

A man and a woman are posed in a close, intimate embrace against a light blue background. The woman, on the left, has long blonde hair and is wearing a black, sleeveless, textured dress. She is looking up at the man with a slight smile. The man, on the right, has dark hair and is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The lighting is soft, highlighting their faces and the texture of their clothing.

Sharon
KENDRICK

MARRIAGE SCANDAL,
SHOWBIZ BABY!

Sharon Kendrik

Marriage Scandal, Showbiz Baby!

«HarperCollins»

Kendrik S.

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Praise for these bestselling authors:

FIONA HOOD-STEWART

“This huge, action-packed saga is a feast for anyone who yearns for a long, rich read.”

—Romantic Times on *The Stolen Years*

“A gripping, sensual tale. The characters are very rich, and they draw you into their story. The story is a page-turner, and you can’t help but get sucked into this romance.”

—Romantic Times on *At the Spanish Duke’s Command*

SHARON KENDRICK

“Sharon Kendrick pens a dynamite tale of love, passion, betrayal and revenge. Her hero is to die for, and the passion...scorches the pages.”

—Romantic Times on *The Desert Prince’s Mistress*

“This book is sizzling hot, with a saucy heroine and a dynamite hero. The scenes are full of passion and emotion.”

—Romantic Times on *The Future King’s Bride*

JACKIE BRAUN

“Intense emotion, a heartbreakingly vulnerable heroine, a wonderful hero, a beautiful setting and truly compelling story make Jackie Braun’s novel a poignant delight.”

—Romantic Times on *True Love, Inc.*

“Jackie Braun’s latest story is truly remarkable, mainly because of its humor, its edge and its cast of realistic, vulnerable characters.”

—Romantic Times on *In the Shelter of His Arms*

DEAR READER LETTER

By Sharon Kendrick

Dear Reader,

One hundred. Doesn't matter how many times I say it, I still can't believe that's how many books I've written. It's a fabulous feeling but more fabulous still is the news that Mills & Boon are issuing *every single one* of my backlist as digital titles. Wow. I can't wait to share all my stories with you - which are as vivid to me now as when I wrote them.

There's **BOUGHT FOR HER HUSBAND**, with its outrageously macho Greek hero and **A SCANDAL, A SECRET AND A BABY** featuring a *very sexy* Tuscan. **THE SHEIKH'S HEIR** proved so popular with readers that it spent two weeks on the *USA Today* charts and...well, I could go on, but I'll leave you to discover them for yourselves.

I remember the first line of my very first book: "So you've come to Australia looking for a husband?" Actually, the heroine had gone to Australia escape men, but guess what? She found a husband all the same! The man who inspired that book rang me up recently and when I told him I was beginning my 100th story and couldn't decide what to write, he said, "Why don't you go back to where it all started?"

So I did. And that's how **A ROYAL VOW OF CONVENIENCE** was born. It opens in beautiful Queensland and moves to England and New York. It's about a runaway princess and the enigmatic billionaire who is infuriated by her, yet who winds up rescuing her. But then, she goes and rescues him... Wouldn't you know it?

I'll end by saying how very grateful I am to have a career I love, and to thank each and every one of you who has supported me along the way. You really are very dear readers.

Love,

Sharon Kendrick

SHARON KENDRICK once won a national writing competition, describing her ideal date: being flown to an exotic island by a gorgeous and powerful man. Little did she realise that she'd just wandered into her dream job! Today she writes for Mills & Boon, featuring her often stubborn but always to-die-for heroes and the women who bring them to their knees. She believes that the best books are those you never want to end. Just like life...

Marriage Scandal, Showbiz Baby!

Sharon Kendrick



www.millsandboon.co.uk

MATT & JEN IN RED CARPET SHOWDOWN!

Hollywood superstars Matt and Jen surprised fans when they both turned up to their film premiere in Cannes yesterday, despite their recent acrimonious breakup. The tension was fierce between them, but they put on brave smiles for the cameras and even sat next to each other throughout the steamy movie

Mills & Boon are proud to present a thrilling digital collection of all Sharon Kendrick's novels and novellas for us to celebrate the publication of her amazing and awesome 100th book! Sharon is known worldwide for her likeable, spirited heroines and her gorgeous, utterly masculine heroes.

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CHAPTER ONE

A THOUSAND FLASHGUNS LIT the sky and the Mediterranean night was turned into garish day as the crowd surged forward.

‘Jennifer!’ they screamed. ‘Jennifer!’

Jennifer paused and smiled, the way the studio had taught her— “Don’t show your teeth, honey—they’re so English!”—but the irony of the situation didn’t escape her. You could be adored from afar by so many—yet inside be as lonely as hell.

She placed one sparkle-shoed foot on the step of the red carpet—the famous red carpet which slithered down the steps of the Festival Theatre like a scarlet snake. Oh, yes. A snake. Lots of those around at the Cannes Film Festival.

At the back of the building lay the fabled promenade of La Croisette, where lines of palm trees waved gently in the soft breeze. Beyond foamed the sapphire-edged waters of the Mediterranean, into which the evening sun had just set in a firework display of pink and gold. But, despite the warmth of the May evening which caressed her bare shoulders, Jennifer couldn’t stop the tiptoeing of regret which shivered over her skin.

Memories stayed stubbornly alive in your head, and you couldn’t stop them flooding back—no matter how hard you tried. She’d been in Cannes with Matteo during that first, blissful summer of their ill-fated romance, and she associated the whole dazzling coastline with him. Matteo had introduced her to the South of France and the heady world of films—just as he had introduced her to white wine and orgasm. Everything in life she thought worth knowing he had taught her.

‘You okay, Jen?’ came the gruff voice of her publicist, Hal, who—along with an assistant, had been shadowing her like a bodyguard all day, as if afraid that she wouldn’t actually turn up for the screening of her film tonight. And, yes, she’d been tempted to hide away in the luxury of her hotel room—but you couldn’t hide from the world for ever. Sooner or later you had to come out—and it was better to come out fighting!

Weighted by her elaborate blonde hairstyle, Jennifer dipped her head so that her low words could be neither lip-read nor heard by the crowds who were pushing towards her from behind the barrier ropes.

‘What do you think?’ she questioned softly. ‘I’m being forced to parade in front of the world’s media and pretend I don’t care that my husband has been flaunting his new lover.’

‘Hey, Jennifer,’ said Hal softly. ‘That sounds awfully like jealousy—and you were the one who walked out of the marriage, remember?’

