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USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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HIS NEEDS

Curvy Women Wanted, 30

Sam Crescent

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Chapter One

Georgina—or Gina to her family—Lowe growled as she looked at the mess in the sink. It was official, Jared Point was a slob. She couldn't believe she had agreed to share an apartment with him. They had both gone for the same rental apartment and neither of them could afford the costly price, but they'd gotten past their hatred of one another and agreed to share this apartment. She should have known this wouldn't work.

They had hated each other for years.

Not exactly true. There was a time they'd been the best of friends. When they were kids, before they got to high school, where he became one of the cool kids and she became the fat, nerdy girl. Jared would poke fun at her when he was around his friends.

He did try to be secret friends, but she'd told him to go fuck himself. If he didn't want to be her friend in front of his cool buddies, then they were not friends. Simple as that.

She shouldn't have agreed to live with him.

"Stupid slob," she said, rolling up the sleeves of her dress and stepping toward the sink.

Gina hated messes, and from the look of the plates and pans, he'd made himself some spaghetti sauce. It was now stuck to the dishes, and that just annoyed her even more. She had no choice but to fill the sink with warm, soapy water to allow them to soak.

Drying her hands on the towel, she shook her head, gritted her teeth, and then stormed across the apartment toward his bedroom.

She got the smaller of the two rooms, but her closet was bigger than his. Being a beautician, she liked to stay current in her clothes so customers were more than happy to come and see her.

Opening a beauty salon in the town where she grew up was a risk, seeing as people often saw her as the nerdy big girl. Customers had entered her salon as if they were going to be met with the devil himself. They had all looked scared, but when she'd stepped out with a smile and a joke, they all soon relaxed. Within months of opening her salon, she'd been able to employ a couple of beauticians who were looking to settle down locally, rather than travel to work. In the future, she hoped to allow a training program, but that was nowhere near to happening.

Now to Jared. He'd never left town, and in fact, was one of the best mechanics around. Women adored him.

Gina saw why. Jared had gotten sexier with age. She hadn't given him much thought since she left for beauty college, but seeing him now, she realized that age had been kind to him.

He wasn't married, but he had a reputation around town for being a wild boy. No woman had been able to pin him down.

When she asked him why he wanted to share an apartment with her, he told her straight. She'd be a good shield against women.

There had been a chance for her to walk away, but instead, she'd snapped up the apartment. It was in one of the nicest areas of town, with beautiful views of the surrounding countryside. Not to mention, the space was incredible, and there was even a pool, but she hadn't gotten a chance to sample it yet.

Storming into Jared's room, she expected to find his room a mess, but he surprised her by having a very nice space.

If he could keep his room tidy, then why the hell couldn't he keep the kitchen clean? It was their communal space.

This was why she needed to set rules, and starting from this evening, she was going to force him to agree to them.

Growling, she stomped her heeled shoe on the floor and then walked back to the kitchen, getting all her aggression out on the plates and saucepans. The man was a pig. There was nothing she could do to make him leave. The rent was ridiculous, and even though her business was a success, she didn't want to run the risk of going into debt.

With the dishes cleaned, dried, and put away, she grabbed her bag and left their apartment, being sure to lock the door behind her. She took the stairs to her car and smiled at some of the neighbors as she passed, trying to build up good relations.

Once inside her car, she turned over the ignition and headed straight toward Jared's workplace. He didn't own the garage, but he was one of the best mechanics around. It probably helped that the garage was owned by his best friend, Phil.

Gripping her steering wheel tightly, she saw the large, obtuse sign and quickly brought her car to a stop. After applying the hand brake, she stepped out of her car. Then with hurried steps, she found the man she hated so damn much. He stood next to a car, assessing it with a clipboard in his hands.

The moment she was close, he turned to face her, and this lazy-ass smile flooded his lips. Why did he have to look so sinfully attractive? This just made her hate him a little more.

"Don't you dare smile at me," she said.

"What's got your panties in a twist, babe?"

"Don't you babe me either. Have you heard of washing up? Soap? Boiling water? Scrubbing brush?"

He clicked his tongue and dropped his clipboard. With his other hand, he scratched his head. "Don't have a clue what any of those mean."

"Oh, shut it, Jared. Seriously. Clean up after yourself, okay? I'm not going to live in a pigsty. That's *our* apartment. I do my part to make it livable. You need to start doing your own." She glared at him and wanted to hit him, but instead,

she just shook her head. “We’ve got a meeting tonight, at the apartment. Be there.”

Jared Point watched his little roommate walk away. The sway of her ass was just too damn tempting to deny himself. Moving in with Gina had been a huge mistake. He shouldn’t have done it. If he was honest with himself, he didn’t need the apartment. The place he had before wasn’t half bad, but he’d been saving and wanted to move.

That apartment had been a beacon.

The thing was, so was Gina.

Ever since she’d returned home, she had been constantly on his mind, in his thoughts. Going for the same place to rent just seemed like the universe or fate, or whatever, was trying to throw them together.

He smiled as he watched her climb into her car and drive off.

Phil, his best friend, whistled. “She looks pissed.”

“I’ll bet.”

Leaving the dishes last night had been incredibly hard. Unlike some of his friends, he never inherited the slob gene, so just leaving random plates and saucepans to wash up didn’t bode well with him. However, he did it just so Gina would have a reason to come to him.

They’d been living together for a few months now. Jared had expected them to at least talk or have something civil to say to one another, but instead, she acted like he didn’t exist. He couldn’t have that.

So, not doing dishes brought her around to him.

He could imagine her having a whole list of chores for him to do, and he intended to shirk on each and every single one.

“I know that smirk, and it never ends well,” Phil said.

“Shut up. Get back to work.”

“Hey, I’m the boss between us.”

“Please, the boss you might be, but we all know who runs the place.” He and Phil were the only two from their high school days who hung out. The rest of the guys had settled down with the high school sweethearts they knocked up, or they’d headed off to college.

For him, college had closed all doors as he hadn’t gotten the grades. Spending way too much time playing sports and partying, and not enough time studying, hadn’t helped. Jared couldn’t even remember some of the lessons, which was why he’d also started to take some additional night courses.

Phil’s dad was a real gem. He’d seen the potential in him fixing cars on his lot, so he’d helped to send him to college, to learn the ins and outs of cars. The deal was that he had to work for him for at least ten years, and seeing as Jared had no intention of leaving town, he agreed.

Now, he had a great job, one he loved with a decent income. He was also studying in his spare time. That was the main reason for the quick spaghetti dinner last night. He’d been too busy engrossed in his books to make a real effort.

He thought about Gina.

When they were kids, she’d been the one with the brains. Always had her head in a book until he forced her to look up at him and see what life was waiting for. Then high school came.

That fucking place.

The guys had all been bros over hos, and all of that. He’d listened. Just thinking back to how he acted then, he cringed.

Gina had been his best friend. She never allowed him to feel stupid, and she used to spend a lot of time helping him to understand stuff. He’d been a slow learner, but Gina, she’d been patient with him, no matter if it meant spending hours on

the same damn page of the same book. She'd find a way to explain it to him.

Even in high school, when the teacher called on him to answer a question. He'd cut her off. Told her she was useless to him, but if he got stuck or was called upon, and Gina was there, she'd cut right in and answer the question.

She wouldn't give any derision.

Some of the guys would say she was nothing but a big fat nerd, but he knew what she did, and why she did it.

Gina always understood him. Another reason why he wouldn't allow the guys to make her a target. Some of the guys—not Phil—they wanted to torment and hurt some of the weaker kids at school. Jared had never found that cool. There was nothing great in hurting those weaker, but he made sure they steered away from Gina.

When they got to their senior year, Gina's curves had started to show, and damn it, he'd struggled not to go chasing after her. He'd made sure all the guys knew she wasn't a target.

Any guy, even those who weren't on his team, got to feel the hard side of his fist.

No one touched Gina. It didn't matter they were no longer friends, more enemies, she belonged to him. That was why he agreed to share the apartment.

Gina was his.

“Yeah, well, how are classes coming?” Phil asked, pulling him out of his thoughts.

“Huh?”

“You know. You said you signed up for a couple of night courses. Have they finished? Did you pass?”

“Nah, they're not finished. I'm taking my own pace, you know.”

Phil nodded. “So, what are you going to do with Gina?”

“Nothing. We’re roommates.”

“Oh, come on, man. This isn’t high school. You don’t have to lie to me or pretend you don’t think of fucking her.”

Jared stared at Phil, who rolled his eyes.

“Not all of us are dumb, Jared. I saw the way you looked at Gina. Especially through senior year. Half of the guys wanted to bang her, just to see those tits, but you put her off-limits to everyone. I wonder if she knows that’s why no one invited her to prom.”

“No one deserved her.”

“Then why didn’t you ask her?” Phil asked.

“You know why.”

“Not really. Sure, you’d been a dick to her, but clearly, there was something between you two. You could have taken her.”

He was a fucking coward, and he hadn’t dared to deal with the possibility of rejection.

Chapter Two

Annoyance flashed through Gina as she glanced down at her watch for what felt like the hundredth time.

Jared was late.

There was a big surprise. All he cared about was himself.

She stamped her foot, free from the confines of her heels, and walked into the kitchen to make herself a sandwich. She was hungry, but she had wanted to have this conversation with him without ruining food.

