

Never Too Late

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**Unedited Story**

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Forty was far from being over the hill - even in women years – but Angela Pratt didn't claim to be a spring chicken either. She was comfortably in the middle and proving there was life after divorce. Okay, so she couldn't claim many great affairs, or even mediocre one's, but she was content in the knowledge that she was forging out a peaceful and happy life for herself. Heck, she was even giving serious thought to bringing a feline companion in her life, something she could never do while married because of her ex's allergies.

Cats came in all shapes, sizes, ages, and... yes forms of hotness. Angela was about to find out just how true the latter statement was when Marcus Fagan enters her life and proves that it's never too late for adventure.

## Chapter One

“Like it says lady ten minutes!” The irritated voice barked back at her inquiry. Its disembodied words echoed in the empty ladies room and rounded the corner to blast her at the entryway. If the yellow warning cone that blazed ‘ten minute cleaning in progress, thank you for your patience’ hadn’t stopped her, the unfriendly response surely was meant to do the trick.

*Jerk.* How was she supposed to know the sign hadn’t been out ten minutes already? Inside the restroom she could hear the janitor grouching about the game not starting for another hour and how was he expected to get his job done with people running in and out of the bathrooms.

Angela held her tongue, she didn’t have time to get into a yelling match with a disgruntled employee outside of the ladies room at Wrigley Field and she sure as hell didn’t have ten minutes in her for him to finish cleaning. No doubt he’d move extra slow if he thought she was impatiently waiting outside. Even more frustrating was the fact that the other bathrooms on the public level were temporarily out of service. What possessed her to drink a tall iced mocha and a glass of ice water on her drive into the city was beyond her. Her punishment? To stand outside the bathrooms bouncing like a two year old in the age-old potty dance.

She’d arrived at Wrigley a bit too early to even get her interview with the Cubs team members before the preseason game began. The stadium was like a tomb, all except for the occasional banging coming from the ladies restroom. Fans wouldn’t be let in for another hour as would have been her fate if not for the press badge dangling from her neck.

She felt ready to burst and there was no way she’d make it to the private press restrooms in the upper levels. Her gaze drifted to the unobstructed entrance of the men’s room. Another quick look around revealed that she was indeed alone. Save her and the “working” janitor there was no one else around. Dare she risk it?

Her bladder expanded in answer causing her to do a quick walk to the men's bathroom and peek her head inside. The open urinals made for an easy assessment. Encouraged she moved farther for a bolder investigation and was happy to see open, and thankfully empty stalls.

Blessed relief flooded her. Just a quick wash of the hands and she'd pretend the little incident never happened. That wasn't entirely true. She'd call Sheila up later and rail her for calling at the last possible moment to get Angela to cover the interviews and game. Her friend's earlier - frantic call - said Angela would need to reach the stadium in under an hour to meet with the players. Just like that, all plans of a leisurely day in her pajamas were banished leaving her to jump into a pair of stone washed jeans, non-descript tee and brush her mop of hair into a respectable ponytail, no questions asked. It wasn't the smartest move on her part. She mentally slapped herself in the head for not asking *lots* of questions. She was done pulling Sheila's ass out of jams. Her decision was final this time. Although she didn't have time to call back to question the nature of today's emergency she was fairly certain it had her friend's latest beau's name written all over it. A name she still hadn't learned. Sheila was certainly being secretive about this one.

"You were right daddy. They do let girls in here." The voice of a small child echoed throughout the bathroom intruding on her thoughts. Her eyes snapped to the reflected pair in the mirror. Father and daughter stood at the entrance, just far enough to allow the tall male to look into the room for any occupants. Behind him his daughter peeked around his waist, ignoring her father's restraining hand.

"It's just her," the girl informed the silent man who continued to stare at Angela even as his little one made herself fully visible. The owner of the voice was a pixyish, caramel colored little girl with a miniature Cubs jersey tucked neatly into jean shorts. Next to her was a very handsome, very shocked looking man in tow. Did she mention *very* handsome?

"Uh, hi." Angela smiled at their reflections in the mirror.

“Hi.” The little girl returned the greeting in a high-pitched voice that bounced against the tiled walls.

Angela scrubbed her hands quickly before reaching for a paper towel. Her gaze held that of the oddly silent man’s through the mirror. Guess it wasn’t everyday that he walked into the stadiums bathroom to find a woman inside.

“Um, the women’s room wasn’t available.” She wasn’t quite sure why she bothered informing him. She didn’t owe anyone an explanation.

“I saw,” he replied.

*Holy Crap! Was that really his voice?* It couldn’t be. With the exception of Barry White no other man’s tone quite hit that low, sensual timber. It was a voice that dripped sex.

“Let go daddy. I gotta pee.” The little girl tugged at his arm a couple times till the child gained freedom. Without a backwards glance she darted into the first stall, needlessly securing the door behind her tiny frame.