And for good reasons. But she knew it was pointless trying to explain them. People like Hal thought she was mad. They had told her in not so many words that she couldn’t expect a man like Matteo to be faithful. As if she should just be grateful that he had cared enough to put a shiny gold band on her finger. Well, maybe her expectations were higher than those of other people in the acting world, but she wasn’t about to start lowering them now.

‘It’s just harder than I thought it would be,’ she murmured.

They’d only split six months ago, and yet already the press had started describing her as ‘lonely’ and ‘unlucky in love’—because, unlike Matteo, she had not fallen straight into the arms of a new lover. Maybe it was different for women. Didn’t they say that men recovered more quickly from a break-up?

Her pride had been wounded and she wasn’t sure she was ever going to be able to replace the man who had been her husband—though that was what the world seemed to want. She just wanted to get through this first public appearance at the world’s most famous film festival—then surely anything else would be easy-peasy. Please God, it would.

‘Jennifer!’ screamed the crowd again.

‘Don’t even attempt to sign autographs,’ warned Hal. ‘Or there’ll be a riot!’

‘You mean there isn’t already?’ she joked.

‘That’s better,’ Hal murmured approvingly. ‘Just keep smiling.’

But as Jennifer began to slowly mount the staircase she heard different voices, which somehow managed to penetrate the clamour of her fans. The clipped, intrusive tones of professional broadcasters. Here we go, she thought.

‘Hey, Jennifer—have you met your husband’s new lover yet?’

‘Jennifer! GMRV news! Any plans for a divorce?’

‘Jen—are the rumours that Sophia is pregnant true?’

Pregnant? Surely that must be some kind of cruel joke? Jennifer gripped onto her sapphire silk clutch-bag so hard that her knuckles showed up white, but then she automatically relaxed them just in case a camera should pick up the tell-tale tension.

‘Jennifer—how do you feel about seeing your husband here tonight?’

At first Jennifer thought that she must have misheard the last statement—her ears playing tricks with her and plucking a wrong note from out of the sea of sound. Matteo wasn’t here tonight—he was miles away, in Italy, and she had agreed to attend the Festival because she had known that. They hadn’t seen each other in months, and Jennifer was still emotionally wobbly. She wasn’t naïve enough to think that their paths would never cross, but had just hoped that it would be without an audience. Especially so soon.

Like a child swimming in choppy waters and searching for a life-raft, she looked round at Hal—but the sudden frozen set of his shoulders made her tense with a terrible growing suspicion.

She tried to catch his eye, but he was steadfastly refusing to meet her gaze. And then the press pack were closing in again, and Jennifer’s gaze was drawn upwards, as if compelled to do so by some irresistible force.

Until she saw him—and her ears began to roar as the world closed in on her.

It couldn’t be. Please, God—it just couldn’t be.

But it was. Oh, it was—for there was no mistaking the dynamic presence that was Matteo d’Arezzo.

Jennifer felt sick and faint—but somehow she sucked in a slow breath of oxygen and managed to keep the meaningless smile on her face as she gazed in disbelief at the man who was standing at the top of the red carpet, surrounded by a small bunch of sychophants—as if he were king of all he surveyed.

His Italian looks were dark and brooding, and his body was lean and honed and shown off to perfection in the coal-black dinner suit. Legs slightly parted, his hands deep in the pockets of his elegant trousers, his casual stance stretched the material over his thighs—emphasising their hard, muscular shafts...leaving nothing about his virile physique to the imagination. Long-lashed jet eyes glittered in the olive-gold of his face, and they flicked over her now in a way which was achingly familiar yet heartbreakingly alien.

Jennifer’s heart contracted in her chest. It had been so long since she’d seen him. Too long, and yet not long enough.

And women were screaming his name.

Screaming it as once she had screamed it, in his arms and in his bed.

Matteo.

She felt like a mannequin in a shop window—with the look of a real person about her, but a complete inability to move.

But she had to move. She had to.

The cameras would be trained on both faces. Looking for a reaction—any reaction, but preferably one which would provide the meat for a juicy story.

She willed some warmth into her frozen smile and began to walk up towards him, thanking her impossibly tight silk dress for the slowness of her steps.

It was a walk which seemed to go on for ever. The roar of the crowd retreated and the blur of their faces merged, and as she grew closer she could see the dark shadowing of his jaw and the cruel curve of his lips. Men like Matteo did not grow on trees, and his outrageous beauty and sex-appeal often made the casual observer completely awestruck. Well, he would not intimidate her as he had spent his life intimidating the studio. He was her cheating ex-husband—nothing more and nothing less—and she needed to take control of the situation.

She lifted her head as she reached him. ‘Hello, Matteo,’ she said coolly.

To see her was like being struck by lightning, and Matteo could feel the hot rods of desire as he saw the creamy thrust of her breasts edged by silk as deeply blue as the ocean. He tensed, his mind racing with questions as he stared down at his estranged wife.

Che cosa il hell stava accendo?

But his face stayed unmoving, even though his groin had begun to tighten, and he cursed his erection and despised the unfathomable desire which made him so unbearably hard. For there were women more beautiful than Jennifer Warren—but none who had ever made him feel quite so...so...

He swallowed down thoughts of what he would like to do, and how much he despised himself for wanting to do it. Weak was not a word he would ever use to describe himself—but something about the physical spell his wife had always cast over him was as debilitating as when Delilah had shorn off Samson’s hair...

What the hell was she doing here? And why the hell had he not been told?

He knew that the cameras were trained on him—and on her—waiting for their reactions. A flicker of emotion here. A tell-tale sign there. Something—anything—to indicate what either was thinking. And if they couldn’t find out, then they’d make something up!

Training took over from instinct and he kept the tightening of his mouth at bay. Only the sudden steeliness of his eyes hinted at his inner disquiet, and that was far too subtle to be seen. He would give them nothing!

The glance he gave Jennifer was cursory, almost dismissive—but visually it was encyclopaedic to a man who had grown up appreciating women, who could assess them in the blinking of an eye. He felt the quickening of his pulse and the silken throb of his blood, for the bright blue silk of her dress clung indecently to every curve of her magnificent body.

For a moment he ran his eyes proprietorially over the soft swell of her breasts and the narrow indentation of her waist, and he did so without guilt. Why the hell should he feel guilt? She was still his wife—maledicala—even though her greedy lawyers were picking over the carcass of their marriage.

