



THE EX-Con (Steamy Shorts #15)

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Category: Action&Adventure

Description: Unlike other convicts, I never deny my crime.

Did I really do it? Yes. Was it worth going to prison for? Yes. Do I have any regrets? Only that I didn't do it sooner. If I could go back in time and do something different, what would it be? I would kill the son of a b*tch with my bare hands and sleep soundly on the same night.

Five years in prison, and now I'm back out into the world and ready to start again.

But first, I need to visit Mom's grave.

A quick stop in my hometown, then off somewhere else, someplace where nobody knows who I am and what I've done.

Well, at least that was the plan before I laid eyes on Jenny. The sexy, stunning brunette who reminds me of my long-lost dreams of a beautiful life. She awakens something forgotten in me, something buried in the back of my mind.

But a piece of my past tries to mess with her and puts her in danger, and there's not even a choice. I no longer care if it puts me back behind bars. I will do everything I can to keep her safe. Everything. Even if it means unleashing the beast I've learned to tame.

He touches a hair on her head, and all hell breaks loose.

Run, run, run, motherf*cker.

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JACKSON

N ot my circus, not my monkeys.

Not my circus, not my monkeys.

Not my circus, not my monkeys.

I repeat the mantra over and over again as I toss back the first and last shot of whiskey for the day. It burns my throat and warms my body, the liquor biting sharp and bitter.

I hate alcohol. Always have. Always will. I hate how it impairs your mind and saps your strength.

But my cellmate's words ring through my head. "Have one drink for me, buddy. Cheap whiskey or beer will do. I'll see you on the outside soon enough."

That's why I'm here. In a small, dingy bar tucked between a hardware store and a barber shop. Dim yellow bulbs, some flickering, dangle above the cracked linoleum floor.

The air reeks of cheap liquor, stale cigarettes, and something fairly greasy. I don't even want to think why the floor feels sticky against my shoes, and even if my bladder bursts, there's no way I'm going to the bathroom. This shithole is where you

go when you want to get an infection just by sitting on one of the chairs.

Somewhere to my side, a group of men tries to grab the attention of a waitress. I see her out of the corner of my eye. I want to step in, my instinctive need to protect women, but I remind myself that I got out of prison today after serving my sentence of almost five years. I only came back to my hometown to visit Mom's grave and give her some flowers.

The plan was to catch a bus immediately after, but the unexpected grief hitting me like a freight train landed me here, plus the reminder of my cellmate's last request.

One drink. One drink, and I'm off. Never to step foot here ever again.

Besides, getting involved in a fight will land me back behind bars, which is not something I want to happen. I should mind my own business. They must have bouncers or guards. That's their job, not mine.

Not my circus, not my monkeys.

"Take those filthy hands off me!" the waitress shrieks. Despite myself, my head whirls toward her, drawn by an unexplainable pull, and my breath stutters when my eyes land on the most beautiful woman I've ever seen in my thirty-five years on this planet.

Her arms are wrapped around a circular tray, which she uses to cover what looks to be clothes a size too small for her. The Daisy Duke shorts do little to cover her ass, and the shirt is tied above her midriff, showing off a flat, toned stomach.

Even all the way from here, I can see her chest heaving, her eyes flaring with anger. Not fear, but anger. Pure, undiluted rage.

I'm powerless to look away.

One thing that strikes me is how small she is. At 6'5, everyone is small to me, but her? She looks tiny. I bet she doesn't stand over five feet. With those killer black heels, she can push maybe five-three and nothing more.

"Come on now, sweetheart. You want a huge tip, don't you?" My gaze falls on someone who looks like a washed-up jock. Greasy, shoulder-length blonde hair and a beard that probably gets washed every three months, if he's feeling hygienic.

He's slumped on the wooden chair, his legs splayed, the paunch more prominent with the way his belt is working overtime to keep his pants together.

"I also got another huge thing for you." He smiles and wiggles his eyebrows at his three buddies, who look no better or cleaner than him. "Hope you like it big."

They all burst out laughing, and I laugh along with them. They turn in unison and squint at me, testosterone oozing out of their pores. So fucking predictable, and here I thought my social skills were rusty.

The waitress looks at me, too, and her eyes widen just a fraction.

I hold her gaze and momentarily forget where we are, what I'm doing, and why I'm here. The oxygen is sucked out of the place, and the ground seems to disappear from under me. If I were standing, my knees would have buckled.

My God. Who is she?

Her tongue darts out, and she takes the tip between her teeth, her eyes sweeping over me. She's checking me out, and based on how she swipes her tongue along her bottom lip, I can safely assume she likes what she sees.

“Who the fuck told you to laugh?” The washed-up jock stands and points a beer bottle at me.

I turn my body on the bar stool to face them fully. “You were pretty funny; I couldn’t help it. I mean, if you think what you have is big, then you probably believe a cigarette butt is colossal.”

Whatever brain cells he has left work overtime. It takes him a few beats before he realizes what I’m saying, not until the waitress snorts and tries to cover it up with a cough. I smile at her and give her a two-finger salute.

This wasn’t in my plan, but what the hell? I’ve always been good at thinking on my feet and improvising. Besides, with no bouncer or guard in sight, I can’t ignore the way these men disrespect her. Not on my watch.

“You’re new here, so I’m giving you a chance to scoot.” He dismisses me with a wave, even though we both know he can never take me on. “Now, where were we, sweetheart?”

His hands slide to her waist, and I’m standing before I even know what I’m doing. The raw fear on her face when he touches her ignites my anger. It’s the same look I’ve seen on Mom’s face when she knew she was about to get hurt and there was nothing she could do about it.

As I close the distance between us, I briefly debate whether this is a good idea.

I just got out of prison.

One fight and I’d be on my way back.

Then again, so fucking what? I am not going to sit here and watch these scums of the

earth harass this woman, or anyone for that matter.

