

Part Seventeen

Dana Weismann – 3/8/2017 – Thursday – 5:32 am

Just as Max was walking back to the truck, Dana was in the middle of sending out a message on blast to all the girls in all the active groups, and posting it so that each new group that was added to the active pool would also get a copy of it once their team went live. She probably should have sent it earlier, but Esme had been doing a good job of managing the expectations of the few girls who had decided to show up so early in the morning.

“To all the ladies of the Brand Game: We now have Max under an agreement that will have him spending every Thursday at the newly christened Ironwood Estates, which is good, because any point where we're able to predict his movements is a benefit for all of us. With that in mind, I want to stress that while Max is in the food truck cooking, we would like to declare a moratorium on any aggressive sexual advances or anything that will detract from his focus on his work. Based on what he's told us, there will be large windows of time where we expect him to get out of the truck – for his own lunch and rest breaks, as well as time spent restocking. Also, once he's done for the day, we anticipate keeping him around the club into the evening a bit. *That's* when he's fair game for anyone to make a move, but if people are trying to grind on him too hard while he's working, he'll consider the arrangement non-beneficial and then we're back to him getting suspicious. So, long story short, keep the flirting to a purely verbal level while the man's working, and once he's stepping out of the truck, don't everybody all mob him at once. Other than that, happy hunting ladies.”

It all felt like one giant game of spinning plates, seeing how long they could keep Max from growing suspicious, but with everyone playing well together so far, it seemed like the illusion would hold, at least for a little while, which is all anyone could really ask for.

The pool of women here at the asscrack of dawn was small, but they'd understood what Dana had told them, and had either agreed to just hang by the pool or were spending as much time as they could grilling the women who'd actually spent time with Max already.

The Travers sisters in particular were sponging as much information as they could out of both Esme and Jenny, who had shown up early this morning, clearly intent on reminding Max of her presence. At this point, Dana felt certain that Jenny was at least going to *try* and stay in Max's life post-game, but she wasn't being subtle about it, which Dana thought was going to come back and bite the detective in the ass.

Going for the big prize was part and parcel for many of the girls, but the game was going to be a very complicated process, and there were a lot of girls fighting for it. Trying to make a place up front was fine – but Dana felt like the person to be selling that to was Max, and not the rest of the girls, because the girls weren't going to back down, no matter what anyone did.

The competition was fierce, and it was only going to get fiercer.

One of the things that Dana had done to make sure that Max's truck got business was lean into nearly every business contact she had in the Oakland/Berkeley/El Cerrito area. She'd been smart about it, naturally, telling them she'd gotten “exclusive” rights for the day for one of the most prestigious food trucks in the Bay and that she would be managing large scale deliveries, if people were interested. By the end of most of the conversations, the people she was talking to thought she was doing *them* a favor instead of the other way around, and were eager to sign up to get “early access” to Constant Rotation's newest creations before anyone else could. They weren't “trial runs” but “early adopters.” They weren't sampling unproven food; they were “beta testing” Max's menu before anyone else. The manipulation of language was something Dana had learned early on, and was practicing every chance she got. She was

so good at it, in fact, that a handful of the people later on her call list had actually called *her* asking why she hadn't reached out to *them* yet. She'd even gotten phone calls and emails from so called "social media influencers" about wanting to get onto Dana's order sheet. They couldn't wait to be the first to post about Max's food and to brag about how cutting edge they were.

People were *so* easy to exploit if you knew how to do it.

Before his little tryst with Mai, Max had posted the week's list of menu items on offer to their LCD screen that hung on the side of the truck, each menu item with a picture taken from Max's demo run yesterday so that even the people who didn't know what half the ingredients were could still get a general gist of the food on offer.

Dana had taken pictures of that with her cell phone and sent them out on blast to her list, stressing that orders were filled on a first-received, first-filled basis, and that the money for the order should accompany it. She was her own little mini-Door Dash for the day.

"You about ready for orders, Max?" Dana said, seeing Mai, Jenny, Esme and the Travers sisters in line, waiting for him to say go.

"Let me make something for everyone here, and then start lining the big orders up, although don't overdo it too fast," he said over Frankie's shoulder. "The last thing I want to do is take too many orders that we can't fill."

"I actually built in a window or so per order. You think fifteen minutes is enough time to fill an order for five to seven?" she asked. "I can space the windows out more, or bring them closer together. Whatever you need."

