



The Mountain Man's Gamble (Viva Las... Oh, Sh!t)

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Category: Romance

Description: I had a feeling when my family and friends all flew out to Las Vegas for my sister's wedding that something crazy would go down.

It was the city of sin after all. What happened in Vegas stayed in Vegas, right? Wrong.

When my brother's best friend, who still insisted on calling me Pixie, tagged along with me to the casino, I was annoyed yet secretly thrilled. Despite his endless teasing, I'd had a crush on him for years.

As the drinks flowed and the bets climbed higher, we woke up in bed together.

Married.

The Mountain Man's Gamble is a brother's best friend, accidental marriage, instalove romance and features an sweet, curvy woman and a sexy, brawny mountain man. It's meant to be devoured in one hour! So if you love short, steamy instalove novelettes with hot mountain men, you'll want to one click The Mountain Man's Gamble today!

In the city of high stakes and even higher heels, love can sometimes be a roll of the dice. But after a wild night of adventures, unexpected is just the beginning for our newlyweds.

In 'Viva Las... oh, sh!t' our accidental couples find themselves hitched. They say Vegas never sleeps. But these lovebirds might never wake from their nightmare.

Can one big oops turn into ever-lasting love?

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CHAPTER ONE

Willow

After parking my car in the marina parking lot, I grabbed my duffle bag and suitcase and walked towards the docks. The sun shone bright in the cloudless sky, and I smiled up at it, loving the feel of the sunshine on my face.

I couldn't believe I was finally here at Apple Lake, about to step on the houseboat I rented, the summer vacation I'd been looking forward to all year upon me.

I wanted to skip, no, run , the rest of the way there but with lots of people mulling about, I decided to breath in the fresh mountain lake air and quicken my pace.

Several houseboats lined the shore, and a zing of excitement ran through me when I spotted mine.

It looked exactly like the photos on the Airbnb listing, a blue awning over the back deck where an outdoor table and chairs sat.

The keys were located in a lock box on the door and the code was in my email.

I managed to score a deal on renting it for the entire summer with a discount for more days rented.

Once on the dock, I navigated my way towards my houseboat, all while sneaking looks at the beautiful, massive lake spread before me.

It stretched for what looked like miles, sunrays beaming along the top of the water.

I couldn't wait to dive in and go for a swim, the cool fresh water bound to be refreshing.

The front of my houseboat came into view, and I sprinted towards it, unable to hold back my excitement.

I pulled out my phone and retrieved the code, swiftly punching it into the lockbox and grabbing the keys tucked inside.

I slipped the lockbox off the door handle, slid the key into the lock, and pushed the door open, the sweet smell of fresh flowers filling my nose.

"It's perfect." I whispered to myself as I dragged my luggage inside and closed the door behind me, making sure to lock it.

I dropped my bags just inside the door and took it all in.

A small kitchen area, complete with the usual appliances was just beyond the door, lots of cabinet space and a sitting area to eat.

A narrow sitting area with a small TV hung on the wall, a built-in bench along the opposite side with lots of throw pillows.

Lastly, there was the one bedroom, a large queen size bed in the middle of the biggest room, a couple of dressers around it, and another small TV hung on the wall.

Behind a door on the right was a bathroom, complete with a tub, something I didn't expect.

It was far from big but for a soak every now and then, it'd do the trick.

I took out my cell phone once more. No service flashed on the screen, and I smiled.

Perfect. I wanted the peace and quiet, which is exactly why I chose this place.

No Wi-Fi, no good cell service, and no pestering sisters calling you every day.

I swore, Xina, was my ride or die, but, lately, she was just a bit too much.

But she wasn't the only thing I needed a break from.

The daily grind of life, getting up and going to work, doing adult things, it was all too much sometimes.

I loved my job of teaching young kids, and my second-grade classroom was like home to me.

I spent extra time there after school helping with after school programs and investing a lot of time in my kids' futures.

If I wasn't going to have my own children, the least I could do was guide others and hopefully leave a lasting impact.

I wanted a family of my own but with each year flying by faster than the next, time was running out.

I turned forty last week and my body liked to remind me every day that I wasn't getting any younger.

So did my sister. With blind date after blind date disaster, I couldn't stand it anymore.

I was tired of her meddling in my love life. But the problem was, she didn't listen.

But now, she was about to be hit with radio silence.

I refused to tell her where I was staying, inside informing a close friend and my parents, who promised to keep my location under wraps.

Stepping onto the back of the boat through the back door, I sat down in one of the outdoor chairs and released a breath, inhaling the fresh air in its place.

The view was gorgeous, with the mountain lake water sparkling and looking very inviting. Boats and sailboats sailed about the lake in the distance, and I wondered how big the lake was. I'd definitely have to do some exploring while here.

But for now, it was time to relax. I'd put on my bathing suit, fix myself a drink, grab my Kindle, and not move from this perfect spot.

And that's exactly what I did.