Fuck it.

This will be worth going back to prison for.

“You touch her, buddy, and I’ll knock your teeth down your throat.” My voice is low, but I don’t miss how he swallows hard.

We’re always told there’s safety in numbers, so this asshole gets a false sense of security because he’s with three of his friends. He puts down the bottle and spits on the floor, which probably answers my earlier question as to why it’s sticky, and moves to a boxing stance, standing with his feet shoulder-width apart, tucking his elbows, and raising both hands. “I won’t go easy on you. You think you’re tough? You haven’t met me, fucker.”

I roll my shoulders and crack my neck, feeling the burst of adrenaline warm my limbs. “No, shitface. You haven’t met me.”

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JENNY

“O kay, this is going to sting a bit,” I tell the guy who just came to my rescue earlier. We sit on the single bed in my tiny studio apartment. I don’t have a couch, and I typically eat on the floor, so this is the only decent place to sit, especially for someone his size.

He hasn’t told me his name yet, but here I am, tending to his wounds like I’m his personal nurse. I have never brought anyone here, so I don’t know what’s gotten into me. Everything so far feels like a dream and I’m just on the sidelines, watching this happen to another version of me.

He’s a massive guy, rough around the edges. He just has a black Henley shirt and dark jeans on, but his muscles ripple with every small movement. He’s at least three times my size, and the first and foremost emotion that should elicit from me is fear.

Right?

Well, for reasons I cannot explain and things I will unpack later, I don’t feel afraid of him. On the contrary, I feel safe.

The way he helped me with those perverts, the way he swung his fists and moved like a seasoned fighter. This is someone who’s no stranger to fights. This is someone who’s had to use his strength to survive ... and win.

“It’s fine. Let’s get this over with.” His voice is deep, and my body responds like it’s a caress. It doesn’t help that his knee grazes my bare one, making me sit up straighter. Even with the thick layer of denim in between, I feel the heat all the way to my toes.

Electricity pulses between us, and I draw a deep breath, struggling to ground myself. Naked hunger flares in his eyes, and I’m pretty sure I have the same look.

My apex clenches, and my thighs cinch together.

It’s what I felt earlier when I first saw him. The dark eyes. The tattoos peeking from under his shirt. The dark hair cut close to his scalp. The roughness. The raw masculinity.

I could tell he was massive as he sat by the bar, but when he stood to his full height, I felt sorry for the guys harassing me almost every night.

Danger comes off him in waves, and I don’t know why I find it hot. Am I the kind of woman who gets turned on by guys who look like trouble? Or is it just because of this one particular man?

“I don’t mean to interrupt whatever debate you’re having with yourself, miss, but you’re rubbing the antiseptic on a different finger.” His voice shakes me out of my thoughts, and I find the corner of his mouth quirking upward. God, he is handsome. Ruggedly so. Like the kind who will sling me over his shoulder and throw me to the bed before he’ll pound into me.

“I-I’m sorry.”

“What’s your name?”

“Jenny. You?”

“Jackson. Nice to meet you, Jenny.”

He sounds so cultured and polite, so far from the man he was at the bar. “Nice to meet you too, Jackson.” I dab the antiseptic to the scrapes on his knuckle. “What brings you to this small town of ours? You don’t look like a tourist.”

“I’m not.” He opens his mouth, then closes it, then opens it again. “I used to live here.”

That surprises me. “Really? What happened?”

Hesitation crosses his features. “I just got out of prison.”

“Oh.”

“I could just leave. I understand if you feel?—”

“No! I was surprised, that’s all.” I wonder how much to tell him, but whatever. Those cockroaches earlier are more dangerous than him. Actually, half the male population in this town is scarier. “In case you’re wondering, no, I don’t feel uncomfortable around you. On the contrary, I feel safe with you.” I sweep an arm across my tiny space. “Apparently safe enough to invite you here, which I never do, by the way.”

“Thank you.” He looks at me from under his lashes, and my God, what long, thick lashes. If I had those, I wouldn’t waste money on mascara and eyelash extensions. “I beat my stepdad to within an inch of his life because I caught him beating my mom.”

I suck in a sharp breath, tears pooling in my eyes. This is the last thing I expect to hear from him. “Oh God. Is she...?”

He gives me a sad smile. “She died last year from an unrelated illness, but I believe

the stress he put her under was part of the reason she kept getting sick.”

“I’m sorry.”

Jackson shakes his head, an almost boyish uncertainty on his face. “No, it’s fine. That’s why I was here, to visit her grave.”

“Are you okay?”

He tries to hide the surprise, but I see it. Is this the first time someone has ever checked up on him? “Yeah, I mean, there’s nothing I can do, right?”

“I understand grief. I do, and I know it’s never as easy as people say it is.”

“Thank you. That means a lot.” He hesitates for a second before looking away. “I should’ve known, you know. I was so busy with making money that I only ever checked up on her once every two weeks. I came home once a year and stayed for no more than two days.”

“Jackson...”

“I should’ve heard it in the quiver in her voice. I should’ve been suspicious when she refused to take video calls.” He runs his fingers through his hair in frustration, and I let him talk. He needs to get this out. “The only reason I found out was because I wanted to surprise her. I came home without telling her since I planned to fly her to Paris. Then...” He clears his throat, and I try to comfort him in the only way I know without making him uncomfortable—I rub his back with my free hand. “I saw that fucker hit her. My vision went red, and I was so consumed by fury that I didn’t know what I was doing until four cops pulled me off him.”

“He deserved it.”

“He did. What kind of man hurts a woman? My mother was the sweetest, kindest person. It would take a special kind of animal to even think of hitting her.”

“Where is he now?”

“I don’t know. Somewhere. I intend to find out, though. A guy like that? I’m sure he didn’t stop with Mom.”

“Are you saying...?”