Her notebook of rules was open on the table. They were rather ... impressive. It was just a schedule of chores, as well as dos and don'ts. She had left a section of the rules clear so Jared could add his own.

He still wasn't home.

With her cheese and pickle sandwich made, she walked into the sitting room and sat on the corner of the sofa, keeping the plate close beneath her chin to catch any crumbs. She finished the sandwich quickly, took her plate to the kitchen, washed it up, and slid it into place.

There was nothing wrong with keeping the apartment clean.

They were both so busy, if they lost focus for even a second, they were screwed, simple as that.

After another hour of him not showing, Gina decided to just bite the bullet and accept that he wasn't going to arrive. She walked into their shared bathroom and stripped naked before stepping beneath the spray of the shower.

It was nice and cold.

Ever since she was a kid, she had always loved stepping beneath the cold shower. There was something quite

invigorating about feeling the icy pricks of the water hitting her skin.

She released a gasp as it did exactly that, taking her breath away and making her smile. The water soon warmed up, and she allowed the warmth and soothing scents of her soap and shampoo to loosen her up.

It had been a long day at the salon. So many clients. Many of them talking about what a dream Jared was.

She couldn't care less.

The more they talked, the angrier she became. It would seem Jared was the man of the moment. The guy they all wanted. The one man not tied down.

She didn't even want to think about what else they had said. How rumors of his prowess had spread far and wide.

Apparently, her roommate had a very large dick and knew how to use it.

It wasn't like this came as a shock to her. Many of the girls in high school had been endless gossipers. There were often times she was in the bathroom and overheard them all talking about what a great time Jared had given them. She didn't care about their experiences. None of them. Just thinking about them all forced her to wrinkle her nose. It was gross. No doubt about it.

Gina didn't have a whole lot of experience when it came to the opposite sex. She'd only had one boyfriend since leaving high school. There was no point in counting her teenage years, as nothing had happened during that time. Not a damn thing. No guy had been interested in her.

Which was a good thing because she had no interest in them either.

No one had wanted to be her date for prom, so she'd spent it watching movies with her mother and eating lots of junk food.

Her parents were currently away on a cruise they'd randomly won. They'd been so excited about it. Gina had checked to make sure it wasn't a scam, and when she was sure it wasn't, she'd been excited for them. While they were away, she took care of their house.

They had offered her to come stay in her old bedroom, but Gina didn't want to live with her parents again. She'd been living on her own for some time. She loved her parents, but they had their own set of rules to follow.

Gina turned off the shower and wrinkled her nose. She'd turned into her parents.

Rules. Structure. She cringed just thinking about it. This wasn't good.

Wrapping a towel around her body, she put her clothes in the laundry basket. There was a communal laundry room near the basement. She waited once a week to do her laundry.

Gina opened the door and stepped out, only to face-plant into a large, muscular chest. She looked up, and sure enough, there was the pain in her ass, finally in the flesh.

“About time!”

Jared glanced down at her towel-covered body, and his brows rose. He'd been able to do that little action when they were kids. She had tried for hours to do it, but she'd failed.

He did it without even thinking, or so that what was it looked like.

“Better late than never, but I had no idea you were going to miss me this much. You had to take a shower to cool off.”

“Hell, no. Trust me, this has nothing to do with you. You know, I should have suspected that you wouldn't take this seriously. I'm trying to make sure we can handle living together in this apartment, Jared. Rules and boundaries are going to make that happen, but you cannot even follow a simple request. This is high school all over again.”

“If you must know, I was working.”

“Please, the garage closed two hours ago.”

“Yeah, but Phil got a call to a nasty accident. We’re a tow truck as well as a garage. Three-car accident. One of the cars is mangled beyond repair. We had to wait for the ambulance to get there.”

“Oh, God, is everything okay? Did anyone get hurt?”

“No, thankfully, it was all fine. The cars are not, but that’s what took so long. We had to wait for the cops to allow us to take the cars away. It took multiple trips.”

Now she felt so freaking insensitive.

Gina was wet, in nothing but a towel with her wet body pressing up against the plush fabric.

Jared had never wanted to be a towel before, but looking at Gina, he wanted to be pressed against her body. She held the towel together, and with the way she held her arms, it pushed those tits up to perfection.

He did have every intention of getting home on time. Only, Phil had said he needed his help, and it was true. The cars were a mess. They had to wait to talk to the owners tomorrow. The mangled car wasn’t going to make it. No amount of TLC would save it. The other cars he could fix though.

Once he got beneath the hood and started to see the damage, it would be easy to fix.

Right now, he wasn’t thinking about cars.

“I’m sorry for ... snapping at you.”

“What are those rules?” Jared asked.

His dick was rock-hard. Staring into Gina’s brown eyes, he wanted to kiss her. He’d been wanting to kiss her since they were kids.

He never did.

His biggest regret was the summer before they got to high school, when shit got complicated. She'd been wearing those little shorts, and even as kids, she'd been on the bigger side, curvy. His dad had once said he liked them big, for something to hold on to, and even though at the time Jared had ignored it, he did in fact agree.

Looking at Gina, he wanted to hold her. No, he wanted to fuck her.

"It's not a big deal. We can flesh them out in our own time."

"Gina, I know you. You've already got a list of rules," he said. Why was she being evasive?

Rules and schedules were things Gina grew up by. Her mother would put a winter chore and summer chore on a board, every single year. Gina's routine was always fleshed out, and unless her dad was home, it was stuck to.

Jared had spent many times helping Gina take out the trash or weeding the yard. Not that her mother didn't do her fair share, she did. She wanted Gina to learn to be self-sufficient, so there wasn't anything she needed anybody for.

Gina slid around him. The towel wasn't long, and he got to see her legs.

When she bent forward to grab her notebook from the coffee table, it was just one flash too much. Without thinking about what he was doing, he closed the distance between them.

This was wrong. He knew that.

They hated each other. Well, she hated him, but he still wanted her.

When Gina spun around, he was there. She nearly fell as she jerked back, but he had his arms around her. Within seconds, his fingers were in her hair, and he pulled her close, slamming his lips down on hers.

Sweet, fucking perfection. That was exactly how her lips felt. Like they were made to be kissed by him.

One taste just wasn't enough.

He wanted to kiss her again. Then again. Jared didn't want to stop kissing.

The notebook was in Gina's hand, but it fell to the floor as her hands went to his chest. He expected her to push him away. To call him a perv, or to break this ... connection.

She didn't.

Her hands slid up, and up, until they were wrapped around his neck, and that was all he needed to grip the rounded, supple curves of her ass.

Gina let out a gasp, and as she did, her lips opened. He plunged inside, tasting her. She met his kiss, pressing her tongue against his own. He stepped Gina back, and they both fell down onto the sofa.

They stopped kissing, and as they did, Gina looked up at him with wide, confused eyes.

"We shouldn't be doing this," Gina said.

"Why not?"

"You ... I..."

He took her hand and pressed it against his dick. "You and I don't have a single problem, baby. We know this. Are you wet for me?"

"Jared?"

"Are you wet for me?"

She glared at him.

"You think I don't know what that look is all about?" he said. "I grew up with you. I know that you don't want to admit the truth. I bet your pussy is soaking wet."

"We're roommates, Jared. There should be rules and boundaries, and chores."

He pressed his face against her neck and breathed her in. “Please tell me that some of those chores involve me licking that wet pussy.”

She gasped as he put his fingers on her knee and slowly slid his hand between her legs, getting closer and closer to her sweet cunt.

He wanted to feel her. To touch her.

The moment he pressed his palm against her, he couldn't look away, especially as she was soaked. Sliding his fingers between her slit, he grazed across her clit. As he caressed her nub, he watched Gina sink her teeth into her bottom lip.

“Don't fight it, Gina. Come for me. Let me hear what you like.”

“We shouldn't be doing this,” she said, gasping.

He grabbed her hand and placed it against the hard ridge of his cock. “Why not? We're both adults. None of our parents are going to come home, and I want to see you come for me, Gina. Come for me, and scream my name.”

She arched her back, and Jared wanted to see all of her.

Releasing the small knot at the edge of her breasts, he opened the towel, exposing her body to his gaze. He nearly came in his pants like a teenage boy.

She was fucking exquisite.

Full, ripe tits, a small, curved waist, a rounded stomach, and thick hips and thighs. She was his dream. More than a generous handful. He did like his women curvy, but the only woman he wanted was Gina.

Chapter Three

This was wrong.

His touch set her on fire. Gina wanted to deny all of this, but she couldn't.

The pleasure was out of this world. She didn't want it to stop. It was intense.

Two of his fingers pushed inside her, thrusting hard and deep as his thumb teased across her clit. She was so close to orgasm. She'd never been this close before.

Her last boyfriend had gotten so fed up waiting for her to have an orgasm, he'd stop, climb between her thighs, and finish himself, leaving her to finish herself. She'd never been able to be free, to let loose, but Jared's fingers were made of sin.

When he leaned down, still fully clothed, and took one of her nipples into his mouth, Gina felt an answering quake between her thighs, making her arch up and scream his name.

Jared moved to her second breast, devoting the same kind of attention to the other.

She was lost in a sea of pleasure. All at Jared's hands.

Touching his thick cock, she marveled at the length. So long. So thick. It was fucking beautiful. She hadn't even seen it yet, but what she felt was a dream to behold. Squeezing the length, she released a moan.

