

OTKromance writing as Jodi Bella

Lucky In Love

By

Jodi Bella

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Chapter 1

Lucky St. James started her 1972 Pinto and sat, staring into space, as it warmed up. She shivered. It was a cold January morning, and her mission was an intimidating one.

As she pulled the noisy car from the sidewalk outside her apartment building and onto the street, Clay's words came back into her head, as they had time and again since she had last seen him. *If you change your mind you know where to find me; but there will be consequences, Lucky...* He had said it with ease, no menace in the threat. And, despite the consequences he spoke of, Lucky had held onto those words. There was a solace and safety there, a round about promise that when she grew up a little and got herself sorted out, Clay would be waiting for her.

Outside her car window, the city flew by. The streets of Philadelphia were fairly deserted, many of the shops closed at this early morning hour. A few scattered Christmas decorations still hung on lampposts and buildings, oblivious to the fact that they had already had their heyday.

Unnerved by the solitude of the day, Lucy switched on the radio and fidgeted with the dial. Talk shows were the predominant feature across the Sunday morning airwaves, with only a few scattered stations actually playing music. She tried humming along with an old Harry Chapin song, but it was halfway over when she found it, and after it ended, a spiritual program began. Eventually she switched the radio off, realizing that the noise of channel surfing was far more irritating than the quiet had been.

Gradually, the cold gray concrete of city streets gave way to green lawns and clear blue skies. The huge buildings that knocked boldly against the foundations of Heaven dissolved into more modest houses that were built closer to the bounds of Earth. Lucky's heartbeat quickened. She remembered how she had driven out here once before with Clay, how he had told her about his childhood growing up on the large farm where he still resided. He'd pointed it out to her as they'd driven by, but had respected her wishes when she'd declined several offers of a tour of the place. Instead, he'd always come to meet her somewhere, and when they had chosen to stay in for the night, those nights had always been spent at Lucky's small apartment in the city.

Now, she saw that circle of white buildings that was Clay's home off the road to her left, immensely impressive even from the road, which was a good hundred feet from the farm. Taking a deep breath for courage, she turned down the long, paved driveway.

The winter branches of the trees along the driveway stretched out in a web of tedious, bony fingers above her as she drove. The Pinto rattled past several large barns and other outbuildings, where Lucky caught glimpses of ranch hands coming in and out with equipment and bags of feed. The pastures were dotted with horses, here a chestnut, there a black, in the far corner three paints and an appaloosa rolling in a patch of sunny grass. There was one pure white foal frolicking playfully with a denim-clad man as he led it out of the barn.

As Lucky pulled around and stopped outside the main house, she was surprised that Clay's SUV was the only vehicle in the driveway. With it being his birthday today, she had half expected to find his girls here to visit with him. Selfishly, she was relieved to discover that he was, at least so far, alone; she had yet to meet Clay's daughters and was nervous enough about that first encounter without having to manage it on today of all days. There was enough on today's plate as it was.

Probably alerted by the telltale rumble of her vehicle's about-to-fall-off-any-day-now muffler, a flutter of movement occurred at the curtain of a first floor window, drawing Lucky's attention as she parked. Clay's handsome, fine features appeared beside the large hand that had drawn back the drape. Despite the distance between where he sat inside his study and where Lucky fidgeted inside her Pinto, she would have still sworn that his eyes meet hers directly.

Within seconds, Clay had left the window and was standing just outside the front door of that massive, yet somehow old-fashioned stone front house. He stared anxiously, almost disbelievingly, at her car. Had the situation been different, Lucky would have burst out laughing to see Clay looking so befuddled and uncertain; the man was never anything but controlled, always certain of his actions.

But there was no amusement in this journey for Lucky. Her stomach was pitching with fear even as she sat there, her car still running, the heat trickling through the dash vents making her sweat. She paused further, telling herself that she was looking for something in Clay's gaze that meant he was happy she had come; but really she was looking for what she thought was more likely to be there—anger, indifference, or any other small sign that he no longer wanted her.

After several long minutes of sizing one another up from a distance, Clay slowly ambled over to her vehicle. His stride was bow legged from so much time spent in the saddle, but he still

walked tall and strong, despite being hunched over against the cold as he was dressed only in a wool sweater, jeans and heavy socks.

With shaky hands, Lucky rolled down her window as he reached the car. Why she didn't just get out of the Pinto she refused to even think about.

“Hi there.” He grinned down at her, just as if it had only been yesterday when they'd last seen one another, instead of three months earlier. There was a shadow of stubble across his jaw and he looked like he'd maybe lost a few pounds. His thick dark hair was in charming disarray around his face, the result of only a few minutes in the January wind. Her eyes took in his familiar face, his warm voice, the body she knew so well how to please. She had to swallow hard on a rush of tears burning the back of her throat.

