

The 32nd Storey: Flirting with Danger

By Madison Blake
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Jenna Stone hated Mondays for two reasons – because the weekend was over and because she needed to go to work, which had become boring lately. The boredom was due to the transfer one month ago of one Tom Langford to the head office, which was millions of miles away in New York.

Sighing, she shod her manicured feet into elegant heels that showcased her limbs. She and Tom had such lovely and exciting times together. At least, that was what she thought they had, but he'd left without a backward glance.

Bull for him.

She closed the door to her flat gently, quelling the urge to slam it shut.

Thirty minutes later, she swung onto the thirty-second storey of the bank building, her high heels clicking importantly on the tiled floors. She reached her cubicle and started all the preparatory work – wiping down her desk with alcohol, booting up her computer and filling her mug with energizing coffee. Just as she took her first sip, her best friend, Abby March, came hurtling for gossip.

"Guess what?" she asked, breathless.

"What?"

Abby's green eyes widened with excitement. "We have a new colleague coming in next week to replace Noelle."

Noelle, who had resigned due to her difficult pregnancy.

"How come the news is so hush-hush and we just learned of it now?"

"Jim didn't want to tell me until he let slip something and I badgered him until he confirmed that the vacancy had been filled. Apparently, the bosses pirated the newcomer over from another bank to grow the department's portfolio, so this new guy's coming in as *assistant manager*."

Jenna drew in a sharp breath. "You mean I didn't get the promotion?" Damn, she needed that promotion and the money that came with it.

"It would seem so," Abby said, apologetic, but as far as Jenna's concerned, she didn't have anything to be sorry for. Those bosses of hers had a lot to answer for though, and this new guy as well. "It would mean two steps up the ladder for you,

and I don't think the company promotes its employees that fast, even for someone as good as —"

"What's his name?"

Abby just stared at her, alarm on her face. "Jenna, you're not planning anything, are you?"

"Of course not. What could I do?" she answered swiftly, shrugging in what she hoped was an unconcerned manner. "The most is to resign and look for a job in a company that appreciates my more than ten years of hard labor and sacrifice, but in these times, it's not a wise move." She pulled out some folders from her cabinet. "So I'll just stay here, nice and quiet, and work on my accounts."

"Good that you see sense." Abby's entire body relaxed. "We're on for lunch later?"

"Of course."

Jenna waited until Abby went back to her department, which was on another floor, before she gave up the pretence of working and stood up. She strode to the department manager's office, giving a brisk rap on the door before entering.

George Tayn glanced up from the file he was perusing. "Jenna, what a lovely surprise. Good morning."

Jenna barely controlled herself from slamming the door behind her. "It would've been fucking good were it not for the news that reached my ears. I thought we had a deal, George. You promised me."

"Jenna..." he spread his hands helplessly. He was still a handsome man in his forties, and she'd often wondered why no woman had snapped him up yet. "Such a thing wasn't in my control. I promised you I would recommend you for the position, but Abram Whitney overrode me."

Abram Whitney was the assistant general manager overseeing three departments, and theirs was one of them. He would have the final vote on any recommendations put forth to the general manager for final approval.

Some rumor about Abram Whitney teased her mind. She frowned and willed the tidbit to the forefront of her mind. Aha, she had it.

"Is it true that Abram Whitney loved a nice piece of ass?"

George's eyes bugged. "Now, Jenna, don't tell me..."

She sashayed toward him, her mouth curving in a seductive smile. "Why are you surprised? You know what kind of woman I am."

Shame at what she was about to do teased at her, but she forced it away. She couldn't afford to feel that way. She had lost the privilege of feeling that way.

She reached him and sank slowly to her knees beside him. "I give you sex for whatever I want done, and I want Noelle's position." She cupped his cock through his trousers, his heat searing her hand. "One favor for another. That was our deal." Passion crossed his face, and he eased back on his chair with a sigh. "I delivered." His cock hardened with her caresses. "You didn't."

She squeezed as hard as she dared without hurting him too much.

"Argh!" George jerked upright, frantic. "Jenna, what are you doing?" His hands fluttered in the air. "Release me."

She didn't hate him, that he would be susceptible to her wiles or that he would agree to the bargain. He was a man after all, and all men ever thought about was how to get that meat between their legs into the dark, heated place between a woman's thighs.