“Someone needs to stop him before he hurts anyone else.”

“Oh, so where are you headed after?”

He lifts one of those huge shoulders. “I still don’t know. I might drift here and there until I find a new home. I need to regroup before I go find him.”

Something about his defeated tone shatters me, and I can’t stop staring at him. He’s been through so much, and all I want to do is make him feel better, make him feel good.

“Jenny? I don’t really mind the sting, but you’ve been pressing that cotton ball to my open wound for five seconds now. It’s a bit of an overkill for the bacteria. They’re long dead, I’m afraid.”

My brain catches up a beat too late, and I chuckle, tucking a strand of hair behind my ear. God, why do I feel awkward and weird? I’m behaving oddly, too. Bringing home a complete stranger? That’s so not me. Thinking of letting him do unspeakable things to me? Definitely not me. “Sorry. I’ll go grab some more bandages.”

His knee is still against mine, which throws me off balance as I stand abruptly. I

scramble for purchase, but his hands wrap around my waist, steadying me.

I end up straddling one thick, muscled thigh and gripping his broad shoulders, and they're so muscular under my palms. My breasts, straining against the poor excuse of a shirt, press against his face.

My body freezes in place, my toes curling in my shoes. A tingling sweeps up the back of my neck and across my face. My skin feels impossibly hot, but I can't find it in me to move.

"Jenny?" Jackson's voice pierces through the fog of lust, and I force myself to look at him. His pupils are blown wide, his gaze dark, and he drops his eyes to my mouth as if drawn there. "Does this make you uncomfortable? Do I make you uncomfortable?"

The question throws me by surprise, and while I want to preserve some kind of self-respect, I can't lie. I don't want to. "No."

He grabs my thighs, moves me forward, and then back. The inseam rubs against my clit, and I can't stop the little gasp coming out of my mouth. His voice drops an octave. "Do you like that, baby girl?"

"Y-yes." God, it feels so good that I abandon any self-preservation and ride his thigh, the friction making my eyes roll to the back of my head. "Oh, oh, God."

In one swift motion, he lifts me off him and stands, planting my feet on the floor. I swallow back the disappointment, but I barely have the chance to let out a protest before I feel his mouth against mine.

The kiss starts slow and tentative at first, like he's gauging whether I'm into it or not, giving me a chance to back out and stop it.

No freaking way.

I stand on my toes, snaking my arms around his neck, which is no easy feat given his height. He grabs me by the waist and lifts me, wrapping my legs around his waist as he skims my back with his massive hand and pulls me to him.

My mind explodes when he shoves his tongue into my mouth. I have never been kissed like this. I have never known passion this primal, this all-consuming.

I give as much as I get, but I groan when he puts me down again. I'm about to tell him to stop playing when he unbuttons my shorts and slides them down my legs.

My walls are thin, and I'm always careful of every sound I make, but the yelp I let out when he crouches down and lifts me on his shoulders is something all my neighbors can hear. Even the old couple across the street probably hear it, too.

My hands go to his head, grabbing his hair as my thighs wrap around his neck, unknowingly shoving my pussy to his face.

His warm breath tickles me, making me burn. "Relax, baby girl. I got you. I won't let you fall."

I begin to relax when I realize he's neither grunting nor staggering with my weight. He gives me no time to get myself together, though, as he slides my panties to the side and drags his tongue from my hole to my clit.

My heels dig into the taut muscles of his upper back, my pulse on overdrive.

I slap both hands to my mouth, muffling the long moan. A ripping sound bounces off my walls, and my panties hang on one thigh after he tears it. Jackson's fingers dig into my thighs, and he backs me into a wall, the hard, rough surface scraping against

me.

Electric heat scorches up my spine as he worships me with his mouth, taking my folds between his lips and sucking my sensitive button. Without shame, I grind into his face as much as I can, riding his tongue and pushing him deeper into me.

I don't even get a warning as my orgasm uncoils with blinding force. My whole world explodes, and I see stars. My heart gives an erratic beat, and my limbs turn into wet noodles.

Something wet and warm gushes out of me, and Jackson laps it all up, slurping and laving in my juices.

He growls against my pussy one word that shakes me to my core. "Mine."

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JACKSON

Jenny was not in my plan. I should be on the bus. I should be as far from this hellhole as possible. In and out. That was my plan. Head down. Ignore the locals. Not stay. Not linger. Not give my old pals and neighbors a chance to remember me. More importantly, not get involved with anyone.

But here I am, sitting on the far side of the bar, nursing a beer, staring daggers at anyone who even thinks of breathing the wrong way around my girl.

My girl.

I'm fucked, I know that, but I can't stop. I don't want to. Less than twenty hours, and she has me hooked around her pretty little finger.

Not complaining. I like it, and it's been so fucking long since I felt anything other than anger, since I felt remotely human.

Last night was a dream, and I thought she would look at me differently in the morning and see me in all my monstrous glory. She didn't.

I made her breakfast, the least I could do after I feasted on her pussy, and she smiled at me in a way that ripped the soul clean off my body. This was uncharted territory, and I had no idea how to navigate it, but fuck that. It made me happy. From the looks of it, it made her happy, too.

Now, as I look at her, I realize with dazzling clarity that I can't stay here, and I can't leave her. This town is too small for her. It's going to suck her spirit and leave her dry.

I can't let that happen.

Jenny is the best thing that happened to me. The least I can do is help her find her passion. I'm sure it's not her life plan to spend her years in this shithole.

My heart rate picks up as she slides on the chair across from me, handing me a plate of grilled cheese. "Hope you're hungry."

I reach across the table and brush my knuckles along her lips. "I am hungry, just not for food. I'm thinking of that meal from last night."

She throws her head back, laughing, but then her smile fades, and she turns serious. "You should know I don't usually do this."

"Do what?"

"Take strangers to my place and..." Her voice trails off, and she stares at a spot above my ear. "You know."