The next few days I spent swimming in the lake, lounging on the back deck of my houseboat, and also on the beach. There was plenty of shoreline to enjoy, with soft sand and not too many rocks.

My skin had already tanned, and all of my freckles have popped on my face, scattering along my nose and cheeks. I could definitely get used to the beach life.

Today, I took a walk along the shore, checking out the various little shops and boat rental places along the way. After only walking for about five minutes, I spotted an ice cream shop. Yum, who doesn't love cold ice cream on a hot summer day?

I hurried towards it, a list of flavors running through my head like a little kid. I couldn't help it. Ice cream was one of my favorite treats.

Inside, the cold air sent a shiver down my spine as I read over the menu.

I placed my order of a small hot fudge sundae with coffee ice cream and after paying, I stepped over to the pick-up counter.

Just as I turned to grab a few napkins, something or should I say, someone , crashed into my legs and a cold scoop of chocolate ice cream landed on my foot.

“Uh oh!” A young boy's voice cried. “My ice cream! It make mess.”

I looked down at the adorable blonde boy, who couldn't be more than three or four years old, holding his dish of chocolate ice cream, a lot of it melting down the side as he dug his spoon in.

Even more of it covered his mouth and shirt and I chuckled to myself.

“We do have a bit of a mess here, don't we?”

How about you clean yourself and I'll clean my foot.

” I handed him a napkin which he took, patted his cheek instead of his mouth, and dropped it on the floor.

I laughed as I wiped up the ice cream from my foot. He was just too cute I couldn't even be mad I had a sticky foot.

“Is everything okay over here? Teddy, did you spill ice cream on the lady's foot?” A deep voice rumbled over me and when I stood up straight and caught a glimpse of the

very tall, very sexy, very handsome man in front of me, I nearly choked on the air in my lungs, lodging itself in my windpipe.

I stood frozen in place, his mere presence gripping me in a chokehold.

He lit every part of me on fire, my nerves misfiring and chaotic, my heart pounding so hard everyone must hear it. When he smiled, my entire body melted like warm chocolate.

Who is he?

“Mmhmm.” Teddy said without a care in the world, his voice dragging me out of my trance. His only mission right now was to eat more ice cream. Little scoop after little scoop went in his mouth, more dripping on his chin and down his shirt.

“I’m so sorry. I turned my back for a second to hand them a tip. I should’ve waited to give him the dish when we got to our table.” His warm smile was still there, a genuine sincerity in his eyes and voice.

“It’s okay.” I forced down my nerves and smiled, afraid I was coming off like a complete bitch when in reality, he stunned me into silence.

He was so fucking hot I couldn’t speak.

Couldn’t even form a coherent thought.

“Can I get you anything? More napkins? A wet one?” He chuckled and ruffled Teddy’s hair. “Always need those everywhere we go.”

I laughed and looked back down at Teddy. I kneeled to his level. “It was nice meeting you, Teddy. Be good for your dad, okay?”

“Lady have ice cream?” Teddy asked.

“Aw that’s sweet of you buddy but she’s probably busy. Say bye, nice to meet you.”

Teddy shook his head and stomped his foot. “No!”

“Don’t worry about it.” I chuckled with a wave of my hand. “It was nice meeting you both, take care.” I waved and moved towards the counter, my ice cream sundae waiting for me.

When I retrieved it, I snuck a look behind me and sure enough, he hadn’t moved. He talked in a low voice to his son and pointed at a table behind them.

Just when I turned away, his gaze caught mine and he grinned. He wagged his finger, beckoning me to come closer. Teddy was back to eating his ice cream, his small tantrum forgotten about.

A swarm of butterflies took flight in my belly. Just take your sundae and go.

But I couldn’t. Something held me there. Pushed me to walk towards him, moving us closer together.

And suddenly, a feeling came over me, one I couldn’t quite explain, but I knew, without a doubt, I wasn’t going to ever be the same again.

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CHAPTER TWO

Bennett

The mysterious, beautiful woman studied me as she stepped closer and I couldn't fault her- I was doing the same thing.

Of course, my son had to drop his ice cream on the hottest woman in the place, but to say I minded would be a lie. She was the most beautiful woman I'd ever laid eyes on before.

She looked older, more mature than women my age, but that didn't bother me one bit. I could handle each and every one of her curves.

When Teddy dropped his ice cream, I honestly expected a blow up, as most people don't tolerate children well.

Especially mischievous toddlers with a quest of ruining your day.

Every day. With a book tucked under her arm, I'm sure she was looking for some quiet time, maybe time away from her own family.

But instead, she didn't show one hint of annoyance. She was calm, cool, and collected, like she could handle a whole herd of kids. I was intrigued. I had to know more. Obviously so did my son.

Normally, I'd ignore his tantrum and swiftly divert his attention onto something else,

but he wanted to share an ice cream with her. Why?

When she came up beside me, I smiled. “Join us for ice cream? Please?”

