

HIS LEADING LADY ©

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Chapter One

Boom! The beautiful blonde barreled into Mark's chest right in front of Jean Louis Designs on Rodeo Drive. He grabbed her upper arms to keep her from falling and stared into the biggest, bluest eyes he'd ever seen. The flash of a dazzling white smile, a whiff of lily of the valley perfume, golden hair, and perfect features blurred everything else around him.

"I'm so sorry," she said. *Or did she?* He was so mesmerized he barely distinguished the words.

She stood as transfixed as he, focused on his baby blues, until a man abruptly tapped her shoulder. "We'll be late, Penny, come on."

"Sorry, I wasn't looking," she mumbled.

"No harm, no foul," Mark muttered, his gaze resting on her generous breasts for a moment before returning to her face. Toting a shopping bag in each hand, she smiled at him again and was gone, as quickly as she had arrived. Mark Davis stood in front of the door, transfixed, as if his feet had been embedded in the cement sidewalk.

"Come on, buddy, you're blocking traffic," Harley Brennan, his best friend and teammate, said, giving him a nudge.

Mark snapped out of his reverie and moved away from the tony store. "Wow," he said.

"A hottie. Yeah. A wet dream on legs."

"Penny, huh? Wow." He shook his head and continued down the street, listening to his buddy with only half an ear.

With Harley, Mark returned to the expensive shop several times during his visit to L.A., but he never saw Penny again. Back in Las Vegas, he searched the Internet for two weeks, using her

first name with no success, so he finally gave up. He buried himself in his workouts and practice with his professional football team, the Nevada Gamblers, trying to forget her.

He went on blind dates, fix-ups by his teammates, but they never worked out. They weren't Penny. Even the ones who were guaranteed to sleep with him on the first night held little appeal. He had seen the gold standard and nothing else would do.

One Saturday night three months after his encounter with the mysterious Penny, he was at the movies on a double date with Harley. They were resigned to watching a chick flick. Harley had explained to Mark, that if it meant they got laid afterward, it seemed a small price to pay. When the lights went down, it happened.

Mark was gazing at a larger-than-life Penny on the silver screen. His mouth went dry, and his pulse speeded up. He let go of the girl whose hand he was holding and simply gawked. When it was over, Harley was anxious to get the girls fed and in bed, but Mark insisted on staying for the credits. And there was her name.

"Penny Thatcher," he mumbled, fumbling in his pockets for something to write it down on.

"Yeah, she was all right. But Chaz Duncan is one hot guy," Mark's date said. With no pen or paper, Mark was resigned to memorizing her name. He knew it was one he'd never forget. *A movie star. Would she even give me the time of day? Probably not.*

He had a burger with his date, but begged off soon afterward. Sex with her wouldn't cut it tonight. He'd seen Penny Thatcher again, and no other women existed. All he wanted to do was dive onto his computer and *Google* her.

When he arrived home, he threw down his jacket and began his Internet search. Sure enough, there she was. Supporting actress in *The Natural Girl*, the movie he had just seen, and a minor character in a new cop show, *Las Vegas Beat*.

A rookie, second-string quarterback for the Nevada Gamblers, Mark lived in Las Vegas. *Maybe they shoot here. Maybe she lives here.* His pulse jumped. He looked her up in the white pages, but no Penny Thatcher was listed. *Dummy. Actors don't list themselves in the phonebook. Afraid of crazed fans, like me.* He laughed at himself and turned off the machine. He had an early practice, so it was time for bed.

Mark hit the showers after a good workout. He'd connected with the running backs like a seasoned player. His confidence was high. He smiled as he flipped on the faucet. The voices of

his teammates trumped the sound of the spray bouncing off his firm muscles, especially the loud voice of the star quarterback, Darvin Sweetwater.

“I’d better get laid tonight, Reid,” Sweetwater yelled.

“My girl said these two are hot. One’s got a huge rack,” Reid called back.

"Come on, Davis," Darvin pulled Mark by the arm. Since he was the only one who agreed to go on blind double dates with Sweetwater, Darvin had no choice on this one.

Before they pushed through the locker room door and into the parking lot, Sweetwater said, “I’m expecting some sweet lip action tonight. Woo hoo!” He crowed. “You take the one with the big rack. Usually, I’d take her. I love big racks, but the other one is an actress on that show, *Las Vegas Beat*. I’ve been jacking to her for the past month, and tonight’s gonna be the real deal. After she does me, I’m gonna fuck her nice and slow.”

Couldn’t be Penny. He’s talking about someone else. He wondered if Darvin's crude attitude would turn the women off.

“You go first, Davis. I hate blind dates.” Darvin gave Mark a little shove, and he entered the lot slightly ahead of Sweetwater. Two women moved toward them. *Holy Shit! It’s her!* Mark gulped, his mouth suddenly as dry as the desert surrounding them.

“Hi, honey, I’m Tiffany Barker. Who are you?” The woman with the big rack pushed ahead of Penny and extended a hand with huge, bright purple nails. He’d never been into super-sized breasts, preferring something he could get a hold of with only one hand, but her chest was so huge, he couldn’t take his eyes off it. Her eyelashes looked to be two inches long. Her red lipstick and white-blond hair made her appear cheap.

Cringing inside, Mark took her hand and shook it gently.

“Are you Sweetwater?” she asked in a sharp voice.

“Just second string, Mark Davis.” Tiffany spied Sweetwater strutting their way, not far behind Mark. When she made a beeline for Darvin, Mark turned to face Penny. A slender young woman with ample, but much smaller breasts than Tiffany, the actress wore almost no makeup and looked so beautiful Mark couldn’t speak. This was the girl, the one who had knocked into him in front of that fancy store.

She flashed him her bright smile, her blue eyes clear, lashes all her own, and he melted inside. She extended her hand. “Penny Thatcher.”

“I know who you are. I’m a big fan,” he gushed. *Shut up, Davis! You sound like a lovesick teenager.*

She blushed and cast her gaze to the ground. *A humble, hottie actress. Imagine that.*