“I guess I’ll leave you two to it.” Although she’d spoken Angela was finding it hard to move from her spot. At his silence she managed to pivot feeling like a complete idiot for standing there wiping now dry hands with the crumbled material. If she thought his partial reflection were something taking in his full form was breathtaking. He was casual in loose jeans and a faded red shirt that stretched across an amazing upper body. Her gaze shifted to his face and she sucked her bottom lip slowly. A manicured goatee graced a ruggedly handsome face, accentuating nice lips. His eyes were a combination of blue green or at least they appeared to be from their distance. Thick wavy hair was cut in a conservative fashion, close and tapered on the sides with a few extra inches up top. She pegged him to be in his mid-thirties, maybe a little younger.

His wife should definitely count herself lucky for landing a prime piece of male. Automatically her eyes drifted to his wedding finger. Nice big hands promised to be strong and thorough. No band. Did that really mean anything? Her ex had stopped wearing his

ring after their honeymoon claiming the platinum metal irritated his skin. Hmm, the stranger definitely looked strapping enough to brave a minor skin irritation.

*Enough of that, she silently reprimanded. You'll soon have a whole locker room full of young hotties to ogle at your leisure. No sense stretching out this awkward little situation.*

Now if only her feet would cooperate and he would step away from the entrance. Granted it was fairly wide and she could probably pass without contact it would just be a little too close for her especially with him standing there like guardian of all exits. Her gaze drifted back to his and she felt mildly uncomfortable to see him studying her in return. Her response was instant as his watchful eyes lingered a bit on her ample breasts. Angela crossed her arms over her D sized bosoms only to find his eyes instantly locking with hers. Usually men gave her an embarrassed or apologetic acknowledgement in response to being caught staring. The look he gave her was far off the mark. His eyes narrowed an almost unnoticeable fraction, but she saw it. His head cocked slightly. If she weren't mistaken, she'd call the look on his face... challenging.

*You're being ridiculous. Men his age that look like that don't look at women my age in that manner.* But damned if it didn't seem as if he was prepared to push her up against the bathroom wall and do much more than just look at her breasts.

"It's too quiet," the little girl's complaint was followed by a loud flush of the commode before she reemerged. She stopped short in route to the sink staring between the two adults curiously.

"Did you come by yourself?" The gentle inquiry came as the tike soaped and thoroughly washed her hands in the sink next to her.

It took a moment for Angela to register she was being addressed and who could blame her with Mr. Adonis looking ready to devour her where she stood.

"Huh? Oh, yes by myself."

Angela was relieved for the distraction focusing her attention on the smaller female. She

was an adorable girl with light bronzed skin, round dark brown eyes that probably got her anything she wanted and a cute little pug nose. Curly, dark brown hair was streaked with blonde highlights and hung passed her shoulders in a manageable style. Angela knew it probably took some effort to get the curls to behave just so. She was obviously of mixed race and since hunky dad looked like his ancestors probably hailed from Ireland or Scotland it stood to reason that she'd probably inherited her darker features and massive curls from her mother. So sexiness over there was down with the swirl.

*Or she could be adopted. Bottom line is it's none of your business.*

The tiny voice was right. Whether he liked black women or not wasn't her concern. Besides he was probably involved and ultimately too young for her.

"Why don't you sit with us? Daddy has sky seats."

"Thank you, but I actually have special seats for reporters." Angela lifted her badge inanely.

*Like that's gonna mean something to the kid.*

"You're a 'porter?"

Angela nodded. It was a half-truth, actually she wrote obituaries for her newspaper and filled in, mostly for Sheila, during last minute emergencies where needed. At least now she felt like she was utilizing her journalism degree instead of playing office manager at her ex-husbands plastic surgery practice.

"Are you married?"

The sudden directional change caught her by surprise although it shouldn't have with someone so little. She had two nieces of her own, who she saw frequently, their questions were just as off the cuff as they were quick. She looked back to the girl's father, for what she wasn't sure. If she thought she'd get any assistance from him she was sorely mistaken because like his daughter he waited silently.

“Uh, no.”

“What about kids?” The next question followed immediately.

“Not my own, but I do have two nieces.”

“Cool. I’m Sophie and my dad’s name is Marcus, but don’t call him Mark, he hates that.”

Angela couldn’t help but smile at Sophie’s energetic introduction. The girl moved next to her parent but kept her eyes curiously on Angela. Funny, the gesture seemed completely protective.

Marcus gave his daughter’s head an affectionate pat, but like child, his eyes were locked on her as well. “And your name?”

Damn, she hadn’t imagined it. His voice did sound like velvet all wrapped in hot sensuality.

“Angela... Angie for short.”

All right, so this definitely ranked up there on her list of the oddest places to have a conversation, at least for her.

“Well Angie, I think we’ve taken up enough of your time, for now.”

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*For now.*

The words echoed through her head although her focus should have been on the game. Try as she might she couldn’t shake the image of Marcus, his spitfire of a daughter or those disturbing words from her brain.