“Puhlease!” Teddy chimed in.

“Well, who can say no to that?” Her eyes sparkled at Teddy, and he ate up every bit of attention.

I led us to a table, helping Teddy in beside me, as she sat across from me. “I’m Zane, by the way. And this little nugget is my three-year-old son, Teddy, who you’ve met.”

“I’m Xiomara. Here for the summer. I rented a houseboat on the lake.”

“Xiomara, hmm? What a beautiful name.” I murmured as I took in more of her features, her mannerisms, anything and everything I could learn just by sitting here across from her.

“Thank you. My sister is Xina. Guess our mom liked X names.” She shrugged and laughed it off. “My parents moved to Europe a few summers ago. So, it’s mostly just me and my sister. But this summer, I decided it was time for a vacation. Alone.”

“Alone, hmm? You do realize I could be a serial killer.”

“Doubt it, unless your son is your sidekick.” She raised an eyebrow before taking another bite of her sundae. She licked her lips, a hint of whipped cream on the bottom and a swell of passion rose inside me. I pushed it deep down.

“Could be. Never know.” I winked. “How is the houseboat you rented? I only live a couple of towns over, so I’ve never stayed on the lake. Teddy and I like to come here a lot in the summer. The lake is great for swimming and boating.”

“I wish I lived closer. It’s so beautiful here. Peaceful and serene.”

“How far out are you?”

“A few hours. A small suburb outside of the city. I teach second grade.”

“Ah ha!” I grinned and Teddy looked at me and laughed. He then repeated ah ha a million times. “No wonder you’re so amazing with children.”

Xiomara’s cheeks flushed and I loved every second of it. I didn’t care how old this woman was. I wanted her. In every way possible.

“You’re sweet. I’ve always loved children.

” She smiled warmly at Teddy. “Their brains are like sponges. So impressionable. It’s amazing how much you can teach and show children, and they drink it all in, their brain ever expanding.

Plus, their innocence is so precious. To think you can invest your time in a child and make a positive impact in their life is huge. ”

I listened with awe, her kindness and caring nature, radiating off her in waves. “It is huge, I agree. It’s why I strive so hard to only have the best for my little guy. Even if it means sacrificing things I wouldn’t normally want to.”

Xiomara’s whole face lit up and I didn’t think it was possible she could become prettier, but she did. “You’re just the type of parent I love to see.”

“Really? Why’s that?”

“You’re kind, caring, and respectful. What more could a woman ask for in the man

raising her children?”

I swallowed hard, a sudden lump in my throat. How...

“Daddy! More please! More please!” Teddy interrupted us.

“No, no more ice cream. You’ll get a belly ache.”

Teddy began to fuss when Xiomara reached out and tapped the back of his hand, drawing his attention her way. “Tell me all about your fun on the lake. Did you go swimming? Or collect rocks? Or I know!” Xiomara made a big show of asking him. “Build a sandcastle?”

Teddys little face lit up brighter than the midday sun. “I swim like a big boy” He said and clapped his hands.

“That’s so awesome! I bet you’re a great swimmer!” Xiomara clapped her hands too and when she looked at me, my heart beat a different tune than it usually did. I lost myself in the chemistry and attraction sparking between us, as if she held me in a trance with a single look.

“Sandcastle Daddy?” Teddy asked, pulling me away from my downward spiral of thoughts.

“Yes, we can build one soon. Let’s finish up our ice cream. I’m sure Xiomara has someplace to be.”

Her cheeks flushed and she shook her head slightly. “Nope. No such thing as time this summer.”

Hmm maybe she couldn’t feel what I could? The magnetic force between us, yanking

us closer and closer, though how she couldn't feel it seemed impossible to me.

Xiomara was able to direct Teddy to his ice cream, singing a song while encouraging him to take bites until he'd had enough.

I laughed as I watched them, Teddy having an absolute ball, his giggles filling my soul in the best possible way.

I'd only ever seen him this happy with either me or my parents who helped me raise him after his mother left town.

So, to see him this way with a woman we met mere minutes ago was thrilling, exciting, and downright nerve wracking.

This woman left me smitten in the best way possible.

In a way I didn't expect, not in the least bit.

My focus was on Teddy and Teddy alone. Always had been.

But the way she interacted with my son, as if he were her own flesh and blood, so patient, kind, and caring, made me pause.

In that moment, I claimed her and vowed silently to make her all mine.

I'd figure out the rest of the details later.

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CHAPTER THREE

Willow

“Thanks for joining us. It was nice to have some company besides the two of us.” Zane said as he held the door of the ice cream shop open for me while holding his son in his other arm.

“Thanks for having me. You two enjoy the rest of your vacation, okay?”

“We will. As long as we see you again.”

His words turned my blood into lava. My cheeks grew even hotter than before. “Well maybe you will. Bye, boys.” I waved my hand and scurried away as fast as I could before he could change my mind. Or before his son could with one adorable look.