Perfection.

Jared twisted his fingers inside her pussy, and then, she felt like she was coming apart as he thrust her into oblivion.

The shockwave of her orgasm took her by surprise. She couldn't think as he worked her pussy, driving her higher than ever before. She cried out his name as she came.

This had never happened before.

Jared's lips were on hers, kissing her. He worked her body, drawing her orgasm out of her until there was nothing left for her to give. Her body was his to command.

A fire.

A fever.

All his.

Gina expected reality to douse out the flame, but it didn't. She stared up at him, and all she wanted was more.

So much more.

In the back of her mind, the Gina who followed the rules screamed at her to run to her bedroom. The woman who had just had the best orgasm of her life didn't want to run away. She wanted to stand her ground, to see what was going to happen next. To explore this man. To relish every taste and whisper, every single morsel, to not give up.

She listened to that woman. All her life, she'd followed the rules.

She grabbed Jared's shirt and worked it up and over his head, tossing it to one side. They attacked his jeans together, and Jared was more of an expert at getting those off. He did so with ease, pulling them off and wriggling out of them.

He wasn't even wearing any boxer briefs, and in the chaos of clothes and limbs, he found a condom.

Gina watched as he tore into the packet and pulled out the condom. She stared at his cock. It was long, thick, and so impressive. She didn't expect to feel more arousal, but that was exactly what she did feel.

Jared moved between her spread thighs, and Gina's face heated as she stared up at the man, that she'd ... once loved and sometimes hated.

They didn't have the best track record, and she would deal with all the mistakes in the morning. For now, she wanted to feel what it would be like with him. To finally put to bed

that question as to whether it would be good between them or not.

It didn't matter, really. Nothing was ever going to come of their time together.

They were not supposed to be together. She was the nerd. He was the jock.

He pressed the tip of his cock against her entrance, and she looked up at him, a little in shock. Then she cried out as he slammed balls deep inside her.

There was nothing gentle about the way Jared claimed her. He took complete control.

No mercy.

His groan was deep and guttural, awakening her need.

"Oh, fuck, I knew you'd feel so good, but damn," he said.

Jared pulled out of her and then slammed back inside.

His hands were at her waist as he started to rock deep inside her. He fucked her in long hard, strokes, going to the hilt inside her.

He was so big that she was sure he was hitting a part of her stomach, but she didn't care. She fucking loved it. Craved it.

This was so wrong, and yet, she had never felt so alive. With Jared, there was no reason to hide or to hold back.

His lips were on hers, kissing her, and she felt his breath hitch. Her body was so sensitive. Each touch and caress seemed to send her higher, almost soaring with need.

Jared suddenly tensed up, and she knew he was close.

His thrusts become erratic as he found that peak, and he threw himself over the edge, into orgasmic bliss.

His growl echoed off the walls, and Gina loved the feel of his body as he collapsed on hers. She ran her hands down

his back, holding him, enjoying him.

Time didn't stand still. Nor did this feeling. Little by little, the harsh, cold taste of reality flooded Gina.

She had just had sex with her roommate. The same person she'd spent a great deal of time not liking. This was a big mistake.

At least they used a condom.

She had to get away from him. "Er, Jared," she said.

"I'll move in a minute."

"This was ... a mistake. You need to ... we need to..." She had to put some kind of distance between them.

What the hell had she done? She was just another woman in a long line who'd given in to Jared.

This was ... holy crap, what had she done?

The following morning, Jared made sure to get up early and set the coffee pot to percolating. The scent was nice and sweet as it filled the apartment.

He was dressed and ready for work, but he didn't need to leave.

Last night, Gina had tried not to have a panic attack, and he had to do some serious damage control with his bestie. Not the best way to finish a pretty decent round of sex.

He'd been thinking about it all night.

Gina thought it was a big mistake. He didn't.

It was the first thing they'd gotten right in years. Gina's pussy was made for him, and well, his dick was made for her.

She wanted to follow rules and boundaries, as well as chores, and he had a few conditions.

His memory of Gina had taught him well.

He watched as she attempted to sneak out of her bedroom. Some things never changed.

Jared cleared his throat, and Gina tensed up, looking at him quickly.

“You cannot pretend to not have seen or heard me, Gina. That’s not going to cut it. You’re going to have to come and enjoy a cup of coffee with me.”

“I’ve got to get to work.”

“Not for another two hours, you don’t.” He clucked his tongue and poured her a coffee, being sure to leave out the sugar. Gina hadn’t ever liked sweet coffee.

With their cups in hand, he led them to their small dining room table.

He slid the coffee to Gina, who immediately put it on a coaster. Always so neat and efficient.

“Hand me the book of chores and rules,” he said.

“How do you know...?”

“That you already have a whole list down for me to do? I know you, Gina. I’ve known you for a long time.”

“Oh, please, you don’t know everything about me.”

“True, but you are a fundamental notetaker. It doesn’t matter what it is, it’s why your biggest purchases are notebooks, of all different sizes, from big to small.” He winked at her, and her response was to shoot him a glare.

He chuckled.

Opening the tab, he found his chores, and he wasn’t wrong.

Gina had everything scheduled out. From taking out the trash, to laundry, to cleaning duties. They were on a two-week rotation, and he didn’t see a single problem with anything.

She was fair. That was his Gina.

He smiled and put his pen down. "I have a few ... requests."

"Okay, well, if there are any changes or chores you don't want to do, or your schedule doesn't quite accommodate—"

"I want to fuck," he said, simply and matter of fact.

"What?"

"You heard me."

"Yeah, I heard you, but what does that have to do with our schedule and chores? You can go and get any woman to ... meet your needs."

"And after last night, I already found my woman."

"Jared, last night was a mistake."

"Wrong. It wasn't a mistake. Coming that hard, the only upsetting part about it was using the condom and I didn't get to feel your sweet cunt wrapped around my dick."

"I am not talking about this," she said.

She tried to reach for her notebook, and he pulled it away from her. "We are talking about this, and I have all of my terms now." He knew how important this book was to her. "So, let's see, I want Gina's pussy on a regular basis. I would say once a night. I understand that you will also have that time of the month that all women go through." He flicked through the book and smiled. "Ah, here it is. I will make a note and be sure to bring home ice cream and snuggles. I'll even rub your stomach for you." He smiled at her.

"Jared, this is crazy," she said.

"No, what is crazy is how amazing we were together last night, and I let you go." He shook his head. "So, I think if I get your pussy, you get my dick." He smiled. "And I would say, so long as neither of us has any complaints, this can be an agreement for some time." He grabbed her pen and clicked it. "What do you say? Is once a day enough?"

“This is ... I can’t ... damn it, Jared, give me back my notebook.”

“I’m not going to give you anything until we settle this.”

“You have other women. Plenty of women, and I’m not —”

“You don’t want to share?”

“We’re not doing this.”

“Yes, we are. I’m not going to force you to have sex with me, but I haven’t been with another woman for a long time. You don’t have to worry about anyone else. This is just you and me.” He wasn’t interested in having sex with other women. Even before Gina came back home, he’d stopped being with other women.

There was only one person he wanted, and she sat opposite him.

“We can’t do this,” she said.

“Why not?”

“Jared, we share an apartment.”

“And that means we don’t have to worry about finding each other at night. We share the same space. We want each other. What is the problem?”

She closed her eyes. “I...”

“How about we give this a trial period?” he asked.

“A trial period?”

“I use you, and you use me.” He was willing to do whatever it took to get the woman he wanted. Gina was worth this.

He stared at her and saw her slowly starting to cave.

Jared closed the book and held out his hand. “Well, what do you say, buddy?” he asked.

Gina took a deep breath. "I'm going to regret this." She put her hand in his.

"Our trial period has just begun." He got to his feet, tugged her close, and kissed her. "I'll see you when I get home, baby."

"Don't call me baby."

He smiled.

This was going to be a lot of fun.

Chapter Four

Gina couldn't believe what she had agreed to this very morning. She got through her work, very much aware of her sensitive body. Jared hadn't been gentle last night.

She kept a smile on her lips as she dealt with customers, enjoying the mundane conversation. After lunch, she couldn't help but watch the clock. Each minute that ticked on by brought her ever closer to going home.

Would Jared be home waiting for her?

What had she done?

Since when did trying to bring about order become a ... sex plan?

That bastard was invading her thoughts.

By the end of the day, several of her employees smiled at her and asked if she wanted to go for a drink. She thanked them but let them know she had some chores to complete. She wasn't much of a drinker. Far from it.

After climbing into her car, she turned over the ignition and started to drive toward the apartment.

Gina tried not to think about last night. But each time she attempted to focus on a brand of makeup, or a new face cream, Jared kept invading her thoughts. It was like he whispered in her ear, the feel of his lips on her body.

By the time she pulled up into the parking lot, her body was on fire. Her nipples were tight and her pussy was so slick.

She grabbed her purse and climbed out of her car. After locking the door, she made her way into the building, and rather than use the elevator, she took the stairs, trying to calm the fire building within her.

After sliding her key into the lock, she twisted it, turned the handle, and stepped inside.

She pulled her key free, but within seconds, she was pressed up against the door. Large hands pushed hers above her head, and she gasped seconds before his lips locked on hers.

The scent of Jared surrounded her. His body was so much bigger than hers.

