

The Trouble with Abby

By

Stevie MacFarlane

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Chapter One

Abigail Stevens was standing on the top rung of a six-foot step ladder arranging boxes of designer shoes when Connor McCabe entered the back room of her new shop and frowned. She was barefoot, her heels kicked off at the base of the ladder, so she hadn't totally lost her mind, but it was still incredibly reckless as far as he was concerned.

They'd talked about this very thing, more than once. Taking chances, leaving the doors unlocked when she was there alone, were not acceptable. Once the store was open for business, it couldn't be avoided. There would be times she was on her own, but at least there would be customers coming and going, not a solitary woman behind paper-covered windows late at night.

He calmed his breathing, burying his frustration deep inside. She was ignoring every directive he'd given her and he didn't like it, not one bit. Abby was more than an hour late getting home, her glittery cell phone lying on the counter in the main part of the shop, far out of reach should she need it, and he'd been standing there a good three or four minutes and she still didn't realize she wasn't alone. By now, had his intentions been evil, he could have had most of her clothes off or slit her throat. At the very least he could be driving away in her car with her cell and purse! No, this wasn't something he could ignore. She was small, fragile, and she thought she was kick-ass tough, touting her black belt like it was a prize she'd won, as if it could protect her from someone like him, a former Navy Seal who'd been standing unnoticed for what, six minutes now, he realized, glancing at his watch. He topped her by more than a foot, outweighed her by better than a hundred pounds and could move so quickly and quietly she'd never know what hit her.

Instead, he stood by the ladder, ready to offer aid if she needed it. Brushing her long dark ponytail over her shoulder, she made her way down the rungs, feeling for each step with her bare toes. When she settled about two feet from the bottom, Connor snaked an arm around her waist and plucked her off, swinging her up and into his arms. She screamed and struggled instinctively as he held her, staring into her frightened eyes.

"Jesus, Connor," she swore, slapping him on the shoulder as she relaxed in his hold. "You scared the crap out of me!"

"Daddy's not very happy with you," he informed her sternly.

"Connor, we talked about this," she sighed in frustration. "You're only my daddy when we're playing, and right now I'm working, so put me down," she insisted, with a stare that was meant to intimidate him, yet somehow failed miserably.

"So right now, I'm Connor?" he asked with slightly evil intent in his blue eyes.

"Yes!"

"Good," he snapped, putting his booted foot on the second rung of the ladder and flipping her in his arms. He had her face down over his knee in a heartbeat.

"Wait," she screamed, frozen for a moment. "Why is that good?"

Connor smiled as he patted her bottom. "It allows me to be harsher," he replied. "A daddy would never punish his little girl so severely. As your man, it's acceptable."

"Acceptable to whom?" she screeched.

"To me," he replied, tightening his grip on her waist.

"No, wait," she pleaded, back-pedaling like mad. "You can be my daddy now, if you want to."

“Too late,” he said, smiling as his hand began to fall. He didn’t pull her jeans or panties down; he didn’t need to. There was more than enough power in his large hand to instill his feelings about this. One swat covered her entire ass, and he had no intention of holding back.

She was crazy-foolish as far as he was concerned and he would make her aware of that now.

He didn’t count the slaps that rained down on her bottom; he didn’t care how many it took for her to learn this lesson. He would spank her each and every time she ignored her personal safety and it wasn’t news to her. They’d discussed it many times and a few in this very manner. Why she didn’t take his warnings seriously, he had no idea, but she soon would.

Abby struggled, swore and promised retribution of immense proportions as Connor turned her butt into a raging inferno. Her hair hung almost to the floor, her feet kicked uselessly and she tried to pinch his calf. Finding no extra skin, she used her nails to dig into him. In response, Connor moved to the back of her thighs.

“Stop, please,” she finally begged, giving in to the pain as her tears fell. “At least tell me why,” she demanded on a wail.

“Why?” he asked, truly shocked as his hand paused. “You tell me, little girl,” he shot back, waiting.

Abby racked what was left of her brain. The entire episode caught her so off guard it was hard to focus. That added to her now scorching ass, made concentration difficult.

“The ladder?” she asked, as she twisted her head, trying to make eye contact. Maybe if he saw her big brown tearful eyes he would relent. It had worked before.

“That’s a start,” he replied, smacking her bottom a good one.

“Oh,” she yelped, struggling to handle the sting and still think. “Um...the door being unlocked?”

“What else?” he asked as he nodded and walloped her again.

