

*making
the
rent*

JENNA ROSE

MAKING THE RENT

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Hazel just ran away from home to get away from her terrible step-dad who's been controlling her life for the last eighteen years, but now she's under the thumb of a tyrannical landlord who keeps upping the rent on her, and has made it clear that being late with a payment is not an option. With her bank account running low, and her hours at work growing thin, Hazel's worried she might end up out on the street. That is until her new roughneck renter who lives above her comes up with another way for her to make the rent...

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<3



CONTENTS

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[More Jenna Rose](#)

[His Only Desire Box set](#)

CHAPTER ONE

Gabriel

IT'S no fun being the mop-up man, but that's your job when you own the building. Whoever said being a landlord was a glamorous job never was one. Mostly my day-to-day routine consists of dealing with noise complaints, work orders for broken appliances, and neighbors who are trying to kill each other.

Tonight, I'm on the way to Unit 1 to handle a call about the ruckus going on from Unit 2. If I remember right, one of the three girls renting that apartment is having her bachelorette party this evening, and it sounds as though they disregarded my warnings about keeping it down and not having too many people over. But what do you expect from a bunch of 20-something girls?

Then, after this, I've got to get back upstairs to my unit and deal with a carton of milk that somehow came with a weak bottom from the store, and when I took it out of the fridge, tore out and sent milk splashing all over my kitchen floor.

I hear the thudding bass and girlish squealing before I even reach the door. I don't know if the resentment building inside of me as I raise my hand to knock is because I'm now going to be forced to reprimand them for breaking the rules of the building, or because they are all sharing in something they have and I don't: companionship.

For years now I've been single, on my own. Ever since my last ex, who I was sure was the one, cheated on me with my best friend and ran off with him, I've been alone. The heartbreak I felt then was just too much, and I swore I would never put myself in that position again. And so far I haven't.

"I told them to keep it down!" I look to my left to the source of the shrill voice and see Miss Jenkins' head poking out of the door of her unit, a very angry glare plastered across her face. "But they just party and party with no regard for anyone and—!"

"I'll handle it, Miss Jenkins," I say quickly. "Don't worry about it. Go back inside, and they'll quiet down in no time."

"They better hope so." She frowns. "My oldest, Franklin, he knows judo..."

"There won't be any need for Franklin to come over, Miss Jenkins. I'll talk to them."

Still frowning, Miss Jenkins mutters something under her breath but closes her door and goes back inside. I never saw myself in a job where I had to deal with people, but here I am doing just that. Not if my plans work out, though. Then I'll be out of this mess.

I raise my hand and knock heavily at the door. There's the sound of hushed voices from inside followed by footsteps approaching. The door swings open, and I'm greeted with an

array of semi-drunk female faces, all smiling at me as though I'm expected.

"Yes, sir?" Becca, the bride-to-be and the name on the lease of the apartment asks, batting her eyelids at me. "Is there a problem?"

I recognize a couple of her friends but see that she's definitely got a few extra over capacity tonight. They whisper and giggle to each other.

"Yes, as a matter of fact, we've had a noise complaint, so if you could do your best to keep it down, maybe turn the music down, that would be great."

"I'm *so* sorry, sir," Becca replies, batting her eyelids yet again. I can smell the alcohol on her breath. "I'm sorry if we've been bad."

"Yeah, we've been *bad girls*," her friend Christine chimes in.

"*So* bad," Claire adds.

More giggles.

"God, he really *is* hot," someone whispers in the back. "Total daddy vibes."

Now I realize what this is.

This isn't the first time the girls from this unit have intentionally gone against something I've said. I guess it's a little game to them—the young girls screwing with the slightly older guy just to get a reaction out of him. Normally, I take it in stride, but tonight after my incident with the milk, and knowing I have to go upstairs and clean it up, I'm just not in the mood.

“Keep it down, or I’m going to have to write you up for a noise violation,” I say firmly. A disappointed and slightly put-off look comes over the girls’ faces as I turn my back on them, but one of the girls in the back goes to the phone connected to the stereo and turns down the music.

“Hey,” Becca calls after me. “You sure you don’t wanna come in and dance with us? This is my last night as a single woman. I’m getting married tomorrow.”

“You’re not *single* now, Becca. You’re engaged.”

“Yeah, true,” she giggles. “But what good are your vows *tomorrow* if you don’t put them to the test tonight, right?”

“He looks like a good dancer,” a girl I don’t recognize from the back adds. “Look at that body. I bet he was a male stripper once.”

The girls all giggle.

“Come on, *one dance?!?*” Claire pleads, clasping her hands in front of her chest, accentuating her breasts. “We need some entertainment.”

“Some male company!”

“You don’t want it to be just *all us girls*, do you?”

There are a lot of men who would take advantage of this situation—or at least think they were. But I’m not interested in being taken advantage *of*. These girls aren’t interested in *me*; they’re interested in having a male plaything for a bit while they’re drunk. I have no interest in Becca or any of her little friends or putting myself on display for them for their amusement.

“Sorry, girls, but I have work to do tonight,” I reply “Keep the music down and be respectful of your neighbors. Don’t

make me come down here again.”

The girls sigh as I turn away, and this time they sound genuine. They know their game is up; I’m not playing along. I hear the door close behind me and know that I more than likely won’t get another call from Miss Jenkins. Sighing, I head up the stairs for my apartment on the third floor, but once I reach the second, I spot Hazel’s door and stop.

Sighing again, I approach and raise my hand to knock. She’s a week and a half late on the rent and hasn’t called or texted me, so while I’m down here, I might as well check in and see what she’s got to say for herself. Hazel is one of those girls who is just so unbelievably gorgeous that life has handed her everything. She’s been able to coast through life on her good looks, and I guess she thinks she’s going to get away with that with me. But she’s in for a rude awakening tonight.

I knock hard, thinking of the mess I’ve got waiting for me upstairs. At first there’s no answer, so I knock again.

“Hazel? It’s Gabriel. I saw your car downstairs earlier, so I know you’re in there. We need to talk about the rent.”

I hear the sound of heels clicking and approaching the door. Typical. She’s behind on the rent and on her way to go out and party with her friends. I guess girls really do run the world, don’t they?

The latch clicks, and the door swings open to reveal Hazel standing there in a short plaid skirt and a white crop top with her hair and makeup done. She’s wearing a pair of black heels, and although I can feel the resentment rising in my chest, I can also feel my cock starting to swell beneath my jeans.

She looks like a million fucking bucks. Her tits are all pushed up and perky as hell, her top is accentuating her slim

waist, and the skirt is showing off her incredible legs that I can only imagine what lucky guy gets to bury his face between every night. Hell, I don't even know if she's got a boyfriend. She must, right?

“Hi! I know I'm behind on the rent, but—”

“But you just thought you'd go out and party?” I ask, cutting her off, eyeing her up and down. “Spend some of your money on drinks? Or you can just get some men to buy those for you, I guess?”

Hazel looks taken aback. “I—no,” she replies. “This is my work outfit, Gabriel. But I lost my shift tonight to another girl who's friends with the manager. I've been losing a *lot* of my shifts lately; that's why I'm behind on the rent.”

Suddenly, I feel like the world's biggest asshole. But then again, she could be lying to me—playing on my male sympathies to get more time out of me. I mean, *look at her*. She looks like a goddess in that outfit. What idiot manager wouldn't have her on his starting lineup every single night of the week? I know I sure would if I was hiring—

“You know, Hazel, *I've* got a bit of work that needs to be done upstairs if you're interested.”

“Work?” Hazel eyes me suspiciously.

“Not *that* kind of work,” I reply. “I'm not a creep. No, I had a jug of milk break on me, and milk spilled everywhere. I wasn't looking forward to cleaning it tonight. You come upstairs in *that*”—I point to her work outfit—“clean it and a few other things for me, and I'll take twenty percent off this month's rent. How's that sound?”

“Twenty percent?” she asks, biting her lip. “How about twenty-five?”

“Don’t push your luck,” I tell her. “I’ve already been generous with how long I’ve let you go being late. Twenty or nothing. This is my final offer.”

“Okay!” she replies quickly. “Do you have cleaning supplies or whatever?”

“I do.” I smile, my cock continuing to grow as I picture her down on her knees mopping the spill in my kitchen. “All I need is you.”

Ain’t that the goddamn truth.

She looks at me, her eyes wide and innocent, filled with hope as she sees a way out of the predicament she now finds herself in. She’s so goddamn young too—nineteen if I remember right from her rental application. Sixteen years younger than me. What the hell am I going to do with myself?

When she first moved in, I stroked it to the thought of her lying in bed in the room below me *at least* once a day before I got my thoughts of her under control. That sweet, supple body just feet from me, separated only by a few layers of stud and drywall. Now she’s going to be *in* my apartment in a skirt and a tiny little top. Fuck, is she even wearing panties underneath there? I’m going to have to walk around and get a view from every single angle when she’s down on her knees with a sponge and bucket.

“All right then,” she says. “Just let me get my phone.”

She turns and goes back into her apartment, giving me a killer view of her ass, which causes her skirt to bounce as she walks away from me in those heels.

If only the girls I just turned down in Unit 1 knew what I was thinking right now. Terrible, terrible thoughts about this innocent little girl who hasn’t even flirted with me once. Now

I'm practically bulging out of my pants about to pay her to put on a show for me as my own private, sexy maid.

She returns seconds later with her phone in hand and a shy little smile on her face.

“Okay, I'm ready!” she says with a tone that goes straight to my balls.

Yeah, this night just got a whole lot better.

CHAPTER TWO

Hazel

I FEEL STRANGELY EXCITED as I climb the steps to the third floor and stand behind Gabriel as he unlocks the door to his apartment. It's no secret that all the girls who live in the building have crushes on him; he's like that good-looking teacher back in high school whose class everyone wanted to be in. Only this is adulthood, and Gabriel is the super-sexy landlord who I honestly don't mind being in trouble with.

After all, I can already tell he's a lot better than the average client I get at work who's generally five drinks deep by the time they're ready to pay the bill and doesn't understand what the word "no" means when I tell it to them for the third time.

No, I feel safe around Gabriel, even if I know I've screwed up and am now going to have to make up for it. There are a *lot* worse men out there who I could be in debt to right now, and as Gabriel opens the door to his apartment and holds it open for me, I feel a shudder of excitement in my chest, not fear.

"Come on in," he says, turning back to me with a smile.

I do.

His apartment somehow smells like a man in a way that I can't quite put my finger on. It's not drenched in cologne or bodywash or scented candles or anything like that, and it doesn't smell like it needs to be washed, either; it just smells like *man* in the best way possible and ignites something feminine inside of me as I step inside.

It's sparse and could definitely use a woman's touch, but it's not a typical bro apartment either with team pennants and posters of girls in bikinis on the beach plastering the walls. I also don't see stacks of crushed-up beer cans everywhere either. Honestly, it's quite tasteful.

"The mess is in here," he says, causing me to jump. I realize I've been staring and quickly follow after him as he motions to me. He leads me into the kitchen where I find a large spill of milk all over the floor.

"So as you can see," Gabriel says with a sigh, "it came from the store with a weak base, and when I took it from the fridge it just fell out and went everywhere."

