

TO CATCH A LORELEI

PROLOGUE

There was a minute's silence after the tenth ring, but then the phone began ringing again. The insistent noise finally destroyed Adam Logan's concentration on the work he was doing at his drafting table. Running strong fingers through his dark auburn hair, Adam gave the clamoring instrument a blistering stare should have melted it down. However, when the phone didn't become smoking slag, or even stop ringing, the tall, powerfully built man vented some steam by throwing his drawing pencil at the device.

Glancing at his watch, he decided only one person would be calling him at ten-thirty at night—his agent, the very persistent Sherman Schieiber. Sighing deeply, Adam slid off his perch on the high stool and advanced toward the phone.

"What do you want, Sherman?" he grumbled into the receiver.

The short pause at the other end was followed by a cheerful, "Adam, my man, how's it going?"

"You know how it's going. Too damned slow. I didn't get back to L.A. from shoot at Lake Arrowhead until a couple of hours ago. Now I'll be up all night getting this project finished for tomorrow. One more assignment like today's, Schreiber, and I'm going to quit modeling, contract or not. You can sue me."

"Now, Adam, don't be angry with me. It was supposed to be a simple two-hour session. I had no way of knowing it would run on so long. But look at the bright side, twelve hours' pay will go a long way toward your tuition next fall."

"I won't be needing any tuition if I flunk out. I mean it, Sherman. I've already spent more time modeling this semester than I should have, so don't put any mote demands on me until I'm finished with finals next Monday."

"I didn't call about another assignment, Adam. I just wanted to check with you about your decision on the Hunt woman."

"Hunt?"

“Yeah, Lorelei Hunt, the lady in San Diego who wrote terrific fan letter to Anytime Jeans about the ad you did for them. I think you should reconsider my idea and go on a few dates with her. I guarantee the publicity I generate will put your modeling career over the top.”

“Sherman, how many times do I have to tell you I just don’t have time for publicity nonsense. And as for a long-term career in modeling, you do remember clause in my contract, don’t you? I’m out of the game the minute I have enough money to carry me through a master’s degree in architecture.”

“Adam, Adam! Lord, I’ll never understand how you talked me into clause. But if it’s quick money you’re after, wouldn’t it be wiser to put your studies on hold? Since you started modeling so late, you only have a few years left to make the big bucks.”

Adam squeezed his eyes shut as Sherman droned on. He had heard this same argument from the man a thousand times in the last three years. And given the work load he had to juggle, maybe his agent had a point. But he hated the idea of dropping out of school; something might keep him from getting started again. Damn it, he was too tired to argue right now.

“Look, Sherm, it’s getting late and I’ve got hours of work to do,” Adam said into the phone. But his agent just kept talking.

“—And, Adam, you know you’re right on the edge of being a superstar. Look at the coverage you got on the last few ads. Look at the letters the jeans people got. The one the Hunt woman wrote was the best of the bunch, but there were hundreds more.”

Although Adam wanted to strangle Sherman for keeping him from putting the finishing touches on his semester project, he couldn’t help smiling at the mention of those letters. He had read a sampling of the mail forwarded to Sherman. He had been flattered, although some of the notes were so steamy he could have reduced his heating bill to nothing by papering his apartment walls with them.

Lorelei Hunt’s letter had been very different from the rest. It had been warm and funny and poetic. Instead of dwelling on his physical characteristics—like the others had—she praised the ad’s creativity, and complimented the company on using a tongue-in-cheek approach.

Yet, as much as he’d like to meet the woman who could write such an appealing, perceptive letter, Adam had to remember his priorities. After a rocky beginning, he finally had his life together. He was back on the track he had somehow slipped from a decade ago. At twenty-eight, he might be one of the oldest juniors in the Architecture Department, but he certainly had earned the highest-grade-point average.

No, he had no time for publicity dates. He didn’t even have time for real ones, his tense body often reminded him.

“Sherm, absolutely not. I do *not* want to meet Lorelei Hunt, and that’s final.”