She breathed him in. His masculine cologne mixed with grease and the slightest hint of sweat.

“I couldn’t wait to kiss you,” he said.

“You need a shower.”

His face pressed against her neck. “So do you.”

He pulled away, and she smiled as she saw his face had a streak of engine oil or grease.

Jared took her hand, and Gina didn’t put up a fight. She followed him to the bathroom, and when he started to strip naked, her mouth watered as he revealed his body to her gaze.

She nibbled on her lip, watching him.

“Do you like what you see?” he asked, suddenly flexing his muscles.

“Yes.”

He closed the distance between them, and his hands went to the buttons of her dress. She didn’t tell him to stop. With each one he opened, her body was revealed to his gaze.

When he got to her waist, his hands slid inside, going to her chest then up, to help push the dress off her shoulders until it fell to the floor.

He dealt with her bra with a single flick of his fingers. Her breasts spilled out, and for her panties, Jared went to his knees. He gripped the edge of her panties and pulled it down.

She stepped out of her panties and kicked off her heels.

Jared stood up.

They were both naked now. Nothing between them but the smallest slither of air.

She stared at him, waiting.

He touched her first, his arm banding around her waist, pulling her in close. Their bodies were now connected. His hard against her soft.

Both of his hands went to her ass, squeezing the flesh, and she cried out.

“Do you have any idea how hard it is to fix an engine while thinking of your pussy?”

She nodded, wanting to deny that she'd been thinking about him too, but what was the point? He'd been thinking about her, so why couldn't she think of him?

“Have you thought of me today, Gina?”

“Yes.”

“What did you think?”

She groaned. “Please.”

“Do you think of my cock? How good it felt inside your pussy?”

She looked up at him and then slid her hand down to wrap her fingers around his length. Her cheeks were bright red, and nerves gripped her, but she fought them off.

“I thought about ... tasting you,” she said. “I want to feel your cock inside my mouth.”

“Oh, baby, you are going to get that. Trust me.”

He moved them back, and Gina stepped into the shower, going beneath the head of the shower.

Jared reached up and turned the water on, blasting her in the cold, and she was a little shocked that he remembered. It was so long ago now.

They had been kids. How could he have remembered?

The water started to heat up, and while she'd been torn in her memories, he'd reached for the bar of soap, which he placed in her hands. "Wash me?"

She took the soap, lathering up her hands.

Gina hesitated in putting her hands on his heavily inked chest, but then she just did it. She put her hands on his body and began to soap him.

For her trouble, Jared captured her chin, tilted her head back, and kissed her, hard. She ran her hands all over his body.

She was lost in the moment. Completely captured by the heat of him.

Jared turned them around so he was underneath the spray of the water.

She hadn't gotten all the grease from his body.

He kept on holding her, pulling her close to him, and gripping her body. Each time he did, she felt herself yearning for more. Once he was clean, it was Jared's turn, and he took his time. He made sure to clean her body thoroughly.

Gina didn't think she was ever going to be able to survive it, but the moment it was over, he turned the shower off, and the intent in his eyes filled her with anticipation.

Jared had always considered himself a tit man.

When it came to Gina, it was all of her body. He couldn't get enough of her tits, ass, hips, thighs, and pussy. She was everything.

His cock was so hard.

Wrapping the towel around her body, he dried off the excess moisture. Then he grabbed her hand and led her all the way to his bedroom.

"Jared?"

To answer her, he pressed on her chest and pushed her to the bed. He didn't allow her to get far before he was between her thighs. He spread her legs, touching her pussy with his fingers, feeling how wet she was.

He pressed a kiss to her lips and then started to trail his mouth down her body, taking his time at her tits.

Once he'd sucked each hard nipple, he went down, kissing her stomach and licking a trail toward her pussy.

“Jared, what are you doing?”

“Let me show you.” He pushed her thighs open wide, and then he hovered above her pussy, staring at her sweet cunt.

Her hair was neatly trimmed. The lips opened slightly, and he saw the swollen nub of her clit peeking through. Sliding his tongue through her slit, he grazed across the nub, feeling her come up off the bed.

Her hands locked into the sheets out of the corner of his eyes.

Had no one tasted this sweet cunt before?

Jared didn't know about her past. If he knew Gina, the only kind of lover she would've had was that of a serious boyfriend. A hard pulse of jealousy shocked him to the core, and it nearly choked him in his thunderous rage. How dare anyone touch his woman. He was angry.

Gina's body hadn't been worshiped the way it was supposed to be, and now, he was going to make sure she knew what it was supposed to be like.

Sliding his hands beneath her ass, he squeezed the plump flesh. He moved his tongue down to circle her entrance, teasing her and feeling her shake beneath his onslaught.

He smiled because he liked the thrill of driving her wild.

Plunging his tongue in deep, he started to fuck her. His dick was far larger than his tongue, but for now, it was going to have to do.

He pulled out and traced back toward her clit, stroking over. He locked his lips over her clit and sucked her into his mouth. Using his teeth, he was gentle at first, then he built up to a little pain that he instantly soothed out.

Pulling one hand from beneath her ass, he teased the entrance of her cunt and thrust two fingers deep inside her, turning them and stroking right over her G-spot, finding it with ease. At the same time, he flicked her clit, stroking back and forth with his tongue and feeling an answering wake as her orgasm started to build.

Jared knew he could be cruel and torment her a little more, but he was so desperate to be inside her.

He sent her over the edge.

His name spilled from her lips, and that was the sweetest sound he'd ever heard.

The only name Gina was going to speak from now on was his. He was going to rock her world.

Before her orgasm had even finished, he moved up between her thighs. Then he pressed the tip of his cock to her entrance and slid in, inch by inch. He started off slow, but she was so tight and so fucking wet, he just couldn't stop.

Grabbing her hips, which were so glorious in his hands, he held her down and slammed to the hilt. It wasn't enough.

He did it again. Pulling out until just the tip of him remained, and then he slammed in. Hard and fast, holding her in place so he could fuck her, guiding his dick inside her.

Jared kept up the same pace, pulling out of her and staring down at his naked dick to see the evidence of her orgasm shining on his length. She was so wet.

He pounded inside her, and he felt his own orgasm start to build. As he did, he also realized another little minor detail.

He wasn't getting a condom.

There was no time to pull out. No time to stop.

He thrust balls deep inside her and came, hard, pulsing his cum deep inside her cunt and filling her womb.

Jared grabbed her hands, pressing them above her head and sinking his face against her neck, kissing her. He nibbled on her pulse, hoping to distract her.

This was ... insane.

He had just fucked Gina without a condom.

There was no protection. He didn't know if Gina was on the pill, but this was ... he had been too far gone to care about wearing a rubber.

Dude, you want her pregnant.

Jared froze.

Where the fuck had that thought come from?

"Jared? You okay?" Gina asked.

"Just ... basking."

He was an asshole for not saying anything.

The moment he pulled out, she was going to know, and he couldn't allow that to happen.

Letting go of her hands, he smiled down at her.

"How about we have a round two in the shower?" he asked.

"What's going on?" she asked.

"I didn't get all of the grease out of your neck, and well, I think it is only fair that I do so."

She was spotless. Completely clean.

He'd been thorough.

When it came to Gina's body, he loved exploring her. Not a part of her was unexplored by him.

And the sex, they had so much to enjoy.

"Fine. Fine. A shower."

“With one condition,” he said.

“Jared, you were the one who wanted the shower.”

“Yeah, but I get to carry you, in a fireman’s lift.”

Gina was too busy squealing as he carried her through to the bathroom. His cum spilled from the lips of her pussy, but she was distracted and he was in the clear.

Chapter Five

“I can’t take it anymore. Stop.” Gina burst out laughing as Jared kept on going, brushing his fingers across her naked ribs, across her stomach.

She’d always been ticklish, but this was too much.

Jared was a lot stronger than her, so there was no way she could stop the onslaught. She laughed and snorted until she couldn’t take it and found the strength to quickly push him to the bed and straddle him.

He didn’t put up much of a fight as she hovered above him. “I win.”

“You think I’ve got a problem with this?” he asked, running his hands from her thighs, across her ass, then up to her back.

She would be lying if she said she didn’t enjoy his touch. In fact, for the past couple of weeks, Gina had been enjoying this *new* chore. Jared was a fiend in bed. He was always so ready, so needy, and she loved it.

He came home before her, and the moment she entered the door, it was time to do chores. This didn’t mean their other chores didn’t get done. On the contrary. The dishes were always neatly washed and put away. She took care of the laundry. Their trash was never spilling over. Their apartment was spotless.

“You know what I’d love more than anything right now?” Jared asked, grabbing her ass.

“What?”

“Grab my cock.”

He lifted her, and she held his stiff prick in her fist. They moved into position together, and he slowly lowered her onto his shaft. When he was a couple of inches inside her, Gina dropped her hands to his chest and gasped.

It felt so good, having him inside her.

“Fuck, yeah,” he said. “That’s what I’m talking about.”

His hands moved from her ass to her hips. He squeezed them gently before setting a pace that was easy for her to follow.

Pressing her hands onto his chest, she took over, riding his cock, needing to come, and wanting to feel him follow her. They were so good like this.