"I know."

She trails a finger along the wooden table, and I can't have all the germs from this place dirtying her skin, so I take her hand and wrap it in mine. She says, "You're the first."

The feeling creeps in slowly. At first, lightness. Like whatever weight I carried was lifted off my shoulder. Then comes the warmth spreading from my chest all the way

to my toes and fingertips. “Do you regret any of it?”

Her smile is like sunshine breaking through dark, heavy clouds. “No.”

I kiss her palm. “I’ll make sure you never do.”

Her shift finishes without a hitch, and she slips her arms around mine as we walk out the door, the cold air biting our cheeks. I pull the jacket tighter around her, but when we round the corner, she grabs my shirt and pulls me in for a kiss. A kiss that freezes my brain and hardens my cock into a crowbar.

“I need you, Jackson. I need you, please.” She unbuttons her top, almost in a frenzy, and pulls her bra down, her tits spilling.

Oh hell. Fuck me.

The narrow alley swallows the main street’s faint glow, and we drift into it. With her leaning against the brick wall, I lower my head and swipe my tongue along the creamy breast, taking the taut bud between my lips, rolling it, sucking, and licking. My hand wraps around the other breast, squeezing and kneading, before I give the other nipple the same attention.

Jesus Christ. Every inch of Jenny’s body deserves to be worshipped by my hands, mouth, and cock.

A street lamp flickers behind us, the light stretching weakly across the street. It’s quiet around here since most of the townspeople are already asleep in their beds, and Jenny’s pants and whimpers are getting too loud.

Need gnaws at my chest, my cock hard to the point of pain. I palm it against my jeans, and Jenny flits her gaze to it, swatting my hand away and reaching inside my

pants.

I brace both hands against the wall on either side of her head, the uneven surface cold against my palms.

Her hand wraps around my cock, and fire plunges down my body. I grit my teeth and huff out a breath, calming myself down before I come all over her after a simple touch.

Desire wraps my head in a haze. Even through it, however, I'm dimly aware that the chance of someone passing by and seeing us is small but not zero. After all, we're only a few steps from the bar, and the last thing I want is for some drunk to enjoy a live show and feast their eyes on Jenny.

My Jenny.

"Jackson..." She keeps pushing her pussy to me, and her eyes are glassy. "Please fuck me."

"Jenny, listen. Your place is a ten-minute walk. We can?—"

"I can't wait. I need you inside me. Please." She must see hesitation on my face because she tilts her chin. "If you won't, I'm going to fuck my finger while you watch."

Well, fuck. That does it.

Just like that, I no longer care about anyone seeing us. I no longer care about anything except burying my cock inside her.

I'm seriously getting the hang of unbuttoning her denim shorts and sliding them

down her smooth, toned legs. I slip a finger inside her thin lace panties. “Baby, you’re wet. Is this all for me? You want me this much?”

With her head tilted to the sky, she answers in gasps. “I told you I need you.”

I add another finger and push them into her pussy, growling when her walls suction around me. Fuck. I can’t take it anymore. I just can’t. My self-control is nowhere to be found.

I unbuckle my belt and unzip my pants, letting them pool around my ankles as I lift Jenny and flatten her against the wall. I use one hand to spring my cock free, and it’s so hard I don’t even need to guide it to her entrance. My hands are on her thighs, holding her in place, as I lower her to my cock, the head slipping easily even though she’s so fucking tight.

The air whooshes out of my lungs when I bury myself to the hilt inside her. “Fuck, baby girl. Fuck, you feel so good.”

She doesn’t say anything, but she rolls her hips and bounces. My lips find the sensitive spot in her neck, and I trail kisses before sucking her skin and biting it lightly.

The dark alley, the street, the still-open establishments. All of those things fly over my head. The only thing I focus on is my cock in her pussy and the soft moans that make my staff twitch inside her.

My hips rut wildly, my fingers digging into her thighs, and her nipples turn to pebbled peaks. She rocks against me, her pussy swollen and slick, and I watch my length sawing in and out of her.

Jesus Christ.

The low rumble of an engine breaks the silence. We don't stop. Not even as the headlights carve twin beams through the dark. Not as the rumble grows louder. Not as it passes us slowly, its taillights flaring red and the faint scent of exhaust lingering in the air.

With a guttural moan, I yank her up against my body, slam deep into her, pull out, slam again, pull out, and slam until her lips part in a silent moan, and she trembles in my arms. I ram forward and upward, my shaft spasming, as a bellow lodges in my throat.

“Baby girl...”

Jenny flutters around me and meets my drives, and heat licks through my veins. My nerves are strung tight, and I bite her shoulder. Pleasure wracks me in waves, and I get thicker inside her, hot jets of my come painting her walls.

It takes us a full minute to even our breaths, and I rest my sweaty forehead on hers, my pulse still pounding, my cock softening and slipping out of her.

“Let's go home,” she whispers shakily.

Home. Yes. She is my home.

4

JENNY

We've been waiting outside the bank for a few minutes, and the parking lot is slowly filling. The sun is out for the first time in weeks, and I'm excited for this change of weather. God knows how sick I am of the frigid air, even at noon.

"Do you like living here, Jenny?" Jackson reaches across the center console of my sedan and takes my hand in his, brushing his lips along the back of my hand.

Butterflies flutter in my belly when he makes the simplest, most innocent gestures like this. He can look at me for five seconds and immediately turn me into a pile of mush on the floor. He has this effect on me that I can't explain and don't even want to.

Jackson wants me. I want him. Period. We'll just take every day as it comes.

I let his question roll inside my head. "Not really, no. That's why I stay at that shitty bar. To save money so I can leave."

"We can leave together if there's nothing here for you. I mean, I know there isn't."

Yes! Oh my God, absolutely. I bite my bottom lip to control my grin and hide my excitement. "And go where?"