She tightened her hold.

He squeaked.

What a loser.

She loosened her hand a fraction. "I'll give you one more chance, George. Arrange a meeting for me with Mr. Whitney. Today."

"What's in it for me?"

Jenna released a spurt of furious, shocked laughter. "I've got your balls in my hand." She clenched her hold around his much-prized gonads. "If you don't do as I say, I'm going to cut them off."

How she was going to accomplish that – even if she had the guts, which she didn't – she didn't know. But at this point, she was hoping he would believe her threats.

He began clawing at her hand. "No, take it off, release me! Get away!"

"Shut up, you fool." She released him and sprung to her feet. "Do you want them to hear us?"

Damn, her legs were cramping, but she forced herself to withstand the sensation. To show any weakness now would be to give George the advantage. Her brain whirred with this new development. How might she get what she want?

"Go to hell, bitch!" He was massaging his balls, and it would've been a funny sight if she'd been inclined to laugh.

She hit upon another idea. "Here's the deal. You arrange that meeting or I accuse you of threatening me when I wouldn't sleep with you."

George stared at her, eyes narrowed with dislike. She could guess she was in for hell for a long time, or until he got promoted or transferred elsewhere like Tom.

"Fine," he snarled. "Now get out."

She threw him one cool glance, then walked out of the door as regally as she had come in. She may feel like she'd never be able to look anybody in the eyes again for shame at what she had done, but she wasn't going to scurry out like a mouse.

Before noon, her anticipated call arrived.

"Abram can meet you now," George snapped, then banged down the phone into its cradle.

Jenna winced, then her face settled into a rueful grimace. She hurried to the washroom to brush up on her toilette, then rode up the elevator to the fortieth story, where the executive offices were located. His secretary, who was getting ready to leave for lunch, waved her in.

She pushed open the door, which was ajar, went in and shut it behind her.

Abram Whitney glanced up from the file and stood up. "Ms. Stone?"

Jenna's heart skipped a beat. Despite his age – he must be nearing fifty – Mr. Whitney was still a handsome man. Though his full head of dark hair was sprinkled silver at the temples, his face was unlined and his body firm and lean. She'd heard that he played a smashing game of tennis, with the drive and intensity of a professional player. Would he make love in the same way? Certainly, it wouldn't be a great chore to have sex with him, especially if she could get what she wanted.

"Ms. Stone?"

She shook the lustful thoughts away and concentrated. One step at a time.

"Mr. Whitney, thank you very much for seeing me on such short notice." Jenna had undone the top two buttons of her blouse, so that part of her cleavage showed. She didn't know whether to be glad or not when Mr. Whitney's gaze didn't waver from her face. She felt a frisson of uncertainty. Perhaps he wouldn't be so easy to bribe.

He gestured toward the chairs in front of his desk. "Sit down, please." When they were both seated, he asked, "What may I do for you?"

She didn't know what George had told him, so she started on neutral ground. "I understand a new colleague is coming in next week to take over Noelle's position."

He frowned. "The topic is not up for discussion, Ms. Stone. It was a management decision."

Jenna could smack herself. Stupid approach. "Then why did you override Mr. Tain's recommendation for my promotion? Surely, I deserve an answer to that."

Mr. Whitney considered her with a thoughtful look. "I thought George had discussed that with you."

George hadn't dared. "No, he didn't."

“Very well.” He leaned forward, projecting an air of sincerity. “Ms. Stone, you have the potential within you for great things. You are an excellent relationship manager, your customers spoke highly of you, and they are very pleased with your service.”

Where was the problem then?

“But you don’t have a lot of outside contacts. With this depressed economy, we need someone to beef up our portfolio and bring in new profitable customers, someone who’s a star performer in another bank, whose customers are loyal to him and are willing to transfer to wherever he is. Maybe in another two years, when the economy is better –”

“I don’t have two years!” she cut him off, desperation making her reckless. “Please, Mr. Whitney, give me a chance. I know I can do the job well. I have a group of loyal and profitable customers. I’m sure they’ll be able to give me the names of potential people I could contact who might be willing to establish a relationship with our bank. I’ll work day and night, on weekends too, if you would –”

“Ms. Stone. Ms. Stone, if you would listen. You have been here a long time. Ten years, I believe? Yes, well, if you had been able to do as you were suggesting, you would’ve done them ages ago. You had the opportunity, but you didn’t follow up on them. I don’t know why you didn’t, but I believe each person has his own strength. Yours obviously is that of a nurturer, of maintaining existing relationships, instead of a hunter. I would be a poor manager indeed if I would put a person in a position that’s a wrong fit for her.”