He hadn’t bothered to get her phone number or even a last name for that matter so why would he add the foreboding ‘for now’. She tried to convince herself that maybe he’d misspoken, yet the way his voice had dipped a little on the final two words seemed completely deliberate. While going through her list of mundane questions, in the player’s

locker room, men milled about in various states of undress. Bare muscled chests, boxer briefs some even in towels and she couldn't bring herself to give them more than a cursory appreciative glance. Men in peak physical conditions and she kept wondering what Marcus would look like in similar attire.

Cheers erupted in the reporters box, as the coed group bounded out of their seats. All around her cameras whirred in rapid successions.

"Whoa, did you see that! It was like butter." The man next to her shouted, professionalism forgotten, at what was probably one of the best plays in preseason. Unfortunately she wouldn't know because yet again she'd been distracted by her earlier meeting. She reached for her camera in the hopes of snapping at least a couple of shots of the two men rounding bases in their pursuit of home plate.

Shoveling through her oversized purse yielded no camera. *Damn!* She racked her brain briefly for the last place she remembered having the object. The men's restroom. Well that was one piece of equipment she'd never lay eyes on again. She hoped whoever got it appreciated the prime piece of merchandise because the blinder could very well mean her job. Sheila was going to kill her for the missed opportunity and the sports editor would definitely rip her a new one before he had her escorted out of the building. If only she'd ignored her phone she could be at home enjoying a nice cup of Joe and a slice of the blackberry cobbler she'd picked up on her way home yesterday.

Without her camera she silently wished that the rest of the game would conclude without too much hoopla but couldn't bring herself to leave until it was done. Several times she thought about chatting up the male reporter next to her whose camera had to have whirred off a thousand shots. A couple times she'd caught the man staring between her sizeable cleavage and the action on the field which said a lot considering he appeared to be an obvious sports buff. She gave him another once over before rejecting the idea. Physically he did nothing for her and there was no way she'd use someone, even to save her job.



Six home runs and four double headers later Angela knew she was cursed. She couldn't believe this was happening on the heels of her 'Great Awakening'. Okay, maybe not so great but definitely a turning point in her life. It was suppose to be a turn for the better. Two years had passed since her divorce, included in that was one year of self-pity, and one more of support groups. Finally, Angela had decided to take back her life on her own terms. She was done living in the past. She no longer questioned why her husband of fifteen years decided to trade her in for a younger but trashier model. She'd gotten over the hurt of him impregnating his mistress/high-school-dropout-ghetto-bimbette when he'd been so adamant about them not having children, and all before the ink could dry on their divorce decree.

Now forty, divorced and very much in the prime of her life she was all about controlling her own destiny, which included taking her current position and hopefully keeping it. Man was she going to have some explaining to do.

Up until that moment she considered things to be going well for her. With Sheila's, her BFF, help she landed the obituary writing job that opened the door for her to take on the additional assignments. She'd joined a gym, not to get thin but to stay healthy, hating they way she's started panting whenever going up the stairs of her two-story home. Her life and luck really seemed to be back on track present day excluded. She probably wouldn't have worried too much except the sports editor was known to be a grade 'A' ball buster. In the past she'd never given him cause to come down on her and didn't relish finding out if he lived up to the hype of his bad reputation.

"Miss." A young man appeared amidst the thinning group of reporters who scrambled to be the first to interview the players as they made their way from the locker rooms. Angela wasn't in as big a rush. She'd already chalked the game up to a bust and was preparing to deal with the repercussions when she checked in on Monday.

"Yeah?"

He extended a folded card to her. "This is for you."

Angela eyed the deliveryman who looked as if he doubled as a vendor before taking the object.

*Since you're off duty we thought you might like to grab something to eat, or at least meet us to get your camera back.*

*Sophie and Marcus*

Adonis had her camera! Angela wasn't sure whether she should be annoyed that he'd kept the item the entire game or flattered by the invite. Surely he had to realize the importance the camera played in her line of work and to just hold on to it. For what purpose? She slipped the note in her bag ready to give Marcus a carefully worded piece of her mind, acquire her camera and head home to salvage the remainder of her weekend.

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"There she is daddy!"

There was no mistaking the youthful cry as she stepped into the wide corridor. Although the stadium wasn't crowded several fans milled about chatting enthusiastically about what amounted to a stellar game.

Angela would have spotted the pair anywhere. The two looked as if they'd stepped out of a *Family Circle* catalogue. It wasn't fair for people to look so beautiful. Marcus leaned casually against an opposite wall. Sophie held one of his large hands firmly in her grasp while bouncing up and down pointing at Angela. She couldn't help but notice the camera that dangled around his neck. The short walk across the expanse felt like the longest in her life. Angela was hyper sensitive to the eyes that watched her every move as she closed the distance.

"I take it you got our message?"

Would she ever get use to the sound of his voice? Better still, would her mind stop conjuring up carnal images of him every time he spoke?

She nodded in response tapping her purse.

“You’re coming?” Sophie beamed.

The way her little face lit up Angela didn’t have the heart to say anything that would destroy it. She looked between father and daughter and knew immediately that she was screwed big time.