Two of the Festival staff moved towards him to usher him inside, but he waved them away with a dismissive gesture.

Should he turn his back on her? That was what he wished he could do. But he decided against it—for would that not just excite more comment from the babbling idiots who would fill their gossip columns with it tomorrow?

Instead, he gave a bland and meaningless smile as she reached him, and looked down into her sapphire eyes, which were huge in a china-white face and blinking at him now in that way which always made him...

Don’t do vulnerable, Jenny, he thought. Don’t turn those big blue eyes on me like that or I may just forget all the anger and the rifts and do something unforgivable, like taking you in my arms in full view of the world and kissing you in a way that no man will ever come close to for the rest of your life.

‘What the hell are you doing here?’ she said weakly.

‘Wondering if you’re wearing any knickers,’ he murmured.

‘I’m surprised you haven’t worked that out for yourself—women’s underwear is your specialist subject, isn’t it?’

How crisp and English she sounded! Just like when they’d met—and then he’d been blown away by it. That cool wit and ice-hot sexuality. But—like a rare, hot-house flower—she had not survived

the move to the tougher climes of Hollywood. Her career had flourished, but their relationship had withered.

‘Oh, cara, don’t you know that when you’re angry you’re irresistible?’

She wanted to tell him that she didn’t care. But it wasn’t true. Because if she didn’t keep a tight rein on her feelings then she might just let it all blurt out and tell him things that he must never know.

That the pain of seeing him was almost too much to bear, and that in the wee, small hours of the morning she still reached for the warmth of her husband in the cold, empty space beside her.

Then remember, she told herself fiercely. Remember just why you’ve haven’t seen him in so long.

‘I had no idea you were going to be here,’ she said, gritting her teeth behind her smile.

‘Snap!’

‘You didn’t know either?’

His black brows knitted together. ‘You think I would have come here if I had?’ he demanded softly. ‘Cara, you flatter yourself!’

Oddly enough, this hurt more than it had any right to and almost as an antidote to meaningless pain, Jennifer forced herself to ask the question which twisted her gut in two. ‘Is your girlfriend with you?’

His mouth hardened. ‘No.’

Jennifer expelled a low breath of relief. At least she had been spared that. Fine actress she might be, and pragmatic enough to accept that her marriage to Matteo was over, but she didn’t think that even she could have borne to see the smug and smiling face of her husband’s new lover. ‘I’m going inside,’ she said, in a low voice.

He gave a cold smile as he walked up the red carpet beside her and into the glittering foyer. ‘Looks like we’ve got each other for company,’ he drawled. ‘Pity we’re both on the guest-list, isn’t it, Jenny? I guess that’s one of the drawbacks of a couple making a film together and then separating soon afterwards!’

‘Matteo!’ It was Hal’s voice. He had obviously judged it safe to talk to them.

Jennifer and Matteo both turned and—for all their differences—their expressions were united in a cold-eyed assessment of their publicist as he panted his way up the stairs and gave them both an uneasy smile.

Matteo spoke while barely moving his mouth. ‘You’re history—you know that, Hal,’ he said easily. ‘You tricked me to get me here, and you bring me face to face with my ex-wife in the most awkward of circumstances. I am appalled—furious—at my stupidity for not having realised that you would stoop to this level in order to publicise your damned film. But, believe me, I shall make you pay.’

‘Now, let’s not be hasty,’ blustered Hal.

‘Oh, let’s,’ vowed Jennifer, her bright smile defusing the bitter undertone in her voice. ‘This is the most sneaky and underhand thing you’ve ever done.’

An official appeared by their side, a brief look of perplexity crossing his brow as he sensed the uncomfortable atmosphere. He made a slight bow. ‘May I show you to your seats, monsieur, madame?’

Matteo raised his elegant dark brows. ‘What do you want to do, Jenny? Go home?’

She wanted to tell him not to call her that, for only he had ever called her that. The soft-accented and caressing nickname no longer thrilled her or made her feel softly dizzy with desire. Now it mocked her—reminding her that everything between them had been an utter sham. And did he think she was going to hang her head and hide? Or run away? Was his ego so colossal that he thought she couldn’t face sitting through a performance of a film she had poured everything into?

‘Why should I want to do that?’ she questioned with a half-smile. ‘We might as well gain something from this meeting. And at least the publicity will benefit the box office.’

Matteo’s mouth twisted. ‘Ah, your career! Your precious career!’

Censure hardened his voice, and Jennifer thought how unfair it was that ambition should be applauded in a man but despised in a woman. When she'd met him he had been the famous one—so well-known that she had felt in danger of losing herself in the razzle-dazzle which surrounded him.

It had been pride which had made her want a piece of the action herself—to show the world that she was more than just Matteo's wife—but in the end it had backfired on her. For her own rise to superstardom had taken her away from him and spelt the beginning of the end of their marriage.

She didn't let her smile slip, but her blue eyes glinted with anger. 'We're separated, Matteo,' she murmured. 'Which no longer gives you the right to pass judgement on me. So let's skip the character assassination and just get this evening over with, shall we?'

'It will be my pleasure, cara,' he said softly. 'But you will forgive me if I don't offer you my arm?'

'I wouldn't take it even if you did.'

'Precisely.'

Jennifer had been dreading the première, but it was doubly excruciating to have to walk into the crowded cinema with her estranged husband by her side. All eyes turned towards them with a mixture of expectancy and curiosity as they took their seats in a box. For a few seconds conversation hushed, and then broke out again in an excited babble, and Jennifer wished herself anywhere other than there.

But there was no comfort even when the lights were dimmed, because for a start she was sitting right next to him—next to the still-distracting and sexy body. And the giant image which now flashed up onto the screen made it worse. For it was Matteo. And Jennifer. Playing roles which they must have been crazy to even consider when their marriage had been showing the first signs of strain.

They'd been cast as a couple whose marriage was being dissected in an erotically charged screenplay. There were other characters who impacted on the relationship—but the main one was the other woman. The irresistible other woman, who threatened and ultimately helped destroy the happiness of the couple who'd thought they had everything.

Art imitating life—or was it life imitating art?

It wasn't real, Jennifer told herself fiercely. If she and Matteo had been strong together, then no woman—no matter how beautiful—could have come between them.

But it was still painful to watch. And even if she closed her eyes she couldn't escape, for she could still hear the sounds of their whispered lines, or—worse—the sounds of their faked cries of pleasure. Hers and Matteo's. His and the other woman's. How easy it was to imagine the other woman in his arms as Sophia, and how bitterly it hurt.