He was right. Everything he’d said, his analysis of her, had been spot on. Still, she couldn’t give up, not this early in the game. “Please, Mr. Whitney, I’ll do *anything* – anything you want – as long as you give me a chance.” She sat on the edge of her seat, her whole body leaned forward and her face turned toward him in entreaty. “I’ll prove myself to you –”

“I don’t understand.” His brows slashed together in a perplexed frown. “Does the position mean that much to you?”

“Yes.” He couldn’t know how much. Being so high up in the corporate hierarchy, an assistant manager position may be peanuts to him, but it meant the world to her.

“The position or the money?” His intense brown eyes on hers were altogether too keen. “Being promoted two levels up would mean a substantial pay increase, not to mention the bonuses and other benefits.”

A lie was on the edge of her tongue, ready to roll off and convince him, a lie that was the only politically correct answer.

“The truth,” he demanded.

She couldn't oppose the hard glitter of his eyes. Something about him was also compelling her to speak the truth. Shaking, she ducked her head and replied, "The money."

"We don't pay you enough to buy clothes and trinkets?" Mr. Whitney asked, his voice sardonic and condescending.

If he'd been kind and understanding, she'd probably have blurted out her troubles to him. But his despicable tone riled her up and she lifted her chin in defiance. Looking him in the eyes, she said, "Not nearly enough."

"No wonder." For the first time since she'd entered his office, his gaze settled on her cleavage. "You look ready to burst out of them."

An understatement, but it was the opening she needed. "As I said, Mr. Whitney, I'd do anything you ask if you would give me the position."

"Wash my car? Walk my dog? Clean my house?" He made a dismissive gesture. "I've already got people to do those things."

"How about this?" She undid another button, then another, until her blouse was hanging open. She shrugged it off, leaving her clad in a black lacy bra that cupped her breasts like a second skin. She welcomed the cool draft that slid across her flesh and tightened her nipples into hard pearls.

He sat up slowly, his gaze turning avid and hot.

She stood up and struck a seductive pose, running her hands over her body in a slow caress. She sashayed around the table toward him, and she was gratified to note his eyes never left hers. Any time now, he would be hers.

Her hands went behind her body, to the clasp of her skirt. "Or this?" Pulling down the zip, she allowed the skirt to fall to the ground in a graceful slide. She kicked it off to the side and turned around, displaying her taut buttocks. Her previous men friends had told her many times they were mesmerized by the sight of her enticing butt encased in silk stockings. She wriggled her hips in a sensual dance, and knew she had him when she felt his warm hand on one cheek, squeezing with awestruck wonder.

"You're beautiful," he said in a hoarse voice. "So tight and sexy."

He pressed a kiss on the fleshy cheek, then licked at her skin through the silk. She shuddered. Never had she felt desire with just a kiss and a touch on her butt.

Negotiations. They weren't done yet.

Gasping, she wrenched herself away and faced him. The stark naked hunger in his brown eyes made her stumble back. No man in her memory had looked at her in this way.

He made as if to stand and pursue her, but she knew that if he did, she was lost. They'd have sex and she would've wasted any bargaining power she had.

"We have to talk," she rasped, clutching her skirt in front of her.

He clenched and unclenched his hands. "Do you know what I'd do to you when I get you?"

His voice was a smoky whisper and plucked all her nerve endings, which were taut like finely drawn strings. "What?" she couldn't help but whisper.

"I'd kiss your ass and bite into the firm flesh, and I bet they'd taste like fresh, crisp apples. Sweet and juicy, with a hint of tang." He was making her pussy pulse and clench in response to the images he was putting in her mind. "I'd open you wide and slide my tongue into your hole and taste your heat. Breathe in your fragrance, your essence. Then, while I hold you by the waist, I'm going to thrust my cock deep into you and ride you until you cry for mercy."