She didn’t know if it was the sex that was helping them to get along or their past friendship. Either way, she loved the fact she didn’t hate him anymore. When they first moved into the apartment, she would come home with a sense of dread, but now she was excited to be coming home. She even watched the clock.

This had never happened to her before.

“Touch yourself, baby. Come all over my cock, let me feel it.”

She lifted up and reached between her thighs, stroking her swollen clit. He always demanded that she orgasm more than once. The first time he requested it, she thought he was crazy, but now, she relished each and every single release.

Much to her dismay, after just a few strokes of her clit, she came hard, calling out his name, and Jared spun her to her back, grabbed her legs, and began to pound inside her, fucking her so hard, the bed constantly hit the wall.

She loved it. Begged him for more.

He was a machine as he fucked her harder, going as deep as possible. She saw the change, felt the sudden hurried rush in his movements, and she loved to see him go over the edge into that blessed peak.

So pretty to watch.

The veins on his neck stood out, and she couldn’t resist lifting up and pressing a kiss to his chest before collapsing.

“Fuck me, Gina.” He collapsed on top of her, kissing her lips.

She smiled at him. “What’s the matter?”

“Do you think it would have always been this way between us?”

The question threw her. “What do you mean?”

“You know what I mean. If we hadn’t ... grown apart in high school.”

She shrugged. “There’s no point in thinking about it, you know.”

He stroked some hair back from her face, and he lifted a strand. “I thought you wanted to become a teacher.”

Gina burst out laughing. “Nah, I stopped wanting to be a teacher a long time ago.”

“Why beautician?” he asked.

“It’s fun.”

“Really?”

She chuckled. “I know, right. I never wore makeup growing up. I always found it boring, and so gross. All that stuff caked onto the face, but I never gave it a shot. Then one day, I went on this, I don’t know what you’d call it. I guess some kind of work experience, you know, in a beauty parlor. The woman there, she knew I had this disdain for makeup, but she showed me how amazing it could be. I love using different colors on women to draw out their eyes, or whatever. It’s fun.”

“You like painting people.”

She rolled her eyes. “It’s not painting people. I love the whole process of putting makeup on and doing hair. Once I opened my eyes to it and realized how much I enjoyed it, my classes changed. I took several business courses, and mostly beauty.”

“How did your parents handle it?” Jared asked.

“My dad was pissed, as you can imagine. He wanted his little girl to be a teacher. My mother said she would reserve judgment. After about a year of training, I came home and showed her what I knew, and she told me to follow my heart. After I graduated and stuff, I asked Mom what made her make up her mind. She told me she’d never seen me so happy doing something. She said that’s the key to life. Find something you love and get paid for doing it.” She smiled. “And that is what I did. What about you?”

“Cars have always been in my blood. Phil’s old man saw the potential in me, and I haven’t looked back since.”

Gina didn’t want to admit it, but she kind of wished Jared had seen her life, the changes. The twists. Just as she wished that she could have been there for him.

Two months later

“What?” Phil asked.

“Don’t, okay? Keep your judgey little voice down.”

“My judgey little voice? Maybe you need to realize what you’ve actually done.”

He glared at his friend, but he couldn’t be pissed at him.

For the past two months, Gina and he had been enjoying this new arrangement. *Enjoying* was the wrong fucking word. For him, he’d been relishing every second, anticipating every morning and evening, and each second in between. Sundays were his absolute favorite.

Unless he got a call out, they had each other, and that day was spent in absolute fuckfest.

He loved it.

He loved her.

That had never changed.

Jared had never stopped loving Gina even though he'd been a prick, a total bastard to her through high school by ignoring her. This was a chance for him to make things right.

Phil glanced around the shop and grabbed his arm, dragging him into the private office. "You've knocked Gina up."

"Keep your fucking voice down."

"You told me you forgot the condom, and then each time since, you've forgotten. You've even admitted to snooping. Damn it, Jared, what kind of a dickhead move is that?"

"A desperate one, okay? I'm not ... proud of it." He ran fingers through his hair. He hadn't openly been deceptive. Whenever he should have reached for a condom, he didn't. Simple as that. It wasn't because of him being a dick, or anything like that.

When it came to Gina, he wanted it all.

He had these feelings when he was a kid, before he went to high school, where he fucked everything up.

"Yeah, well, now you're telling me she's got morning sickness."

A few times this week, she'd been running to the bathroom, throwing up in the morning, but come evening, she'd been fine, cooking at the stove and welcoming him home with a warm smile.

Gina couldn't cook well, but she tried.

"What do I do?" Jared asked.

"You've got to tell her the truth."

He rolled his eyes. "I'm not doing that."

"Dude, Gina's a smart girl. She's going to be able to figure out that she's pregnant, then what?" he asked. "What will you do?"

"I'll handle this."

“Are you even ready for a kid? For all of this?”

“I’m ready for Gina,” Jared said.

Phil’s brows rose. He started to chuckle. “Put those big guys down.”

“Are you serious?” Phil asked. “You want ... Gina, like for real? As your wife?”

“She is the only one I do want.”

“Wow.”

“Yeah, wow,” Jared said.

He gripped the back of his neck, knowing how fucked up this was. This was the story of his and Gina’s life. He fucked up by making a stupid, rash decision, and Gina, well, as a kid, she fixed everything. That was how they worked.

She always said that he had the best of intentions, and even now, he did.

He loved Gina.

Even with their time apart. Seeing her for the first time in years, he’d been hit by that love once again. It never faded. He knew it never would. It was why he made sure no one asked her out in high school. The guys never paid her any attention, and if they so much as tried, they ended up in his bad books.

No one had Gina. No one but him.

He loved her. Had done so since he was a kid.

“Look, I don’t exactly agree with this. I feel that you’ve been a bit of a dick, but if that is what you want, then I will stand by you. I will always stand by you.”

Jared nodded at his friend, but the truth was, he was still fucking scared. Gina had every single right to turn her back on him. To keep him out in the dark, and the very thought of her doing that left him feeling empty and cold.

He was a fucking moron for what he’d done.

Phil gave his shoulder a squeeze before he left the office, and Jared collapsed into the only available chair. What had he done?

Later, there was a knock on the door, and he glanced up to see Gina there, holding a small box.

“Surprise?” she said hesitantly.

“What’s this for?”

“I wanted to apologize for being off my game this week.” She stepped into the office. “So, don’t worry, I didn’t bake this. I went to the local bakery down the street and saw your favorite, or at least it was your favorite when we were kids ... double chocolate fudge cake.”

He repeated the words along with her and looked into her brown eyes.

They shared a smile.

He adored this woman. Always had.

She stepped toward him and placed the cake in front of him.

He lifted the lid and saw it was a smallish cake, but it had been cut into several different pieces.

“You didn’t have to do this,” Jared said.

“I know. But I wanted to.” She leaned down and kissed his cheek. “I even got them to cut it for you, so it’s easier for you to grab a piece.”

Gina went to stand up, but Jared needed her, and the dress she wore was floaty enough for him to force her to straddle his waist.

“Jared? Not here.”

They had already had sex in this very office less than a month ago. “I’m not going to fuck you. I just want to hold you.”

She smiled at him, resting her hands on his shoulders.
“How’s work?”

“Busy.”

“Will I see you tonight?”

“We live together, Gina. You’re always going to see me.”

She rolled her eyes. “I mean because of all the work you’ve got to do.”

“I’ll be home.”

He didn’t want to let her go, and he feared the moment she discovered the truth that it would be over between them.

Chapter Six

Gina looked out of the kitchen window to see Jared outside with her father. Her parents had returned from their cruise a few weeks ago. They'd looked so good, happy, and refreshed. They both possessed a nice tan from days of sunbathing and lapping up all that Vitamin D.

"It's nice to see Jared around again," her mother said.

Gina rolled her eyes as she turned toward her. "Subtle."

"What? I can't help it if it is nice to see him around. You were both always attached at the hip as kids, you know."

"I remember."

"I know you two had a bit of a, what did you call it? Falling out."

"It's in the past, Mom. Don't worry about it."

Her mother was in the process of chopping onions, and she chuckled. "You two would get into all kinds of trouble. I would wonder if you'd come back home without a limb at times. You were the planner of the group, and I'd say Jared was the adventurer. Together, you made one hell of a team. It was sad when you both stopped hanging out."

"Don't, Mom."

"I always found it so strange though. You and he had stopped being friends, but Jared, whenever he saw me laden down with groceries, he'd always stop and come to help me. You know? He was a good boy and from what I hear, a good man."

"Mom, come on, he's been with half the female population."

Her mother tutted. "Don't you go listening to idle gossip. If I did that, your father and I would have divorced long ago. Believe me, some women tried to make out that your

father was sleeping with them when he'd spent the entire day with me. Trust me on this."

She went to her mother and wrapped her arms around her. "I do trust you, so completely. You know this."

"Good, because I know what I'm talking about."

She giggled. "You're a font of much wisdom."

"That I am."

Gina looked at her mother, wanting to talk to her about ... so many different things. The words got stuck in her throat. With Jared occupying her father, she needed this time alone.

"Mom, I want to ask you something, and you cannot scream or panic, or in any way bring Dad and Jared into this house."

Her mother stopped chopping and turned toward her. "What is it, sweetheart?"

This was a lot easier inside her head.

She nibbled on her lip and then glanced back toward the kitchen door.

"Er, morning sickness."

Her mother gasped, and Gina put her hand on her mother's arm.