Jennifer watched as her own screen eyes fluttered to a close, her lips parting to utter a long, low moan as her back arched in a frozen moment of pure ecstasy.

'I'm coming!' she breathed.

All around her Jennifer could hear the massed intake of breath as the people watched her orgasm—watched her real-life husband follow her, his dark head sinking at last to shudder against her bare shoulder.

She closed her eyes to block out the sight and the sounds—but nothing could release her from the torment of wondering what the audience were thinking and feeling. Perhaps some of them were even turned on by the blatant sexuality of the act.

It was a ground-breaking film, but now Jennifer suppressed a shudder. It no longer looked clever and avant-garde, but slightly suspect. What kind of job had she been sucked in to doing—to have stooped so low as to replicate orgasm with her real-life husband while the cameras rolled?

And then—at last—the final line. The amplified sound of herself saying the words 'Now she's gone. And now we can begin all over again.' The screen went black, the credits began to roll and there was a moment of stunned silence as the cinema audience erupted into applause.

The lights went up and Jennifer stared down at her hands to see that they were trembling violently.

‘Ah! Did the emotion of the film get to you?’ mocked the silken tones of Matteo, and she looked up to see that his eyes were on her fingers. ‘You’ve taken your wedding band off, I see?’

She nodded. ‘Yes. I threw it away, actually.’

His black eyes narrowed. ‘You’re kidding?’

‘Of course I’m not.’ Jennifer wouldn’t have been human if she hadn’t experienced a thrill of triumph at the look of shock on his handsome face. But any triumph was swiftly followed by anger. Did he think it a comparable shock to seeing those snatched long-range photos of him kissing Sophia in a New York park?

She turned her blue eyes on him. ‘What on earth does a woman do with a redundant wedding ring?’ she questioned in a low voice. ‘I don’t have a daughter to leave it to, and I’m too rich to need to pawn it. So what would you suggest, Matteo? That I melt it down and have it made into earrings—or else keep it in a box to remind me of what a sham your vows were?’

He bent his head towards her ear, presumably so that the movement of his lips could not be seen, but Jennifer felt dizzy as his particular scent washed over her senses.

‘How poisonous you can be, Jenny,’ he commented softly.

‘I learnt it at the hands of a grand master!’ she returned, as he straightened up and she met his cold smile with one of her own. ‘Oh, God,’ she breathed, their slanging match momentarily forgotten. ‘Here they come.’

Matteo shook himself back to reality, irritated to realise that he had been caught up with watching the movement of her lips and the way that the great sweep of her eyelashes cast feathery shadows over the pure porcelain of her skin. Insanely, he felt himself grow hard.

But he wouldn’t beat himself up about it. You didn’t have to be in love with a woman to want to...to...

Dignitaries were bearing down on them. He could see a cluster of executives and all the other acolytes that the film world spawned. His eyes narrowed and he turned to Jennifer.

‘You’re not going to the after-show party, I presume?’ he demanded.

‘Why not?’

‘Perhaps it bothers you that I will be there?’

‘Don’t be silly, Matteo,’ she chided. ‘You aren’t part of my life any more—why on earth should it bother me?’

His eyes hardened. ‘Then we might as well go there together. Si?’

That hadn’t been what she’d meant at all. Jennifer opened her mouth to protest, and then shut it again. Maybe this way was better. She would have Matteo by her side as they walked down the endless red carpet and into the waiting car. And while he might not have been faithful at least he had always protected her, and she missed that. Badly.

‘People will talk.’

‘Oh, Jenny.’ His laugh was tinged with bitterness. ‘People will talk anyway. Whatever we do.’

She met his eyes in a moment of shared understanding which was more painful than anything else he had said to her, for it hinted at a former intimacy so powerful that it had blown her away.

And suddenly Jennifer wanted to break down and weep for what they had lost. Or maybe for what they had never had.

‘Come on,’ said Matteo impatiently. ‘Let’s just go and get it over with.’

CHAPTER TWO

SOMEHOW THE LONG SCARLET flight of steps seemed safer this time around—and so did the legion of press waiting at the foot of them. As if Matteo had managed to throw the mantle of his steely strength over Jennifer's shoulders and was protecting her and propelling her along by the sheer force of his formidable will.

Even the questions which were hurled at them about their relationship had somehow lost their impact to wound her. As if Matteo was deflecting them and bouncing them back with one hard, glittering look and a contemptuous curl of his lip which made women go ga-ga and photographers quake.

The party was in one of the glitziest hotels along the Croisette itself, but Jennifer found herself wishing that it was being held in one of the restaurants which lined the narrow, winding backstreets where Matteo had once taken her. The real Cannes—where such luminaries as Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton had eaten. But it didn't really matter where the party was—she was going to stay only for as long as necessary and then she was leaving. That way she would save her face and save her pride.

They were in a room which was decorated entirely in gold—to echo the colour of the Festival's most prestigious award, the Palme d' Or. The walls were lined with heavy golden silk, like the inside of a Bedouin tent, and there were vases of gold-sprayed twigs laced with thousands of tiny glimmering lights. Beautiful young women dressed in belly-dancer outfits swayed around the room, carrying trayfuls of champagne.

But once she had accepted a drink Jennifer deliberately walked away from Matteo. She didn't need him, and she was here to show him and the rest of the world just that. She was an independent woman—why would she need anyone? That was what her mother had always told her, and it seemed that her words had been scarily prophetic.

The party might have had a budget to rival that of a small republic, but it was a crush—and less hospitable than some of the student get-togethers Jennifer had gone to in her youth.

An aging but legendary agent was holding court. A nubile starlet was not only falling out of her dress but also falling over from too much wine, by the look of her. A raddled-looking rock star was looking around the room with a stupid grin on his well-known face and suspiciously bright eyes. And from out of the corner of her eye she saw Matteo being surrounded by a gaggle of glamorous women.

Welcome to the world of showbiz, thought Jennifer wryly. But inside she was hurting more than she could have imagined it was possible to hurt.

She dodged passes, questions, and having her glass refilled—managing instead to find a very famous and very gay British actor who was standing in the corner surveying the goings-on with the bemused expression of a spectator at the zoo. Jennifer had played Regan to his King Lear, and she walked up to him with a sigh of relief.

'Thank heavens,' she breathed. 'A friendly face with no agenda!'

