

It Happened One Summer Novel – Chapter 24 -

Brendan had been hoping to get a lot of time alone with Piper while in Seattle. He hadn't expected to get it so soon, but he sure as hell wasn't going to complain.

As the four of them stood in the lavish hotel lobby getting ready to part ways, he did his best not to feel underdressed in jeans, flannel, and boots. He'd taken off the beanie as soon as he'd gotten to his room, kind of dumbfounded by the level of extravagance.

The price of their stay had tipped him off that it would be fancy, but he was going to spend the whole time worried about leaving boot prints on the carpet.

This is what she's used to. This is what you'll give her.

Piper was laughing at Hannah's disgruntled expression. "Is it that bad?" "She didn't even warn me. Just *rip*."

"Who didn't warn you?" Fox asked, splitting a curious look between the women. "Jesus. What happened since we left you?"

"We got waxed," Piper explained breezily. "In the room." Hannah poked her sister in the ribs. "*Piper*."

Piper paused in the act of fluffing her hair. "What? It's like a basic human function."

"Not for everyone." Hannah laughed, red-faced. "Oh my God. I should go before my sister embarrasses me any more." She turned to Fox, raised an eyebrow. "Ready?"

For once, Brendan's best friend appeared to be at a loss for words. "Uh, yeah." He coughed into his fist. "Let's go record shopping."

"Meet back here at six for dinner," Brendan said.

Fox saluted lazily and followed Hannah toward the exit.

They were almost to the revolving door when Piper tugged on Brendan's shirt, making him look down. "They worry me a little. She says they're just friendly, but I don't want my sister to get her heart broken."

Brendan wouldn't say it out loud, but he'd been worried about the same thing. Fox didn't have female friends. He had one-night stands. "I'll talk to him."

Piper nodded, though she cast one more worried glance at her sister's and Fox's retreating backs. "So . . ." She turned on a heel and gave Brendan her full attention. "It's just the two of us. For the whole afternoon. Should we go sightseeing?"

“No.”

“No?” Her eyes were playful. “What did you have in mind?”

She obviously thought he was going to throw her over his shoulder and bring her back up to the room. And goddamn, he was tempted to spend the whole day fucking a bare-naked Piper on that ridiculous bed, but being predictable wouldn't serve him. He needed to use his time with her wisely. “I'm taking you shopping.”

Her smile collapsed. A sheen coated her eyes.

A trembling hand pressed to her throat. “Y-you are?” she whispered. He tucked a fall of hair behind her ear. “Yes.”

“But . . . really? Now?” “Yes.”

She fanned her face. “For what?” “Whatever you want.”

Those blue eyes blinked. Blinked again. A line formed between her brows. “I can't . . . I can't think of a single thing I want right now.”

“Maybe once you start looking—”

“No.” She wet her lips, seeming almost surprised by the words coming out of her mouth. “Brendan, I will always love shopping and fancy hotels. Like, *love* them. But I don't need them. I don't need you to do”—she encompassed the lobby with a sweeping gesture—“all of this in order to make me happy.” Her cheek pressed to his chest. “Can you let me into the recharging station, please?”

Without delay, his arms were wrapped around Piper, his mouth pressed to the crown of her head. Until she said the words and relief settled over him, he didn't know how badly he needed to hear them. He might be able to afford places like this, but he couldn't deny the need to be enough on his own.

Oddly, now that she'd erased that worry, he found himself wanting to treat her to a day of her favorite things even more. “I'm taking you shopping, honey.”

“No.”

“Yes, I am.”

“No, Brendan. This isn't necessary. I'd be just as happy watching them throw fish at Pike Place Market with you, and oh my God, I really mean that.” She snuggled in closer, her hand fisting in his flannel. “I really, actually do.”

“Piper.” He dropped his mouth to her ear. “Spoiling you makes my dick hard.”

"Why didn't you say so?" She grabbed his hand and tugged him toward the exit. "Let's go shopping!"

* * *

"*Jeans?*"

Piper lifted her chin. "You said whatever I want."

Enjoying the hell out of himself, Brendan followed Piper through the aisles of the classy Pacific Place shop, watching her ass punch side to side in her pink skirt. She was so in her element among the mannequins and racks of clothes, he was glad as hell he'd pushed to go shopping. As soon as they'd walked through the doors, salesgirls had descended on his girlfriend and they were already on a first-name basis, running off to retrieve a stack of jeans in Piper's size.