"Let's keep it at that, and we'll see where we go moving forward," Max said, as he started to cook. Dana was intent to keep him right in that sweet spot between floored with work and not overwhelmed to the point of making mistakes.

Brooklynn Travers – 3/8/2017 – Thursday – 6:22 am

She'd known that the competition was going to be fierce, but Brooklynn had to admit to herself she was surprised to be getting such a light amount of competition early in the morning for Max's attention. Sure, he was cooking loads, but he was also surprisingly chatty while he worked, and he seemed to find the presence of women to talk to refreshing, as long as they didn't overwhelm him, something all the girls were making a point of not doing. The last thing anyone wanted was to invoke Max's wrath and get driven off from the truck.

In fact, most of the girls were helping making themselves useful, wrapping up orders, getting them in bags and boxes, double checking the items in them and handing them off to runners who were showing up from all sorts of businesses and construction sites around the East Bay. Besides, Max's cooking smelled amazing, and after they'd had their share of breakfast, getting Max's attention was simply the name of the game.

"I know you," Max had said to her almost immediately after getting a good look at her. "You were in that movie I saw last year, *Deadly Persuasion*, the one that had that guy from that boy band in it, now that he's trying to rebrand himself as an actor."

Brooklynn had smiled, glad he knew her from her acting career and not from the tabloid messes of the last few years since her father's death. "Thanks, I'm glad y'all liked it," she said, leaning into the southern accent she'd affected for the film. "I got to do mah own stunts an' everything." She giggled a little. "I wasn't too sure about the accent," she said, returning to her own voice, "but the critics seemed

okay with it, even if they were still upset I wasn't showing my tits on camera. I mean, just 'cause my sister does it doesn't mean I have to.”

“Oh, I showed a *lot* more than just my tits on camera,” Guinevere said with a laugh. “When Martin Fucking Scorsese asks you to show your bush in a film, you don't say no. You just make sure it's not going to get the film rated NC-17 or anything, 'cause that's commercial suicide, but he wasn't going to go that route.”

Brooklynn shook her head as her sister walked away from the truck with her breakfast burrito, clearly going to devour the hell out of it, even while Brooklyn kept talking to Max. “She's always been like that,” she sighed. “The younger sister who's got to one-up my game for everything, but I won't let her goad me into it. If I see a role where I feel like nudity is an essential part of the role, then I'll do it, but I refuse to let myself be objectified for no good reason.”

“Hey,” Max said, “you should be proud of having a set of standards you refuse to cross for a part. That probably kept you out of some skeezy casting offices from time to time.”

She groaned, nodding her head. “Fucking Harvey Weinstein wanted to talk to me about a part in some movie he was putting together, but I'd heard all the fucking stories from some of the people he'd pulled that shit on before, so I wasn't having any of it. I refused to take any meetings with him that didn't have at least three or four people present for them.”

“See? That's smart looking out,” Max told her with a sense of admiration that felt genuine. Brooklynn never knew how much or little she should be talking about Hollywood with civilians (aka anyone *not* in the Hollywood business) but Max seemed to be game to spend some time on the subject.

“That your usual kind of flick?” she asked him. “The military thriller shoot'em up?”

“I mean, I'm into all kinds of movies,” Max told her. “Yeah, I do love thrillers, but I'm also a big fan of comedies, genre pictures, film noir, horror flicks...”

“God, I swear coming up those things were constantly auditioning endless pretty girls who could scream loudly and show their tits proudly. I had to finally tell my agent to stop sending me on those auditions because I wasn't going to take my top off for some random fucking casting agent.”

“So what are you and your sister doing up here in the Bay?”

“David Fincher is working on a miniseries for Amazon Prime Video about the Dot Com crash of 2002, and both Gwen and I have parts in it,” Brooklynn said, deciding to shade the lie with some truth. “We don't start shooting until the fall, but Gwen and I both wanted to come up here and do some research as well as take in the lay of the land.”

“That crash was pretty brutal out here,” Max told her. “I hope he's going to do something to make the story a little less of a downer.”

“It's based on a memoir from one of the guys who was running one of the largest dot coms that just up and vanished within a couple of years of their big break,” she said. “I can't tell you which one, but I can say the script has a lot of comedic moments to contrast some of the despair and heartbreak. It's definitely got some pitch black comedy in it without it being a full-on comedy. You know, like *Fight Club*.”