'Hiding from the vultures?' he questioned wryly. 'Sort of. Congratulations on your knighthood by the way. What are you doing here?'

'Same as you, I imagine. I may be an old queen—and a knight now, to boot—but I have to please my publicist like a good boy.'

'Don't we all?'

He surveyed her thoughtfully. 'I see you arrived with that adorable man you married—does that mean you're back together?'

In spite of the room's heat, Jennifer trembled—but she was a good enough actress to inject just the right amount of lightness into her voice. 'No. We're just playing games with the press. The marriage is over.'

‘Sorry to hear that,’ he said carelessly. ‘Occupational hazard, I’m afraid. You’ll get over it, duckie—you’re young and you’re beautiful.’ He sighed, his eyes drifting to Matteo once more. ‘Mind you—so is he!’

Jennifer grimaced a smile. ‘Yes.’

‘Go home and forget him,’ he said gently. ‘And stay away from actors—they’re feckless and unfaithful and I should know! Marry a businessman next time.’

‘I’m not even divorced yet,’ she said solidly. ‘And even if I were, this thing has scarred me for life—I’m through with marriage. Anyway—better run. Lovely to see you, Charles.’

They exchanged two butterfly air-kisses and then Jennifer resolutely made her way towards the door and slipped away—not noticing that she was being followed by a Hollywood icon who had just gone through divorce number four.

Not until she was in a quiet corridor and he moved right up close behind her.

Jennifer jumped and turned round. ‘Oh, it’s you, Jack!’ she exclaimed nervously. ‘You startled me!’

He flashed his trademark smile. ‘Well, well, well,’ he drawled softly. ‘Maybe my luck has changed for the better. You look damned gorgeous.’ He crinkled his blue eyes and directed his gaze at her chest. ‘So, how’s life, Jennifer?’

Jennifer knew that his fame meant he got away with stuff that other men would be prosecuted for, and she should have been used to the predatory way that such men feasted their eyes on her breasts, but the truth was that she didn’t think she’d ever get used to it. ‘I’m fine, thanks,’ she said blandly.

‘Well, since we’re in the same boat, maritally speaking...’ His voice dipped suggestively and his swimming pool eyes gleamed. ‘It can get a little lonely in bed at night—what say we keep each other company?’ And then his eyes narrowed as a shadow fell over him and he looked up into a pair of black, glittering eyes. ‘Well, well, well,’ he blustered. ‘If it isn’t the Italian Stallion!’

Matteo wasn’t bothered by the star’s slurred insult, but he felt a shimmering of intense irritation as he saw the fraught expression on his wife’s face. That and the blunt hit of jealousy.

‘Are you okay, Jenny?’ he demanded.

She wanted to tell him that it was none of his business, but instead she looked straight into his eyes. And, in one of those silent looks between two people who have lived together which speak volumes, her eyes told him that, no, she wasn’t okay. ‘I was just leaving.’

‘What a coincidence,’ Matteo murmured. ‘So was I.’

The sex symbol frowned in confusion, looking from Matteo to Jennifer like a spectator at a tennis match. ‘But I thought—’

‘Well, don’t,’ Matteo interjected silkily. ‘You’re not paid to think—you’re paid to act...pretty badly, as it happens, which is why your career is on the way down.’

And he took Jennifer’s hand in a proprietary way which made her momentarily long for the past and loathe herself for doing so as he led her down a corridor.

‘What do you think you’re doing?’ she demanded, shaking him off once they were out of sight.

‘You wanted to get away from that strisciamento?’

‘Well, yes. But not with you!’

‘Are you certain?’ His eyes glittered. ‘I’ve discovered a service lift which bypasses all the press—if you’re interested?’ He arched his dark eyebrows as they came to a discreet-looking steel door at the end of the corridor which was light-years away from the luxury of the guest lift they’d ridden up in.

‘Aren’t you the clever one?’ she questioned sarcastically.

‘But of course I am—we both know that. Coming?’

Jennifer hesitated.

‘Unless you’re secretly hot for the bastardo?’ he suggested silkily. ‘And want to stick around?’

Jennifer glanced back along the corridor and then stepped into the lift beside Matteo, pointedly moving as far away from him as possible as the doors slid shut on them.

‘You’re going to have to watch your step, Jenny,’ Matteo said softly as the lift began to whirr into action. ‘Men like that eat women for breakfast.’

Jennifer stared at him in disbelief. ‘How dare you?’ she questioned. ‘In view of what’s happened how dare you take a holier-than-thou opinion on another man’s behaviour? Have you tried looking at your own lately?’ She clenched her hands into two tight fists, her breath coming hot and fast as the words came spilling out of her mouth. ‘How’s your girlfriend, Matteo?’

Matteo’s eyes narrowed. ‘Jenny, don’t—’

‘Don’t you dare tell me “Jenny, don’t”! Remind me of her name again.’ Jennifer faked a frown. ‘Oh, yes—Sophia! Not exactly a household name at the moment, but I guess that’ll soon change with the magic of the d’ Arezzo influence.’

‘You didn’t knock it when you used it yourself,’ he challenged softly.

‘You bastard! At least I was known for being a good actress before I met you—and not for pouting and lounging around half-naked in some over-hyped perfume advertisement! So, was she worth it?’

Matteo’s black eyes flared. Had he meant so little to her that she could enquire after another woman as if she were asking the time? For, while he accepted that their marriage was over, Matteo knew that if he bumped into any lover of hers he would want to tear him limb from limb.

‘I don’t think that’s any of your business, do you?’ he drawled. ‘You wanted a divorce—and you’re damned well getting one! Technically, that makes me a free man, Jenny—and at liberty to date whom I please.’

‘But you weren’t technically free in New York, when you started your affair with her, were you, Matteo? When the cameras caught you kissing her?’ The words were out before she could stop them and he stared at her, an odd expression in his eyes which Jennifer had never seen before.

‘I hadn’t slept with her then,’ he said slowly.

The use of the word then cut through her like a knife. ‘But now you have?’ She swallowed. ‘Slept with her?’

It was both a statement and a question, and there was a long and uneasy pause. For, no matter what the circumstances leading up to the act had been, Matteo knew he had broken his marital vows. ‘Yes.’

Jennifer clamped her clenched fist against her mouth as the cold rip of jealous rage tore through her heart. But what had she expected? For him to carry on denying a physical relationship? To pretend that his undeniable attraction towards the stunning Italian starlet had remained unconsummated?