"Wow, jerks," I remark. "Well, it won't take me too long to clean up."

"Well, take your time," he says with a devilish grin as he goes to the cabinet under the sink and retrieves a bucket that he begins to fill with hot water. He adds a little bit of soap too. "It's probably a little sticky by now. I had to deal with the rowdy bachelorette party downstairs."

For some reason, a strange pang of jealousy rises up in my chest when he says this, and I picture him downstairs with those girls...their eyes all over him, joking and giggling, no doubt making all that noise just so he would go down there and they could get some of his attention.

Am I crushing on Gabriel?

Obviously I find him attractive, but am I actually *crushing* on him too? I know I'm here to do this for him because I *have* to, but at the same time, I kind of *want* to. The idea of being a sexy little maid for him right now is kind of a turn-on.

No, it's really a turn-on. And as he lifts the bucket out of the sink and hands it to me, along with the sponge, and I get down on my hands and knees on the floor in front of him in my skirt and heels, I feel myself getting terribly wet between my thighs and wishing I'd taken the time to put on a pair of panties this evening.

Could this be the man to take my virginity? I'm sure he has more than enough experience and would be able to show me exactly what to do. But would I be able to please him? That's the real question. With so many women to choose from, why would he want me? An inexperienced virgin with nothing to offer him?

He hands me a roll of paper towels that I use to mop up the majority of the milk spill. I toss them, soaking wet but nowhere as wet as I'm starting to get with his eyes all over me, into the trash and then dunk the sponge into the soapy water. He's leaning against the counter now with his thick arms crossed over his chest, and unless it's my imagination, I can see a bulge in his pants.

Is that because of me?

How does a landlord have such an incredible body? He must go to the gym every single day. The fabric of his T-shirt is stretched tight over the incredible muscles of his torso, and his jeans are sculpted to his legs that could have been taken from a gladiator. A strong, sinewy neck leads up to his chiseled jaw and sharp, almost dangerous features. His clear

green eyes cause my blood to pump even faster when mine meet them, and I squeeze the sponge hard and quickly begin scrubbing the sticky milk spot like I'm being paid by the hour.

I glance, careful to hide my eyes, and see his hands, so strong and rugged.

What would it be like to have those hands on me...? Have them reach up under my skirt while I am here on my knees on his kitchen floor, mopping up this spill like his own personal maid? Would he take his time and tease me, or would he go right for what's between my legs that no man has touched before?

I realize now just how turned on I am doing this for him and lean forward and extend my arm in a way that causes my top to slide down slightly, giving him a better view, one that would probably earn me better tips if I was at work.

“So your boss makes you wear that to work?” he asks.

“Yeah, I work at Thunderbolts,” I reply. “The restaurant. Have you heard of it?”

Gabriel chuckles to himself and shakes his head in a way that makes me feel suddenly slightly ashamed. “Yeah, yeah I have.”

I feel my cheeks starting to go red.

“Is there something wrong with working at Thunderbolts?” I ask. This isn't the reaction I was expecting, and I'm feeling suddenly insecure. Rick, my stepdad, was the most overprotective—some would say controlling—man in the world, so when I finally turned eighteen and moved out, I took the job at Thunderbolts as a big middle-finger to him. I knew *he* wouldn't approve, but Gabriel? Some man I never even knew, who has no stake in my life or my sexuality?

“No, not at all,” Gabriel replies. “I just—when you first signed the lease agreement with me, I never pegged you for that type.”

I feel my eyes narrow into slits. “The type? The type to what?”

“Nothing,” he replies, shaking his head. I kind of want to press him, but at the same time I really don’t. I feel like we’re on the verge of getting into an argument, and that’s the last thing I want right now. But at the same time, I can’t shake the feeling that he’s just insulted me.

The milk spill is basically all clean now, so I finish wiping it up with the sponge, wring out the sponge in the bucket, and bring the bucket to the sink.

“That’s a really good job, Hazel,” Gabriel says, coming up behind me. As he gets closer, the scent that I smelled before and responded to wafts over me. Again, my body responds, and my pulse pounds even faster. “You wouldn’t be bad to have around, would you?”

His voice is like magic in my ear.

He steps closer, pressing the hard part of his body against me.

Yeah, I want him. I’m ready to give myself to him right now, even if he disapproves of my day job. I’ve got daddy issues and Gabriel is giving off *serious* daddy vibes right now that I’m just not able to deny. There are just so many things I want to explore with him, and I don’t know how much longer I’m going to be able to control myself around him.

I turn and look at him, knowing I have the biggest fuck-me eyes *ever* on my face. But to my surprise, Gabriel doesn’t lean

in to kiss me or reach out and pull me to him. Instead, he smiles and says, “I have a proposition for you.”

A proposition? I was not expecting that.

“Um, okay?”

“Since you’re behind on your rent and you’ve been losing shifts at work, why don’t you come and live with me?” For a second, I’m sure I haven’t heard him right until he continues, “You can live here rent free of course. All you have to do is anything I want you to do.”

A sinking feeling forms in my stomach, and my fingers begin to tingle.

“I...Wait a second,” I say slowly. “Weren’t you just making fun of me for working at Thunderbolts?”

“I wouldn’t say I was making fun of you—”

“No, you definitely were,” I reply quickly. “You said you didn’t peg me for *that type*, and now you basically want me to come live with you and be your little whore?”

Gabriel’s face changes. He takes a step back and puts his hands up harmlessly.

“I—That’s not what I meant at all, Hazel. I would *never* call you that.”

“Good, because I’m a *virgin*, Gabriel, and I’m not going to be your little slut for money, rent, or anything else you want to give me. Understand?”

Before he can say anything in response, I take the bucket of dirty, soapy water sitting by the sink and slap it off onto the floor. It splashes *everywhere* as I push past Gabriel and stride past him to the door. I hear him shouting something after me

on my way out, but I'm already pulling the door shut behind me.

I don't want to hear it. The last thing I need in my life right now is another man trying to control me and my life.

I thought you were different, Gabriel. But I guess I was wrong.

CHAPTER THREE

Hazel

“YOU’RE CRAZY, HAZEL,” Jess tells me as she loads up yet another beer onto my tray that is already at risk of toppling over and not only ruining my night but probably also getting me fired.

“Can we not right now, Jess?”

“Let me get this straight,” she persists. “Your incredibly hot landlord who has ‘total daddy vibes’—your words, not mine—that every girl in the building wants to make babies with, just offered to let you live rent free in the building as long as you play sexy maid for him and you said *no*?”

I have an eight-top waiting for me in the dining room, but this is one of those bff-moments that you just have to finish no matter the circumstances. Jess managed to get one of the girls to switch with me so I could actually get into work tonight, and I filled her in on what happened with Gabriel just before my shift started. Needless to say, she did *not* agree with my decision to reject his offer.

“It wasn’t *just* to be his sexy maid, Jess,” I reply. “He said I had to do *anything he wanted me to do*. You think it would

have stopped at cleaning up spilt milk or sweeping up in a short skirt and heels?”

“Um, no, but is that really such a bad thing? Hazel, your lady bits have seen less use than a shower at a gamer convention. You’ve *told* me a million times how hot you think he is.”

Sighing, I kick the door open to the dining room. “Yes, that’s true, but I’m not some kind of prostitute, okay?”

Jess gives me that judgmental look that only best friends can on my way out and eyes me up and down. “She says in high heels and a skirt that shows her uterus.”

I frown and try not to laugh as I go out, balancing my tray of beers, and make my way over to the rowdy table of guys who have their eyes fixed on the football game playing on the TV. As I come over however, all of their eyes shift to me.

When I first started working here, I thought for sure that I would feel empowered and confident in my sexuality—that when I put on the uniform I would gain some sense of my self that I lacked growing up with a stepfather that never let me date or wear anything he deemed “slutty,” which was pretty much everything. I wasn’t allowed to wear short-shorts, short-skirts, tight pants, yoga pants, crop tops, tight T-shirts, or basically anything the other girls at school were wearing, so the first time I put on my Thunderbolts uniform, I was crazy insecure, but I figured that would eventually go away and I would feel like Beyonce or Nicki Minaj and learn to strut around like the more confident girls who’d been working here for years.

I was wrong.

I *still* feel like I want to crawl into a hole and pull a blanket over my head as I approach the table with the men's eyes all over me. This is nothing like the excitement I felt around Gabriel last night. Their excitement level grows for sure, though.

“Aye, the beer maid returns!”

“We lucked out, boys. Best looking waitress in the place!”

“Say, you don't do private parties do you, babe?”

“Don't call her *babe*, Carl,” one of the men scolds the other. “It's 2021. That's sexist, ya know?”

“Oh, right.” The man roars with laughter. “You don't do parties do you, *sweetheart*?”

The whole table laughs. I set the tray down and begin to dole out the bottles to each of them.

“I, um...I just work here,” I reply sheepishly.

“Ah, what a shame. It'd be a lucky son of a bitch who got *you* as his private beer maid, you know what I'm sayin'?”

The man reaches for my skirt, and I know I should react, but I'm so taken aback that I don't. A more experienced waitress would. Thankfully, one of his friends slaps his hand away and scolds him. “Hands off the merchandise, pal. This ain't that kinda joint.”

“No, that's later!” another man chimes in.

Quickly, I take the empty tray back to the kitchen and brush past Jess, who is bringing an order of food out.

“Save me,” I whisper.

“You can do it,” she assures me. “Just think of the tip.”

I DO, and as always, Jess ends up being right. The raucous men end up ordering four more rounds of drinks as well as some appetizers, and their bill comes out to just under three hundred dollars. I pick up three more tables before the night's over and end up with just shy of two hundred and fifty dollars in tips. Just enough to pay off what I owe Gabriel and have a little left over for gas and some groceries.

“Indie rapper or Elon Musk?” Jess asks me as she comes in from clearing her last table.

“Ummmm, Jay-Z?” I shrug, showing her my night's tips. “You?”

“Broke indie rapper living in his parents' basement,” she groans, showing me hers. It's a disappointing amount. I puff out my lower lip in commiseration. “I got an anniversary. They ordered martinis, the bill was *four hundred*, and they tipped me twenty bucks. *Twenty!*”

“That's criminal,” I groan. “Let's go beat them up. You want to?”

Shouldering her purse, Jess fake cries. “I'm going to go get in the bath and drown myself in a bottle of champagne. And, bitch, if *you* don't go march your ass home and tell your landlord that you're going to be his wife? I think I might just kill you.”

I try not to laugh but fail miserably. “We'll see, Jess. We'll see.”

She points a warning figure at me, leans in and gives me a hug, then exits out the back door. I head to my locker and am in the middle of packing my things for the night when Tiffany, a girl who I've never really liked but has been here the longest

out of anyone, comes up behind me and gives me that look that I know means she's going to ask me to do something.

“Yes, Tiffany?” I ask.

“I need you to take out the recycling before you go,” she says, as though it's a foregone conclusion that I will obey her. “My back is still bothering me, and it needs to go out tonight.”

Rather than argue with her, I just force a smile and nod.