“Hi,” she squeaked.

His smile broadened at her obvious nervousness. But his warm blue eyes were kind, as always.

“I confess I hadn't dared to hope for such a wonderful birthday gift as this.” He opened her door then, and reached over the top of the steering wheel to turn the car's engine off himself. Just like him to take control of the situation, especially since she was still sitting there like a stone, just staring up at him. Pocketing her keys, he held out his hand. “Come on in, Lucky.”

She considered a few minutes longer, knowing the pleasures that awaited her if she went with him. And weighing the other things that were sure to accompany them as well.

Then, slowly, she nodded and climbed out of the car. The hand that clasped hers as they walked towards the house was surprisingly warm, despite the January cold.

The inside of Clay Jackson's home was warm and decorated in masculine tones. Lucky glanced nervously around as he helped her off with her tattered coat, imagining she could smell the money that had gone into creating such a beautiful and well-kept home. The wooden handrail that led from the foyer to the second floor was intricately carved and shone richly, while a crystal vase housing a handful of sunflowers gleamed in the sunlight pouring down from the double skylights in the cathedral ceilings. Everywhere she looked she saw money—expensive furnishings, fine fabrics, original artwork, high tech electronics. And beneath her soiled sneakers, the tile floor stretched out down the hall towards the other first floor rooms, each one, she was sure, more extravagant and expensive than the one before it.

Feeling shy, and silly because of it, Lucky had to force herself to meet Clay's eyes. His expression was slightly amused. "Do you like it?" he asked quietly. Despite the amusement in his eyes, there was a seriousness in his tone that made her think her answer was important to him somehow.

"What's not to like?" she asked, spreading her arms out wide to include all that was around them. When she noticed how shaky her hands were, she let her arms drop and folded them stiffly across her chest. "It's beautiful. You have nice tastes, Clay."

His gaze dropped to her folded arms, and the amusement left his features. He grasped her hand again, leaving her no other choice but to drop her other arm to her side, and tugged her gently along beside him as he started down the hallway. "I can't take the credit for the décor," he told her casually. "I had help from the girls. Though I am glad they didn't suffocate me with flowers and pastels."

Lucky smiled at the image. "I was afraid I'd be crashing a family birthday party. I thought they might be here already."

Clay flashed her a grin over his shoulder as they entered a large den. "It's too early in the day for my girls to be out of bed, much less out of the house. I'm sure they'll come around later this afternoon or maybe this evening."

He gestured for her to have a seat on the huge chocolate brown leather sofa that ran the length of the center wall of the room, then wrapped around the corner before finally finishing around the middle of the far wall. "Have a seat. I'll go and get us some drinks. What would you like?"

Timidly, she perched on the edge of the sofa. With a shrug, she said, "Something warm?"

"Coming right up."

She watched him stride away, her eyes hungrily taking in his long legged walk, the strong, athletic movements of his muscular, work honed body. When he had slipped out of view, closing the French doors to the room behind him with a quiet click, Lucky swallowed thickly and jumped back to her feet.

Move in with me, he'd asked her three months before. I want to wake up in the morning beside you, come home to be with you at night. I'll make you happy, Lucky, you know I will.

She'd wanted to do as he asked, more than anything else. That was the problem; she wanted it too badly, and anytime she wanted something that badly, it only ended up hurting her

in the end. Lucky was afraid to trust, afraid to be happy. Afraid, and certain that it would—could—never last.

I can't see you anymore, she'd told him simply, that last night at the club, a week after he'd asked her to move in with him. *I'm sorry*.

He'd just looked at her sadly, disappointed. He knew why she was pushing him away, had probably even seen it coming. *Don't do this*, he'd said, even though the expression on his face said that he knew it was a waste of time to try to change her mind.

I have to. She'd straightened her shoulders then, and stood up from the barstool. *Goodbye, Clay*.

She'd almost made it to the door before he called her name. Her first instinct had been to just keep walking, pretend she hadn't heard him. But something else made her turn around, the part of her that didn't want to give him up.

If you change your mind, honey, you know where to find me. He'd sat tall and straight in the bar stool, his long fingered hands spread on his muscular thighs. His blue eyes had glinted across the distance of the club at her, dangerous and steely. *But there will be consequences*, Lucky...

She knew what he meant by consequences, though up until now she'd not experienced them. He'd told her shortly into their relationship that he had what he called some "unusual sexual interests." More specifically, spanking.

As it had been early in their relationship, he'd been quick to stress that for the most part, he had only used spanking in his relationships in a sexual context—for foreplay and pleasure. But, later on, he had been more honest, and told her that he did believe in domestic discipline, in a home where the man was the head of his household and when a woman did something to warrant it, it was the man's responsibility to correct and better direct her behavior.