Matteo was a devastatingly attractive and virile man. He needed sex like most men needed water. Well, she had asked the question, and she had only herself to blame if he had given her the answer she had dreaded.

She had thought that the pain of their break-up couldn’t possibly get any worse, but in that she had been completely wrong. He had said it now. He had slept with Sophia. His body had lain naked against hers, warm skin against warm skin. He had entered another woman, had pushed inside her and moved and then thrown his head back and groaned out his pleasure in the way she knew so well—the way he had done with her.

And spilled his seed inside her? Made this other woman pregnant, like the pressmen had suggested earlier?

Biting against her fingers, Jennifer fought hard to prevent herself from retching. The mind could be a wonderfully protective organ—allowing you to block things out because they were too painful to contemplate—but it could be capricious and cruel, too, and Matteo’s words triggered an inner torment as images of his infidelity came rushing in, like some unwanted and explicit porn film.

Jennifer leaned against the steel wall of the lift, beads of sweat gathering above her upper lip as she pictured her husband naked with another woman.

Matteo frowned and made an instinctive move towards her. 'Cara, you are faint?'

'Don't you dare call me that!' she spat, and shrank even farther against the metal, which felt cold against her bare back. She wiped the back of her hand over her clammy face. 'And don't you dare come near me!'

A wave of sadness washed over him and he wondered how something which had seemed so perfect could have deteriorated into a situation where Jennifer was staring at him as if he was her most dangerous and bitter enemy.

Maybe he was. Maybe that was what inevitably happened when a marriage broke down. Maybe the myth of an 'amicable' divorce was exactly that—a myth.

He stared at her as she moved a little restlessly, as if aware of how tiny the enclosed space was. Her proximity was distracting. Matteo's senses felt raw—as if someone had been nicking at them with a razor. Yet when he looked at her he felt nostalgic for times past, and that was always painful—for it had never been real. Because memory played tricks with your emotions. It tampered with the past and rewrote it—so that everyone saw it differently. He knew that Jennifer's version of it would be different from his own, and there was nothing he could do about that.

But maybe that was only part of it. For the eyes didn't lie, did they? He studied her and thought how much time had changed her. Tonight she was all sleek Hollywood film star—her heavy blonde hair caught up in an elaborate topknot with a few artistic tendrils tumbling down around her face. Her gym-tight body was encased in clinging sapphire silk, and she was bedecked in priceless diamond and sapphire jewellery.

How little she resembled the rosy-cheeked girl with tousled hair and bohemian clothes he'd fallen in love with. Was it the same for her? Did she look at him and see a stranger in his face today?

And a floodgate was opened as the reflection triggered a reaction. Forbidden thoughts rushed into his head with disturbing clarity, and Matteo remembered the pure magic of meeting her. Of feeling something which had been completely alien to him.

CHAPTER THREE

MATTEO HAD BEEN FILMING in England. The ‘Italian Heart-Throb’—as the newspapers had insisted on calling him—had agreed to play Shakespeare. It had been a gamble, but one Matteo had been prepared to take. He had been bored with the stereotypical roles which had brought him fame and riches, and eager to show his mettle. To prove to the world—and himself—that an Italian-American could play Hamlet. And why not? All kinds of actors were switching accents in a bid to show versatility in the competitive international film market. Some had even won awards for doing just that.

Jennifer had been playing Ophelia—but not in his film. She’d been what they called a ‘serious’ actress—stage-trained, relatively poor, and rather aloof. He had gone along one evening to watch her perform and had been unable to tear his eyes away from her.

They’d been introduced backstage, and he’d been both intrigued and infuriated when she’d given a slightly smug smile which seemed to say I know your type.

‘I loved your performance,’ he said, with genuine warmth, before realising that it made him sound like some kind of stage-door Johnny—him!

‘Thank you. You’re playing Hamlet yourself, I believe?’ she questioned, in the tone of someone going through the motions of necessary conversation. Almost as if she was bored!

‘You do not approve?’ he challenged. ‘Of someone like me playing one of your greatest roles?’

Jennifer blinked. ‘What an extraordinary assumption to jump to! I hadn’t given it a thought.’

And he knew that she spoke the truth. For a man who held the very real expectation that every actress in Stratford would be anticipating his visit as if it were the King of Denmark himself, Jennifer’s uninterest inflamed him.

She was studying him, her head tilted slightly. ‘But your reviews have been spectacular,’ she conceded, in the interests of fairness. ‘So well done.’

He knew that. Every theatre in the world wanted him, and Broadway was putting irresistible offers on his agent’s table. But somehow Jenny’s quiet compliment meant more to him than all those things. ‘Have dinner with me tonight,’ he said suddenly.

Jennifer put her head to one side, her tousled hair falling over her shoulders. ‘Why should I do that?’

A stream of clever retorts could yield entirely the wrong result, Matteo realised. For the first time in his life he anticipated that she might do the unthinkable and turn him down!

‘Because my life will be incomplete if you do not,’ he said simply.

‘You can’t say things like that!’ she protested, biting her lip with a mischievous kind of fascination.

‘I just did,’ he drawled unapologetically.

She stared at him for a long, considering moment. ‘Okay,’ she said, and smiled.

And there it had been—like all the old songs said—something about her smile.

Matteo had never really believed in love—considering it something which existed for the rest of the world, but which excluded him. He had seen glimpses of it, but never before had he felt the great rush of passion and protectiveness he experienced with Jennifer that day, which had been the beginning of their tempestuous and ultimately doomed union.

And now?

Now he believed that what had happened had been a cocktail of hormones which had combusted at a time in his life when he’d craved some kind of excitement. He had been right all along. Love was not real. It was a story they fed you which sold movies and books. That was all.

Jennifer rubbed distractedly at her forehead. ‘This lift is taking for ever.’

He had been so lost in his thoughts that he hadn’t noticed.

‘Is it?’ he questioned, as there was a sudden lurching kind of movement, followed by complete and deafening silence. Matteo looked from the disbelieving accusation in Jenny’s eyes to the stationary arrow on the illuminated panel. ‘Maybe you’re right,’ he mused. ‘Seems like we’ve run into a little trouble.’

‘Please tell me you’re joking.’

‘You think I’d joke about something like that? You think perhaps I’ve set this up?’ he demanded. ‘Lured you into this lift so that I can be alone with you?’

Jennifer turned glacial blue eyes on him. ‘And have you?’