“Okay, Tiffany. No problem.” What's one more thing to do tonight? I've made enough money to pay back Gabriel; after this, I can head home, take a nice hot shower, put on some Netflix, and relax. I stuff my tip money into my purse, stuff my purse into my locker, and go to the kitchen where the recycling bins are. It only takes three quick trips to get them out back to the parking lot. Of course I see Tiffany pulling away as I'm taking the second bin out, but I just keep reminding myself of how much of a success tonight was, take the last bin out and then head back inside, grab my purse, and head out to my car.

I'm practically glowing as I drive to the gas station. I put on *Avril Lavigne – What the Hell* and sing along like a maniac. This might be the first time since I can remember that I can actually fill up a full tank. I pull up to the pump, hop out and skip across the lot to the station and go right up to the attendant, who looks like he's bored out of his mind and ready to go home.

“Good evening! I would like fifty dollars on pump number two, please!”

“Fifty on two,” he replies.

I unzip my purse, reach inside, and find it completely empty.

“I...wait a minute.”

My heart skips a beat then nearly stops.

“That’ll be fifty dollars,” he says, his voice completely monotone.

“Yeah, I know, I just...” My stomach drops as cold panic floods through me. “I had my—”

“Listen, girlie, it’s late, and I don’t have time for games, all right? Now, you either have the money or you don’t.”

“No, I definitely have the money,” I stammer. “I *just* made it at work. I had it just now, I put it in my purse and then I—”

And then it hits me.

Tiffany.

I put the money in my purse, I put my purse in my locker, and then I went outside to take the recycling out. And when I was doing that, Tiffany left *with my money*.

The realization hits me so hard it nearly takes my legs out from under me. I have to brace myself against the counter to keep myself from falling. She must have been watching when I showed Jess how much I made tonight and then came over and made me take out the recycling just so she could rob me.

“Listen, you got the money or not?” the station attendant asks.

“I...” It’s one of the hardest admissions I’ve ever had to make. “No, I don’t.”

I turn around and walk back out to my car, my heart heavy as tears begin to well up in my eyes.

This can’t be happening. How could I be so stupid? Jess has told me countless times to *never* let my tip money out of

my sight, but I went ahead and left it in my locker around Tiffany, the coldest-hearted bitch in all of Thunderbolts? And what's even worse is that there will be no way for me to prove that she took it from me. No one will believe me. She has seniority, and that's just how it goes around here.

On the verge of a full-blown breakdown, I get back into my car. The gas needle is on E. I know I have just enough to get home, but definitely not enough to get in to work whenever I get my next shift.

I'm screwed.

I SLUMP FORWARD on the steering wheel when I get home and park. There's no stopping the tears now. My hands are trembling as I get out of the car. I can hear music playing in Becca's apartment as I pass it, and somehow knowing she's in there with her husband, all happy together after their wedding today, just makes me feel even worse. It's like salt in my wound.

I take the stairs to the second floor and stop at my apartment door. Less than a half-hour ago I had everything all planned out on how I was going to fix all of this. Now I'm dreading going back inside. I reach into my purse for my keys, but that's when I hear it: the sounds of strong, heavy, manly footsteps from the floor above.

Gabriel...

I could do it, I guess—take Jess' advice, take Gabriel up on his offer, and solve all my problems right now.

And would it be all that bad really?

I'd be living with an incredibly gorgeous man, rent free, I wouldn't have to worry about whether or not I was getting hours at Thunderbolts and whether or not my tips would be getting stolen by some horrendous bitch there. I mean...I might even enjoy myself.

"He *is* handsome..." I whisper to myself as I lean my head against the wall, remembering his chiseled jaw and the way those piercing green eyes looked at me while I was down on my hands and knees on his kitchen floor.

I suddenly have the urge to slam my fists against something, and I'm not sure if it's because I'm angry at Tiffany for stealing my money, or angry at myself for wanting to surrender my independence to Gabriel so willingly.

There *are* other ways I could go about this—ways to make money, other jobs I could apply for. But when I hear those footsteps above, *his* footsteps, a realization sweeps through me:

I *want* to surrender myself to him.

I want to belong to him. And it's taken this desperate moment for me to realize it.

And so, puffing out my chest with a deep breath, I wipe the tears from my eyes and take the steps up to the third floor.

Gabriel's door stands before me like, tall and menacing, and I feel my heart begin to race as I approach. I do my best to remain calm as I raise my hand to knock, but it's no use; I'm already shivering as I bring my knuckles down against the wood the first time. And when I hear his footsteps approaching, I almost turn around and sprint for safety. But I force myself to stay where I am as he opens the door.

And then there he is, in all his masculine glory, wearing nothing but a pair of gray gym shorts, looking down at me from his height, a smile on his face, his piercing green eyes staring right through me.

“Hello, Hazel,” he says simply.

“I—hello, Gabriel,” I reply, clearing my throat. “I...I’m here to take you up on your offer.”

For a moment, Gabriel doesn’t reply, and a cold chill of panic hits me as the thought that that offer may have expired crosses my mind. But then, a smile crosses Gabriel’s lips, and he steps to the side and raises an arm, beckoning me in.

“I’m glad to hear that, Hazel. Come on in.”

CHAPTER FOUR

Gabriel

I DIDN'T MAKE her sleep with me last night, although I could have according to the contract I had her sign which states that she can live with me here, rent free in my unit, so long as she obeys me and does anything and everything I say. I didn't want her to be uncomfortable as soon as she moved in and think that I was some kind of dirtbag or something. Just having her here is enough for now; the rest will come later.

I can't even remember the last time I had a woman in the apartment. Hazel's feminine energy has my blood pumping hot and heavy. When I heard her in the shower this morning, just knowing she was wet and naked only a few feet away from me was enough to get me rock hard and thinking terrible thoughts.

What man *wouldn't* be, for Christ's sake? Hazel is a goddess, and now she's in my kitchen, wearing a pair of red gym shorts with white piping and a white crop top, making brunch for me *voluntarily*.

"I'm actually a good cook," she says, flipping the bacon. "I bet that's not something you hear from girls these days."

“I...” I stop short. Maybe I’ll save the whole I’ve-been-single-for-years conversation for another time. “You’re right, I don’t. You watch a lot of YouTube videos or something?”

Hazel giggles in a way that goes straight to my core and causes my cock to throb and swell even larger than it already is.

“Try I had a nightmare of a stepdad who *made* me learn. I had to cook, clean, and basically do all the things a ‘good woman’ would need to know how to do by the age of twelve.”

“Looks like I chose the right girl,” I reply with a wink.

Hazel turns back to the stove just as she starts to blush. Christ, if I didn’t want to be a gentleman about this, I’d be balls deep in her right now—bend her right over that stove, pull those shorts down, tug her panties to the side, and stretch that pussy open. How fucking amazing would she look with her legs spread and her back arched to its breaking point?

Being a landlord means being in control of yourself and your senses, but Hazel is breaking me down, slowly but surely, and I need to get my shit together.

“Yeah, well you can thank my stepdad,” she says.

“Your boyfriends must have,” I suggest.

“What boyfriends?” she replies.

“You’ve never had any boyfriends? Come on, Hazel, don’t be ridiculous.”

Hazel turns back and looks at me, slightly embarrassed. “Don’t you remember what I...what I told you?”

How could I possibly forget?

“Good, because I’m a virgin, Gabriel, and I’m not going to be your little slut for money, rent, or anything else you want to give me. Understand?”

Those words will forever be etched into my memory like words chiseled into stone. The thought that a girl as unbelievably sexy as Hazel could possibly still be a virgin at nineteen when girls these days are losing their v-cards before they can even drive shook me. I didn’t even believe her. I thought it was just something she was saying in the moment to get to me, but from the way she’s looking at me now, it seems like she’s being serious.

“Yes, I remember,” I reply. “I just thought you were joking, that’s all.”

Hazel sort of laughs and shakes her head. “You probably think I’m pathetic.”

“No!” I say quickly. “Not at all, I mean...I haven’t really been killing it with the ladies lately myself.”

Hazel frowns and puts one hand on her hip, accentuating her waist. I try not to stare.

“Says the man who has every lady in the building vying for his attention?”

“Well, I try not to mix business with pleasure, but...you’re young and in the prime of your life,” I reply, trying to get the focus off me. “Why haven’t you ever had a boyfriend? The boys at your school must have been lining up for you.”

“I wouldn’t say *lining up*,” she replies. “But it was my stepdad again. He had a rule: no boys until I was eighteen, and even then when I was living ‘under his roof,’ he wasn’t having it.”

“Talk about controlling.”

“You have *no* idea,” she sighs. “So I got a job at Thunderbolts and moved out.”

“Couldn’t find a man there?” I tease.

“Oh, I could find one,” she laughs. “Just not the right one.”

It feels good to hear her say that. A lot of girls who work at a place like that fall into the trap of all that male attention. They go out with their first regular who shows up with hefty tips week after week and then have to start asking other girls to switch shifts with them once they break up and don’t want to run into him anymore. Even with all those men fighting for her attention, she picked *me* to come to.

“I’m surprised you didn’t have any sugar-daddy offers while you were working there,” I say.

Hazel tilts her head down and looks at me with a twinkle in her eyes.

“Who says I didn’t?”

Okay, I was asking for that one.

I help drain the bacon of its grease while Hazel scrambles eggs while making toast. She serves while I pour us both orange juice, and like a domestic couple who’s been doing this for years, we take a seat at the table across from each other and start to eat.

“Perfect bacon,” I tell her. “Not too crispy.”

“No one likes too crispy bacon.” She smiles. “When it just falls apart in your mouth.”

She smiles, and I feel it right in my chest. She looks like she’s enjoying herself, and *God* so am I. I’ve got the sweetest, sexiest girl in all of existence right here in my kitchen, and she just got finished making me brunch. I’m the luckiest son of a

bitch in the world. Now all I have to do is make sure she never does this for any other man.

I haven't even tasted her yet, and the thought of another man even touching her is enough to raise my blood pressure. To think of all the things I've dealt with managing this building over the years and kept a level head through it all, but just *imagining* Hazel at this point with another man has me already on the edge.

And Christ, part of me hates her stepdad for what he did to her. What kind of a cruel son of a bitch would do that to a young girl? But another part of me hates *myself* for being thankful that he kept Hazel untouched for me.

You sick fuck, Gabriel.

"Hey, you." Hazel's voice shakes me out of my thoughts. I look up from my plate and smile at her. "You still with me?"

"Sorry," I chuckle. "I was just...lost in how good this bacon is. You really are an amazing chef."

Hazel blushes again. God, she's so fucking cute.

"Well, at least that's *one* good thing that came out of my stepfather's captivity. I can do *some* good things for you..."

Hazel clears her throat and looks down at her plate.

Jesus, is she saying what I think she's saying?

From this angle and the way she's leaning against the table and holding her fork, she's squeezing her tits together, giving me a stellar view of her perfect cleavage. She's so fucking soft and supple, and I can't even imagine just how warm she must be on the inside. I'm going nuts just looking across the table at her.

“What are you saying, Hazel?” I ask softly. “Are you saying you’re embarrassed because...because you’re a virgin?”

It’s a risk just coming out and asking her this, but she left the door open for me, and I’m going for it.

She shifts slightly in her chair and keeps her eyes on her plate, but then after a moment, nods so gently I barely even notice.