Max chuckled. “I'm still bothered by the number of people who think Tyler Durden's philosophy is a good one. I mean, way to miss the point of the fucking movie, guys.”

Brooklynn giggled a bit at that, nodding her head. “David says the same thing, and he's setting out to make this one maybe a little more obvious, which is why the scripts are still going through some tweaking. It's going to be a ten episode series. Gwen's in two and I'm in five.”

“Can you tell me who you play?” Max said to her out the back door of the truck as he folded up yet another breakfast burrito, handing it to Frankie, who wrapped it in tin foil then handed it to Esme, who was putting everything into the box for the order.

“My character isn't a real person,” Brooklynn said. “More of an amalgam of a bunch of different people who were caught up in the mess of the tech bubble going pop.”

“And your sister?”

“Oh, Gwen's playing Natalie Donovan, the whistleblower who testified in front of Congress that most of the tech companies knew they didn't have an actual business model, but were hoping to fake it until they made it.”

Max stopped for half a second. “Wait, the one who hanged herself in between hearings?”

“That's the one,” Brooklynn told him. “Downer ending, right?”

“Is that the end of the series?” Max asked incredulously.

She laughed, shaking her pretty head at him once more. “Fuck no. That happens in like episode three of ten. The series is told in sort of a jumbled chronological order, jumping back and forth in time for dramatic effect.”

“How do you like acting?” Max seemed genuinely interested in her and her life, something Brooklynn hadn't been entirely prepared for. She'd expected he'd want to talk about himself, his cooking, his weird life, but instead, he'd been remarkably private about all of that unless asked.

“It's what I always wanted to do with my life, so I'm happy that I have a chance to do it full time, assuming the other shit doesn't keep getting in the way of doing that.”

“Oh, that's right,” Max said. “I remember hearing that your father was in a bit of debt when he died and that got passed on to you and your sister. Sorry to hear about that.”

Fuck, Brooklynn thought to herself, I wanted to keep him *off* that topic. Oh well, nothing to do about it now but to run head on into it.

“I just wish he'd told us, you know?” Brooklynn said with a sigh. Max gestured for her to hand him a package of tortillas from the table behind her, which she did. “I get it. No man wants to look weak in front of his daughters, and he didn't expect to die so young, so maybe he was just hoping to find some way out of it before we found out, but it seems like my father just kept throwing more money at the problem, hoping it would all go away and it never did. He was gambling on the Night Hawks making the Super Bowl some year, and even if they didn't win, the very fact that they made it there would've meant a huge spike in merchandise that maybe, *maybe*, would've helped him start climbing out of the hole he'd been digging since between me and my sister were born. I think when Mom died, he just found himself underwater and couldn't figure out which way was up.” She laughed a little bitterly, shaking her head. “Look at me, bitching about being in debt to a guy who's literally working himself to the bone day in and out. Sorry about that. Didn't mean to wallow.”

“You've got every reason in the world to be pissed at him,” Max said. “He left you all this shit behind, and you're the one stuck cleaning up after him. How much of it fell on your and your sister?”

She laughed, making a bit more angrily than she'd intended. “Not as much as could've, I guess, but certainly not as little as we would've liked,” she admitted. “We hoped that declaring bankruptcy would've gotten us out from under this, but even after we sold the team, sold Dad's old house, sold all his cars, shit, sold nearly everything he ever owned, we were still several million in the hole, each.”

“But you're making movies, so that should get you out from under that cloud eventually, right?”

"It's not like we're in Marvel movies or anything, Max," she sighed. "We're doing okay, and the debt collectors are patient, because they see us good earners. It just means most of the money my sister and I are making from our movies is going to pay off the debt that dear old Dad left us with."

"I hate to be indelicate, but can't you just take a lot more roles to make up for it? I get that you don't want to take every part that someone's willing to throw your way, but when I see stories about people like Nicolas Cage or John Travolta being out of money, you see a ton of direct-to-video or international-only releases with, like, ten minutes of the actor in them, just so they can use that actor's name on the marquee to try and sell tickets."

"I'm no Nicolas Cage," Brooklynn said. "Besides, when it comes to women who are down on their luck, it's almost like Hollywood thinks we're cursed, and if we're associated with their movie, it's going to rub off on their project and take some of the shine off."

