regretting you?” A humorless laugh puffs from his mouth. “It would be just the opposite. Ask me to come to LA, Jenna. Save me from feeling like the chainsaw-wielding beast kidnapping the stranded beauty. Ask me and I’ll come. I want to. I’m just...fuck. I’m losing confidence that you want me there.”

No.

I’m stuck.

I’ve trapped myself in a corner.

In trying to set Penn free, I’ve caused him to second guess how I feel about him. Which is the absolute last thing I want. I don’t want to leave him doubting that every second of our time together was authentic. This bond is the realest thing I’ve ever experienced. Maybe I’m the one lacking in confidence that I can make him happy

enough to love LA. Maybe if we'd just had a few more days together, I'd be selfish enough in our love to move mountains for a shot with him. Maybe maybe maybe.

My chest weighs a thousand pounds when I reach up and stroke the sides of his face. "You saved me so many times over the past couple of days. You've demanded respect for me and shown me what true selflessness looks like. But I'm going to go." That last word emerges on a sob. "I'll think of you constantly. I'll miss you like I'm dying. But I have to go." I go up on my toes and kiss his mouth hard. "Goodbye, Penn Holland."

Penn is still as a statue, staring down at the ground with a clenched jaw, when I turn and run back to set, tears streaming down my face and a horrible churn in my gut telling me I've just made a horrible, irreversible mistake.

CHAPTER 11

Penn

I'm destroyed.

The last two weeks have been a pitch-black hole and I've been operating blindly, trying to be a father, trying to do my job, trying to remember how to get up, function and breathe without the possibility of Jenna walking back through my door.

She's gone.

She blew in here, rearranged the geography of my heart, my soul, and left me bleeding out on the floor. Nothing looks the same. Nothing feels the same, now that I've felt her breath on my skin. Now that I've been the object of her trust. She let me into her world and now, I'm locked out in the fucking cold. I was a fool to think our relationship would end any other way.

She's a nineteen-year-old bombshell on her way to meteoric fame.

Did I really think she'd saddle herself with a scarred vet on a humble salary?

That was never going to happen. Not in reality.

I need to be grateful for the small amount of time I was allowed to exist in her orbit. I need to count my blessings that I've had a woman like that look up at me in the dark and whimper for me to kiss her, to stop her world from spinning too fast. To anchor her, even if it was just for a little while. Even if it was only temporary.

I don't realize I'm staring into space until Erin shrieks my name from the living room.

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Source Creation Date: August 15, 2025, 10:33 am

“Dad! Jenna is on television!”

My feet carry me in the direction of the living room before I make a conscious decision, heart slamming into my jugular. Seeing her face might be the absolute last thing I need right now, but I also need the sight of her like goddamn oxygen.

And there she is.

Walking down a street in Los Angeles, carrying a brown paper bag on her hip.

Loose, low-hanging jeans and a white tank top. A ponytail.

I don't expect the dark circles under her eyes. I don't expect the haunted expression. Don't expect her to look so lost and confused when the reporter sprints up to her with a camera on his shoulder, firing off questions like bullets, making Jenna jolt.

“Jenna Fairchild! Deadline just announced your new starring role in the Muse trilogy. Congratulations.”

“Thank you,” she murmurs, looking a little dazed. Pale.

Has she been sleeping? Eating?

Where has the color gone from her face?

“This is going to be quite a departure from Hey Betty. You're going to be playing a sexy assassin. How far are you going to take this new foray into more adult roles?”

Are there any love scenes in your future? What about nudity?"

"Um. I'm just out trying to buy some groceries." After a beat of silence, she sets her shoulders and looks the reporter in the eye. "And you shouldn't be asking me those types of questions. They make me uncomfortable."

"Right." He laughs off the admonishment.

But me? I'm so proud of Jenna, my chest could burst. Moreover, I'm so proud that Erin got the witness the moment Jenna stood up for herself.

"You've been silent about your recent trip to the mountains, but the picture of you and a mystery man are still circulating. Could you shed some light on his identity?"

"Are they talking about you, Dad?" Erin wants to know.

"Yeah, honey. They're talking about me," I mutter distractedly, because I'm too busy witnessing Jenna's reaction. The bag of groceries slips down her hip a little and it seems to cost all her strength to drag it back up.

"It looked like you were getting pretty cozy with the man in flannel," urges the reporter in a voice dripping with innuendo. "Was he a fling or something more serious? People are dying to know."

Just when I think Jenna isn't going to answer, she whispers, "It was serious. He was everything to me." A hard swallow. "He still is."

And then her bottom lip wobbles and she looks directly into the camera, ever so briefly, one flash of those green eyes ripping me wide open.