I almost laugh but stop myself. How she could possibly think I’d be upset about her being completely untouched? Instead, I just smile and take my chair and scoot it around so I’m sitting beside her.

“Hazel,” I say, placing a hand on her thigh. The softness and warmth of her skin is like an explosion of sensations that nearly causes me to go off in my pants. “Nothing could be *less* embarrassing.”

She looks up at me with timidity and shyness that could break even the most stalwart of men. And it sure does the same to me. The way she looks at me...like I’m some kind of father figure that can not only keep her safe but can teach her things as well.

And oh, the things I’ll teach her.

I see her confidence falter, and she breaks eye contact and looks away. “I...I should clean up.”

She grabs the plates like she’s going to take them to the sink, but I grab her wrists and stop her.

“No,” I say softly. “That can wait. There’s something *I* want to do first.”

She brings her eyes back to mine. Her gaze tugs at my heart. My lust rises within me like the building pressure of a volcano. Christ, am I really this smitten?

“Oh, yes, you sexy girl,” I say, sliding my hand up her thigh, feeling the heat grow. “And don’t forget; while you live here, you do anything and everything that I want to do.”

CHAPTER FIVE

Hazel

I DON'T KNOW how I'm not trembling as Gabriel's hand inches higher and higher up my leg. It's clear what his intentions are, and given my complete and utter lack of experience, I should be terrified about what's going to happen next. But again, I feel somehow safe with him, and maybe it's that sense of safety that's allowing me to keep myself under control as he touches me in ways no man ever has.

In fact, no man has even been this close to me before. Looked at me this way, let alone has his hand on me like this. No man has ever excited me like this before—made me wet between my thighs like this.

Does he really believe he has to force me to obey him? To do exactly what he wants me to do because I'm living with him? Or does he know that at this point I would gladly do whatever he says simply because I want to? Either way, right now, I'm his.

I look up at him through my eyelashes, leaning forward so he can see my breasts. I saw him looking at them earlier when I was leaning down on the table. That made me feel like a real

woman for the first time in my life. This man could have any woman he chose, yet he was checking *me* out.

“You’ve never even kissed a man?” he asks.

“I...no,” I reply. My embarrassment must read all over my face, because Gabriel gently reaches down and lifts my chin, bringing my eyes to him.

“But you know how, right?”

“Sort of,” I whisper. “I’ve seen it in movies.”

He smiles, but again, I feel safe. His hand on my thigh squeezes, applying a firm pressure as if to say *you’re mine*. Then he leans closer. His scent sweeps into my nose. His pheromones awaken something inside me.

“Purse your lips,” he tells me. “Let your mouth open just slightly. I’ll do the rest.”

“Do I...do I use tongue?”

God, I wish I knew what I was doing.

“Just follow my lead,” he says gently, his voice so confident and sexy that I practically fall into his arms.

My eyes fall to the bulge in his pants as he leans in, driving my eager excitement higher, and when our lips meet, it feels as though the entire earth itself has shifted. I close my eyes and accept his kiss, following his lead as he said. Instantly, my desires run rampant for him. The desire to strip out of my clothes and be naked beneath him overpowers me.

He moves a hand up to my breast and squeezes, nearly taking my breath away. My mouth drops open, and I moan. He slips his tongue into my mouth, and I lose all control. My body becomes his, and I let my legs fall open as his other hand moves up to my sex. When he applies pressure, all my breath

escapes my lungs. My body jerks hard, and I nearly fall backward in my chair.

But Gabriel, being the man that he is, catches me and cradles me to the ground, where I land delicately, my legs spread wide open and my mouth holding his tongue.

I was not prepared for this. Like every girl, I imagined what my first kiss would be like—what it would be like the first time a man put his hands on me, but I never could have prepared myself for the kind of sensations now pulsing through me. I know I should be doing something back to him—touching him in some kind of way—but I’m helpless. All I can do right now is lie beneath him like a doll and allow myself to be acted upon by him as an object of his desire.

“You don’t know how hot it is to know that I’m the only one who’s ever had these lips,” he growls, breaking our kiss.

“I...I was saving myself for you, Daddy,” I whimper, biting my lip at him.

Okay, so maybe that’s a bit of a white lie, but right now, it sure feels that way. There’s no doubt in my mind that Gabriel is the man I want my first time to be with, and if I’d ever been given a choice to wait for him, I would have.

“I’m supposed to be gentle for your first time,” he growls, hooking a finger in the hem of my shorts. “But, baby, I don’t know if that’s going to be possible.”

The lust in his eyes causes me to swell with pride. *I’m doing this to him?* His green eyes grasp me and hold me with an animalistic force that seems to just tell me what to do without him even saying anything. I lift my hips as he pulls my shorts down. His eyes move to my womanhood and go

wide when he sees my little secret—that I'm not wearing any panties today.

“You naughty little girl...”

“Only for you, Daddy,” I whisper back.

Oh my God. I never knew my daddy issues ran this deep, or that the things my stepfather did caused such issues inside me, but as I say this to him, an excited arousal stabs me so deep in my center that I can barely contain myself. Every nerve in my body comes alive for him. My nipples go instantly hard, and I reach up with a new confidence and lift my shirt, exposing my breasts to him.

“Jesus Christ, I can't handle it any longer,” he snarls, reaching for the button on his pants. With a sharp tug, he pops it and unzips his zipper. “I'm going to show you how to suck my cock now, baby.

Even if he'd warned me beforehand, there would have been no way for me to prepare myself for the sight of Gabriel's cock. So long. So thick. So veiny and swollen with masculine power. He places the hard flesh into my hand, and I gasp and sit up, unable to believe what I'm looking at.

“That's right.” He smiles, obviously proud of himself. “It's a lot, and it's going to be hard for you to handle at first, but you'll be able to.”

“I...are you sure?”

Gabriel reaches between my legs and drags his middle finger up my slit, sending an electrifying sensation through my body that causes me to almost scream.

“You feel that? How wet you are for me, baby? You're goddamn right you're going to be able to handle it. Now open your mouth for Daddy.”

Being commanded by him is *such* a turn-on, and I do exactly as I'm told. I let my jaw fall open and look up at him with eager eyes as he slides his hard cock between my lips. It's all I can do to keep my teeth from scraping his thick shaft, but I do my best, desperate to please him. And when he groans and tilts his head back to the ceiling, a feeling of pride unlike anything I've ever felt rushes through me.

“Christ, you're a natural.”

I take as much as I can before I feel myself starting to gag. I can tell Gabriel wants to go deeper but holds back. No doubt a more experienced girl could handle more of him, but that will come in time.

He pulls his shirt off, exposing his muscled torso to me. I watch his abs contract as he moves his hips back and forth, thrusting in and out of my lips. With one hand, he grasps the back of my head, his fingers threaded through my hair, taking full control, and with the other, he caresses my sex.

I'm peaking with sensation. My clit is buzzing with every flick of his finger. I may be servicing him with my mouth, but at the same time, I'm being treated like an object of his desire. I can feel his desire to pleasure me in the way he touches me, and it's this just this that brings me closer and closer to orgasm.

My heart pounds in my chest. I feel beads of sweat breaking out all over my body. If my mouth wasn't full, I would scream his name. *Gabriel!*

“Oh, you're getting close, baby,” he growls. “I can see you getting close. Come for Daddy. Let it go. Come with that dick in your mouth.”

That does it. I go off.

His eyes latch on to mine as my climax rocks me. So much passion, so much lust in their piercing clarity. Even lost in my own pleasure, I'm desperate to please him, desperate to give him my everything and feel him inside me. Oh God, it's almost unbearable. My whole body quivers. My muscles tense up so tightly they almost cramp. Gabriel holds my head right where it needs to be, which is good because as soon as I'm finished, I lose all control and go limp as a doll. Then, slowly, he withdraws from my mouth and sets my head back on the floor.

"Oh my God..." is all I can say as I blink rapidly and gasp for breath. I know we've barely even gotten started, and Gabriel has completely leveled me. Kicking his pants the rest of the way off, he nudges my legs all the way apart and positions himself between them. He leans down and kisses me gently on the neck, sending a shiver up my spine.

"Not God," he whispers. "Call me Gabriel."

And then I feel it—the push, the pressure, followed by the stretch.

I knew it would hurt; I just didn't know how much. It feels like I should pull back, push him away, but Gabriel's arms lock around my back, his hands clasping my shoulders. I'm not going anywhere. His weight pins me down against the kitchen floor as he continues giving me inch after inch of his manhood, and although the pain is real, it's accompanied by an overpowering instinct to please him, to mate, to give my body to him and make him the man who claims my virginity.

Yes, this is the man who needs to take me.

And inch by inch, I take him until I feel the finality of it all and Gabriel groans as he buries all of his cock inside me. I throw my arms around him, bring my teeth down gently to

bear against the skin at the base of his neck, and whimper as the throbbing ache begins to fade. He kisses me tenderly, strokes my hair with one hand, and purrs in my ear, “Take a breath and relax, little girl. The pain will be gone soon, and then you will be in heaven.”

“I...I’m not a virgin anymore?” I don’t know why I’m asking such a silly question. I guess I just want to hear him say it.

“I felt it, baby,” he replies. “I felt your cherry pop when I claimed your little virgin pussy.”

“Oh my God,” I moan, lifting my hips, feeling the pleasure begin to swell within like golden tremors.

“And you really are a virgin,” he says with a naughty smile that fills me with pride. “I don’t know how I’m going to last in this tight little pussy. A girl like you is too good to be real.”

CHAPTER SIX

Gabriel

I MUST BE DREAMING or full-on hallucinating right now. My arms wrapped around this goddess, my cock buried deep in her perfect virgin pussy, her breasts pressed against my chest as I stare into her perfect eyes...it's all too perfect. What did I do to get so lucky? And to be the first and only man? I must have won the universal lottery.

I had no idea the gift I was receiving when I first let Hazel into my building, when I first had her sign those rental papers and made her my tenant. Now I've made her so much more; I've made her mine, and I'm never going to let her go.

After my ex's betrayal, I was sure I would never be able to feel anything for a woman again, but here I am with my heart on fire for this angel beneath me. When I felt her hymen break and give way, and her pussy stretch around my cock, it was like experiencing a miracle. Watching every tiny little reaction in her face, feeling her body as I claimed her...it was like the rest of the world melted away, leaving only the two of us.

I feel like a king between her legs as I begin thrusting. Christ, she's so fucking wet. This virgin, untouched pussy is

mine and only mine, and I'm going to do my best not to come like a goddamn teenager, but it's going to be the hardest task of my life, because I've never felt anything this good before.

Hazel moans and whimpers as I rut deep inside her. I know the pain has dissipated and she's feeling the same pleasure I'm feeling now. I level my eyes at hers and watch her face, desperate for the blissful expressions signifying her gratification.

My cock pulses, threatening to explode. I bite down, clench every muscle in my body like I'm at the gym preparing to lift a heavy weight, and stop, burying my inches deep and holding them there. *Fuck, she's incredible.* Sucking air into my lungs, I force myself to calm down, focus on my heartbeat—pounding like the beat of a song—and lean down delicately and wrap my lips gently around the nipple of Hazel's left breast.