"Please, I..."

"You're pregnant?"

"I don't know. I don't know if I am or not."

"But you and Jared?"

Gina nodded. She wasn't going to openly admit to her mother she'd been having sex, some of the hottest and best sex of her life. That wasn't going to happen, like ever.

"Oh, sweetheart, how do you ... feel?" her mother asked.

"I feel okay, now."

She had started to realize the pattern. The morning sickness constantly swirling in the gut. Feeling sick. Certain smells affecting her, even at the salon. She couldn't get away from it.

"But you've got all the signs?" her mother asked.

"Yeah, I do."

"Okay, so what we need to do is head out to the pharmacy."

"Mom, it's a small town. They will gossip."

"Please, I'm not an amateur. I didn't say we'd go to the one in this town." Her mother stopped chopping the onions.

"We don't have to go now," Gina said, trying not to freak out.

"Sweetheart, you could be pregnant, and I want you to be healthy. Once we know for sure, we can start planning everything."

"Of course, right." She should have known her mother always had a plan.

"Go and get in the car. I'll be back in a second. Your dad can cook dinner with Jared. They're going to need to get along if you are."

Gina smiled but decided to make a quick getaway to her mother's car.

She couldn't believe this was happening. She felt like a child at this very moment, a little terrified. Less than five minutes later, her mother was there sliding into the seat beside her.

"I'm sorry," Gina said.

Her mother turned to her. "Georgina Lowe, do you love this boy?"

She nodded, afraid to say the words out loud. She had wanted to hate him. When they were kids, and he turned into

this horrible popular guy, she'd tried to hate him. She failed. It was why she would always speak over him, to answer questions he struggled with. Or conveniently cough out the answer for him. It was a code they had gotten through before they drifted apart. She couldn't believe how long it had been.

Her mother pulled out of the driveway and started the journey, heading toward the pharmacy in the next town.

Gina sat in the car as her mother went and got the test.

Neither of them spoke on the journey back home, but her mother gave her the bag, telling her to go and put it in her room. It was her mother's way of telling her to go and take the test.

Gina didn't want to do it, but this was the only way for her to know.

While her mother dealt with her father and Jared, Gina snuck off to go and take the pregnancy test. There were only two in the box, and her mother said to just take one. It didn't matter how many times she took the test, the outcome would always be the same.

Gina read through the instructions and followed them exactly. Then she put the test on the counter, washed her hands, and breathed.

I can do this.

I can do this.

Gina didn't look away from the test. She stared at the lines as they came to life.

She was pregnant.

"I can't do this."

"I will kill you if you hurt my daughter."

Jared stared at Gina's dad. He was a big, powerful man. When he and Gina were kids, he was a little afraid of him, and

that hadn't changed as a full-grown man.

"I love her," Jared said.

It felt good to tell someone other than Phil how he felt. His secrets and truths to Phil would remain with his best friend, so admitting anything didn't feel different to him.

Telling Gina's dad how he felt, this was real. This was out there.

Her dad chuckled. "You think I don't know that?"

"Sir, I..."

"I know young kids don't realize this, but we were like you once as well. All balls and no brains. You think we don't know what it's like to want to fit in? Terrified of doing the wrong thing? Saying the wrong thing?" He tutted. "We know more than most what it takes, but that doesn't mean our feelings change. I was so disappointed in you."

He kept on waving the knife, and Jared was a little afraid.

"I know. I fucked up."

"But at the same time, I was pleased you did it."

"What?"

The older man sighed and put the knife down. "You and Gina always had this bond. I'd never known anything like it. Sure, they talk about it in the movies and stuff like that, but with the two of you, it was always so different. You were never on a different wavelength. Always the same. Always heading straight ahead. I worried that she would ... change her path just to be on yours."

"I'd never have done anything to hold her back."

Her father shook his head. "Not intentionally, but I know my little girl, Jared. She loved you. It broke her heart every single day to see you and to know that you weren't friends. I hated you for it, but I was thankful. She got her head stuck down into her studies. She focused. The beauty thing took me

by surprise. This is my girl, who would rather have books for Christmas presents and wrinkled her nose at makeup. She never did her hair unless you count pulling it back into a ponytail as a job well done.”

Jared smiled, recalling the few times she would try to change it up. It would result in two ponytails, or her hair tucked around in a looped bun.

She never took the time to learn those skills, but now, she loved doing all different kinds of styles and designs.

“She has changed a lot,” Jared said.

“Tell me about it.”

They heard the door open, and seconds later, Gina’s mother appeared in the doorway. “Something smells good.” She went up to Arthur and wrapped her arms around him, kissing his cheek.

“I only follow your recipe,” Arthur said.

Gina’s parents had always been loving. Her mother was strict with rules, plans, and timelines, but the love between them was palpable.

“Jared, give it five minutes and then go upstairs to the bathroom,” she said.

“O-okay.”

“Arthur, step out into the garden with me, please.”

Jared had no idea what was going on. He glanced at the time shining on the stove and waited the full five minutes before heading upstairs.

Was this where Gina told him it was over? Why would her mother take Arthur outside, if not for something bad about to happen?

He made his way upstairs, toward the bathroom.

The house was small, so they had a shared bathroom.

He lifted his hand and knocked.

“Who is it?” she asked.

“It’s me, Jared.”

He heard her chuckle. “Come on in.”

He gripped the doorknob, twisted it, and allowed himself to enter. Trying to keep a smile on his face, he stepped into the bathroom. When he looked at Gina, he saw tears spilling down her cheeks.

“Baby,” he said, going to her, sinking to his knees, and cupping her face. “What is it? What’s the matter?”

He couldn’t stand to see her like this. What could have happened for her to be crying?

Gina lifted her hand. “Look.”

Jared looked down, and there in her hands was a white stick. He knew what that was. “You took a pregnancy test?”

“Yes.”

“And?” he asked.

“It’s ... positive. We’re going to have a baby, Jared.”

Her lip quivered. She looked so sad.

“You don’t want to have a baby with me?” Jared asked.

Gina looked up at him. “I ... yes, I want to have a baby.”

“I did it on purpose,” Jared said.

“What?”

“I forgot to put a condom on, and I should have told you, but instead, I hid it, and every time since. I remembered a condom, but I stopped myself. I didn’t want to wear one.”

Gina put her hand over his mouth, and she shook her head. “Shut up. Do you think I’m stupid enough not to ... ask?”

He frowned. “Did you...”

“No, not all the time. I was so far gone most of the time that I just wanted to feel you inside me. I ... I don't know what is going to happen, Jared.”

“I love you.”

“What?”

“I have always loved you. That hasn't changed. It is never going to change.” He took hold of her hand and placed it over his heart. “Do you feel this? This is what you make me feel all the damn time. I can't get away from it, Gina. I love you so fucking much. I was a dick to you. I ... you didn't deserve it.”

“Jared, shut up.”

“Marry me,” he said.

“Wow,” she said.

“Do you have any idea how many times I wanted to ask you to marry me? I have missed you so much. Every day that you were gone, it killed me.”

“Stop it.”

He cupped her face. “I love you so fucking much. I want this town, no, I want the world to know how much.”

“By marrying me?” she asked.

“Yes.” He chuckled and kissed her lips. “Come on, Gina. Give me, give us a chance.”

Chapter Seven

Three weeks later

Gina didn't know if she could do this.

Jared had always wanted a summer wedding, and after telling their parents she was pregnant, they had also admitted they were going to get married.

The wedding had come as a shock to the town. A lot of women had stopped by the beauty salon to catch a look at the soon-to-be bride. People were a little shocked that Jared had picked her.

A town full of beauties, but he chose her.

Rather than keep their relationship a secret, and their upcoming marriage a surprise, Jared had done the opposite.

She had heard the story being retold so many times. He'd walked into the diner during one of its busy dinner times and announced to the entire room that he was marrying her.

A lot of people were supportive.

"How are you holding up, sweetheart?" her father asked, coming into the back room of her salon.

Jared had been willing to spend a fortune on a church wedding, with all the trimmings, but she refused.

Back when they were kids, Gina had remembered Jared's wish. That when they got married, it be at the town's garage, surrounded by cars and family. His love of cars had never diminished.

Gina never had a dream wedding in her mind.

To her, so long as her husband had been Jared, she hadn't cared about where or who married them.

Their best friend, Phil, had taken the necessary tests and had obtained the certificate to be able to perform the wedding. With Jared announcing their wedding to the town, he'd also

told them where it would be, and that if they wanted to, they could attend.

So, today, roughly four months pregnant, she was going to marry her childhood sweetheart. The town rebel. The guy she once hated, but had always, without a doubt, loved.

“I’m fine. Has he made a run for it?” she asked.

Arthur laughed. “Nope. For once in his life, that boy has been early.”

“Early?”

“Yeah, standing there waiting and all.”

“Oh.” Gina looked down at her dress. “How do I look?”

“A little filthy?”

“Dad, come on.”

“You look stunning.”

She put a hand on her stomach. “Are you disappointed in me?”

“Honey, you went away and found yourself. You came back home, showed me what an amazing woman you are, and found the love of your life again. How can I be disappointed in that?”

“I’m getting married four months pregnant.”

Her father walked toward her and pulled her in for a hug. “And you are glowing. I have nothing to be disappointed in. I’m going to be a granddaddy.”