Crumbling my world around me.

“How do you feel about moving to LA, kid?” I rasp.

Jenna

One month later

“Cut!”

There’s a round of applause from the crew, and I let the tension of the scene melt away, drooping my shoulders.

“That’s a wrap for today, Jenna. Well done. Can’t wait to review these dailies.”

Forcing a smile, I say, “Great. See you tomorrow.”

I did it.

I landed the role of a lifetime.

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Source Creation Date: August 15, 2025, 10:33 am

I'm surrounded by a cast of people my own age that invite me out every night to the Château Marmont or whatever club they've decided to frequent. I've gone a couple of times, but I can't do anything but sit in the corner, numb, my drink untouched in front of me.

I don't want to be there.

I don't want to be anywhere.

I need to be cuddling with Penn.

My body is bereft without his heat. Somehow sleeping one night in his bed has ruined my ability to sleep in my own. My cold sheets are no match for his hairy barrel chest and his open grip on my hip. The way he adjusts his position to accommodate my preferred sprawl or snuggle. How he'd kiss my head and rub my back.

I yearn for his voice.

I feel sick without his solid dependability in my life. His belief in me.

Have I matured in the wake of our whirlwind affair and learned how to stand on my own two feet, in a new, positive way? Yes. I fired my manager, found a new one. I'm in the process of buying a permanent home. I'm showing up to set on time every day, my lines have been learned and I'm focused on being a professional. On building my career the way I want it to look. Not the industry.

But even a marvel, especially my marvel, needs to come home and let her man do the

soothing. Are you going to give me that responsibility, Jenna?

Why didn't I just say yes?

I turn away from the set, my intention to change in my trailer and go home, but there's a man blocking my path. It's the director. He's still here.

A quick glance to my right and left tells me no one else is around.

But he's been professional with me thus far, so I check my discomfort for now.

"Jenna, we've got your seduction scene tomorrow..." He rubs his hands together, his eyes taking a quick tour of my body, which is clad in a leather mini skirt, heels and a crop top, in keeping with the provocative nature of my character. "I hope it's not inappropriate to say I can't wait to film it."

He's talking about the scene where I seduce my target, only to stab him in the heart as soon as we're alone in a hotel room in Tokyo. Or a set that looks like a hotel room in Tokyo, at least. "Oh. Um..."

"I know we already met with the intimacy coordinator to discuss your comfort level for the scene, but I'm really looking to give this part of the story...pop. Fire." He takes a sauntering step in my direction. "And you're so beautiful, Jenna. Shouldn't we give the people what they want? A little more..."

"Nudity?"

"Yes."

I'm instantly exhausted. I can fight this battle. And I will. I'm not the only actress fighting it. But there are some days, like today, that I don't have the bandwidth. I

suspect that's why he's approaching me now, after a strenuous day of filming. My energy level is low. There's no one around.

"We could have given this part to so many girls..." he laughs, running fingers through his dyed black hair. "But we went with you. You know what I'm saying?"

There it is. The demand for a show of gratitude. A reminder to kiss the ring.

Not today. Not ever.

Feeling an urgency to put space between me and the direction before I knock him down a peg and inform him I'll be calling my agent, lawyer and manager on a conference post haste, I reverse a step—

And my back hits something hard.

"Leave it with me," a familiar deep voice says into my hair.

Shock hits me in the solar plexus and I quite simply collapse. Carrying the world on my shoulders is rewarding, but as soon as I hear Penn's voice, the weight rolls off and my legs turn to nothing in the wake of the whiplash relief. In a matter of seconds, I go from defending myself with a sword against a five-headed fire monster to sleeping in a meadow, in the arms of my king—and he's always, always keeping watch.

Penn catches me, turns me around. Elevates me with a brawny arm beneath my butt, so I can bury myself in his neck, my arms squeezing his neck with a force that would kill any other man besides this one. My man only grunts, rubbing my back encouragingly.

"You're here. You're really here," I whimper, soaking the shoulder of his T-shirt with happy tears. "I should have asked you to come, Penn. I need you. I love you. What was

I thinking? That I could live without you? I can't."

"Shh. I'm here now." His voice hardens, his hand tugging down the hem of my leather skirt, which has ridden up. Next, he addresses my director with a murderous tone. "And if you ever approach her again without me present, especially about something that involves her body, I'll put your fucking head through a wall. Is that understood?"

"Who..." Based on the sound of his footsteps, the director is backing away. "Who the hell are you?"

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“Someone you should be very worried about.” Even when Penn projects violence at the director, he kisses my cheek gently. “Someone who makes it so she doesn’t have to.”