She gasps and moans my name. "Gabriel..."

I can barely take it. This girl is absolutely too much for me.

Her warmth, her sweetness, the perfect smoothness of her skin...

I wrap her in my arms and cup her firm little ass in my hand and dig deeper. It's like I want to hollow her out, stretch her so hard that she can never forget this moment with me. Hazel is bringing out raw, primal emotions in me I never even knew I had.

"Fuck," she groans, biting her lip. "You're going to kill me, Daddy."

"Does it hurt?" I ask, cupping a breast. She nods.

"Yes, but it also feels so good."

I thrust hard, keeping my cock deep.

“Your pussy is dangerous,” I growl in her ear, letting my lips wet her earlobe. “I can barely even move inside you. Are you on the pill?”

Hazel shakes her head. “No, I never had a reason to be.”

This should scare me. Any normal man would be afraid of going raw in a girl he’s just having sex with for the first time. But Hazel’s admission has the opposite effect on me; it turns me on even more. My cock flexes, hardens to its max. My balls are taugt, filled with the seed just begging to be released inside her.

“Fuck that’s hot.” My voice comes out deep and heavy, filled with hot breath. I pump harder, knowing there’s only so much more of this that I can take. “Put your arm around me, baby.”

She does. She clutches her arms around my back and neck in an embrace that’s filled with want and trust. She’s mine to look after now.

I feel my climax rising up. There’s no holding back no. No stopping it.

“I’m going to come inside you, you sexy little girl,” I snarl, kissing up her neck and down her jaw to her lips. “I’m going to fill that little virgin pussy with my fucking load.”

“Fuck, Daddy, the way you talk to me...”

“You love it, don’t you?”

“I *love* it!” Her moaned admission sends me over the edge. I explode inside her, erupting with the most powerful orgasm of my life.

“Oh my God, Gabriel, I’m coming again!”

I spray inside her, hot rope after hot rope, and grunt as I feel her pussy clamp down on me as she goes off again. Her arms clench around me in something like a death grip as her climax takes hold of her. Her body quivers, and she cries out in passion. If I could hear only one sound for the rest of my life, *that* would be it.

And then she presses her mouth against my neck, whimpering in bliss as we share the moment together. Her plump lips, the gentle suction, the feeling of her warm breath...it amplifies everything as I shoot. How is this girl so fucking perfect? The absolute pinnacle of femininity draws desires out of me I've never felt before.

The desire to breed a female.

Christ, and it feels so right as I fill her tight little hole with my seed. I unload my balls until I feel my load spilling out of her and dripping down her thighs and running down her ass onto the floor. Maybe I should have setup something more "romantic" for her and her first time—candles and flower petals leading up to the bed. Maybe I should have given her a massage and put on some sweet music before I took her. But I just couldn't stop myself. And she sure didn't seem to mind.

In fact, she seemed to be begging for it.

As my cock pulses for the last time, milking the last of my cum out of me, I snug her up in my arms and lean down on top of her, pressing my weight against her, and inhale deeply. Her scent fills my nose and goes straight to my lungs like a drug, sweeter than any perfume. She is it. *She* is my home.

"Well, that's one way to finish brunch." Hazel's joke breaking the silence comes as such a shock to me that I instantly burst out laughing. She giggles and goes wide-eyed.

“Oh my God, I can feel your...your *thing* move when you laugh.”

“My *thing*?” I smile. “Hazel, we just had sex. I don’t think you have to refer to my cock as a *thing* anymore.”

She instantly goes red. My God, she’s so adorable.

“I know, I just...I’m still shy, I think.”

I kiss her lips and smooth back her hair. “I know, and I love that about you.”

Gently, I slide out of her, causing us both to groan slightly. I stand and help her to her feet. She slumps forward against me and sighs, then quickly gasps and puts a hand between her legs.

“Oh God!” she looks at me panicked as I hand her a napkin. “It...it comes out!”

“Yeah, it does,” I chuckle.

“Is that why they call it...cum?”

Chuckling, I snatch Hazel up in my arms. She squeals as I carry her down the hallway to the bathroom. I turn the shower on hot and stand with her under the water. I know we just had sex, but somehow as we wash each other, I can’t help but feel as though we’re doing something even more intimate together.

I run my hands over every inch of her incredible body and watch as she washes her hair. She tilts her head back, accentuating her breasts, the curve of her back, and the shape of her ass. By the time we’re done, I’m already getting hard again.

We spend the rest of the afternoon moving her things into the apartment. I handle the heavy lifting while she organizes her clothes and the rest of the small things. I catch a few

glances from the other tenants in the building, but nobody asks any questions, although I can see they want to. Those will come in time once they see she's going into my apartment every day and not hers.

I'm just coming upstairs with the final box of shoes when I find Hazel standing in the kitchen wearing a flannel skirt with a white top and a pair of heels. She's already got something cooking on the stove.

"I hope you like steak," she says with a wink.

"I was going to take you out tonight," I reply.

"Oh no you weren't," she says firmly, prancing over to me in a way that makes her hips move like a goddess. She leans in and slides a hand up my thigh, cupping my cock. "Not after you spent all afternoon lifting heavy things for me. What you're going to do is sit right there at that table while I cook dinner for you. And *then* you're going to take me in the bedroom and do more of what you did to me earlier right there."

With a smile, Hazel points to the spot on the kitchen floor where I deflowered her. Instantly, I feel myself starting to harden against her hand.

"Sound like a plan, mister?"

God, I'm falling in love with this girl.

"Yeah." I nod. "Sounds like a plan."

CHAPTER SEVEN

Hazel

THE WORLD IS WARM, and I feel more alive than I've ever felt waking up in Gabriel's arms. He made love to me last night after I made him dinner, and he makes love to me again this morning like we've done it a thousand times.

He kisses me on the back of the neck to wake me, then pulls my panties aside with a finger. I arch my back and move my leg to give him access. He's already hard, and I'm already wet, so he wraps his arm around me, cups my breast, and slides inside.

The pain I felt the first time is gone now—the stretch is still there and causes me to gasp for breath as he pushes every one of his many thick inches into me. God, I love being held like this, spooned and engulfed by him, feeling his power as he ruts inside me. His size compared to mine makes me feel so small, and it's just so amazing.

Neither of us speaks. I don't even open my eyes. I just lie there, completely under his control, slightly rocking my hips back against him in rhythm with his strokes, taking his cock like the eager little girl I am.

I'm whimpering and starting to shake from the rising of my climax. It's twisting inside me like a hurricane. I don't know what to do with my hands, so I reach out and grab the pillow and clutch it to me like a security blanket. I don't deserve to be treated this well—treated this well by an older man who could have any woman he wanted.

“Come for me,” Gabriel whispers in my ear, stoking my internal fire.

His balls clap against my clit as he picks up the pace, pounding me harder. He slides a hand up my stomach, cups my breast, then keeps going, clasping his fingers around my throat and holding them there, not hard enough to hurt but just hard enough to make me acutely aware of his strength and ferocity.

And that's enough to set me off.

“I'm coming, Daddy!” My cry is somewhat stifled by his grip, but he can still hear me. And I know he loves hearing it too, because as soon as the words leave my lips, I feel him explode inside me.

He tightens his hold around my throat as his cock pulses and sprays its hot load into my eager hole. The feeling is something I will never get tired of. It's beyond anything I ever could have dreamed. His muscles go tight against my body as he comes, and he grinds deep inside me as he unloads. God, I love taking it all, feeling the tremendous and powerful release as an expression of his pleasure—a pleasure *I* am responsible for giving him.

This is what it's like to be cared for by a man—not held prisoner by one and be constantly told what to do. Until now, the only example of masculinity I've ever really had has been my stepdad. And what a terrible example that was. But now

Gabriel has come and shattered that example to bits and replaced it with something so wonderful and amazing that it's like a drug to me, and I'm feeling myself becoming quickly addicted.

“Can we do this every morning, Daddy?”

“Only if you promise me one thing,” he whispers in my ear.

“What's that?” I reply, twisting toward him.

Gabriel hooks a thumb under my panties, which I realize I'm still wearing. “You start sleeping naked so I have easier access.”

I giggle and nuzzle my nose against his neck. “Yes, Daddy. Whatever you want.”

We get up, shower together, and I make breakfast—blueberry pancakes and bacon. Gabriel makes us gingersnap tea and pours orange juice, and we both clean up together.

“I'd like to take you somewhere today,” he says, pulling me into his arms. “Unless you have prior plans.”

He smiles. I know he's kidding, but I decide to play along.

“Well, I was going to go to the White House for a quick meeting, but I suppose I could blow that off. What did you have in mind?”

Gabriel chuckles and pinches me on the butt. “It's a surprise. Go put some shoes on. *Real* shoes, not heels.”

“Where are we going?”

He winks at me. “Didn't you hear? It's a surprise.”

Excited, I go to my room and quickly change into a pair of jeans and sneakers. I know Gabriel and I have already had sex,

made meals together, showered together, slept in the same bed together, but as we leave the house for our first little day trip together, I really start to feel like we're an actual couple, and a fuzzy feeling forms in my chest.

Is this...*love* that I'm feeling?

I glance up at him as we make our way down the stairs and feel the fuzzy feeling grow. Butterflies flutter in my stomach. How am I getting nervous about being around a man I've slept with? It's actually magical that he can make me feel this way!

When we reach the first floor, I hear giggling voices and see all the girls from the rowdy bachelorette party the other night standing outside Becca's apartment. Becca sees Gabriel, and her face lights up.

"Oh hey, Gabriel..." she starts to say gleefully, but when she sees me with him, her voice trails off slowly. Her brow furrows, and she looks at me perplexed, as do the rest of the girls. I *really* do my best not to look smug as I walk past them, but I'm pretty sure I fail miserably.

Yeah, that's right, bitches. I'm with him. He's my man. That's what I want to say—what I wish I was saying.

"Hey, Becca," Gabriel says politely in his landlord voice. "Girls."

He nods as we pass and holds the outside door for me. I step outside and wait for it to shut behind us before I start giggling.

"They are *so* jealous."

"Stop," he chuckles as we head for his car.

"It's true!"

“I’m trying to be professional here,” he replies, but I can see he’s enjoying this as much as I am. Again, he holds the door for me to his car, and I slide in. He gets in beside me, and we pull off, and I can only imagine the girls inside watching us through the windows of Becca’s apartment.

WE DRIVE FOR AROUND TEN-MINUTES, with Gabriel refusing to tell me where it is we’re going, until we reach an industrial park area on the outskirts of town. He pulls off the main road and down a drive that’s in desperate need of repair.

“Hold on,” he says. “This one’s a bit bumpy.”

That’s an understatement. The road is so full of potholes and bumps that I have to hang on with both hands to keep from being thrown from my seat—and that’s *with* my seatbelt on.

“Um, Gabriel, you’re not taking me somewhere to kill me, are you?” I joke.

“You saw right through my plan,” he laughs.

Luckily, the road ends shortly, and we pull onto a fresh stretch of pavement. We pass several warehouses and a self-storage complex before Gabriel slows the car at an empty lot overgrown with grass and weeds. He parks and looks at me.

“Am I supposed to say something?” I ask, confused.