"Wherever you want. Whatever you want to do." His eyebrows scrunch together, and

he turns to me, brushing hair from my forehead. “What do you want to do?”

“Attend culinary school and open my own restaurant.”

Jackson smiles, and a shiver of happiness ripples through me. “Then that’s what you’re going to do.”

I roll my eyes and lean back. “If only. Culinary school is hella expensive. I’d have to work for at least twenty years before I can save enough money to open a food truck, and even that isn’t an assurance it will succeed. I know lots of places that serve good food but had to close because no one was coming.”

Jackson smiles like he knows something I don’t. I’m about to ask him what it is, but I spot movement by the entrance, and we turn in unison.

The security guard flips the sign to “Open,” and Jackson gives me a lingering kiss. He smooths down the button-down plaid shirt he bought yesterday—the only one to fit him. Even if he’s fully covered, though, it can’t hide his muscles completely.

“I try not to take too long, baby girl, but it might be an hour before I get back.”

I lift an old paperback to him, something I’ve read at least three times already. “I’ll be fine, I promise.”

He nods once and kisses me one more time before opening the door and jogging to the bank.

I watch as he enters the building and close my eyes, letting my mind drift. I met him three days ago, and in that time, my life changed in unimaginable ways.

To anyone watching us from the outside, it’s crazy. We haven’t known each other

that long, he's just released from prison, and now I'm more than willing to follow him anywhere.

The sex is good, yes, but it's more than that.

It's the small things he does, too. He's always making me breakfast. He does little chores at home without complaining and without being told to. He fixed the broken leg of my vanity table and the leaking faucet.

Most of all, I feel like I can tell him anything and everything, and he won't judge me. He listens and doesn't think I'm being stupid.

God, I'm falling for him. Fast and hard.

Then again, people don't call it a whirlwind romance for nothing, and he's so—

My thoughts screech to a halt when the door to the driver's side opens. The smile freezes on my face when I see that it's not Jackson, and the little hairs on my arms and neck stand.

It's an older man with scars all over his face and arms and a broken nose. One eye is drooping, and there's a thick ridge of scar tissue along his right ear.

At first, I think he's got the wrong car, but he throws me a smile that makes my stomach drop, a knot coiling tighter in my gut.

The alarm bells ring in my head, and I spring into action, trying to unbuckle my seatbelt and open the door, but he's faster than me.

He guns the engine, and I'm shoved against the seat as he weaves through the parking lot and traffic, farther and farther from Jackson. My breath catches in my throat, fear

knocking the air from my lungs.

I can't breathe. I can't think. I can't speak.

I force myself to look for a weapon or be a weapon, but there's nothing beyond my debilitating fear.

"Whatever you're planning, don't. I have no problem beating the shit out of you if you don't behave," he says. Something about his deadpan tone convinces me he's telling the truth.

I gulp breaths to stay quiet, my fingers gripping each other so tightly that my knuckles turn white.

The car feels cramped, the air tight, squeezing me from all sides. My chest is caving in, and there's nothing inside me except unyielding terror. The fear claws at me, wrapping its tendrils around my neck.

I rub furiously at my skin, prickling with icy dread.

Who is this guy? What does he want from me? Can I fight him?

I make a mental catalog of all the things I can possibly use, but the toolbox is in the trunk. I have nothing here except the registration, receipts, and other useless papers.

Sweat trickles down my back and dots my forehead. My shirt sticks to my skin, and my hands turn clammy.

"W-what do you want?" I finally spit out.

I don't dare look at him, but I can feel him smile when he speaks, and it's all I can do

not to vomit all over the car and faint. “You’ll see. You’re just at the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong person, sweetheart.”

5

JACKSON

The door closes behind me, and on instinct, I pat the thick white envelope inside my jacket just to make sure it's still there. It's not much, but Jenny and I can leave town and start a life together.

After all the paperwork, I can start picking up where I left off. Jenny doesn't know what I used to do for a living, and I can't wait to tell her all about it. She's throwing her lot to a man who seems to have a bleak future ahead. She doesn't mind that I don't have money or anything to my name.

Jenny wants me for me, and that's more than enough.

She'll be surprised to know we're set for life even if I ultimately decide to spend my days in bed with her—not too bad of a plan, to be honest.

See, I am not an impulsive guy. Not the type who will drop everything for a woman. Then again, it's Jenny. She's NOT just any other woman.

She's mine.

Thinking of her makes me smile, but I stop dead in my tracks when I see that the car isn't where I left it. I swing my gaze to the left and right. Nothing.

Did she leave? Did she get bored and get coffee? But the cafe is just across the street.

Maybe she had an emergency?

It takes me a while before I notice a kid tugging on my shirt. I look down to see a boy with wide eyes and a tooth gap. He has his skateboard clutched to his chest while handing me a small piece of paper.

I furrow my forehead. “What’s this?”

“Someone told me to give it to you.”

I read the note, and my stomach twists.

“Welcome back, son. You know where to find me. Be fast. I’m not a patient man.”

Goddammit. That sick fuck. That piece of shit, motherfucker. When I get my hands on him, I’ll pulverize his face to his ground.

I look for the kid to pepper him with questions, but he’s gone. Shit. I know where that bastard is, and now he’s taken Jenny.

Has he been following me this whole time? Waiting for his chance to pounce? It’s my fault Jenny’s gotten wrapped up in this mess. Now she’s in danger, and fuck.

I should have taken care of him first. I should’ve known he would always be on to me.

Jesus. I’ve been too lax, too obsessed with Jenny to notice someone on my trail.

I crumple the note in my hand, blood roaring in my ears. I let the familiar wave of anger flow through my veins, warming me, filling me with enough strength to beat him to a pulp.

I was almost too late with Mom, but that's not going to happen to Jenny.