“I’m not saying bye. I’m saying see you soon!” Zane called after me and honestly, it was as if a spotlight shone down on me, making me feel like the hottest woman alive. Did the mountain man actually want me?

I snuck a quick peek behind me, and he was still standing there with Teddy in his arms staring at me walk away.

Phew! Thankfully I picked my tightest, shortest shorts for today. The ones that made my ass look a hell of a lot better than the reality.

I forced myself to look straight and when I finally had gotten some distance away, I

looked behind me once again, but Zane was gone.

After parting ways with the hot mountain man and his adorable son, I couldn't stop thinking about them. I tried walking around more, but I found myself looking for them. Who was the mysterious Zane?

And why the hell am I so damn attracted to him?

Back at my houseboat, I poured myself a drink, sat on the back porch, and opened my book.

But after reading the same sentence five times, I gave up and closed it.

Instead, I stared at the lake, the calm, serene looking water, with lots of people mulling about along the shore.

Considering today was Friday, the beach was a lot more crowded than usual. I figured weekends would be.

As I people watched, my eyes kept looking for one particular man, with a little boy at his side.

Fuck I needed to stop. I didn't come here to find love. I came here to get away from it and all of the hassle that followed.

So, what if he was handsome and sweet? Didn't necessarily mean he was a great guy.

Besides, he seemed younger than me. He looked younger than me. Maybe his late twenties at most? What would he want with an almost forty something year old woman?

With a loud sigh, I took up from my chair, grabbed my drink and book and went inside.

I'd find a way to distract myself if it was the last thing I did.

The next morning, I woke up early and went straight to the beach, grabbing a nice spot before it got crowded. With just a chair and my book, I read and read as the sun rose higher and the beach filled up.

As noon time rolled around, my stomach growled, and I stretched my legs out in front of me. The shore was filled with families and people enjoying their Saturday, and I watched as kids played and splashed in the water.

"Daddy! Daddy! Look! It's the pretty lady!" A familiar voice drifted over towards me and when the words became clear, I instantly knew who it must be. Teddy.

Sure enough, he ran towards me, a shovel and bucket in each hand with his father right behind him. "Teddy! Wait!" Zane called but it was no use. Teddy picked up his speed, his little legs working overtime. A huge smile lit up his face and I couldn't help myself from returning the smile.

"Hi buddy! How are you?" I stood up from my chair just as Teddy smacked into my legs, his little arms still holding his supplies wrapping around my calves.

"Sandcastle! Sandcastle! Come see!" Teddy begged me as he let go of my legs and lifted his arms, motioning for me to pick him up.

I lifted him into my arms and Zane appeared next to me, looking a little disheveled. "Teddy, I told you not to run away from me!" He scolded his son whose smile fell. "I know you wanted to see her, but you need to wait for me. Got it little dude?"

“Got it. Sandcastle?”

We both laughed, Teddy right back to his most important matter- his sandcastle.

“I’d love to see it, Teddy! You must’ve worked so hard on it.” I grabbed my chair and book while still holding Teddy in my arms, but Zane took the chair and book from me.

“I’ll carry those.” Zane’s kind smile lit up my insides.

“Okay, Teddy, where are we going?” I asked.

His chubby little hand pointed at a yellow umbrella setup with a couple of chairs beneath it, various toys scattered around it. “Ello.” Teddy said.

“Yellow umbrella. Got it.” I saw the little sandcastle next to their blanket, two pieces of its side by side, made by the bucket he carried. One had fallen over slightly. “I think I see it!” I teased as we got closer.

Teddy wiggled in my arms as soon as we reached their spot and I placed him down gently as he ran over to his castle. “Look, Mara!”

I giggled at the way he said my name and when Zane walked up next to me, he set my chair and book down. “He kept talking about you last night. Said to me, what’s pretty lady’s name? And that’s the best he could do. Mara.”

I laughed again. “It’s adorable. He’s adorable. You’re a lucky guy.”

“I think we’re all pretty lucky. I mean, Teddy and I met you, right?”

I waved a hand and elbowed him playfully. My cheeks were burning, much like my

insides, coiling and building with pleasure. “I wouldn’t say that’s luck.”

“I would. And I’d like to be even more lucky. By asking you to spend the day with us, have dinner later, get some more ice cream dropped on your foot, you know, the fun stuff.” Zane winked and even more desire flooded my system, warning bells going off all over.

“Spend the day with you?” My breath caught in my throat. “But why?” The question was out before I could stop it, and I immediately wished I could take it back. I sounded like such an idiot.

Zane laughed, the sound low and deep in his throat, a sound I could certainly get used to hearing every day. “Teddy and I like your company. Why else?”

“You do?”

“Give yourself some credit, woman.”

He was right. I often sold myself short. I loved me, but I wasn’t always everyone’s cup of tea. I liked quiet nights at home and could go days without talking to anyone.

