

Just Adore Me

By Ria Prestia

Gretchen Saxon thought that the best romance stories were the ones where the man loved the woman more than she loved him. That's what she wanted—to be adored by a man who would love her beyond her wildest dreams, but that was the fantasy. You know the one—boy meets girl, boy chases girl, girl resists, boy chases again, girl still resists, boy pursues more and finally girl gives in knowing full well that he will love her forever because he worked so hard to get her that obviously he loves her more than she loves him.

But for Gretchen that didn't happen. For Gretchen on that cold January morning when she entered Freshly Ground to get her coffee, she bumped right into him—the man of her dreams. The *oh my god, drop dead gorgeous, please take me away—Mr. Ambitious—Mr. Right.*

And guess what? He smiled and said, “Hi,” got his coffee and quickly left leaving Gretchen in a state of disarray since she didn't know his name, and didn't know if she would ever see him again!

“Earth to Gretchen!”

The bliss suddenly ended at the sound of the irritating voice that bellowed at her. She looked up annoyed. “Hi Ben. Working again this morning?”

“The usual, Gretchen?”

“Yeah. I mean, I don't want to give you anything too complicated to make,” she said.

“Ha! Ha!” Ben sneered. “

He marked her cup as he spoke, "Caramel flavoring, extra shot of espresso, steamed half and half, whipped cream, caramel topping. Dieting again," he added sarcastically.

Gretchen moved to the side to wait and thought about Ben. They had been friends in high school. All was good until they started to flirt and he asked her out and Gretchen said no expecting Ben to chase her. He didn't, and so their friendship ended in a not so nice way. Looking at Ben, she thought, *he's still kinda good looking*. He was sporting his usual facial gruff look, blue jeans, and black T-shirt. He was nice to look at, but not ambitious, and he didn't chase a girl. At twenty-five he was working in his uncle's coffee house and playing guitar at night at the local venues. It seemed a bit like loser status to Gretchen, so she was glad he never chased her back.

"How's corporate America? Still clawing your way up?" he asked.

Tapping her red stiletto shoe, she took out her card from her designer handbag.

"And, Mr. Ambitious you're up to what these days?"

"Enjoying life. Taking some music classes at the college."

"College courses? Wow."

"You're surprised?" he said.

"Yeah." She picked up her cup. "I figured you'd do this the rest of your life."

"What's wrong with doing this. My uncle does well."

"He owns it. You work here. It's not . . . "

“What?” he interrupted. “The corporate office, expensive suit, ambitious man with a diamond studded watch like Jake who just left? You know, what you really want in a man.”

“Jake? His name is Jake?” she asked.

“Ambition means something different to everyone. It’s not all about climbing a ladder. Are you even happy?”

His question through her off.”

“I’m happy,” she snapped.

“Oh yeah, that look on your face wrecks happiness. You’re like a freaking ray of sunshine every morning,” he said sarcastically.

“Maybe it’s because I have to see you almost every morning.”

“Find another coffee shop.”

“I like the coffee here.”

“Then you gotta deal with me.”

“You’re impossible. I’m so glad we never dated!”

“I’m glad I didn’t chase you. It’s what you wanted, not me!”

Gretchen got quiet. “What do you mean?” she asked.

You wanted me to chase you, and beg you to date me so that you could fulfill your little fantasy. You wanted me to adore you like a princess.”

“A lot of women want that.”

“That’s not a real man. That’s a character in a movie. If you want me, you need to take me the way I am and not try to change me into your fantasy man.”

Gretchen moved up close to the counter and said, "I don't want you, but I'd like Jake's last name and number."

Ben laughed. "No way. He's a friend. The last thing he needs is you."

Gretchen got quiet as she stared into Ben's deep brown eyes and lost her breath. He stared back and slightly touched her hand as he handed her back her card and she felt a tingle. A tingle she didn't want to feel, and she thought, *Holy shit, I can't be liking Ben*. He smiled. "Dinner tonight, 7 pm," he affirmed.

She took her card slowly from his clutch and stepped back from the counter and quietly quivered, "Yeah, I'd like that."