"Of course, you can get whatever you want," he said, trying to keep from knocking over racks with his wide shoulders. "I just figured you'd go straight for the dresses."

"I might have." She sent him a haughty look over her shoulder. "If I didn't remember you sarcastically asking me if I owned a pair of jeans."

"The night you went dancing at Blow the Man Down?" He thought back. "I didn't think you recalled half that night."

"Oh, only the important parts," she said. "Like backhanded slights against my wardrobe."

"I like your . . . wardrobe." All right, then. He used the word "wardrobe" now. With a straight face, too, apparently. "In the beginning, I thought it was

. . ."

"Ridiculous?"

"Impractical," he corrected her firmly. "But I've changed my mind." "You just like my clothes now because you get to take them off."

"That doesn't hurt. But mainly, they're you. That's the real reason." He watched the salesgirl approach with an armload of jeans and just barely stopped himself from barking at her to go away. "I like the things that make you Piper. Don't go changing them now."

"I'm not changing anything, Brendan," she said, and laughed, pulling him into the dressing-room area. "But I can only get away with dresses for so long. It's going to be fall soon, in the Pacific Northwest."

The salesgirl breezed in behind them and ushered Piper away, putting her in the closest dressing room with a half-dozen pairs of jeans of various colors and styles. Then she pointed at a tiny, feminine chair, wordlessly implying that Brendan should sit—and he did, awkwardly, feeling a lot like Gulliver. “Is this what it’s like when you go shopping in LA?” he asked Piper through the curtain.

“Mmmm. Not exactly.” She peeked out at him and winked. “I typically don’t have a six-foot-four sea captain along for the ride.”

He made an amused sound. “Does that make it better or worse?”

“Better. Way better.” She pushed back the curtain and walked out in a pair of light-blue painted-on jeans and a black see-through bra. “Ooh, not a fan.” She turned and looked at her butt in the full-length mirror. “Thoughts?”

Brendan dragged his jaw up off the fucking floor. “I’m sorry. How are you not a fan?”

She made a face. “The stitching is weird.”

“The . . . what?” He leaned in for a closer look and immediately got distracted by the ass. “Who gives a shit?”

The salesgirl walked in and tilted her head. “Oh yeah. No. Pass on those.” Piper nodded. “That’s what I thought.”

“Are you two playing a joke on me? They’re perfect.”

Both women laughed. Out went the salesgirl. Piper retreated to the changing room. And Brendan was left wondering if he’d taken crazy pills. “Yeah, safe to say this is definitely different than shopping with my friends back in LA. I’m pretty sure half the time they tell me something looks great even when it doesn’t. There’s always a sense of competition. Trying to get the edge.” A zipper went up and he watched her feet turn right, left, right under the curtain, smiling at the sparkly polish on her toes. It was so Piper. “I

think maybe shopping hasn’t been fun for a while and I didn’t even realize it. Don’t get me wrong, I adore the clothes. But when I think of going dress hunting with Kirby now, I can’t remember feeling anything. I spent all of that time trying to give myself that first euphoric rush. But . . . I was more excited to get a deal on a fishing net at the harbor supply shop than I was buying my last Chanel bag.”

She gasped.

Alarm snapped Brendan’s spine straight. “What?”

“I think Daniel’s lesson worked.” She pushed aside the curtain, revealing her shocked expression. “I think I might appreciate money now, Brendan.”

If he wasn't supposed to find her utterly fucking adorable, he was failing miserably.

"That's great, Piper," he said gruffly, ordering himself not to smile. "Yeah." She pointed down at a pair of dark jeans that molded indecently to

her mouthwatering hips. "These are a no, right?" "They're a yes."

She shook her head and closed the curtain again. "And they're a hundred dollars. I looked at the price tag!" Then she mumbled, "I *think* that's a lot?"

His head tipped back. "I make more than that on one crab, Piper." "What? No. How many crabs do you catch?"

"In a season? If I hit the quota? Eighty thousand pounds."

When she opened the curtain again, she had the calculator pulled up on her phone. With her mouth in an O, she slowly turned the screen to show him all the zeroes. "Brendan, this is like, *millions* of dollars."

He just looked at her.