“I’m sorry. I just don’t find myself to be that entertaining.”

Zane’s eyes pierced my damn soul. “You’re an amazing woman, Xiomara. I hardly know you, but I already know that. Just from the way you are with my son.”

“Thank you. You’re not so shabby yourself.” I teased.

“Well, I do have a really cute kid, so at least there’s that.” Zane joked back.

“That seems to be all that’s going for you, hmm?” I elbowed him again.

Zane clasped a hand to his chest. “You wound me. You cut me deep.”

We both dissolved into a fit of laughter.

“Sandcastle, Mara! Sandcastle!” Teddy shouted between us.

“Okay, Teddy, I’m coming.” I said to him before looking at Zane once more. “Show me what you got, mountain man.” I grinned before plopping onto my ass in the sand and getting to work on a very important job.

Building a sandcastle with Teddy.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Bennett

Our day at the beach was full of fun, laughter, and sunshine.

After building sandcastle after sandcastle, we cooled off in the lake, Xiomara helping Teddy to learn the doggie paddle.

He took right to her, like a moth to a flame, and the way she taught with so much patience and kindness made me believe she was meant to be a teacher.

After we had our fill of sand and sun, I took her back to our cabin in Appleridge for dinner. She insisted on helping, but I insisted she relax though Teddy certainly kept her busy.

I fired up the grill and was about to head inside to grab the hamburger patties in the fridge when Xiomara said, “Your place is nice. How long have you lived here?” She sat at the patio table on the back deck, coloring a picture with Teddy in one of his many coloring books.

“Born and raised. Haven’t left. I like the small town feel and how gorgeous it is up here. There’s lots to do with apple orchards in the fall, the lake in the summer, wildflower picking in the spring, lots of good sledding in the winter. Hell, I could go on and on.”

“That’s amazing. My hometown isn’t nearly as cool.”

“You live near the city though, right? That’s gotta be interesting.”

She shrugged. “Yeah, when you’re younger, maybe. The older I get, the more I like nights at home.”

“I have to agree there. Besides my little guy keeping me home.”

Xiomara chuckled. “The older you get? You can’t be out of your twenties yet.”

“What makes you think that?”

“I’m confident in my guess?”

“You don’t sound so sure.”

“Fine, let’s just get this out of the way. I’m thirty-nine. And you are?”

“Twenty-five.”

Her mouth dropped slightly before a small chuckle escaped. “I could be your mother!”

“No, you would’ve been fourteen or something.”

“Hey it happens.”

Teddy giggled. “Daddy a baby.”

I shot my son a look before flicking my eyes to Xiomara. “Age is a mere number, a number in this game of life that doesn’t matter if two people like each other.” My stare was intense, and I watched the way her chest moved quicker in response.

“I suppose that’s true. But what life differences? Different phases of life? One wanting a family, and one not?”

“You make it work when you want to be together. Growing, changing, adapting. In whatever way.”

“I grow big, Daddy!” Teddy exclaimed and Xiomara laughed at the same time I did.

“Yes, you sure are, little man.” I said before setting my focus back on her. “I don’t care how old or young you may be, Xiomara. It doesn’t change the way I feel about you.”

Without waiting for a response, I went into the house for the hamburger patties.

I put it out there. She knows I want her.

Right? Was I even clear enough? I wasn’t sure.

I wasn’t the best at reading between the lines or figuring out what women really wanted.

I didn’t have much experience with them, a few casual hookups here and there, and a not so serious relationship that ended up with me becoming a single father.

Which left me putting Teddy first and foremost. Love had to wait while I figured out fatherhood.

But that was three years ago, and I hadn’t met her. Xiomara.

The woman I already had strong feelings for, and they were growing stronger by the second.

I kept the conversation light as we had dinner, learning more about ourselves and having silly conversations with Teddy. She cleaned up while I gave Teddy a bath and put him to bed.

“He’s fast asleep already.” I said as I walked into the kitchen where Xiomara wiped the counter. “Thank you for cleaning up. I appreciate it.”

“It’s the least I can do after a wonderful day and cooking me dinner.” She folded the washcloth and placed it next to the sink. “It’s getting late, I should probably get going. I’ll order an Uber for my ride home.”

“No, I couldn’t let you do that. I brought you here, so I’ll bring you home. I can call my babysitter to come by and sit with him while I drive you home. No biggie.”

“That’s silly to have your babysitter come out just to drive me home when I can easily order an Uber.”

“Or you can spend the night.” I challenged. My son was asleep. I could finally say what I wanted, get an explanation, or ask questions. As far as I was concerned, she wasn’t going anywhere.

“Spend the night? Zane...I...that’s crazy, I couldn’t ask that.”

I stepped in front of her, her back now flush against the countertop, closing the distance between us. I placed my hands on either side of her, firmly gripping the counter and boxing her in. My head dipped low, and I moved my mouth closer to hers, dying for a taste. One little, tiny taste.