Damn him. The shame of her actions was supposed to keep her chained to reality, but he was sweeping her into lust, making her pliable and willing, turning shame into natural desire.

She shook with the force of the terror she felt. This man was very dangerous, far more dangerous than George. "For a taste of apples, give me the assistant manager position."

He smiled, lethal and sharp. "I'm afraid I can't do that."

"I thought we have a bargain."

"We are in the midst of *making* a bargain," he corrected. "I can't give you the position because the general manager has already approved the candidate, and he will be joining us next week. However, *I* can offer you another position."

"There are two positions up for grabs?" Jenna was confused. Had she gotten the information wrong?

"The assistant manager position you coveted has already been filled, but a new position has just been opened." He perched on the edge of the table and eyed her with keen directness. "As my mistress."

She was tempted, oh yes, she was. He might be interested in only her ass, but she wanted to experience that thick cock she could see bulging between his thighs somewhere else. But to give in would be disastrous.

"Oh?" She gave him a contemptuous look. "Why do you think I'd be interested when you've nothing to give me in return?"

"I'll pay you in hard cash."

His words were the slap she needed to awaken from this sensual haze that had come up out of nowhere. A whore, that was what she had come down to. Money for sex.

"I'll give you the amount you would've gotten if you had been promoted." He almost looked bored, discussing such petty things as money. "That, plus your salary should be enough to indulge your craving for pretty things."

She couldn't stand the humiliation or revulsion that crawled through her. That she had come to this... Almost immediately, she thrust the feelings away. They had no place here. She was doing what she had to.

"What do you say, Ms. Stone? Do we have a deal?"

"How many times do you expect to have sex with me?"

He appeared astonished. "Why, as many times as I want, whenever I want. As my mistress, you'll be at my beck and call."

"What?" She was shocked, not at his words but by the surge of excitement that had rushed through her. She wanted him. She wanted him with a fierceness that was skewing her conscience.

"The money not enough?" His lips twisted. "All right, final offer. That amount on a monthly basis until I tire of you. Should I decide I've had enough of you on the first week of a new month, consider the rest a bonus. I think my offer's more than fair." His brown eyes caught hers. At first, she'd thought they were an ordinary color. Yet, how could anything ordinary compel hers so thoroughly she couldn't look away? "What's your answer, Ms. Stone?"

She licked her lips from nervousness, and she lost her breath when his intense gaze followed its movement. He looked as though he wanted to devour her, and he might, if she let him. "Deal."

He started to go to her, then stopped and glanced at his watch. He cursed. "I've got a luncheon meeting in ten minutes. Meet me here after work."

"Here?" She glanced around in dismay.

"What? You find office sex cheap and shoddy?"

She lifted her chin in defiance. There was nothing cheap about her. Even the price he was paying for her services was hideously expensive. She felt a twinge of conscience, then she brushed it away. He could afford it. "I think it would be very exciting."

There was a glimmer of something in his eyes. Approval maybe? Admiration? "What do you mean then?"

"I don't want my colleagues or anyone in the company to learn about...this."

He frowned, thoughtful. "You have a point. It's nobody's business anyway. I only meant for us to meet here, then I'm taking you somewhere, but maybe even that is not wise. Let's meet instead in the underground parking lot at eight. Those spaces are reserved for the executives, so none of your colleagues should have a reason to be there."

"Unless they're fucking the GM," she muttered under her breath.

He must've heard her, because a little smile played around his mouth as he came toward her. "Before I let you go, I want a sample of your charms."

She watched helplessly, her back pressed against the wall, desire rising within her as his head descended and his mouth crushed down on hers. His lips were firm and warm, and his hands too, when they stroked her body and raised her temperature to boiling point. He tasted like the fragrant aroma of freshly brewed coffee. Irresistible. She moaned and leaned further into the kiss. Her skirt fell unheeded to the ground as she wound her arms around his neck and responded to his kiss. His big body covered the cool draft from the air con, surrounding her with a delicious heat. His hips grounded into hers, his unmistakable hardness pushing into her soft belly.

He released her so suddenly she didn't know what had happened. Before she could even process a thought, he'd flipped open his cell phone and was talking into it. He ran a hand through his hair, tousling it as he paced, and she couldn't help noticing once again what an attractive man he was. She knew his wife had died some years back, but why hadn't he remarried? Did he love her so much no woman could take her place?