Gabriel chuckles and points to the lot. “*This* is my future. *Our* future, Hazel.”

I know I’m missing something, but I don’t know what.

“You and I are going to open a landscaping business so we can weed places like this?” I suggest with a silly smile.

Again, Gabriel laughs but shakes his head.

“I own this lot,” he explains. “I invested in it years ago when it wasn’t worth anything. But lately, the state has been buying up everything in this area, and soon, they’re going to buy this for a *lot* of money.”

“How much is a lot of money?” I ask.

Gabriel smiles, puts a hand on my thigh, and squeezes. “Let’s just say...what would you do with your life if money wasn’t an issue?”

His question catches me off guard. Is he really saying what I think he is?

“Gabriel...” I say slowly, softly. “Are you saying what I think you’re saying?”

“Answer the question.” He smiles.

“Because after what happened to me the other night at work, I *really* don’t want to go back to Thunderbolts.”

“And I *really* don’t want you going back there either,” he replies. “So tell me; what would you do if money wasn’t an issue for you ever?”

This relationship with Gabriel has been so many firsts for me, beyond just my first time having sex. And being asked such a personal question about my life’s goals is yet another first that I never expected to be asked. My stepdad would simply never concern himself with anything I *wanted*; he would just tell me how things were going to be and assume I would go along with them. I actually have to take a second to think before I answer.

“I...well, I’ve always wanted to paint, I guess,” I say slowly. “But I never really thought about it—”

“Perfect.” Gabriel smiles. “On the way home, I’m going to buy you paints and then we’re going to sign you up for painting lessons.”

Before I can respond, Gabriel puts the car into drive and pulls away from the lot. I look at him, waiting for that heart-melting grin of his that will let me know that he’s teasing me. But it never comes. Is he really serious? When this all first happened and he made me this offer about coming to live with him in exchange for my rent, it felt like coercion or some weird kind of blackmail, but now I can see that he actually wants to take care of me. In a responsible way.

“Are you trying to make me cry?” I ask him, doing my best not to.

Gabriel chuckles. “No, I’m just trying to make you happy. Hang on again.”

My heart warms, and I clutch the seat and armrest as we go back up the pothole-filled road. I can hardly believe this is all happening—that it’s real. How can such a kind, incredible man like Gabriel exist in a world with men like my stepdad, in a world with women like Tiffany?

I bite my lip in a playful manner and look up through my eyelashes at him as we come back out onto the main road.

“You know what else I’ve never done before, Daddy?” I ask, unbuckling my seatbelt and leaning over the center console.

“What’s that?” he asks.

I reach down and unbutton his pants, tugging down his zipper. “Given road head.”

CHAPTER EIGHT

Gabriel

WHEN I WAKE UP, Hazel is already up, walking around the apartment in nothing but a red mini-thong with her hair down. I find her in the kitchen sipping mint tea out of a mug.

“Hey, Daddy.” She smiles. “Want some? I made enough for both of us.”

I yawn, stretch and nod. Yeah, I could get used to this.

“I like waking up to you,” I say, pulling her in and squeezing her ass as she hands me my mug. She nuzzles into my neck as I sip my tea, which has just the right amount of sweetener in it. “And honestly, if I didn’t have things to deal with today, I could spend the rest of the day in bed with you.”

“That sounds like a perfect day.”

“Did you shower yet?” I ask.

“Nope.” She smiles. “I was waiting for you.”

“Gosh, you really are perfect, aren’t you?”

Hazel flashes me a big, cute smile. I set my tea down on the counter and quickly throw her over my shoulder and carry

her to the bathroom. But on my way there, I pass the bedroom, and I just can't help myself.

"Detour," I announce as I take her through the door. She squeals as I toss her roughly down on the bed and roll her over onto her stomach.

"Gabriel!"

Her ass is just so perfect and again, I'm overcome; I spank her nice and hard, causing her supple flesh to jiggle just right. She cries out, and I grasp her hard by the hips and pin her down beneath me as I tug down my briefs. My cock is already hard and springs out, ready for action.

I mount her hips, my knees on either side, and rest my shaft between her buttocks and rock gently, giving her a taste of what's to come.

"Oh my God," she moans, looking back at me over her shoulder, her eyes hooded with lust. I snatch her wrists and pin them behind her back, then hold them with one hand while I tug her panties aside to reveal her bare pink pussy, already dripping with arousal. Using my thumb and forefinger, I gently squeeze her lips and rub gently. She moans and arches her back.

"Yeah, you're nice and horny for me, aren't you, baby?" I rock my hips back and drop my cock, which is now fully hard, onto her pussy, teasing her with the tip.

"Don't tease me, Daddy," she moans. "You know I want it."

"You want that nice hard cock inside you?" I growl, spanking her hard again, this time leaving a nice red mark the size of my hand. Christ, her ass is absolute perfection. I'll have to fuck it too one day.

“Yes, Daddy!”

Gripping my cock from the base, I press the tip into her and watch as her lips spread open, revealing more of the pink inside, more of the gleaming wetness of her arousal. A growl rises from deep within my chest and pushes its way out through my throat as I rock forward and drive my inches inside her.

Fuck I love this.

I love her.

I give her everything I have to give and immediately push down on top of her with all my weight, pinning her down on the bed beneath me. She moans just as our lips meet and lock with a kiss. I can't start slow this time; I'm in a frenzy. My hips buck hard and fast—so fast the bed begins to shake on its frame.

“Harder, Daddy,” Hazel whimpers, breaking her lips from mine. “Give it to me harder.”

Her words just turn me on even more, and I can already feel myself getting close to climax. My heartbeat pounds in my ears, and I reach underneath my angel and find her clit with my middle finger. Gentle pressure is all it takes to coax a shudder and a scream out of her.

“Shit!”

“That's right, baby,” I growl into her ear. “I want to feel you come all over my cock.”

“Put a baby in me, Gabriel.” Her words shake something primal out of me, and I feel my balls go taught and my cock pulse with uncontrollable eagerness. “Breed me, Daddy. Breed me. I want it all inside me.”

That's it. I'm finished after that.

This girl knows exactly what to do to me, exactly what to say, and those words destroyed whatever endurance I had left.

My orgasm hits me like a freight train. My whole body quakes, and I bury my cock inside her and start shooting. As I do, I feel her go off too. Her tight little pussy clenches up even tighter, and her mouth opens wide against the mattress like she's going to scream. But at first, no sound emerges. I spray inside her and feel her wet cunt pulse and grind on me, accepting everything I have to give, until finally she cries out, "Yes! Fuck, Daddy!"

We come down together at the exact same time, and I collapse on top of her. Every muscle in my body that had gone tight relaxes. I let go of my grip on her wrists, and she throws her arms out and gasps for breath like she's just finished the hardest workout of her life.

I'm just completely lost in her and her body. I kiss her lips, working my way up her cheek to her ear and then down her neck and her back, inhaling her scent, tasting her sweetness and feeling the texture of her skin. *Yes, this girl is mine. All mine.*

"How am I ever going to get anything done with you around?" I ask after what could have been several minutes for all I know.

Hazel giggles. "I like being your little distraction."

I kiss her gently. "You know what? I like it too. How 'bout that shower?"

"Yeah, how 'bout that shower?"

Hazel and I shower and wash each other. I make a big mountain of foam out of the shampoo and put it on my head

like a silly hat. This makes Hazel laugh, which is all I'm looking for. Just making her happy is better than all the sunshine in the world. I feel as though I've reached some emotional peak that I never even knew existed, and as long as I'm with her, I'll remain here.

Do I love her? Yes, I do. Absolutely and unconditionally. I never thought I'd be able to love again after what happened with my ex, but here I am with my heart overflowing for her, feeling as though an invisible chain has bound us together. I'm obsessed with her. Desperate to be with her every waking moment of every day.

As I dry her off and carry her to the bedroom, her little giggles go straight to the center of my being. Her happiness is like a drug to me, and when I look into her eyes, I know she loves me too. And *that's* a feeling that nearly knocks me over.

I lie back on the bed and watch her as she dries her hair and dresses, slipping into a pair of light blue jeans and a tight peach-colored T-shirt with some kind of band logo on it. As she steps into a pair of white flats, I go over and unbutton her jeans and bite her on the ass.

"You trying to get me going again?" she asks.

"I could ask you the same question," I growl, pulling her pants back up. "No, come on."

I take her by the hand as she's reaching for her eyeliner.

"But my makeup!"

"You look gorgeous, baby. You don't need any makeup."

She protests even more as I pull her out of the bedroom and out the door, but I assure her that I'm not just being one of those overly supportive boyfriends when I tell her she doesn't

need to wear any makeup and that I love how she looks even when she's just rolled out of bed in the morning.

“Okay fine,” she finally says, giving in as we get into the car. “Where are we going then?”

“I already told you. The art store. I'm going to buy you paints so you can get started painting.”

Hazel's eyes start to tear up as we pull out of the driveway. She looks at me like she can't believe it—like I'm going to take back what I said at any second, turn around and bring her home and tell her it was all just a cruel joke. It's only once we're parking at the art supply store that she drops her shoulders and looks at me with full acceptance.

“We're...really...?”

I chuckle and put a hand on her thigh. “Come on, did you really think I would mess with you like that?”

I can tell by the way she looks at me that she may not have actually thought I was messing with her, but that there was definitely some doubt in her mind still. This girl has never been treated right by anybody, and I'm damn sure going to make sure I treat her like the queen she is to me.

I HAVE to admit that I'm out of my depth at the art supply store, but thankfully there's a very knowledgeable girl with blue and pink hair that helps us out. Hazel's eyes are bright and sparkling as we go down the aisles looking at all the paints and brushes and different types of paper. I tell her to pick out whatever she wants, but I can tell she doesn't want me spending too much money on her and holds back. But in the

end, we end up leaving with a starter kit of watercolor paints, some oils, some brushes, and three different types of papers.

“You should have let me get you more,” I tell her as we drive home.

“No, you’re too sweet. We have to see if I’m even talented first before you go blowing all your money on me!”

“I’m sure you are.” I smile.

“How are you sure?”

“I just am,” I reply.

This is it. No more spending my evenings alone after going about my landlord duties. I now have someone to share my life with. Who knew this is where things would lead when I first invited her to come and stay with me? But Christ, if the two of us weren’t meant to be together.

Just as we’re pulling up at the building, Hazel gets a text.

“Oh, someone’s interested in renting my old apartment,” she says happily. “They said they could come by in fifteen or twenty minutes and check it out. Does that work for you?”

Fake sighing, I reach over and slip one hand up her shirt and cup her breast. “Well, that’s going to get in the way of my *other* plans, but I guess I do have some responsibilities as a landlord...”

Hazel giggles. “I should probably just go make sure I didn’t leave anything in there before you show it.”

“Okay,” I reply, parking. “I’ll take the paints and meet you upstairs.”

We part with a kiss, and I head upstairs feeling like a new man. It’s like we’re a team now. Hazel is starting something

new, and I'm the reason for it. She'll be successful at it too; I know that. And I absolutely cannot wait to watch her succeed. Just picturing how happy she'll be as she gets better already has me smiling as I go inside.

This is what it's like to find the one.