The town is quiet, and I'm already considering running all the way across the square when I see a patrol car slowing to a stop in front of me, its window lowered.

"Jackson? Is that you, man?"

I blink. "Adam?"

Adam used to be one of my best buddies, and he often found reasons to hang out in my home whenever Mom baked her chocolate chip cookies. He stayed at his folks' place until he graduated college. We lost touch when I was imprisoned, mostly because I cut everyone off.

Instead of the long-haired, mustached guy, this one is clean-shaven and looks like he has his shit together. His uniform looks crisp, the badge glinting in the sunlight.

He rests an arm on the door. "You okay?"

If I want to get there in time, this is the only way, so I jog to the passenger side and slide in, handing the crumpled piece of paper to Adam.

A patrol car isn't my favorite mode of transportation, but I can't be choosy right now.

Adam doesn't say anything as he revs the engine. "Where do you think he is?"

"Home."

He nods once and takes out the emergency lighting to set on the car's roof. He doesn't turn on the siren, which is good because the last thing I want is for the fucker to know I'm coming with company.

I'm running high on adrenaline and anger, and I know I have to tamp it down. I can't risk Jenny, so I need to calm the fuck down.

With my fists clenching and unclenching on my lap, I break the silence first. "A police officer, huh?"

"Who would have thought, right? Even my mom wasn't sure until I got the badge."

"Damn."

Adam clears his throat. "I heard you got out. I thought for sure you were gonna drop by to see me."

"I didn't want to stay. I only came to visit Mom."

"I understand."

"So, he's been here the whole time?"

"Your stepdad? Nah. Saw him a couple of times, but I heard he's living in the next county, stirring trouble as always."

We're quiet once again, and when the car stops in front of my childhood home, I begin to stew. That bastard has no right to sully my memories of this place. He's done it once already. I won't let him do it a second time.

I spent the first two decades of my life living in a farmhouse, sitting on a massive plot of land. It's a few miles to the next neighbor, and I've always liked the privacy. It was just Mom and me and a few of our farm animals. We were happy here ... until my stepdad arrived and threw our lives into chaos.

I don't know what I expected to find, but seeing the house stand almost like a skeleton of its former self unsettles me.

We repainted it every few years, but now the peeling paint clings to the warped wood, the porch sagging. The old barn's roof has caved in, and everything looks decrepit.

I stand outside the car, listening to sounds, especially Jenny's voice. I don't have a plan of attack because I don't know what I'll find. He was never the most mentally stable person, and he often did things impulsively without regard to the consequences. Maybe I can work that to my advantage.

Adam gets out and looks at me. "Is he there?"

"Yes, with my girl."

Apparently, this small town still works like every other typical small town. News travels fast.

Adam nods. "Jenny." I can't stop myself from glaring, and he smirks and shakes his head. "You forget that everyone knows everyone here."

"I need a weapon, Adam."

"I can't give you my gun, man."

"Anything else, then."

"I have a bat in the trunk, confiscated from one of the high school kids. Let me get it for you." My eyes don't leave the house even as Adam hands me the bat, big and heavy enough to do damage if I swing it correctly. He takes out his gun. "Whatever

happens in there, you won't be locked up again. I'll make sure of that."

I nod, and we stalk toward the door. There won't be any element of surprise because I'm sure he heard us arrive. Here's hoping he doesn't know I'm with a cop.

I kick the door open, and I'm greeted by the smell of something so pungent and slightly sweet, so strong I can feel it at the back of my throat. Then my gaze falls on Jenny, tied to a chair in the middle of the family room.

Her hair sticks to her forehead and face, while her shirt clings to her body. She sees me, and the relief on her face hits me square in the chest.

"You brought a friend." My stepdad, Trip, stands behind Jenny and points a gun at her temple. His perpetually hoarse voice, thanks to daily alcohol consumption, grates on my nerves, but it's the way he's so close to Jenny that makes me see red.

Trip is only fifteen years older than me, but he looks like he's pushing sixty. The years haven't been kind to him. He's gaunt, and his skin is pale and drawn. His hair is sparse and gray, and his eyes are sunken and shadowed.

Good. I can take him on. I just need to make sure Jenny doesn't get caught in the middle of our fight.

"Hands in the air, Trip." Adam steps forward, and I don't miss the way he subtly nudges my foot.

I do a quick scan of Jenny. She looks terrified, but from what I can see, there's no wound or discoloration on her skin. No visible injuries, but I don't allow that fact to make me complacent.

I'll need to take care of Trip first.

“Stay out of our business, boy.”

“I’m a cop, Trip. It’s my job to get in your business.”

Trip waves his gun. “I could shoot you.”

“Then what? You shoot a cop, and it’s gonna be so much worse for you.”

“Fuck off. You don’t do noth?—”

Trip doesn’t finish his words as I ram my body into him, the bat hitting his stomach. We both fall to the floor, and I knock the gun from his hand.

Time to settle an old score.

The first punch breaks his nose. The second makes him cough up blood. I hit him for my mother. For Jenny. For me.

I’m so consumed by rage that I brush off the hand on my shoulder. The only time I stop is when small arms wrap around me, Jenny hugging me from behind. She’s crying, and she presses her face to my neck. “Stop, Jackson. Please. You’ll kill him.”

Trip is lying in a pool of his blood. He’s breathing but barely. I stare at my knuckles, raw and bleeding, too. Mustering whatever strength I have left, I spin around to face Jenny.

Tears fall freely on her cheeks.

“Are you okay, baby girl? Did he hurt you?”

She takes my hand and holds it in both of hers. “No, he didn’t, just doused me in

gasoline. Let's go home, Jackson. Take me home."

6

JENNY

“Good morning,” I tell Jackson as I rub my eyes, my voice still thick with sleep.

The smells hit me first—freshly brewed coffee and butter sizzling on a pan. My kitchen is tiny, barely enough room for one person, but there he is. His broad back is turned to me, his shoulders nearly touching the overhead cabinets.