He gave a short laugh. ‘Have I? Believe me when I tell you, cara, that I can think of a lot more agreeable companions to be stuck with than a woman who does not seem to know the reason of the word “trust”!’

‘And I’d rather be with the devil himself than some arrogant and egotistical sex maniac who can’t resist chasing anything in a skirt!’

His black eyes narrowed as he felt the bubble of rage begin to simmer up. ‘You dishonour me with such a description!’ he declared furiously.

‘It’s the truth!’

‘Ah, but it is not the truth, and deep down you know that, Jenny! You saw the amount of women who threw themselves at me! It was never the other way round.’

Yes. Those women who would pass him their telephone numbers openly in restaurants, right in front of her face, as if she were just part of the furniture. Or those others, who would use more devious methods to get the attention of the devastatingly handsome actor.

The shop assistants and the flight attendants who would slyly slide him their details. The doctors and lawyers who would invent the need for a meeting with him. It seemed that none of them had any shame—any woman with a pulse wanted her husband.

‘Did you ever stop to think what it was like for me, as your wife?’ she demanded.

‘Of course I did! You made it damned impossible for me to do otherwise!’

‘Did you? I think you used to treat it as an amusing little game—batting those gorgeous eyes as if to say, I’m not even doing anything, and still they bother me!’

‘Oh, Jenny—that was your insecurity talking, not mine. I’d gone beyond the stage where I needed fans to bolster my ego.’ His eyes darkened. ‘But, beyond refusing to leave the house, the only way to stop women coming on to me was to increase our security—and that brought its own claustrophobia.’ There was a pause. ‘And anyway, you know damned well that I pushed those women away.’

‘But you stopped pushing eventually, didn’t you, Matteo?’ she questioned, and she felt that familiar pain stabbing at her heart. And although part of her wondered why she was putting herself through yet more pain, she couldn’t seem to stop herself. ‘When you looked at Sophia. And you wanted her. Are you denying that?’

There was another kind of silence now—fraught and terrible in the already silent lift. Yes, he had been guilty of the sin of desiring another woman, but it should have remained just one of those unacted-upon desires which made up a human life. People were not immune to desiring other people even if they were married. Only the truly naïve believed otherwise. And it was the naïve who fell victim to mistaking that forbidden desire for love. Matteo had seen it, and known it for exactly what it was. Unfortunately, Jenny had not.

He had been filming with Sophia, and their on-screen chemistry had been so hot it had sparked off the set. Everyone in the industry had been talking about it. And eventually Jennifer had got to hear about it.

But even if she hadn’t developed such an obsession with it their marriage had already been at crisis point. Their work schedules had kept them apart so much that all she’d been getting were reports from the newspapers and photos of him with Sophia. She had picked away at the rumours—

like a teenager worrying at a blemish on her face—until eventually her jealousy and suspicions had blown up. Trust between them had already been destroyed by the time he had kissed Sophia.

‘You can’t deny it, can you, Matteo?’ she persisted. ‘That you wanted Sophia?’

‘What do you want me to say?’ he demanded. ‘Because by then what I did or didn’t do was irrelevant! We were no longer a real couple. We were so far apart from each other that we might as well have been existing on different planets.’ He looked at her across the confined space and his dark eyes were sombre. ‘You know we were.’

Jennifer bit her lip so that he wouldn’t see it trembling, because now there was pain in his eyes, too, and somehow that made it worse. It was far easier to think that Matteo was immune to the hurt of their break-up. Because if he shared even a fraction of her heartbreak, then somehow that only emphasised the precious thing they had shared and now lost.

‘Oh, what’s the point in discussing it? There’s nothing left to be said.’

Matteo stilled. ‘Well, for the first time in a long time we are of one accord, cara,’ he said softly.

Another barb. Yet more pain. But Jennifer silently thanked her ability to act as she kept her face from reacting and flicked him an impatient look instead. ‘Look, just concentrate on getting us out of this mess, will you, Matt—since you’re the one who got us into it.’

‘Are you implying that I’ve trapped you?’ he laughed softly.

‘No implication,’ she answered. ‘You have.’

He narrowed his eyes and listened. ‘Can you hear anything?’

‘Unfortunately, no.’

‘Got a phone?’

‘No.’

‘Me neither. The truly successful never carry phones to events like this, do they?’ he mused. ‘That would make us far too accessible to the big wide world—and there’s always someone to take our messages for us.’

For a moment Jennifer was surprised by the unfamiliar note of cynicism which had crept into his voice. ‘Surely Matteo d’ Arezzo hasn’t become disenchanted with the jetset world which brought him riches and fame?’

‘Isn’t that inevitable?’ he questioned drily. ‘Doesn’t it happen to everyone?’

‘Not to you.’ She shrugged. ‘I thought that success was your very lifeblood.’

‘Success on its own isn’t enough,’ he said tightly. ‘I don’t want to stay on this merry-go-round of a life until it chews me up and spits me out.’

Jennifer blinked. ‘I can’t believe you just said that.’

He looked at her and his eyes were like chips of jet. ‘Was I really so ruthless, Jenny?’

She thought about the way they’d pored over their working schedules like two prospectors who’d just struck gold and now she recognised her own ruthlessness, too. Oh, how stupidly short-sighted you could be when fame came tapping at your door. She shrugged her shoulders. ‘Maybe we both were.’

She felt the hot pricking of sweat on her forehead and ran her tongue over parched lips, noticing that his black gaze was trying not to be drawn to them. She hoped to God that he didn’t think she was giving him the come-on. Fractionally, she moved away from him. ‘What are we going to do?’

‘We don’t have a lot of choice. We wait.’

‘For how long?’

‘How the hell should I know?’ Did she think this was easy for him? Her standing so close and off-limits—her luscious body barely covered in some flimsy gown which made her look like...

‘Do you want to sit down?’ he suggested carefully. Because surely that way he wouldn’t have to be confronted by the tantalising thrust of her breasts?

Jennifer didn’t know if she dared move. She was aware that her panties were growing damp and that if she wasn’t careful Matteo would guess. He had always been so perfectly attuned to her body and

its needs that his senses would be instantly alerted to the physical manifestations of desire. Briefly, she shut her eyes, summoning thoughts which would kill that desire stone-dead. But it wasn't easy.

'You're okay?' he asked softly.