Although, one taste would never be enough, I wanted it. I wanted it so bad I was ready to explode with need. “You’re not asking me. I’m asking you.”

“But...I...”

My eyes dropped down to her sexy, plump lips and all I could think about was kissing her, my cock growing bigger by the second inside my pants.

“I like you, Xiomara. A lot. We only just met but...I don’t know, I can’t explain it.

All I know is I want you. All of you. Every part.

The good and the bad. The light and the dark. All of you. All of it. All the time.”

Neither one of us said anything, the air between us charged with electricity. Our hot breath mixed together and my need to taste her grew to unbearable levels. “Let me kiss you. And if you don’t feel anything, then I’ll walk away. But I guaranteed you’ll feel something .”

Xiomara’s lips parted and I took that as a yes.

I thread my hand through the back of her hair and pulled back, exposing her long neck and supple skin to me.

I groaned at the thought of her taste and when I couldn’t take it anymore, I slammed my mouth onto hers, covering it with my own, as our tongues swirled together, all while sipping, tasting, loving.

It was better than I could’ve imagined, our mouths and bodies colliding together in a fiery, addictive explosion of passion. I gave everything I could into that kiss, the passion and desire, the need to prove myself worthy of her and her sweet lips.

“Wow,” Xiomara whispered when I ended the kiss, her fingers flying up to her swollen lips.

“I take it you felt something?” I grinned.

“Just a little...” She giggled, her eyes sparkling.

“A little is all I need to count it as a yes. I’m not walking away. And I don’t ever plan to.”

CHAPTER FIVE

Willow

“Zane, I...I don’t know what to say.”

“You don’t have to say anything. Just be in the moment with me.”

“But there’s things we’d have to figure out and?—”

I placed a finger over her lips. “I don’t know much about your past relationships, but mine weren’t great, mainly for lack thereof, but it’s rare to meet someone special, someone you connect with in multiple ways, someone you know is right for you.

If you never give it a chance, you might just miss out on something really great. Like the love of your life.”

Xiomara fell silent as she digested my words, her gaze never wavering from mine.

“What do you feel?” I asked her.

“I feel like I’ve never felt before.”

“What do you think?”

“I think it’s crazy.”

“Is the crazy worth the feeling?”

Her breath hitched and she paused. Finally, she whispered yes and that’s when our lips collided once more, the passion between us like a volcano erupting after days of brewing silently.

Our tongues explored and tasted, our mouths moving together like they were meant for each other, the kiss growing more heated with every passing second. Hands began exploring, darting into unknown territory carefully while asking permission and answering with more kisses and touches.

When we broke apart, gasping for air, I took her by the hand and led her upstairs to my bedroom. I wanted her in my bed now.

Xiomara didn’t hesitate any longer, her wall breaking down and exposing her passion for me.

She wrapped herself around me as soon as we stepped through the doorway of my room, our mouths finding each other once more.

Clothes flew in every direction as we moved towards the bed and didn’t stop until we were fully naked.

My hard cock pressed against her belly, leaving a small trail of precum on her soft skin as my hands found her ample breasts, my thumbs flicking over her nipples before giving them a little tug with my fingers.

Her head fell back, and her supple neck was on display for me again. I couldn’t resist this time and buried my face against her sweet-smelling skin I couldn’t wait to taste. I licked, nipped, and sucked on her skin, leaving a mark I’d see the next day. There. Now she’s officially claimed as mine.

Xiomara's hot little hands found my cock and I groaned when she stroked the shaft with just the right amount of pressure, squeezing it as she moved up and down.

"Fuck, that feels so good." I said as my eyes dropped down to between us, watching her stroke my cock all while licking those sexy lips of hers. "I can't wait any longer to taste you, sweet girl."

I placed her down carefully on her back, her naked body spread out before me like a fine meal I was about to devour. Her body didn't show any signs of aging though she insisted she found gray hairs and stretch marks. If anything, they only made her more beautiful to me.

I kissed every inch of her skin, every freckle and birthmark, worshipping her from head to toe. I wanted to show her how much I cared, how much I wanted and appreciated her, and how I was falling hopelessly in love with this woman.

"Touch yourself. I want to watch." I said as I sat up and leaned back, giving me full view of her sexy self.

Xiomara drew in a deep breath and broke eye contact, her cheeks growing red.

"I...I..."

Her voice trailed off and I brought my face to hers, kissing her lips ever so softly. "It's okay if you've never touched yourself in front of someone before. We're about to have lots of firsts together."

I kissed her again and her hand moved slowly down, inch by excruciating inch, until she reached between her legs.

I growled low in my throat and leaned back once more for the show to begin.

Xiomara spread her legs wide, opening her gorgeous pink pussy for me as one finger moved over her clit and the other two dove inside. Everything around us disappeared as I got lost in watching her build her pleasure herself, her fingers working magic like she was a pro at getting herself off.