Jackson is barefoot, and he has nothing on except a pair of sweatpants. I catch myself drooling at the sight of him—the tattoos all over his body, the way his muscles flex. Every damned thing he does turns me on.

He throws me a smile over his shoulder. “Good morning, baby girl. Breakfast is served.”

I plop down on the nearest seat and rest my cheek on my palm, unashamedly checking him out. “You’re spoiling me.”

“As I should.” He sets a plate of pancakes and bacon in front of me, leaning over the table to kiss my forehead. “How are you feeling?”

Everything that happened yesterday is a bit of a blur—the drive from the bank to the old farmhouse, the madman drenching me in gasoline, the sound of tires against gravel, Jackson appearing in the doorway with a cop.

“I’m okay, all things considered.”

He sits across from me and peers closer. “You sure?” He takes my hand and kisses my palm, a thrill running through my chest.

“Not a hundred percent, but I will be in time.”

“I’m so sorry about this, baby girl. I never thought he’d come after me or anyone I cared about. He’ll never hurt you again. No one will. I promise you.”

I believe him. In the short time we’ve spent together, Jackson has always been careful with me. We can be rough in bed, but that’s it. Seeing how he reacts when I’m in danger puts me at ease. This is a man who’ll do anything to protect me and keep me safe, and I can’t ask for anything more. “I know.”

“Can I ask you something?”

I lean into his touch and close my eyes. “Sure.”

“Will you go anywhere with me?”

A smile tugs on my lips. “Yes, but you already know that. What do you have in mind?”

“Several things. Do you prefer hot or cold climate?”

“Hot. I’m sick of the cold. I’m always at risk of freezing to death in the shower, and I can hear my knees pop each time I wake up.”

“You’re twenty-two, Jenny, and you run five miles every day. If there’s any knee popping around here, that would be mine.”

“Oof. Spoken like a true old man.”

His eyes crinkle at the corners. “Who are you calling old man?”

I tut and take a bite of my pancake. “Before we know it, I’m going to need to lift that meat between your legs and pump it for an hour to make sure it stays up.”

Jackson’s grin is so wide that I raise a brow, laughter bubbling inside me. “Is that so, baby girl?”

“You need to keep up with little ‘ole me,” I taunt.

He doesn’t say anything, just taps his fingers on the table. The silence stretches on, the smile never leaving his face.

When I can’t take it anymore, I cross my arms over my chest and tilt my head to the side. “What?”

“I’m just thinking what else that mouth can do aside from spewing lies.”

I gasp. “Lies?!”

Jackson shrugs and takes a sip of his coffee, eyeing me over the rim of his cup. I stand abruptly and stalk toward him. He follows me with his gaze until I’m standing in front of him.

“You wanna know what else this mouth can do?” I challenge him, but he doesn’t rise to the bait. With a huff, I go down on my knees and palm his cock through the thin fabric. In seconds, it grows in my hand, getting harder and harder. Jackson’s face darkens, and he swallows hard. “Let me show you, old man.”

I reach inside the waistband and let out a whimper when I find he's wearing nothing else underneath. My fingers can barely wrap around his thick girth as I pull it out. It's massive and veiny, and I wonder how it managed to fit inside me.

Whatever.

My eyes don't leave his as I drag my tongue along his length. His hips buck, and he hisses, his fists digging into his thighs.

I moan, and the vibration makes him clench his jaw and scrub a hand across his face and through his hair. "Jesus, fuck, baby."

I take him inch by inch, my eyes tearing as he hits the back of my throat, but I don't stop. I slide his cock in and out of my mouth, using my hands to pump the base of his shaft and fondle his balls.

Jackson growls and his hands tunnel through my hair, guiding my head, moving me the way he wants to. Saliva pools in my mouth and leaks in the corners of my mouth. It's messy and filthy.

I love it so much.

Jackson's nostrils flare, his eyes squeezed shut. I know he's trying his best to swallow back the sounds he wants to make. Meanwhile, there's me on my knees, sucking and slurping and milking him for all he's worth.

His thighs tense, and I keep the rhythm, bobbing my head up and down until he grabs the back of my head to keep me in place. I follow like a good girl, like HIS good girl.

The first spurt of come makes me gag, but I don't pull away. Instead, I swallow every drop, not caring if I look like a mess.

By the time I lift my head, Jackson is slumped on the seat, his eyes at half-mast, his face and neck red. His heavy-lidded gaze makes me wet. Then, he leans toward me and kisses me before wiping something from my cheek. “My turn, baby girl.”

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Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:14 am

EPILOGUE

JACKSON

Life has been good. Too good, in fact, that I sometimes wake up in cold sweat, wondering if any of this is a dream. Then, Jenny stirs beside me, and all is right with the world again.

We moved across the country to a city where it never snows and seldom rains. Jenny thought this was a random choice. She couldn't have been more wrong.

Before I went to prison, I was pretty successful in flipping properties and renting some out. I made millions in two years. So when I told Jenny I'd take care of her, it wasn't an empty promise. I had investments to back it up. I had a solid plan for her future, our future together.

She wanted to enroll in culinary school, and that's where we're headed on Monday. What she doesn't know is that the school only needs her application form to process her enrollment. I deposited the funds more than a week ago.

"Okay, where are we going?" Jenny asks as she tugs on the blindfold, looking so fucking heartbreakingly beautiful in a light blue sleeveless dress. Her tits are begging me to release and worship them, but no. I can't get distracted right now. We'll have time for that later. All the time in the world, in fact.

"It's a surprise."

She huffs, and I can almost see her rolling her eyes. “Ugh. You’re just taking me somewhere so you can fuck me in this dress.”