My heart topples over, spilling sappy heat into my chest, happiness waking up my limbs and nerve endings and parts of me that have been sleeping since I walked away from the glorious giant of a man.

Before the director can respond, Penn turns on a heel and carries me off the set, not stopping until we’re outside the building and climbing the stairs to my trailer. In a replay of six weeks ago, the door is locked, but this time Penn kicks it wide open, carrying me inside.

“How are you here? Are you...did you just come for a visit, or—”

“Nope. Here to stay, Jenna.”

I squeal, planting kisses all over his face, the life reentering my body like an acceleration of spring. Flowers blooming, birds chirping, the ground thawing.

“How?” I ask. “How? Where is Erin?”

“With her mom, for now. She’s back from her tour and they’re spending some much-needed time together, but she’ll be coming to see us a lot.”

“Oh good,” I whisper, relief and hope swelling in my throat. “Your job?”

“I’m still contracted with the forestry department, but they’re only going to bring me in as foreman on large-scale projects, maybe two or three trips north per year. The rest of the time, I’ll be consulting and doing remote planning.” He settles my bottom down on my dressing table, dropping his mouth to mine and giving me his tongue so deep, my thighs start to tremble, rattling the dressing table. Oh God, oh God. How did I live without him for a whole six weeks? “But baby,” he says, tipping my chin up with a crooked knuckle. “What’s my most important job?”

“Being my Daddy,” I whisper, my whole body shaking now.

“That’s right.”

He holds intense eye contact with me while I unfasten his belt blindly, clumsily, practically hyperventilating with need. Still looking at him. Not daring to look anywhere but his eyes while I unzip his jeans, fist his cock and stroke it firmly with two hands, letting him hear my worship for him in every gulping inhale, feel it in every luxurious pump of my hands.

“Will you come live with me?” I ask, in between lusty kisses, his hand reaching up beneath my skirt to rip the crotch of my panties in half, making me writhe frantically on the table, arching my back to show him my breasts, my head falling back in an involuntary gesture of the bliss that’s coursing through me. “Please. Live with me. I can’t sleep without you in my bed. I need to be near you. Always.”

“I’m going to live with you. And for you. My life is dedicated to you, Jenna Fairchild.” He presses his sex to mine, and we moan into each other’s mouths as he drives in slowly, slowly, then slams the final few inches, making me scream with the force of my sudden, rippling peak. A peak that has been sitting there for weeks, waiting for Penn to come give it to me. It’s an endless spasm of muscle, an outpouring of pleasure, that twists me in its grip and doesn’t let go, my sex squeezing and squeezing, exuding wetness everywhere.

“Oh fuck,” he groans, rocking into my clenching flesh. “This little girl missed her Daddy real bad, didn’t she?”

“Uh-huh. Especially his come,” I pout, bringing my heels up onto the edge of the desk and watching that visual blow his mind. Enough to have him falling on me in a frenzied rut, the table bashing into the wall of the trailer in time with his drives, his roar of release nearly deafening me, but my lips are curled in a dazed smile the whole time, my eyes rolling back in my head with euphoric glee when he floods me with his hot spurts, his older and bigger body wracked with shudders against mine, his sweat smearing on my breasts, his breath heavy on the crown of my head.

“This is where you belong,” I whisper, licking perspiration off his jaw. “Stay forever, plus one extra day.”

He pulls back and looks me in the eye, drowning me with affection. “Forever and a day, baby.”

EPILOGUE

Penn

Five Years Later

I wear a lot of hats—and they’re all a damn fine fit.

For one, I’m still a lumberjack. Matter of fact, some time and perspective made it easier to plan for the careful removal of trees, followed by planting to replace the oaks we harvest—and the projects I’ve spearheaded have been successful enough to earn me a promotion to forestry commissioner of California.

Two. I’m a husband to Golden Globe-winning actress, Jenna Fairchild. A job I covet.

Prize. A job I can't believe is mine, even four and a half years since we were married in a private ceremony in the backyard of our house, beneath a gazebo that glowed with lights.

I'm more than her husband, though.

I'm her bodyguard.

I'm her confidant.

I'm her fixer, soother, cuddle partner.

I'm her Daddy.

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I'm whatever she needs me to be, so she can focus on being fucking amazing. Ninety-five percent of the time, I'm on set. Watching the behavior of her cast, crew. Waiting for someone to step out of line with her, so I can handle them. Word has spread far and wide enough about my protectiveness, and the closeness of our marriage, that I rarely have to step in and remind people of their manners anymore. But every once in a while, someone gets a black eye or a broken jaw. A reminder that no one talks to my wife with anything but the utmost respect. Respect she has earned all on her own.