“I don’t know,” she wailed, drooping over this thick thigh.

“Where’s your cell?” he demanded, spanking her three times, hard.

“Out there on the counter,” she cried.

“And is it of any use to you, say, now when you’re at the mercy of a very determined man?” he questioned with three more cracks.

“No,” she sobbed. “Please stop, Con, I get it, I really do.”

“Obviously you don’t,” he insisted, spanking her again and again. “Your purse is out there, lying open with your wallet and keys in plain sight,” he growled, his huge hand resting for the moment on her burning butt. “And you’re alone.”

“I’m not alone,” she shouted, regretting it immediately as he spanked the tops of her thighs. “Bridget’s with me.”

“Really, I don’t see her,” he drawled, pausing.

“She was here, she just ran out to get coffee,” Abby sighed, sniffing.

“Oh, ‘Miss I can get distracted by anything that sparkles’ is your protection, your back-up?” he snorted. “Is there a reason you couldn’t have locked the door behind her? Why you couldn’t have waited until she got back before balancing on the top of a six-foot ladder?”

“I, ah...I...”

“I didn’t think so,” he snapped, resuming his blistering cracks to her ass with a steady rhythm.

“Please, Con, please,” she cried. “I’m sorry, so sorry,” she sobbed, her small body trembling.

Connor turned her over and planted her sore bottom on his thigh, holding her in place as she tried to hop down. Grasping her chin, he forced her to look at him.

“I will not tolerate this, Abigail. I know what having your own shop means to you and I support you one hundred percent, but not under these circumstances,” he barked as her eyes studied his face.

Cropped blonde hair, clear blue eyes and a chiseled jaw that currently had a tick in it were not very reassuring. Abby had no doubt this scene would be replayed each and every time she disobeyed him on something he took seriously. Part of her wanted to tell him to fuck off and mind his own business, even though it would certainly ensure her spanking wasn't over. However, another part of her made her bit her lip and keep quiet. Inside, despite the painful discipline, there was the gooey warm feeling his dominance brought out. His no-nonsense attitude when it came to her well-being both frustrated her and turned her on, right down to her pink toenails.

Connor loved her, she had no doubt, and this wasn't some macho, alpha act. This was who he was, overprotective, demanding, bossy and used to being obeyed. He was also loving, gentle and fun. It was a lethal combination as far as her heart went, and as much as he pissed her off, she wouldn't change one hair on his head.

“Why didn't you call me when you knew you were going to be late?” he asked softly.

Abby wasn't fooled by his change of tone or the accusing look in his eyes. One smart-assed comment, and he would resume spanking her with a vengeance.

“The time just got away from me, baby,” she answered truthfully, wiping her eyes on the sleeve of her shirt. “I have so much to do before I open, and it's only two weeks away. A major shipment of stock is coming in on Saturday and I don't even have a place to put it. Shelves have to be put up and there are displays to get ready. I haven't even unpacked my computer system or register yet. I had no idea everything would take so long.”

“Why haven't you asked for help?” he scowled.

“It's my responsibility. You're working for Mason now and at the pub. I'll...”

“You'll swallow your pride and ask for help, is what you'll do,” he informed her, lifting her to the floor. “Put your shoes on and hand me the rest of those boxes.”

Half an hour later, all the shoes were on the upper shelves, arranged neatly according to style and size. Bridget still wasn't back and it was no surprise when Dell walked into the shop.

“Anyone seen my bride?” he asked, looking around. “She was supposed to be home an hour ago and I can't reach her on her cell.”

“No,” Connor replied, lifting a heavy box onto a display case in the main part of the store, “but she better hope you find her before I do.”

“What did she do now?” Dell asked, sighing.

“She was supposed to be here with Abby and I found this one by herself doing all sorts of naughty things,” he replied, indicating a blushing Abby.

Abby elbowed him away from the box and managed to make him grunt.

“Hey,” he yelled, “for someone who just got her bottom roasted, you're pretty fresh.”

“She went to get coffee,” Abby offered, pulling Styrofoam out of the box that Connor had sliced open.

“How long ago?” Dell asked, checking his watch.

“Oh, maybe half an hour ago,” Abby replied

“Maybe an hour and a half,” Connor corrected, giving Abby a stern look.

“An hour and a half?” Dell asked, looking at his watch. “There’s a coffee shop around the corner. Where was she parked?”

“Out back,” Abby replied, feeling a little worried herself, now that she really thought about it.