She opened them. Think of his betrayal. Of his doing with another woman what he had stood up in church and declared was for her and her alone. 'Oh, yes—I'm absolutely fine! Just wonderful! I'm trapped in a service lift in a foreign country with my cheating ex-husband. Exactly the way I would choose to spend my Saturday night!' She rubbed her fingertips against the necklace which was digging into her throat.

'Why don't you take that off?' he suggested, as he saw the red mark she'd left there. Her skin was moist and a damp tendril of hair was clinging to her neck.

She met his eyes. 'I beg your pardon?'

He gave a snort of savage laughter. 'Madre de Dio—don't look at me like that!'

'I wasn't looking like anything!'

'Oh, yes, you were,' he contradicted softly. 'With shock and horror written all over your face. As if I were suggesting some kind of striptease when all I meant was that your necklace doesn't look very comfortable.' He ran a disparaging glance over the heavy, wide choker which gleamed around her slender neck. 'Studio told you to wear it, did they?'

'Yes.' But he was right. She was aware of the costly gems digging into her flesh, making her feel as if she was wearing some upmarket dog-collar. Blindly, her hand reached up behind her, tried to reach the clasp, but failed—and there was no mirror...

'You want me to do it for you?' he questioned.

Jennifer hesitated, because it seemed almost too intimate a thing to do. The putting on and the taking off of a necklace was the kind of thing a husband did for his wife in the seclusion of their bedroom when they were properly married—not about to enter one of the biggest divorce battles of the year. Yet what choice did she have?

'I guess so. Never has the word "choker" seemed so appropriate,' she added sardonically.

He gave a wry smile. 'Turn around, then.'

But, confronted with the sight of her bare back, Matteo found his mind slipping into forbidden places. He silently cursed as he felt his erection grow even harder, thankful that she couldn't see his face—for he was certain that it had contorted into a pained expression of exquisite sexual frustration.

'You see...ex-husbands do have some uses,' he observed evenly, and lifted his fingers to unclasp the necklace, letting it slide into the palm of his hand like a heavy and glittering snake. 'There. Better?'

'Much...thank you.' Jennifer composed her face and turned—noting the dull flush of colour which was accentuating his high cheekbones. She knew what it meant when he looked like that—or at least she thought she did. Was he just getting overheated, or...?

Did he still want her? Was he imagining what they would have been doing in here if they were still married? Him rucking up her dress and pushing at her panties, unzipping himself and thrusting deep inside her, with her back pushed against the steel wall?

Oh, Lord—what was the matter with her? How could the thought of sex with him be so unbearably exciting despite everything that had happened between them? Everything they'd said and thought and done and accused each other of.

'Do you want me to put it in my pocket?' he asked. 'What?' asked Jennifer blankly.

He held the gems up. 'This.'

'Sure.' She nodded her head and turned away, unwilling to watch him slide them into his trousers, some sixth sense telling her what her eyes did not want to see—that he was hard and aroused.

So why did that thought give her some kind of primitive satisfaction instead of shocking her to the core?

As the minutes ticked by she could feel beads of sweat trickling down her back and a faint dampness gathering beneath the heaviness of her breasts. Shifting her position in her high-heeled

shoes, she could see the faint sheen on Matteo's olive skin, and she swallowed as their eyes met in an uncomfortable moment of awareness.

'It's hot,' he said huskily.

'Yes.' She looked into his face because there was nowhere else to look. Nowhere to run. The bare steel walls seemed to be shrinking in on them, and suddenly Jennifer was terrified of this false intimacy—frightened of the sensations which were beginning to creep over her skin and the thoughts which were flooding into her head.

She turned away from him and lifted up her fist, pounding it hard on the metal surface of the wall and wincing as she struck.

'Help! Let us out!' she called. But the silence was deafening. She raised her voice. 'Let us out!'

'Why do you shout when no one will hear us, Jenny?' 'Somebody's got to hear us! Because being in here with you is driving me mad!'

'I thought you liked that aspect of our relationship.'

'I wasn't talking sexual!'

His eyes drifted over the hard points of her nipples. 'Weren't you?'

'Oh, can't you keep your mind on something other than your bloody libido?'

Matteo almost smiled. She was angry. And she was aroused, too. He knew that with a certainty which only increased his own desire to an almost unbearable pitch. Would he ever again know a woman as intimately as he did this one?

She wished he would stop looking at her. She wished he was anywhere other than here. Because just his presence was making her have the kind of thoughts which were forbidden. Longing thoughts. Wishful thoughts.

'Help!' she screamed again, and this time she began to drum both fists against the wall. 'Please, somebody—help us!'

'Jenny, don't—'

But his words inflamed her even more—or maybe she was just in the mood to be inflamed. And seeing his insufferably enigmatic face as he calmly watched her losing it was like pouring paraffin on an already blazing fire. 'I'll do as I damn well please!' she retorted furiously. 'And you can't stop me!'

He wanted to marvel, because this raging woman was utterly magnificent, but he could see from the rapid movement of her breathing that she was in danger of hyperventilating. 'That's enough! Now, stop it,' he said flatly.

'No!' she yelled, and hot, angry tears began to spill from beneath her eyelids. 'No, I won't stop it!'

Swiftly he moved towards her, wrenching her away from the wall, and she whirled round, imprisoned in his arms, and began to beat against his chest instead.

'Si,' he urged her softly. 'Hit me. Hit me if it makes you feel better, cara!'

'Bastard!' She slapped him. 'You bloody, bloody cheating bastard!'

'Si. That, too.'

'That's for that bitch you slept with!'

He took her furious punch without flinching.

'And so is that!'

She made a little roar of rage as she drummed against his chest until her hands ached. And then suddenly her rage became frustration, and all the fight went out of her, to be replaced by a different kind of emotion. She shook her head, trying to deny it, her hands falling as she looked up and saw something change in his eyes, too.

The look of understanding, of empathy, and the fleeting look of sorrow had been replaced by something else. Something she knew all too well and had never thought to see again—even though she had longed for it in the sleepless nights which had followed his departure. And it was wrong. Wrong. Oh, so wrong. He had been to bed with another woman!

'Was she better than me?' she demanded.

‘Jenny, stop it.’

‘No, seriously—I want to know. Did you do it to her lots of times? Like you did to me when we first met?’

He winced as if she’d hit him, and then the need to destroy her foolish fantasy simply overwhelmed him. ‘You want to know the truth?’ he exploded. ‘I did it to her once—just once—and it was the biggest non-event of my life. Do you know why that was? Because all I could see was your face, Jenny. All I could feel was your body.’

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