Off screen? She's just as incredible. A doting and dedicated stepmother to Erin. She's even friendly with my ex-wife and regularly texts her pictures of Erin with updates when my daughter is visiting us. I don't know what the hell I did in my life to deserve to call Jenna mine. But that's what she is. She's mine.

She's.Mine.

That's why she's sleeping in my lap right now, cradled in my arms in the back of a limousine, on her way to a wrap party. She's just finished shooting the third movie in the Musetrilogy and she's exhausted, yet somehow, she managed to put on a little black dress that looks like second skin, insisting she needed to show her face. Then promptly fell asleep in my arms as soon as we started driving, her painted pink mouth parted with gentle inhales and exhales.

Keeping her secured to my body with one arm, I use my opposite hand to book a two-week vacation to Mykonos on my phone. Then I message our housekeeper and ask her to pack our suitcases, so I can fully focus on my girl tonight. She needs to be babied and that's exactly what I'm going to do.

The limousine hits a bump and Jenna jolts awake, gasping.

Looking around and slumping in relief when she sees me.

Nothing more rewarding than that.

Being the cause of this intoxicating woman's relief.

"I only meant to close my eyes for a minute," she yawns, sitting up in my lap to nuzzle me. "Sorry."

"Don't apologize. You've been working yourself to the bone."

Observing me with adoring amusement, she shakes her head. "You won't let me do that, remember? You had three-day work weeks written into my contracts. Even when I am working, you're demanding non-stop breaks."

"I'm not going to let movie studios take advantage of my wife. She needs her rest."

"Oh really?" she murmurs, lightly, turning to straddle my hips, his lithe legs sliding wide on the limousine seat, allowing me to feel the warm curve of her pussy against my already straining fly. Then she rests her smiling lips against mine, tapping her tongue to the seam of my mouth. "I think you just like playing in my trailer."

Good lord. She's right about that.

We've logged at least a thousand rounds of sweaty, bone-melting sex in her trailer. I gave her anal for the first time on that fluffy pink bed in the back, a bottle of lube clenched between my teeth while she moaned into the palm of my hand. I've eaten her pussy so many times on the floor, I've lost count. Sometimes I need to taste it so bad, we simply can't make it to any of the furniture. She's been fucked standing up,

bent over, riding frontways and backwards. I've pumped between those tits and inside those lips.

I've had her every way, over and over and over. And I only want to bang her harder.

More often.

Filthier.

I'm addicted to her body, and she's addicted to mine.

I stare into the green eyes of my obsession now, molding her ass cheeks in my hands, moving her in a teasing hump. "You know I love your trailer. I'm thinking of recreating it in one of the guest rooms. An exact replica."

Jenna gasps in delight. "For my birthday?"

I swat her backside lightly. "What have I told you, Jenna?"

"Every day is my birthday," she whispers, bearing down a little harder on my erection, her breath beginning to grow scattered. "You know, we could skip this wrap party, if we wanted to..."

"We'll do whatever you want."

"I'm just so tired," she pouts, resting her forehead against mine.

Alarm circulates in my blood. It's not like her to be this exhausted. She's usually a ball of energy. "I'm bringing you to the doctor."

"Okay."

“Okay?” I shout, feeling her forehead. “You’re agreeing, just like that?”

“Well...” She plays with the buttons of my dress shirt. “I guess we could just do a pregnancy test at home. But my period is a month late, so maybe we should go straight to the doctor?”

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The only other time I've felt time stop so clearly is the first time I saw Jenna.

"You're pregnant?" I manage, thickly, my heart knocking noisily into my ribs.

"I stopped taking my pill months ago," she whispers, flicking open the button of my pants and lowering the zipper, biting her lip with excitement when I spring free, stiff and pulsing for her, as always. "It was time to make you a father. For the second time." She sits up on her knees and guides me to her slick entrance, rubbing me there. "All those nights in our bedroom when you gave me your sperm and we pretended Daddy was getting me pregnant...I know you wanted that for real. I did, too." She connects our bodies with a moaning twist of her hips, and we gasp together, our mouths close, panting, her welling eyes locked on mine. "I love you. I love this baby. I already love everything in our future."

Just when I thought I couldn't possibly be any more in love with this woman, she pushes me to some new, higher platform. I'm so high up now that I can't see the ground. Maybe we've reached heaven.

"I love you, too, Jenna," I say in a low choke, my emotions wreaking havoc on my vocal cords. This woman. How is she mine? I'll never understand the forces that allowed this to happen. "I love this baby. I hope they have their mother's heart."

"I'm fine with that." She kisses me and starts to move in slow, devastating bucks that make my jaw go slack. "They'll have you to protect that heart, the way you protect mine."

THE END