Dell headed through the store to the back entrance. In the weak glow from one security light, he saw Bridget lying crumpled on the pavement as soon as he pushed open the heavy steel door. Her leg was at an odd angle and there was no sign of her car.

“Call 9-1-1 and tell them we need an ambulance and call Rory,” he shouted through the open door as he ran to his wife. Abby and Connor were right behind him as Abby fumbled with her cell.

* * *

Bridget opened her eyes to a roomful of people, hushing and shushing each other loud enough to make the pounding in her head seem quiet.

“What happened, Winston?” she whispered to her husband as he held her hand gently.

“I don’t know, baby. We were hoping you could tell us,” Dell replied, glaring at the others to shut up. “Do you remember anything?”

“No, what’s wrong with me?” she asked as she tried to focus.

“Your leg is broken and you have a concussion, but you’re going to be all right,” he assured her, kissing her forehead. “You just need to rest, now.”

“Where’s Abby? Is she alright?” Bridget asked, searching the room.

“Abby’s fine, sweetheart, other than being worried about you. She and Connor are at the police station giving a statement. Don’t worry about her. The doctor wants you to rest.”

“Bridget, do you know who did this? Did you see anyone around the car when you left the building?” Rory asked, elbowing his way through his family to the other side of his sister’s bed. “What time was it? Abby said you were going to get coffee; did this happen before you left or after you got back to the parking area? Damn it, Dell, I told you not to let her have that Maserati. That’s one of the most commonly stolen vehicles in the country and why red?” he demanded. “Nothing like tempting fate,” he continued with a grimace.

“She didn’t exactly ask me,” Dell shot back, grinding his teeth as he remembered the night he came home from work and spotted the sports car in Bridget’s parking space. Before they were married, he’d refused to buy her the car, and instead bought her a safe, economical Honda. Now, apparently having the Winston name was enough of a guarantee, because she’d traded in the Honda without his permission or his signature.

He spanked her of course, intent on making her bottom as red and hot as that fiery car, but it didn’t change the outcome. Bridget got the car she wanted, well, at least for a little while. Who knew where it was now.

Getting the third-degree from Bridget’s oldest brother, Detective Rory O’Malley, made him wish he’d spanked her harder.

“Honey, can you tell me anything, anything at all?” Rory asked gently stroking Bridget’s hair. “Even if you don’t think it’s important. I need to find out who did this to you,” he said, swallowing his rage.

“It’s not Winston’s fault,” Bridget whispered, closing her eyes. “I went behind his back to buy the car. The last thing I remember is reaching into the car to get the coffee tray and feeling a horrible pain in my leg. I’m sorry Rory, my head hurts.”

“All right, that’s it,” Maeve O’Malley insisted, moving away from her husband’s side. “It’s time for my wee girl to rest now. Go on, everyone out,” she said, shooing her family to the

door after allowing them to kiss Bridget's cheek. "That means you, too, Rory," she added when she saw her eldest son making no move to leave. "Tomorrow she'll be a mite spryer, I'm thinkin'," she said, soothing Bridget's brow. "Dell, stop over to the house. I imagine they'll be puttin' you out of here soon."

"Ma, I'm not here as her brother, I'm here as a detective, investigating an assault and robbery," Rory insisted.

"You're her brother first and a policeman second, isn't that right, Sean," Maeve replied crisply, looking to her husband.

"Your mother's right, son," Sean said. "Bridget needs tender care, not badgerin' right now. You and Tess come to the house and we'll hash out what's to be done."

Rory caved, not gracefully, but just the same he kissed Bridget's cheek, shot a disgusted look at Dell and walked out of the room.

"You'll be along, Dell?" Maeve asked, patting his back kindly.

"Yes, as soon as she's settled for the night."

Maeve nodded, kissed her daughter, and allowed her husband to take her arm as they left the room.

The minute the door closed behind them, Bridget's eyes popped open.

"Why you little faker," Dell said in shock, his own eyes narrowing.

"Don't scold me, Winston, and don't take anything Rory says right now to heart. It's all personal with him and he'd have asked me the same questions ten different ways. My head does hurt and I'm not up for that. Tomorrow I'll tell him every little detail I can think of. Are you mad about the car?"

"I don't give a shit about the damn car, other than I'm mad at myself for not making you take it back," he said quietly, kissing the hand he was holding. "I can see now that I should have taken a much tougher stand on that and I'm eternally grateful they took the item of lesser value."

"What?" she asked slightly confused.

"You, Bridget, they didn't take you," he whispered with tears in his eyes.