Hands shaking, she put on her clothes. Within minutes, she was back to her impeccably dressed self. She was checking her hair and make-up in the transparent glass door on the bookshelf – which made a very poor mirror – when he came up behind her and pressed her to him. For a woman, she was tall, but she only stood up to his chin. His cock was as huge and hard as before, and she could feel the outline of his arousal on the small of her back.

He nuzzled her neck and covered one breast with his hand. She hated that her nipple surged toward the heat of his hand. "I'll see you later, Jenna Stone. I can't wait to have you naked in my arms. You are very bad, to give me such a glimpse that will surely haunt me throughout the afternoon."

She tried not to let his words affect her and said instead the words that had been the reason she hadn't slipped away when he was otherwise occupied. "I want an advance."

His entire big body turned rigid, and his expression became cold and forbidding. His hand fell away and he stepped back. "The money. Ah yes, of course," he said with a cynical twist of his lips. "I'll give you the check tonight. If I don't see you later,

I'll assume you changed your mind and our deal's off." He gestured toward the door. "You should go now, Ms. Stone."

"I'll be there." Jenna didn't know if she was convincing him or her. Without waiting for a reply, she moved toward the exit.

By the time she reached her cubicle, she was shaking with reaction. She couldn't believe what she had agreed to. How low would she sink to? Instead of a one-time sex in exchange for a favor, she would be supplying the sex for money. Yet, what was the difference between the two? The product was the same – sex; only the payment was different.

She had no choice. She had tried every means of raising money possible. She had sold her jewelry, her car and her house. She was up to her chin in debts from friends and relatives, and her credit cards were all maxed out. The only thing she had left to sell was...herself.

The tears were perilously close to the surface, self-pity not far behind. The depths of despair yawned wide in front of her, enticing her to fall in to the sweet, numbing darkness.

The jarring peal of the phone shook her out of the mood.

Sniffing and wiping away the mist in her eyes with the back of her hand, she lifted the phone from its cradle. "Jenna Stone speaking."

"Mama!"

The joyous cry of her sweet, brave two-year-old son brought everything back in perspective. For him, everything she did was worth it.

"Hello, baby boy. How are you today?"

"Tood."

She imagined him nodding his head vigorously, as he was wont to do, and she had to smile through the tears that had started up again. "Oh, you were a good boy for Grandma, huh. That's my boy. Have you eaten your lunch?"

"Yes."

"What did you have?"

"Rice and brocli and fish!" Jenna didn't know if that was what her mother had fed her son, since those three items were Mark's standard answer for lunch and dinner.

"Did you finish everything?"

"Yes. 'Bye, Mama." In the background, she heard the lively tune of a Hi-5 song and knew she'd been tossed aside for the singing group.

The phone clattered, then it was picked up again. "Jenna."

“Mom.”

“Have you had your lunch yet?”

“About to.”

“Right. Mark needs you more than ever, Jenna, so you have to take care of yourself.”

“Yes, Mom. You too. Grandmas are indispensable.”

Her mother laughed. “Don’t worry. I intend to be here long enough to see Mark grow up, get married and have children.”

A lovely thought, one that she dreamed of every night. “By the way, Mom, I won’t be home early tonight. Something’s come up.”

“Okay, don’t be too late.”

Her mother had always hoped Jenna would meet a man who would love her and marry her and take on her problems. But Jenna knew things like that only happened in fairy tales. Her mother had pinned her hopes on Tom Langford, and look where that had gotten her. No, in real life, a woman could only count on herself to get things done.

“I’ll try. ‘Bye.” She didn’t know how long Abram Whitney was going to keep her that night. An hour? Two hours? However long it was, she would be ready for him.

~ To be continued ~

Madison Blake is the author of several books published with Ellora’s Cave (<http://www.jasminejade.com>), [Perhaps Love](#), [Love In Mysterious Ways](#), [Playing For Real](#), [Sex Symphony](#), [Psychic Heat](#) and [At Long Last, Love](#). She has two books to be released soon, also from Ellora’s Cave – [Pleasure Trap](#) and [Honoring the Goddess](#). She welcomes emails at Madison@thelovechronicle.com

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