“Now that’s an idea that honestly never crossed my mind.” She lifts her dress, grabs my hand, and puts it on her thigh, sliding it upward until my pinkie finger brushes against her crotch. Her fucking bare pussy. “Jesus, baby girl. I’m driving.”

“Then drive. Eyes on the road.”

I take a deep breath as I steer through the winding streets. My mind is going in different directions. On the one hand, my palms are damp from nervousness because I really, really want to impress her and make her happy. On the other, my cock is roaring to attention with the way Jenny keeps teasing me.

The neighborhood is pristine and looks exactly how it did on the website. Manicured lawns and houses that belong on the covers of magazines. It’s what Jenny deserves. This and more, so much more.

With superhuman strength, I pull my hand back. This is important. I can fuck her senseless later when we’re inside.

“You’re not peeking, are you?”

She chuckles. “I wouldn’t dare.”

The road curves, and there it is.

The two-story house is sleek and modern, built in the late 2010s and renovated only last year.

My chest tightens as I pull into the driveway, slowly easing the car to a stop. I pause

to gather my breath. I turn off the engine, step out, and open her door. She smiles when I take her hand, and I guide her out, making sure she doesn't bump her head.

Doubts begin to creep in. What if she doesn't like it enough to live here? What if she already prefers something else? What if...? I shake them off. Too late to back out now.

I stand beside her, gently pulling off the blindfold. "Open your eyes, baby girl."

She blinks against the light a few times before her gaze lands on the house. Her jaw drops, a hand flying to her mouth, her eyes glistening with tears.

Jenny whips her head to me. "How did you know?"

I smile at this girl who turned my whole world upside down. "I saw it bookmarked on your laptop. I also saw you check the property every day to see if it was already sold."

"I-it was my dream. I knew I could never afford it." She sniffs and laughs softly. "It was something that inspired me and kept me going, that maybe someday I would get to live here if I worked hard enough." She leans against my chest, and my arm automatically goes around her shoulder. "It's as beautiful as I thought. Actually, no. It's so much more beautiful."

"Wait until you see the inside."

A single tear slides down her cheek, and I wipe it with a finger. "I-is this really...?"

"Ours. But you should know, baby girl, my home is you. Wherever you are, that's where I belong. I love you so much."

She slides her arms around my neck. “I love you, too. Forever and ever and ever.”

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Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:14 am

JENNY

The restaurant is still empty except for Jackson and me. All the staff is in the kitchen, and I can hear their conversations and the clanging of pots and pans.

I look around and take it all in, trying to see the restaurant from the eyes of my potential customers. Would they love it or think it's too much? Is it cozy enough or trying too hard? Is the chandelier a lovely or tacky touch, especially with the pendant lights?

God, my anxiety is through the roof. I haven't had a good night's sleep in the weeks leading up to the opening. It's driving me nuts, and I don't know how Jackson managed to keep up with my craziness.

The walls are sage green, my favorite color, and adorned with framed paintings of rolling fields, flowers, and fruits. A young local artist hand-painted all twelve of those in just six months.

The bespoke chairs are perfectly arranged around the matching tables—all made to order. Jackson was adamant about sparing no expense, and I couldn't be more thankful for him.

While I love to say this is a product of hard work, that's not actually true. It's Jackson's hard work, and he's the one who helped me achieve this lifelong dream. I always try to tell him that, but he insists that this is all me.

“What if nobody comes?” I ask Jackson as I twist the wedding ring around my finger,

my gaze flicking to the door.

Jackson pulls me to him, and I breathe in his scent. “They will.”

“You don’t know that.” I tug on one of his buttons, nervousness chipping away at my excitement. “And if they do come, what if they don’t return? What if they don’t like the food?”

“They’ll come, and they will love it. So much so that they will come back every day.”

I step back and stare at him, my palm on his chest. “You’re so confident. What did you do?”

He fixes his tie and avoids my eyes. “Nothing.”

I prop both hands on my hips. He’s such an awful liar. “Jackson.”

Jackson looks up with a sheepish grin. “I may have told the tenants they’re getting fifty percent off their rents this month if they come on opening night.”

“Oh my God!” Jackson owns two three-story buildings in the city. They’re all occupied, and I count off the number of tenants. Twenty!

Flush creeps along his neck as he scratches his cheek. “I may have also told them that if they refuse, they can start looking for a new space.”

I clamp both hands on my mouth and burst out laughing. “Why would you do that?”

“I don’t like my wife being disappointed.”

“How can they give me honest feedback? You bribed them.”

“No. What’s the difference between what I did and offering discounted prices on opening day?”

My shoulders shake as I continue to laugh, and Jackson takes me into his arms. I look up at him, his eyes shining with happiness and love. “You’re going to eat everything if no one shows up.”

Jackson grins from ear to ear. “That’s not really a punishment. I love your cooking, and when you say I’m going to eat everything, does that include your pussy?”

My skin burns as I smack his arm lightly. “The staff might hear you!”

“So? I make it no secret that your pussy is my favorite thing to eat.”

I clamp a hand on his mouth, but when he sucks my palm, my core automatically clenches. All these years haven’t dimmed our desire for each other. If anything, I only want him more. “Ugh. You’re impossible. You’re lucky I love you.”

“And I love you, baby girl. You and me forever. You are my home.”

“And you are mine.”

The glass door swings open, and a couple I have never seen enters. One of the servers rushes to them and leads them to a table.

At this, Jackson presses his mouth to my temple. “See? I told you someone will show up, and they’re not one of my tenants.”

With tears in my eyes, I wrap my arms around his waist. “I’m a damned good chef.”

“You’re a damned good chef, and it won’t take long before the whole city knows it.”

In moments like this, I always think back to that night when Jackson showed up at the bar and rescued me. I didn't believe in love at first sight, but that was exactly what happened to us. It changed both of our lives in the best way.

Before him, I was just a girl with dreams. But after? I'm living every single one of them.

The End

Thanks for reading!