"What a stupid fucking concept," Max told her.

"Oh, agreed, but that's the way it is. They're brutal on older actresses, too, so at some point within the next twenty years or so, the roles are going to start drying up and nobody's going to want to cast me in anything. Remember when Demi Moore was white hot? Seen her in much lately?" She took a final draw from the bottle of Orangina that she'd gotten with her breakfast. "Fucking blows is what it does."

"Can I ask you another possibly stupid question?" he said, a strange smile on his face.

"Sure," she replied. "I doubt it's anything I haven't heard before."

"What the hell is a girl like you doing in a place like this?" he said with a soft laugh. "What I mean is... you're a beautiful woman who's well-known and seemingly well-liked in Hollywood, so I imagine whoever you wanted to fuck, you could. And yet, both you and your sister are here in a sex club on a Thursday morning, which seems *way* out of character."

"Would you believe this club may be indirectly features in David's miniseries?" she lied. "They're still debating whether or not they want to include the part of an episode that takes place in a fictionalized version of Ironwood Estates, but it's in the script right now, and neither Gwen or I had ever been to a sex club before, so we reached out, got memberships and decided to come and see the place for ourselves."

The Fincher project was real, but there wasn't any mention of any sex clubs in it, not the fictional Ironwood Estates or even the more real locations scattered around the Bay. The closest it got was a few scenes set at a gay bar called The End Up, but even that wasn't set in stone yet. The scripts were going through revisions, but the plan was to start shooting in September, long after the Brand Game had finished, making the timing impeccable.

"Shit, I just became a member a few days ago," Max told her. "So I imagine you haven't been here much longer than that."

"Two weeks or so," Brooklynn told him. "And it's been a surprising dearth of men present here at Ironwood during that time, but the manager told me they're on something of a downswing for male members right now, pun very much intended," she giggled. "So if it feels like every chick and her sister are trying to get into your pants, they probably are. I think we're all a little dick starved as of late."

"Yeah, I mean, I don't get that," Max said, scraping the top of the grill clean with a tool designed to get caked on food off. "Every time I've been here, it's been packed with gorgeous women and almost never a dude in sight. The only other guy I've seen in these walls besides Frankie is this guy Danny, and Danny said he mostly comes with his girlfriend because she's an exhibitionist, and likes to

have people watch them fucking.”

Brooklynn nodded with a smile. “Yeah, I've seen Danny and Liane going at it a couple of times,” she giggled. “Lucky fucking girl. I wouldn't mind making that sailor stand up and salute for a night, given the chance.”

“I think I'm most surprised you *and* your sister are both here,” he told her. “I would think that would be weird, knowing your sister's competing with you for man meat.”

“Certainly better than dudes asking us if we would partner up,” she said with a shudder. “I mean, Gwen's my fucking *sister*, dude. C'mon. That's just fucking gross. I mean, yes, she and I have dated the same guy before, but there was, like, years in between him dating me and him dating her. Hollywood's such a fucking small club we knew it might happen eventually.”

“Certainly a lot bigger than Ironwood is,” Max countered.

“Why Max, are you telling me that you wouldn't want to fuck me or my sister?” she said coyly, fluttering her eyelashes at him.

He got flustered in a way she found cute and endearing. “No, uh, that's, ah, that's not what I meant to say at all. I just meant that it has to be weird, knowing that if you were fucking someone, your sister would be just a room or two away,” he stuttered his way through.

“Not any weirder than when she and I were roommates after we first moved into our own apartment, and she or I would bring guys home,” she laughed. “It was a two bedroom apartment, but those walls were paper thin, and we both got shows now and then. And we don't tend to get jealous about shit like that, in case you were thinking about fucking me and then fucking her later.”

“I, uh, I...” he stammered, clearly taken aback by how casually forward she was being with him. “I wasn't, I mean, I was, but I wasn't, I just...”

She started giggling wildly, holding her hand up to her mouth. “Oh my god, Max, it's totally fucking fine. Fuck me, fuck her, fuck both of us, it doesn't fucking matter, okay? It's *just* fucking, and it doesn't have to mean anything if you don't want it to.”