Apparently, the spanking interest had been a major problem in his first marriage. And, he had told her one late night, he really did not see himself having another happy long-term relationship without that component being involved.

She hadn't been that put off by the idea of being spanked for sexual pleasure; it wasn't as weird a concept as some other things that people got excited over. But the idea of being punished, even in what Clay had described as a loving domestic discipline setting, made her

nervous. It sparked too many memories of the stepfather she'd grown up with, who had let off steam and stress with a bottle of his favorite bourbon and a heavy hand to her mother's face.

Even so, she'd willingly read the stories Clay printed for her from his computer, glimpses into his soul and what he felt he needed to be happy in a relationship. And she began to see what he meant by the loving balance that could be achieved by the equality and fairness and by the addressing of problems and forgiveness, instead of the holding of grudges and bad feelings. The night he'd asked her to move in with him, she'd been planning on telling him that she was willing to try their relationship his way, the old fashioned way.

But when he'd asked her to live with him, she'd gotten scared. And she'd run instead.

Now, she stopped her pacing and dried her sweaty palms on her skirt. She moved purposely to the windows and twisted the baton until the blinds were all closed. Next, she moved to the French doors, grateful that he'd led her to a room that had doors, and even more grateful for the curtain that she now untied and let fall over the decorative glass.

On quivery legs, she next went to the far corner of the room, where she turned her back on the room and stood facing where the two walls met. One trembling hand reached behind her and, remembering a story she'd read that Clay had given her, folded up the back of her skirt, baring her bottom, encased only in worn white cotton. Gooseflesh broke out along her legs and arms and a shiver coursed through her.

The same hand hovered at the top of her panties, remembering how the girl in the story had also lowered those until they pooled at her ankles. Somehow, Lucky couldn't do that, though. Eventually, she brought her hand back in front of her body.

It was only a moment or two later, when she heard the doors open and Clay's steps as he entered the room.

"Sorry for the wait. I thought you'd like some cocoa, but I had some trouble finding..."

His voice trailed off as he took in her current position. Silence followed, the only evidence of his presence in the room the muffled clunk as he set their drinks down on coasters. Lucky fidgeted in the corner, her stomach a riot of butterflies, her face hot and red with embarrassment.

Though she kept her gaze focused on the crease of plaster before her, she was aware of Clay's approach. His hand caught her gently at the back of her head, smoothing back the waves of auburn hair in a calming gesture. Slowly, his touch continued down the length of her back,

making the cotton shirt she worn stick to her slightly sweaty skin beneath, then over one hip, until it paused and rested just at the center of her pantied backside.

Once, then twice, ever so softly, he patted her there.

“I see you haven’t forgotten our last conversation,” he said softly, his voice right beside her ear, so close she felt the warmth of his breath and smelled the spice of his cologne.

“I remember,” she whispered, still intently facing the front.

Again, he patted her bottom, this time the slightest bit harder. “Look at me,” he said.

Her eyes burning, she turned her head and met his gaze, finding relief in the warmth in his eyes.

“You can trust me,” he told her.

Lucky nodded. “I know.”

“Good.” He took her hand and pulled her along with him as he stepped towards the couch. When he reached it, he sat down before her and took both her hands in his own. “I’m not going to go easy on you, though,” he told her sternly. “When you walked away from me, you may as well have cut my heart out and taken it with you. You stole three months from me, from yourself, from us, and I don’t take that lightly. I intend to make sure that you won’t ever even think of running out on this relationship again. Do you understand me?”

Slowly, she nodded.

“All right, then.” He patted the couch cushion to his right. “Kneel here, please.”

Feeling clumsy, Lucky did as he requested. A shiver shook through her when Clay bent her upper body over, granting him access to her panties, which he quickly shucked down to her knees. Lucky couldn’t help the distressed whimper that crawled out of her throat from somewhere deep inside her belly.

Clay met her wide eyes with his own calm, warm ones. “In my house, a spanking is always given on the bare bottom. There is no other way. So you may as well abandon your modesty here and now, honey.”

A moment later, she found herself belly down over his hard thighs.

“Because this is your first time, I’m only going to use my hand. In the future, for something as serious as this, you can expect a good dose of something more strict.” He sat forward on the cushion and tucked both of Lucky’s bare legs between his own, causing the

panties to slide even further down her legs. He angled her position then, so that her upper body was supported by his left thigh and the expanse of couch beneath them.

Lucky sucked in a breath, anticipating the first stinging blow. Five seconds ticked by, then ten, and still it didn't come.

"Relax your bottom, Lucky," Clay said above her. "I don't want to bruise you." Then his large hand grasped her cheeks and shook them around a bit, eliciting a gasp of surprise from her. Clay chuckled. "Not what you were expecting, huh?" he teased gently. A moment later, he released her and nodded his approval. "Better. Don't clench, now, baby, it'll be better that way."