It was fucking hot as hell.

I stroked my cock, rubbing over the head and spreading the precum around. As she sped up, so did I. “Come for me, baby. Let me see you lose yourself.”

Xiomara was really into it, her hips moving and bucking off the bed. “Fuck, I’m going to come so hard.”

“Me too, baby. Me too.” I gritted out as my orgasm built higher and higher.

Moments later, we both came at the same time, her legs shaking as I shot out cum all over her sexy, naked body.

“Fuck!” I roared, one of the most intense orgasms I’ve ever had ravishing through me to the point where I collapsed beside her, out of breath and buzzing with energy at the same time. “That was intense.”

“Fuck is right.” Xiomara agreed, her own chest heaving with heavy breaths.

“We aren’t done yet.” I jumped up from the bed and walked over to the master bathroom, fishing a towel out from the cabinet.

I cleaned my juices off her body before climbing back on top of her.

“But don’t worry, I’ll do all the work.” I winked before grabbing her by the hips and hitching one of her legs onto my side.

My already hardening cock rubbed against pussy, brushing over her sensitive, swollen clit.

“I want to taste you, devour your pussy like it’s my last meal on earth, but right now, I need to be inside you more.” I said as I lined myself up at her entrance and dove inside, pushing all the way in so that I was balls deep.

“Oh my God!” Xiomara cried as I began to thrust, quickly picking up more speed.

But I didn’t let up. Not until after we both came, went a second round, and came again, our bodies completely spent.

I fell asleep with her in my arms, our bodies a perfect fit along with our hearts.

CHAPTER SIX

Bennett

After our first night together, I couldn't get enough. Of him or his cute son.

Our days were spent on the beach, swimming, boating, fishing, and even hanging out at my houseboat. My nights were spent in Zane's bed as he catered to every inch of my body, coaxing orgasm after orgasm out of me. I never knew I could orgasm so much in such a short period of time.

We talked for hours and learned about each other, confessed our dreams and hopes, and I confided in him about my need to get away from my overbearing sister.

"Should I tell her your officially off limits now?" Zane asked one night while cuddled on the couch together watching a movie. Teddy had gone to bed about an hour ago and this was my favorite time of the day, when I finally had Zane all to myself.

"Oh, am I? Officially?"

Zane pulled me into his lap and started tickling me as I batted his hands away, my laughter choking me.

"You know it, hot stuff." He kissed my lips and wrapped his strong arms around me. I loved how I felt in his arms, so safe and protected, sheltered from the cruelties of the world.

But the nagging doubts that grew bigger with every passing day warned me again and again.

This wasn't for forever. It wasn't going to last.

How could it?

I was heading home in a few short weeks, the summer over, with reality knocking at the back door. Besides, he was young and had his whole life ahead of him. He deserved more kids as he was a great father and who was I to hold him back from any of it?

My concerns were harder to hold back as the days passed, and while I enjoyed every second I spent with Teddy and Zane, I wasn't always present in the moment, worried for what the future might hold.

And today, it seemed to reach its boiling point.

I untangled myself from Zane's arms and got to my feet. I wrung my hands together, looking anywhere but at his handsome face. "Look, who are we kidding? We aren't official anything. I'm going back home soon and then what?"

Zane stood up and grabbed me by the waist gently, pulling my body against his.

I wouldn't, no couldn't look at him, only able to stare at the couch behind him.

"Hey, wait, come on now, we'll figure it out.

" He hooked one finger under my chin and lifted, my eyes finding his burning ones.

Always so intense and passionate, and while usually I loved it, in that moment, I

didn't. It was all too much.

I backed away from him and threw my hands in the air. "You always say we'll figure it out. But we never do, do we? We're running out of time, Zane. I knew this was going to happen. I knew this was a mistake, a broken heart waiting to happen. And here we are."

Zane reached out and folded his hands over mine.

"I love you, Xiomara. I love you so much my heart hurts. Teddy loves you, too." He stepped closer, closing the distance between us.

"I've known since the moment we met there was something happening, something neither one of us would expect to hit so hard.

But with it came love and happiness. I never been so happy my cheeks hurt from smiling.

And Teddy, he's blossoming, and he's so smart and learning every day from you.

You teach him when you don't even know you are.

Move here. Live with me. And Teddy. Start a life with us. "

"Zane..." My heart pounded so hard I thought my rib cage might snap. "It's not that simple. My job, my age, what if I can't give you more children? That's not fair to you. You're so young and full of life, you deserve a family."

"I make enough for the two of us but if you want to continue working, the schools around here are always looking for good teachers as the community grows bigger. And if kids aren't in the cards for us, that's okay, too. There's always adoption. A lot

of kids need families.”

Tears welled in my eyes. This man was perfect. What’s the catch?

I shook my head as more tears slipped down my cheeks. “Zane, it’s too much to ask. Too much sacrifice for you.”