CHAPTER NINE

Hazel

IT FEELS strange walking up to my old apartment door, sliding the key into the lock, and stepping back into the space I used to live. I was sure I would never come back here after moving in with Gabriel, but after what he just did for me—taking me to the art store and buying all those paints for me—coming back to make sure the place is clean for this tenant is the least I can do to repay him.

I told him I'd list it on Facebook to also help him try to get someone in to rent it as quickly as possible, and it looks as though that worked out. That makes me smile. Nothing makes me happier than being useful to Gabriel, whether it's making him food, cleaning up the apartment, or of course providing him with pleasure. When I'm with him, I feel like I'm where I belong, and even right now when I've only been away from him a few minutes, I'm starting to feel something akin to withdrawal symptoms.

Satisfied that the apartment is clean and ready to be shown, I head for the door. I pull it open and find myself face to face

with a brunette girl, probably in her twenties, wearing dark blue jeans and a white top, cell-phone in hand.

“Oh!” I say, caught off guard. “You—you must be Liz. You’re here about the apartment, right?”

“I *am* Liz.” She smiles, but something about the way she does sends an odd feeling through my body.

“Okay, well I just went through the apartment to make sure it was ready,” I say, trying not to stumble over my words. “Gabriel, he’s the landlord, isn’t here right now, but if you want to come in, we could wait for him?” I step aside, and Liz takes a few steps in with me and closes the door behind her. “I’ll just set him a text—”

But as I pull out my phone, Liz puts a hand on my wrist and stops me.

“Actually, I’m not here about the apartment. I came to talk to you.”

For a moment, I’m not sure I heard her right.

“Me? Oh, I’m not the landlord. I don’t do any of the renting, I was just the last tenant here—”

The next thing I know, Liz has my hands in hers and is staring directly into my eyes.

“You need to leave him *now*.” Her voice is firm, level and cold. “Gabriel is not who you think he is. He’s a psychopath, and he’s going to hurt you if you stay with him.”

Her words hit me like a punch to the chest. I’m in such shock that I almost can’t respond. When I do, my voice wavers like an autumn leaf barely hanging on to a branch being blown in the wind.

“I...what are you...talking about? You know Gabriel?”

“I want to show you something,” she says, pulling her phone from her purse. “I used to be a tenant here. Gabriel and I had...a thing for a while, like he does with so many of his female tenants as I’m sure you know...”

No, I didn’t know that.

She tilts her phone screen at me and shows me an photo – a selfie of her with Gabriel, his arm around her, both of them smiling.

“Everything was fine at first,” she says. “He was *such* a gentleman. The sex was incredible—”

I start to tremble.

A pit forms in my stomach.

“But then I got this amazing job offer in New York. I told him I was going to move and that’s when things changed.”

She looks down at her phone, flips through the photos as my heart rate begins to skyrocket. As adrenaline begins flowing through me.

“He told me he was happy for me, but I could tell he was holding back,” she says. “I went up to his apartment for what I thought was going to be a goodbye...one last night together, ya know?”

The pit in my stomach grows, throbs with pain that begins to expand throughout my body as I picture things I never wanted to picture. Shaking my head, I back away from this girl who now feels like a foreign invader in my life.

“No!” I bark. “Stop. I don’t want to hear this.”

“You have to, Hazel,” she says, her voice calm like a therapist. “For your own safety.”

She inches towards me with her phone in her hand outstretched. I avert my eyes, not wanting to see whatever it is she's about to show me. But I'm also gripped by a morbid curiosity and sense of self-preservation.

My own safety?

But Gabriel would never hurt me. I know him. Don't I?

"My safety? What are you talking about?"

"When I tried to leave that night," Liz says slowly. "Gabriel...he wouldn't let me, Hazel."

I almost laugh. "What do you mean, he wouldn't *let* you?"

"He told me I couldn't," she replies. "He said I had to stay with him. Said that if I left him and went to New York that 'I would regret it.'"

"No," I shake my head. "I don't believe you. That's not Gabriel. He's not like that."

"I told him I *was* leaving," she continues. "And when I got my things...he grabbed me by the wrist—"

"Stop."

"He slammed me up against the wall—"

"No!"

"And he—"

"No, I don't believe you!" I cry out.

"Please," she whispers. "Just look at this. Then you'll believe me. You'll have to."

No...

I feel the tears coming as she approaches me. I let her. She reaches out and raises the camera to my face. I hold out for as

long as I can, but eventually the morbid curiosity gets the best of me and I look. And what I see, knocks the wind out of me.

On the screen, is a photo of Gabriel lying in bed, naked, with just his top-sheet pulled up over his buttocks. I know it's him. I recognize his body and it's very obviously his bedroom, the one I've been sharing with him. Oh the floor, a pair of panties and a pair of dark blue jeans and a white top.

"I took this photo, Hazel," she says. "And you see those clothes? They're the same ones I'm wearing right now."

The urge to vomit hits me.

I don't want to believe her, but how could she fake a photo like this? That's very clearly Gabriel, obviously his room, and the exact same clothes Liz is wearing right now.

"This is what he did to me," she says softly.

I can barely look as she flips through photos on her phone of her arms showing bruises and scratches.

The tears fall from my eyes.

The room starts spinning. I have to steady myself against the stove.

Oh, no. I'm going to throw up.

The pieces of my life that I've been building with Gabriel come crashing down like a Jenga tower. Bit by bit, my reality starts to crumble as I fight to hold on, clutching for anything I can that will keep me anchored to the feelings I've grown accustomed to—to the truth I've been believing.

I close my eyes and focus on the thought of his hands on my body, how I respond when he pulls me close and holds me in his arms or when I inhale his scent or feel his lips press gently against the skin of my neck.

No, he loves me!

“You have to listen to me, Hazel.” Liz’s voice shatters the moment like a hammer against glass. My eyes snap open to her face, filled with concern, her gaze latched on to me. “I barely got out of there with my life. I had to leave the state just to get away from him. I’m risking *everything* just being here again, but I can’t let him get away with it again. I just can’t.”

“I...I don’t know what to do,” I admit. I’m starting to shake. This is all too much to take in. It’s like an overflow of information—like trying to watch five channels of television at once.

Liz reaches out and takes hold of my hand again.

“Come with me,” she says. “We’ll go to the police. They can protect you.”

“I don’t think I can...”

“Don’t worry.” She smiles. “I’ll help you. It will all be fine.”

She pulls me toward the door, my heart pounding in my chest. I’m sweating. My fingers are tingling, and I can feel the cold adrenaline coursing through my limbs.

“I just...I can’t believe it,” I mutter as we reach the hall. “Not Gabriel...”

“I didn’t believe it either,” she says. “But believe me, Hazel, it’s the truth.”

Becca’s apartment door opens as we pass, and she pokes her head out.

“Hey, what’s going on outside?”

“I—what do you mean?” I ask.

“The cops,” she says. “Talking to Gabriel.”

“The cops are here...?”

“I called them,” Liz whispers in my ear, pulling me through the outside door. She hooks a hard right toward a green station wagon parked on the street. “Don’t look; he’ll see us together and try to stop you from leaving.”

I’m almost in a trance as Liz pulls me toward her car, and I almost manage to do as she says and not look back, but just as she’s opening the door for me, I glance back at the parking lot and see Gabriel standing there surrounded by three police officers. He looks confused. He looks upset. He looks on the defensive.

And it’s at that moment that my heart breaks.

“You see? I told you,” Liz whispers, guiding me into the passenger seat.

How could this be?

How could Gabriel be two men like this?

How could he go out of his way to share his life’s plan with me, to buy me art supplies and encourage my undeveloped passion and also be some sick and twisted abuser?

It just doesn’t make any sense...

I have one foot in the car when it happens. Gabriel’s voice rings out.

“Hazel, stay away from her!”

“Go!” Liz shoves me *hard* into the car. My side slams against the center console, knocking the wind out of me. She slams the door shut behind me, and I hear the policemen all

shouting as Liz races around to the other side of the car and pulls open her door.

“He’s not going to get you,” she snarls as she fumbles with her keys. “Son of a bitch thinks he can just do whatever he wants...”

“Liz...” I sit up, nursing my side and look out the back window to see Gabriel *and* the policemen all sprinting toward us—the policemen with their guns drawn.

My heart nearly stops.

Their guns drawn?

I spin back to Liz, my eyes wide and my heart filled with a sudden dose of brutal realization; Gabriel isn’t the bad guy here—Liz is. And like the silly, naïve girl I was when Gabriel met me, I’ve just been duped.

“He won’t have you,” she mutters as she finds the right key on her keychain. “Not if I have anything to say about it.”

I hear the shouts of the policemen outside. I hear Gabriel cry out my name.

Liz reaches out to insert the key into the ignition, but this the naïve girl inside me says no. This time, I decide to act.

I slap her wrist, causing the keys to fall from her hand and land somewhere down at her feet.

“What are you doing!?” she screeches. “Are you insane!? They’ll get me!”

Get *me*?

Yeah, this girl is crazy, and I should get my head checked for ever believing her story in the first place. *Gabriel, please forgive me.*

“Show me your hands!”

The police round the corner of the car and aim their pistols at Liz, who instantly cries out and bursts into tears.

“You bitch!” she screams, whirling on me, her face twisted with rage. I back away, afraid she’s going to attack me, but it’s right then that the passenger side door opens and I feel a pair of familiar hands snatch me by the waist and pull me to safety.

Gabriel...

“You’re all right,” he whispers, lifting me into his arms. “You’re all right.”

I’m crying, sobbing as I twist and bury my face into his neck. His scent, his warmth, his strength is more comforting than it has ever been. I break down crying as he carries me away from the car, gently caressing my hair, cooing softly, letting me know that everything is going to be okay.

“I’m so sorry, baby,” I sob. “I never should have listened to her. Please don’t hate me.”

“How could I ever hate you?” he asks. I can hear the smile in his voice. “I *love* you, Hazel. I love you so, so much.”

I look up at him, wiping the tears from my eyes with the back of my hand.

“Re-really?”

He nods, his green eyes filled with strength and understanding. “Really, baby.”

Warmth flows through me, fills my soul, and anchors me with such purpose. I have to make this almost-betrayal up to him somehow, and I will. It’s my mission now to make this man happy for the rest of my life.

“I love you too,” I tell him. “And I’m sorry.”

Gabriel leans in and kisses me. “There’s nothing to be sorry about, baby. Now come on, let’s go home.”

EPILOGUE

Hazel

Five years later...

“DO you think we’re a power couple?”

Gabriel looks up from his drafting table as I come into his study and smiles, and as I always do when he does, I go all giddy inside. He crosses his arms and leans back in his chair and looks me up and down as I was hoping he would. I’m wearing a pair of red stockings with a garter belt to go with the red thong I bought and the red mesh bra to commemorate our five-year anniversary today. I also have a pair of black heels with red bottoms to complete the look.

“Power couple?” he asks, choosing to answer my question before commenting on my look. It’s a tease, and we both know it. I don’t mind. In fact, I love it. “Define power couple.”

“Well, I’m a successful painter,” I muse, slinking forward toward him, making each of my steps sexy and deliberate. “And you are an architect who is having incredible success early on and can barely keep up with demand for his houses.”