"Oh no," she said after a beat, shaking her head. "This is bad." Brendan frowned. "How is this bad?"

"I just learned the value of money. Now I find out I have a rich boyfriend?" She sighed sadly, closed the curtain. "We have to break up, Brendan. For my own good."

"*What?*" Panic gave him immediate, searing heartburn. No. No, this wasn't happening. He'd heard her wrong. But if he hadn't misheard, they weren't leaving this fucking dressing room until she changed her mind. He lunged to his feet and ripped the curtain open, only to find Piper laughing into her cupped palm, her sides shaking. Relief washed through him, as if an overhead sprinkler system had been engaged. "That wasn't funny," he said raggedly.

"It was." She giggled. "You know it was."

"Do you see me laughing?"

She pressed her lips together to get rid of the smile, but her eyes were still sparkling with laughter. But he couldn't be mad at her, especially when she crossed her wrists behind his neck, pressed her soft body up against his hard one, and coaxed his mouth into a winding kiss. "I'm sorry." She licked gently at his tongue. "I didn't think you'd buy it so easily."

He grunted, annoyed at himself for enjoying the way Piper was trying to get back in his good graces. Her fingers twisted the ends of his hair, her eyes were contrite. All of it was oddly soothing. Christ, being in love was doing a number on him. He was a goner.

“Will you forgive me if I let you pick out my jeans?” she murmured against his lips.

Brendan smoothed his palms back and forth along her waist. “I’m not mad.

I can’t be. Not at you.”

She dropped her hands away from his neck and handed him the next pair of jeans in the stack. As he watched, she unzipped the ones she was wearing and peeled them down her legs. Good God almighty, Piper was bent over in front of the mirror, her ass nearly brushing the glass—and looking down from above, he could see everything. The mint-green strip of fabric tucked up between her supple cheeks, the suggestion of a tan line peeking out.

By the time she straightened, her face was flushed, and Brendan’s cock was straining against his zipper. “Put them on for me?”

Christ. It didn’t matter that the salesgirl could come in at any minute. Arrested as he was by those big, blue bedroom eyes, nothing mattered but her. Hell, maybe that would always be the case. Brendan let out a shuddering breath and went down on his knees. He started to open the waistband so she could step into them, but the little triangle of her panties absorbed his attention when he remembered she’d gotten waxed that morning.

Truthfully, he’d never given a thought to women’s . . . landscaping before. But ever since the first time he’d eaten Piper’s pussy, he’d craved *hers*. The way it looked, felt, tasted, the smooth succulence of her.

“Can I see?”

Almost shyly, she nodded.

Brendan tucked a finger in the center of her thong’s front waistband and tugged it down, revealing that teasing little split, the nub of flesh *just* pushing her lips apart. He swayed forward with a growl, pressing his face to the lush flesh and inhaling deeply. “This is mine.”

Her stomach hollowed on an intake of breath. “Yes.”

“Going to spoil you with my credit card now.” He kissed the top of her slit. “Then have you sit on my face and spoil you fucking rotten with my tongue later.”

“*Brendan.*”

He banded his arms around her knees when they dipped, using his upper body to lean her back against the dressing room wall. When he'd made sure she was stable, he urged her without words to step into the legs, one at a time. His hands scooted the denim up her calves, knees, and thighs, his mouth leaving kisses on the disappearing skin as he went. It hurt to drag the zipper up and hide her pussy away, but he did it, swirling his tongue around her belly button while engaging the snap.

He stood, turning Piper around so she was facing the mirror. He tugged her ass back into his lap so she could feel his hard-on, making her lips puff open, her neck go limp.

Through dazed eyes, she scanned her reflection, her attention on Brendan's hand as it traveled down her stomach, his long fingers delving into the front waistband to grip her pussy roughly, earning him a shocked whimper. "Keepers. Definitely."

"Y-yes, we'll get these," she said in a rush. Brendan tightened his grip again, lifted, and she went up on her toes, her lips falling open on a gasp. "Yes, yes, yes."

Brendan planted a kiss on the side of her neck, biting down on the spot and slowly sliding his hand out of her jeans. When she stopped swaying, he left her flushed in front of the mirror and edged out into the waiting area. "Good girl."

"You know," she panted through the curtain. "Shopping is more about the journey than the destination."

He gestured to the salesgirl as she walked in. "She'll take them all."