She smiled, feeling the tears come to her eyes.

She had picked out a beautiful white dress, not expensive because the bride from Jared’s dream wedding wore steel-toe capped boots, which she wore. The dress was torn, to show them off as well. Grease stains on the hem, and around the body, but also, her hair wasn’t perfect either. Some grease was also on her cheek.

Gina had taken great care to look the part of his ideal bride.

As she did so, she remembered the boy who had told her his secret. She smiled fondly. To her, it was another reason why she loved him so damn much.

How could she not?

“I think it’s time,” Gina said.

Her parlor wasn’t too far from the garage, but as they got closer, she was shocked to see the turnout from the town. People made a passageway for her to walk down, and music began to play.

Claps surrounded them, and as she got to the entrance of the garage, she looked up. There was Jared. He wasn’t dressed in a tuxedo.

“You have to marry me, Gina. You can’t say no.”

“Fine, but if I marry you, then you have to promise me, you don’t change. You will always be like this. The boy I love.”

Gina hadn’t remembered that moment until now.

They’d been out in the woods. It had been raining, and they both had fallen in the mud. Jared was soaked in it. The jeans he’d worn that day had been torn at the knees, with some blood peeking through because he’d cut himself. The shirt his father had given him had been way too big, and it hung from him, and the mud had made it even heavier.

She stared at him now, a little taken aback.

Jared, the boy, now the man, stood before her, dressed exactly as she remembered.

The world faded.

She held on to her father’s arm, but to Gina, it didn’t matter.

The only one she saw was Jared.

Phil stood behind him, and it was like a symbol to Gina. Phil and Jared had been kind of friends growing up, but in high school, their bond had gotten tighter while she'd been pushed away.

With him standing at Jared's back, she knew their friendship would never change, but this was Jared's way of saying he was back. He was all hers.

She stepped toward him, and her father placed her hand within his.

"You remembered," he said.

Tears welled in her eyes once again. Stupid hormones were making it hard for her to keep her mascara from running.

"Of course, I remembered. Our memories don't change, Jared."

Phil stepped forward and waited for them to give him permission to start. Gina didn't look away, not once. Nor did, Jared. They nodded their heads, and Phil started to marry them.

They had agreed not to do vows. When it came time to do them, they both said the same thing together.

"My vow is that I belong to you, in life and in death."

Phil asked if anyone opposed their marriage, and he didn't even finish telling Jared to kiss her.

She was pulled into Jared's arms, and when his lips were on hers, she knew she hadn't made a mistake.

This man was her soulmate.

Epilogue

Five months later

Jared held his wife's hands as she pushed. Her water had broken a couple of hours ago, and he wanted to see his child so damn much, but he was also afraid. Gina had been in so much pain.

He felt so completely selfish.

The doctor kept telling her to push, and he wanted to pummel the fucking bastard for ordering his woman about. What kind of asshole did he think he was?

"You're nearly there, Georgina," the doctor said.

"Come on, baby, we're nearly there."

"We? We? I don't see you doing this," Gina said, crying out.

Jared kissed her sweaty forehead, not caring that she was in pain. They'd participated in all of the couples' birthing groups, and they had met some couples who were on their third child, so this was to be ... expected.

The dads had warned him that she would be a little bitchy, but to accept it. After seeing a very detailed video of what his woman was going through, Jared would take anything Gina had to offer.

"That's it. That's it."

Gina collapsed against him, and then they heard it. The scream.

Jared couldn't believe a sound could affect him so much.

She looked up at him with a smile. "I did it."

"You did it." He kissed her head.

"No, we did it."

He chuckled, and then, as the nurse came to put their baby in her arms, Jared stared down into the scrunched-up face of his son.

He was a dad.

“Oh, my God,” Gina said.

“He is so...”

“Precious,” Gina said.

She grabbed his hand, and he locked his fingers with hers as they stared down at their little baby boy.

They had agreed to wait to find out the sex, but the doctor had let it slip and called him a little guy during one of the checkups. Jared didn't care. Boy. Girl. A healthy baby was all that he wanted.

“Hey, sweetheart,” Gina said. “I'm your mommy, and this is your daddy.”

“Oh, Gina,” he said.

“I know.”

They didn't need to talk.

In the five months they'd been married, it was like they had never been apart. The kids they'd been, they were back.

His soulmate was back with him.

As he wrapped his arms around her, Gina tilted her head back to look at him, and like so many times before, he knew she loved him. This moment would stay with them for the rest of their lives.

There were many moments Jared was going to treasure, and this was one of a million.

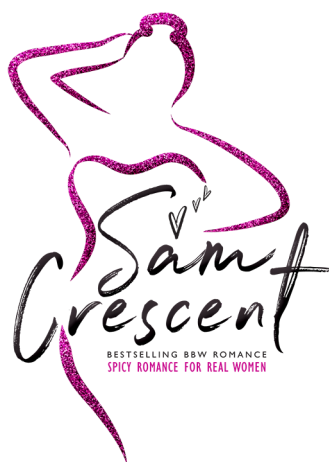
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BONUS SAMPLE CHAPTER

CAPTURED NANNY

The Nannies, 9

Sam Crescent

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Chapter One

“Give me back my fucking daughter!”

The chair hit the glass for what had to be the hundredth time, and like all the other times before, it dropped to the floor without success. The woman on the other side didn't give up.

Wolf Jackson wasn't impressed. The woman screaming for her kid wasn't the problem. No, the issue he had was with the men who'd *accidentally* captured this woman and her five-year-old child.

Never in all his years had he known of such a fuckup.

“She won't stop,” Mitchell said. “She has punched and bitten anyone who has gotten near her. Ralf had to go to the doctor.”

“And you don't understand why?” Wolf growled as he spun toward the man who'd been his right hand for the past five years. “That right there is a mother. Look at the way she is dressed. She is not some fucking bitch off the street with no life and no one looking for her. This is a woman with an identity, with a life.” He shook his head and glanced back at the mirror. She couldn't see two men watching her, but he could see her, and what a woman he was looking at.

He'd been around desperation for so long, he had forgotten what a woman with everything to lose could fight for.

The women who were normally purchased and sold were addicts. Women who came from the streets offering their bodies for payment for their next hit. They were never missed. Often, their loss was seen as a blessing because the cops wouldn't see them on the streets, shot up with whatever shit they were craving.

Running a hand across his face, he left the room and walked several feet to his office where the little girl sat on the floor. She was on her knees, her coat still wrapped around her,

tights covering her small legs. This child wasn't homeless or uncared for. She was loved, taken care of, and pampered. Even her hair was pulled back into one of those French plaits he had no idea how they were done.

"Hi, sweetheart," he said.

The girl looked up. "Where's my mommy?"

"She's doing fine. Just a few more questions to deal with," he said, approaching the table and crouching down.

He wasn't a good man. Most saw him as a monster, evil. He'd killed men and women with his bare hands without batting an eye. Death didn't bother him. He'd driven through the city streets plenty of times with blood coating his clothing and hands, and he didn't care one bit.

What many didn't know was he had rules. The people he killed were not good. They were evil, and so there was no reason to feel guilt.

He'd never killed an innocent or a child.

That woman back in the room was innocent. This child, she didn't deserve death.

"So, do you want to tell me your name?" he asked.

"I'm not allowed to talk to strangers."

"Wolf Jackson," he said, holding out his hand. "Now I'm not a stranger."

The girl frowned at his hand and put the crayon she'd been using down. "But ... those men. I watched them hit girls, they were bad men."

He ground his teeth together. This girl had already seen too much, and so had her mother.

"That's why I had to rescue you. Nothing will ever happen to your mother or you. You're safe."

The girl tilted her head to the side and then held up her little finger. "Do you pinky swear?" she asked.

He chuckled. "Of course." He put his pinky to hers, and the little girl smiled.

"If you pinky swear, it means you have to keep your promise." She nodded. "Mommy always said a pinky swear was sacred. No one could break them, and you could trust in a pinky. I'm Evelyn."

"Evelyn, nice name. What about your mommy?"

"Rain without the *e*. She is always telling people it's without the *e*." Evelyn smiled at him.

"Last name?" he asked.

"Thomas." Evelyn picked up her pencil and started to color again. "Rain and Evelyn Thomas, two strong women about to make a life for themselves. It is what Daddy would have wanted."

He frowned but figured Rain had said it enough times for Evelyn to copy it.

"You carry on coloring, and I'll be back in a little while." He left his office, flicking the catch on the lock. "I want every single little detail on a Rain Thomas right now," he said to Mitchell.

The man ran off, looking like death was chasing at his heels, which it would be if Wolf wasn't satisfied.

Having to handle this fuckup was an embarrassment. He walked back toward the room and saw Rain hadn't given up. This time, she was kicking at the door. Her face was red, and perspiration dotted her brow. The only reason he'd caught sight of her was all the fuss she'd been making.

The men who'd taken her and brought her to the docks. When they unloaded the women, they had seen their mistake and tried to take her child away. The moment they did that, a monster had been truly unleashed.

She had attacked.

So much fire. So much passion.

He couldn't just wait any longer, he needed to put a stop to this ... nonsense.

Going to the door, he flicked the lock and opened it just as Rain was about to charge at it. This time, she ran straight into his arms. He caught her, wrapping his arms around her waist, thinking he'd have a few seconds of surprise, but Rain shocked him again. The moment she was touched, she started to attack, flinging her arms at him, trying to use her legs, anything that would get her free.