“So you’re saying we’re like Jay-Z and Beyonce?” he smirks.

“No,” I reply as I reach him. “You’re *way* sexier than Jay-Z.”

Arching my back, I lean over his table, squeezing my arms together to show off my *assets*, and bite my lower lip at my gorgeous husband and the father of my incredible son. It’s hard to believe sometimes just how far we’ve come as a couple, especially after that nightmarish event where I almost ended running away from him like a crazy woman.

As it turned out, I was actually right about Liz. In reality, she was a crazy stalker who had been obsessed with him when she was a tenant there. Gabriel eventually had to file a restraining order against her to get her out of the building.

The selfie she showed me of them together was something she asked him to take with her on the day she moved in, and the photo she took of him sleeping in his apartment was something she took after she broke in – something she had been doing regularly it turned out.

She faked the scrapes and bruises as well. Thankfully the police were able to figure that one out, and it turns out she and Gabriel had never had a sexual relationship at all. She’d just been obsessed with him and when he hadn’t returned the interest, she went off the rails. There was no job in New York either; her entire story had been lies. She’d been stalking and spying on him even after the police got involved and when she saw us together, she lost it.

The police confirmed all of this. The reason they were even at the apartment that day when Liz showed up was because Miss Jenkins saw her coming into the building, recognized her, remembered all the drama that had gone down,

knew she wasn't supposed to be at the building any longer, and called them.

I apologized for *weeks* to Gabriel for even remotely believing her, but he wasn't angry at all. Not even for a day. He said he understood, given her fabricated story, how I could be blindsided by something like that, and did his best not to let me feel guilty. Still, I spent two weeks looking up brand-new dinner recipes to cook for him and woke him up with blowjobs and breakfast every single morning until he told me to relax and stop setting my phone alarm to wake me up before him.

And as it turns out, one of those first few times he and I had sex, Gabriel got me pregnant. I found out the next month, and when I did, he immediately proposed.

"This isn't because I feel obligated now, I just want you to know," he joked, down on one knee looking up at me with those eyes and that smile, melting my heart with every second that he looked at me.

"I know, silly!" I laughed through tears of happiness.

"It's because I love you and want to spend the rest of my life with you," he said as he slipped a ring on my finger as the sun went down. "So, Hazel, will you marry me?"

"Of course I will!" I blurted out, falling into his arms.

We made love right there in the grass at our favorite spot by the river where we would go and have picnics in the evening. We were married less than a month later; neither of us wanted to wait. I still smile every day when I wake up and see the ring on my finger.

True to his prediction, the state bought the land Gabriel had purchase for a *lot* of money—enough money that he was able to follow through on his promise to take care of me. I

didn't have to go back to work at Thunderbolts or anywhere else. I lost myself in my painting, and when Gabriel built us our new home, he made sure it included a studio for me with big double doors that opened on to the back yard.

“Yeah, I'd say we're a power couple then.” Gabriel smirks, leaning in and gently pressing his nose between my breasts. I giggle as he tickles me so delicately as he moves up, drags his lips up my neck and finds my mouth with a kiss. “I know I wouldn't be half the man I am without you by my side, baby... without this beautiful body here for me every morning and every night...” He stands and comes around the drafting table to me. I turn, showing him my body, which he drinks hungrily with his gaze. I twist my hips, feeling my own sexuality come alive beneath his eyes. I can already see the bulge growing beneath the gray sweatpants he's wearing today.

“You like it, Daddy?”

“God, yes,” he growls, delivering a sharp spank to my backside as he pulls me in by the hips and presses my body against his. “I love the days when I can sketch at home and don't have to go into the office. Makes it so much easier for me to get my hands on you.”

I bite my lip as he tugs my panties aside and presses two fingers against my sex, sending a warm wave through me.

“I like being your reward after a long, *hard* day's work, Daddy,” I whimper, rocking my hips against him. There's nothing I want more right now than to be totally owned by him—to please him and hear his groans of pleasure as he explodes inside me.

I reach into his pants and find his cock, hard as steel, and smile as he groans in pleasure—pleasure that *I'm* giving him. It shouldn't be possible to be still so sexually attracted to your

husband after this many years. Not after the things you hear from all the other married couples in the world. But here Gabriel and I are, all over each other like a couple of newlyweds, about to get it on in a way that would win some awards if cameras were rolling.

He holds me by the hip, lifts my leg, and slides inside me with such force that he shakes me down to my core. He fills me, completely and fully, causing me to cry out and throw my arms around him as I hang on for what I know will be an incredible ride.

I must have been even more turned on than I realize, because as Gabriel begins thrusting, I feel myself already approaching a tremendous climax. He ruts in and out of me like a primal man. I feel his balls slapping off my ass with each of his rough thrusts. He reaches up and cups my breast with a callused hand, then snatches a fistful of my hair and tugs my head back and brings his lips to bear against the soft skin of my neck.

“Take me, my love,” I whisper as he picks up the pace. “I’m yours.”

“You are mine,” he growls back. “My sweet love.”

The End

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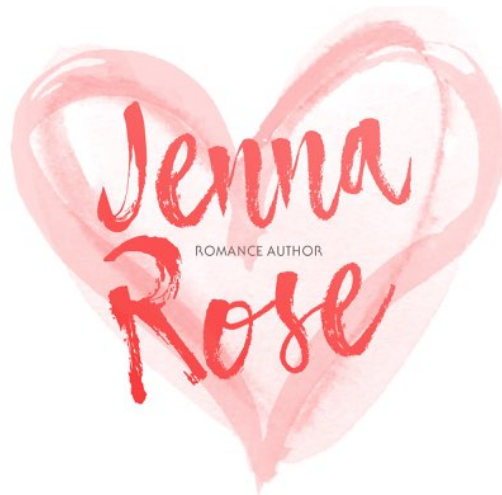
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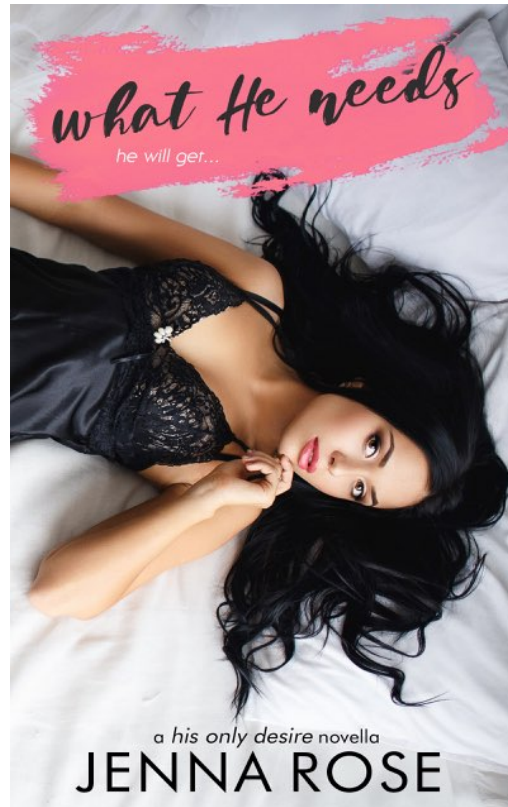
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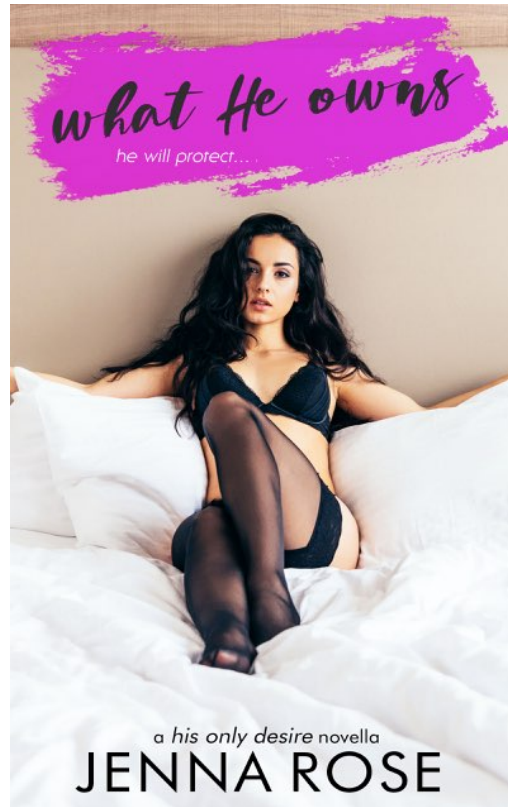
WHAT HE NEEDS



Percy Rankin is professional fighter, but he's also a professional ladies man who needs to clean up his image. So when his manager suggests paying a nice girl to be his fake-girlfriend and stand by his side when the cameras are snapping, Percy figures why not? What's the worst that could happen?

But then he sees Whitney, a proper, gorgeous, innocent music student studying violin, and everything changes. There's nothing fake about his desire—a desire he's never felt for anyone. But Whitney isn't falling for it. She knows guys like Percy and won't be convinced that this "relationship" is anything more than just business. But Percy has fought for everything he has in life, and he's not going to stop until she's his...

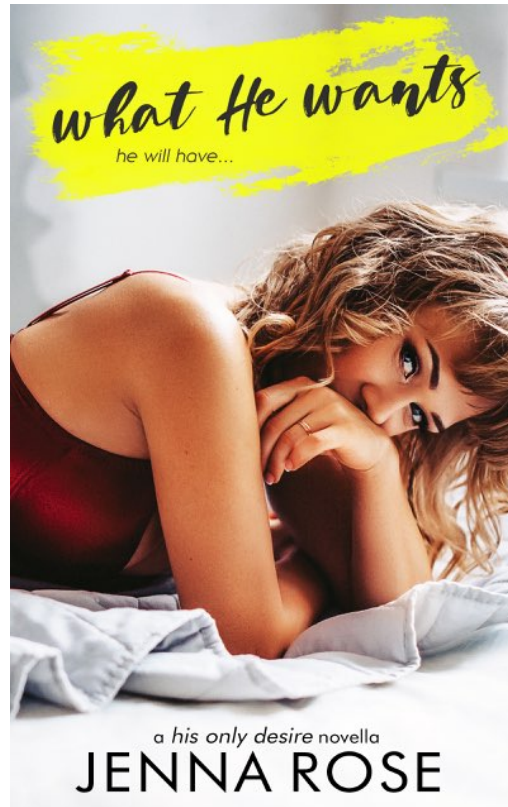
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Gwen Thompson is hot on a story involving town development and corruption. The trail leads her to the home of Harrison Night, billionaire-playboy-business-man. All she wants is an interview, but when the rakish bachelor looks at her, Gwen knows he wants to do a lot more than answer her questions.

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While working undercover to bring down a dangerous crime boss, Fletcher becomes entranced by the girl living across the street. He keeps his eyes on her. Watching. Waiting. She's an angel in the wrong part of town, and he's going to make sure she's safe—no matter what.

AURORA IS STRUGGLING, working, saving her money for school, but one night she sees something she shouldn't have and suddenly, she's whisked away by a mysterious man who claims to be her protector. But he wants something from Aurora—something she's never given—and she's not sure if she can.

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