And then the first fiery swat fell.

Lucky arched up with that meaty smack, then was quickly distracted by a twin smack to the opposite bottom cheek. Clay quickly set a lightning pace, alternating spanks from left to right, top to bottom, then right in the middle, and soon the sting of each individual swat turned into a pervading heat, then a burning pain that had Lucky hollering and begging with each additional spank he gave her.

If this was what a hand spanking from Clay Jackson was like, she thought desperately, she never wanted to experience one from 'something more strict,' as he'd put it.

"Please, Clay!" she pleaded. "I can't take any more of this!"

"Spankings in my house," he told her calmly as he continued to wallop her, not even winded, "begin and end at my discretion, not yours, young lady. I will decide when you've had enough."

Lucky now knew why he'd restricted her legs by pinching them between his own. She could hardly even struggle against his barrage of smacks from her hobbled position. The best defense she could manage was to throw back her hand as a pathetic shield, but that effort was only in vein because Clay easily grabbed a hold of it and pinned it to her back with his non-spanking hand, all the while tsking her for the attempt.

"We need to get a few things straight in that head of yours, I think," he told her between hard, open palmed spanks with nary a pause between them. "I'm not your father, Lucky," he continued, pausing briefly to move her further forward over his lap. His broad open palm caught the back of her left thigh next and the fresh sting on that expanse of untouched skin pricked her eyes. She gasped aloud with the next swat, directed to the back of her right thigh. "And I'm not your stepfather, either." SMACK! This time right in the center of her bottom cheeks and the first

tears spilled over Lucky's face. "I'm not going to walk out on you," SMACK! "or hurt you," SMACK! "except maybe for the occasional trip over my knee, like this." SMACK! "I'm not any of those guys you dated before me, either," SMACK! "I'm interested in a lot more than just getting you into my bed," SMACK! "and I would never cheat on you or lie to you, either."

The tears ran freely down Lucky's face now, and she keened with them, with the vulnerable way they made her feel. It wasn't just the spanking anymore that was making her walls crumble, but the truth in what he was saying. Clay wasn't the father who had walked out of her life when she was a baby, the man she had never known. He wasn't the stepfather who'd abused her mother and terrified her throughout her childhood until the day he finally drank himself to death. He wasn't the guys she'd slept with in high school, searching for closeness with a man, but never quite finding the intimacy and connection that she needed. He wasn't Jack, the first guy she'd thought she loved, only to find out he'd cheated on her nearly the entire time they'd been together. And he wasn't Charlie, the last man she'd been serious about, who had turned out to be a married man with three small children.

He wasn't any of those guys, but she was punishing him for the grief that all of them had given her before he ever came into the picture.

Lucky was so lost in her own pain and thoughts that she had hardly even noticed that Clay had eased up on the force and number of his smacks. His large hand, a bit rough from working in the stables, smoothed over the soft skin of her bottom, further abrading the raw, hot flesh, and she hissed at the simultaneous comfort and irritation his touch evoked.

"I'm sorry, Clay," she sobbed, limp and exhausted over his knee. "I'm sorry..."

"Shh..." She felt his hand on her hair, smoothing the tangled tresses back from her sweat and tear stained face. "I know, I know." He continued to stroke her hair, as she wept quietly into the couch cushions, her reddened backside still propped up over his knee.

After a few minutes had passed, and she had calmed some, Clay cleared his throat and said, "I just have one question for you and then we'll be done with this, honey. Are you ever going to run from me again, Lucky?"

"No, Clay," she answered hoarsely, honestly. "I'll never run from you again. I swear it."

"Damn right," he agreed, swatting her hard one final time for emphasis. Lucky moaned as he helped her sit up, chuckling arrogantly when she hissed as her bottom rubbed against the

denim of his jeans. She settled gingerly on her side and cuddled into his chest, purring a little when his hand cupped her burning bottom flesh and gently caressed it.

“I’m sorry, Clay,” she whispered again, looking up at him through tear spiked lashes.

Clay smiled and wiped away the tears from her cheeks with the pad of one thumb. “All’s forgiven and forgotten,” he said and then cupped her face. His lips pressed against her forehead gently, and Lucky could feel the tremble in them, full of the longing and loneliness that waiting for her had brought on. “I love you, Lucky.”

Lucky’s stomach flip-flopped at the words. Words so many women longed to hear, but not her. To her, love only ever brought hardship.

Willfully, she pushed those stubborn memories away, and wrapped her arms around Clay instead. “I love you too. Don’t ever leave me, Clay.”

His arms tightened around her back, then one snaked up to entangle a hand in her unruly hair. The other hand returned to her bottom and patted the reddened skin, a love pat, like a parent would give a fussy infant. “Never, my love. I’ll never leave you.”