"Let me fucking go, you piece of shit. I want my baby. I am going to kill you." She yelled each word.

Wolf had no choice but to grab her hands and haul her up against the wall. She was strong, but no match for him. There was no way she'd ever be able to overpower him. Still, she wriggled, and he couldn't believe how much he liked having her so close to his body.

Rain was all soft curves, and the feel of her full tits was enough to distract him for the merest hint of a second, but then he was back in focus, keeping control of her.

"Let me go!" She yelled the words in his face, but he didn't care.

He loved this fire. She was full of passion.

A mother fighting to get to her child. It was rather refreshing. He'd been made aware of women begging for money for their kids. Rarely did he see them fighting to protect. This was ... interesting.

The men who'd taken her had truly fucked up big time.

"You need to be quiet," he said.

"Not happening. You think I don't know what is happening here? Give me back my daughter, you disgusting piece of trash. Fucking perve."

She fought against him, tugging at her wrists, but she wasn't going to get free.

“You leave me no choice.” Wolf let her go, spun her around, and placed his hand over her mouth. “It’s not nice to say bad things about strangers.” He covered her nose, and she kept on hitting him. Even as the fight clearly left her, she kept on fighting him.

He was getting nowhere with her in this building, and to be honest, he wanted to go and wipe the blood from his feet and clothing.

The moment Rain slumped in his arms, he picked her up, not caring about the dead weight of the woman.

Mitchell came scurrying back as he left the room. “Sir?” he asked.

Wolf ignored him, going toward the other room where Evelyn waited. He opened the door, whistled, and the little girl looked up with a gasp. “Mommy!”

“Mommy got a little tired, pumpkin. I’m going to be taking you over to my place. Do you want to come? I’ve got a big bedroom with your name waiting for you.”

She nodded, and being a young girl, she used her whole body to nod.

“Sir, do you think that is wise?”

“Grab your coloring book,” he said before turning toward Mitchell. “Do not even think to ask me that. I’m cleaning up this mess. Do as you’re told. I want the answers, and I want them now.”

Mitchell nodded as Evelyn came toward him. She surprised him by sliding her hand in the pocket of his trousers, holding on to him. He’d never experienced this.

Rain was growing even heavier in his arms, and he couldn’t guarantee she wouldn’t wake up and cause a scene.

So far, the woman had been one giant surprise after another.

Walking out of the building, he ignored the curious looks of some of his men. They knew to do their job of keeping an eye out, and nothing had changed.

He placed Rain in the back of his car and then looked at Evelyn. Without a word, she climbed in after her mother, but kept on talking about whatever it was she was saying as they walked down to the car.

The kid didn't shut up, and oddly enough, he didn't mind the constant chatter.

Something was seriously wrong with him.

Rain jerked up in bed with a gasp. She placed her hand to her chest, feeling her heart race, knowing instantly something bad was happening. Just like the same morning she knew he was ... gone.

She shook her head, refusing to go to that melancholy moment. Pushing her hair out of her face, she glanced around, knowing she was in a bedroom she wasn't familiar with. The room was large, the walls decorated in a cream color, and there was so much space. The bed itself was huge, and she quickly flung the blankets off her body, becoming aware she'd miraculously changed.

Gone were her jeans and shirt, and instead, she was dressed in a pair of very nice-feeling pajama pants and a shirt. She tugged at the hem, trying to figure out what the hell had gone wrong.

Everything came back to her in a sudden flash. Without a single care for her own safety, she charged for the door.

Of course, it was locked.

Gritting her teeth, she growled as she tried the handle. Lifting her palm, intent on slamming it against the wood, she quickly jerked back as someone entered.

She stood perfectly still as the man from her nightmares was suddenly in front of her, carrying a food tray, and she

hated that he looked way too sexy for his own good.

This man was a monster, but with his crisp white shirt, the sleeves rolled up to display the ink that decorated his arms, it wasn't fair. Nor were the trousers that looked like they had been made on him, they fit that perfectly.

She knew style, and she knew wealth. This man dripped with it, including the watch on his wrist. All of it branded and designer.

Her stomach chose that moment to growl, which was also totally unfair. She shouldn't be hungry at a time like this.

“You're awake.”

“Where's my daughter?” she asked.

He tutted. “You care for your daughter very much, don't you, Rain?”

“I'm her mother, and how do you know my name?” she asked, not liking this one bit.

He chuckled. “I know a great deal about you, but come now. I think it's time that you ate something.”

“Have you sold her?” Rain asked. Her hands clenched into fists, ready to pound on this man if any harm was to come to her child.

She missed Evelyn. This was the longest she had ever gone without seeing her baby. She wanted to wrap her arms around her, hold her close, press her face against her neck, breathe in her scent, and for the world to be okay once again.

Right now, her world didn't seem okay.

She was all alone in a strange man's house, and there was nothing about this that was okay.

Wrapping her arms around her body, she rubbed her hands up and down herself, trying to warm up from the sudden chill she experienced. This wasn't good.

Tears filled her eyes, but she refused to let them fall. She had often been called stubborn, and she was probably proving it right now. This man wouldn't see her cry.

"I am many things, but selling children is not something I do." He wrinkled his nose.

"But women are okay."

He pulled out his cell phone, and Rain wondered if there would be any way to overpower him to get that phone. It would be so easy to get a message out. Would the police even come for her?

On so many cop shows, it was the cops that turned out to be the bad guys. Everyone always wanted money.

Her head was starting to pound from information overload. Being snatched, nearly beaten, and then imprisoned, it was all getting to be a little too much.

She took a deep breath, dropping her hand to her chest, trying to calm her breathing.

"Don't even think about it," he said.

"I wasn't going to do anything."

"From what I've learned of you, Rain, you will try anything to get to your daughter."

"How do you know my name?" If she couldn't get the phone, then she wanted answers, and she wanted them now.

He chuckled and turned his phone around, and Rain saw Evelyn. Her baby girl was sitting at a small table, some dolls and teddy bears around her with a tea set.

"She's currently enjoying tea with some old pals. They have been wanting to go to tea for some time."

"I want to see her," Rain said.

He tutted. "You have seen her, and for now, that will do." He sat down in a chair, and she hadn't noticed the small table near the large open windows. She could have tried to

escape, but there was no way in hell she'd leave without her baby girl. Evelyn was all that she had left.

She folded her arms across her chest and glared at him.
“What do you want?”

“Is that any way to treat your savior?”

“You didn't save me.”

“You're currently not put up for auction, so I'd say that is a huge win for you. Nor do I have you on your back servicing any male who will pay a price. You've already had a child, so your price wouldn't exactly be high.”

“You're a pig.”

“And I have killed people for less,” he said.

“Yet, I'm still alive.” She didn't know if she had brains right now or was just plain stupid.

“You know, it's refreshing to have someone speak their mind to me, without any fears.”

The truth was, she was shaking to her core, but she wouldn't show it. There was way too much at stake. She wanted her child. “What do you want?” she asked.

“For you to sit.” He pointed at the chair.

She stared at it, a little ... unnerved.

Take the damn chair. The sooner you comply, the sooner you can get Evelyn and get out.

Rain walked to the chair and slowly sat down, resting her hands on her knees and taking a deep breath to try to calm herself.

You can do this.

She truly didn't think she could get through this.

“Evelyn told me your name, and I did tell you this during our last meeting.”

“You mean when you tried to kill me by cutting off my air?” She remembered his hand over her mouth, cutting off her ability to breathe.

“Trust me, if I wanted to kill you, Rain without an *e*, I would have done so. I didn’t want you dead, but I also didn’t want to mar that pretty face with a bruise by knocking you out. Trust me, you got the better end of the deal.”

She gritted her teeth. There was no way in hell she would consider anything this man had to offer a good thing. He made her sick.

He turned toward her, and she watched as he poured them both a coffee. His hand didn’t even shake under the weight of the coffee mug. He was in constant control.

Her mouth was so dry, and the scent of the coffee made her mouth water.

“Sugar?”

She shook her head.

“Cream?”

“No, thank you.” The manners her parents taught her came back full force.

“Milk?”

“Just a splash.”

She didn’t want to make this pleasant at all, but arguing over coffee was pointless.

He placed the coffee in front of her, and she lifted it to take a sip. She couldn’t help but close her eyes, enjoying the sudden hit of caffeine but also the exquisite taste. It was so good. She licked her lips, wanting more. She didn’t ask for anything else though.

Drinking her coffee, she was aware of him watching her. She wanted to growl at him but continued to drink.

“It is good. Thank you,” she said.

The silence was starting to unnerve her. After years of being surrounded by activity, the sterile sound of silence always made her nervous.

“Very good.”

“I would like to see my daughter,” she said.

“I have a business proposition for you.”

She tensed up.

“It would appear I have come into contact with a child, and I think it would be only fair that you work for me as my nanny.”

Rain put the mug on the table and glared at him. “Are you trying to offer me to be a nanny to my own child?” she asked.

He tilted his head to the side and looked at her. “It is one of the only ways you’re going to get to see your child.”

“And what is the other?” Rain knew the instant the words left her mouth that she shouldn’t have asked.

“To fuck me,” he said.

End of sample chapter

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