Zane squeezed my hands and brought them up to his lips, kissing each finger one by one. “I’ll sacrifice every day if it means I get to wake up next to you.”

My cries turned into sobs, a mixture of happiness and anxiousness filling me from head to toe. Could I really move here? Pick up my entire life and career and start over here? And what about my sister?

But I loved him. I’d do anything to stay with him, even if it meant giving up my job, something that scared the shit out of me.

I loved this man so much I couldn’t breathe when he wasn’t around. I’d move heaven and earth to be with him.

And there was my answer. Staring me straight in the face.

I threw my arms around his neck and jumped onto his waist, wrapping my legs around him.

“I love you so much. I can’t let you go.

Yes. Yes. Yes to it all!” I cheered through my falling tears and when my lips found his, the rest of the world around us melted away, leaving only me and him in our little bubble.

We'd figure the small stuff out later.

All that mattered is we found each other and in that we found our forever love.

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Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 10:16 am

Willow

Three months later

“It looks great in here!” Zane said as he walked through the doorway of my new first grade classroom here in Appleridge.

I beamed with pride, proud of all the hard work I put in to decorate. It was sad leaving my old school, and even sadder saying goodbye to my sister, but she was happy for me and relieved my blind date days were over. Seemingly, more so than me.

“You like it?”

“It pretty, Mara!” Teddy squealed from his father’s arms. He’d already grown so much in the short three months I lived here with Zane and him. I loved that I got the opportunity to watch him grow, and maybe even teach him in my own classroom one day.

“Thanks, buddy. I knew you’d like it. Want to see the playdoh I got?”

“Yes please!” Teddy clapped his hands and wiggled to get down. Zane set him on the floor, and he ran over to me, sliding his chubby little hand inside mine. I fell in love with this child more and more as time went on and he was starting to feel like my own son.

I set him up at the table with some playdoh as Zane watched on lovingly.

A playful grin had been tugging at the corners of his mouth the past couple of days, and I wondered what he was up to.

Last time he grinned like a fool was the day he moved me out of my apartment.

Later that day, he had welcomed me into his cabin, now our cabin he said, with rose petals and a bath, champagne, and chocolate covered strawberries.

Followed by a wild night of passionate sex I'd never forget.

Little did he know, I had my own surprise waiting for him.

About a month ago, we saw a fertility specialist and gathered our options in regard to pregnancy.

If we wanted children, we had to move fast. And considering everything moved fast between us, it didn't phase us one bit.

The doctor said the older I got, the less likely of a viable, healthy pregnancy without assistance of things like IVF or fertility drugs.

But there was still a chance. A physical at my doctor's office showed me in good health and though my age put me at high risk, I should be able to handle a pregnancy without issues.

All I wanted was to make Zane happy. And while he promised he was okay with adoption or even surrogacy, I wanted to give him the family he so deserved.

Besides, my maternal wants came rip roaring out of the darkness I hid them in, and suddenly, the urge to become a mother was strong.

We decided to try without any assistance at first and reassess after six months.

Well, we wouldn't have to wait that long. Apparently, I was still fertile, or Zane's sperm were strong and healthy, because only one month into trying and I was pregnant.

I knew something was off when I all of sudden couldn't stand the smell of eggs, one of my favorite breakfast foods. Then it dawned on me I hadn't seen my period in a while and sure enough, two pink lines popped up on the test immediately.

My plan was to surprise Zane with the news but now I wondered if he knew somehow. Did he see the box and wrapper in the trash? Shit, why wasn't I more careful? Pregnancy brain, that's it, I'm blaming the hormones already.

Later that night, after dinner and putting Teddy to bed, Zane walked me outside onto the back porch and we slow danced under the full moonlight, a slight crisp in the air. Before the dance ended, he got down on one knee.

"I love you so much, Xiomara. I want nothing more than to spend the rest of my life with you. Please marry me. Become my wife and my family. Forever."

"Oh my God, oh my God, I can't..." Sobs pushed at my throat as I stood there in shock. "Yes, yes, Zane. Of course I'll marry you."

Zane got to his feet, slipped the ring on my left ring finger, and took me into his arms, lifting me off the ground and spinning us in a circle. "I love you so much, wifey. Hmm, I really like the sound of that."

"I love you so much, hubby ."

We kissed and kissed under the stars, the night more perfect than I could've ever imagined.

"One more thing." I said, my lips still tingling from the intense kiss. "You're gonna

be a daddy.” I whispered.

Zane’s head snapped back, his eyes bulging out. “What?” He cried. “You’re joking.”

I took his face between my hands and kissed him over and over. “Nope, I’m dead serious. I’m pregnant.”

“Holy shit, this is the best night of my life.” Zane cheered, happiness and excitement radiating off. I laughed and laughed and kissed my future husband, the love of my life, and now father of my baby.

A summer vacation that led to a forever love.

THE END

I hope you enjoyed Bennett and Willow’s story!