Max started to speak, stopped, started again, stopped again, then finally laughed. “Sorry, just the whole idea of totally casual meaningless sex is nothing I've ever had to really deal with before this week. I'm a nearly broke chef working himself to death on his food truck to make up for the restaurant I had that burned down unexpectedly.”

“Then my advice to you is 'just say yes,’” she giggled at him. “You'll only regret the chances you didn't take, not the ones you did.”

“Were you asking me something I could say yes *to*?” Max said, confusion in his voice.

She put her head in her hands, shaking it. “I *must* be losing my touch,” she groaned. “You couldn't even tell I was hitting on you?”

“I mean,” Max said. “It sort of *felt* like you were? But you're an ex-model turned actress and I'm, well, *me*. You should be punching *waaaaaaay* above my weight class.”

“You're smart, you're cute and you haven't talked down to me *once* this entire fucking conversation, Max, which is more than I can say about *any* guy who's taken me out on a date in the last five years,” she said. “So I'm asking you if you *want* to fuck me...”

“Any straight man in a hundred miles *wants* to fuck you, Brooklynn,” Max said to her with the sort of honesty that Brooklynn wasn't accustomed to. “So yes, the answer is yes.”

“Great,” she said. “After the morning rush, when you're on your first break, we can go upstairs and have ourselves a fun quick romp. I get my rocks off, you can tell your friends you've fucked a Hollywood A-lister, and everybody's happy, yeah?”

“If that's what you want...” Max still seemed a little unconvinced, but both Esme and Jenny had reported he'd been very shy right up until the moment of contact.

“Max, c'mere a second,” she said. “It'll only take a second.”

He finished the last thing he had in the order, handing it off to Esme before he moved to the back door of the truck, where Brooklynn was close. “Ye-?”

She grabbed him by the shirt and pulled him down close enough that she could kiss him, and she kissed him like her life depended on it, like she wanted to convey as much desire as she possibly could. It wasn't even entirely acting at this point. Sure, the money would be a great help in getting them out of debt, but Max also seemed like a genuinely good guy so far. Maybe, Brooklynn thought to herself, she really was in for the big prize.

After the kiss broke, she pushed him back a little, licking her lips, looking up at him from hooded eyes before winking. “So I'll see you when you're on break in about an hour or so?”

He finally stammered “Yes ma'am” as she began to turn and walk away.

She hadn't *entirely* lost her touch.

Max Brewster – 3/8/2017 – Thursday – 9:45 am

The rest of the morning was mostly a blur, although Max did spend at least a bit of time talking with Jenny again, happy to see her once more. She'd also given him a kiss, although certainly not with the intensity or ferocity that Brooklynn had. Jenny had helped Esme package and double check the orders before handing them off to runners.

She also asked Max if he was going to hit that, when he was talking about his encounter with Brooklynn earlier in the morning. He told her that Danny had convinced him he should say no less, and Jenny actually seemed pleased by that response.

“Life's too short not to take some risks, Max,” Jenny said to him, just around the time Max was filling the last expected order for the morning. He and Dana had agreed on a 9:30 cut off point, so that he would have time to recharge and restock before they'd start taking orders again at 11 for the lunch rush that would last until around 2:30 or 3.

“So you're saying I should fuck a movie star,” Max said, finally taking his apron off, setting it aside, stepping out of the back of the food truck.

“No,” Jenny laughed. “I'm saying you should fuck *several* movie stars, given the chance. Speaking of which, aren't you due to go start in on that right now?”

“You know,” Max laughed. “At one point, I thought you might have wanted to be my girlfriend.”

“Oh I *do*,” Jenny replied to him. “But I also think you need to sow the *fuck* out of some wild oats first, so it's pussy for months and when winter rolls around, we can talk about what it might look like if you and I wanted to make a more emotional go at it. For now, though, you better hit that shit and do it right, you hear me?” She even slapped his ass like he was a stubborn horse, refusing to move.

“Yes ma'am.” It was becoming his new catch phrase.

He found Brooklynn in one of the upstairs bedrooms, wearing nothing but a silk robe that she had drawn tightly around her, it abundantly clear that her nipples were rock hard as she laid on the bed, scrolling through her phone. “Normally, I’m just resting up and catching my breath during the down time,” Max told her. “And I reek of food.”

“You mean you smell delicious,” she said, patting the bed next to her. “Let me do all the work then. You can just sit and enjoy.” While her red hair had been done up before, she’d taken all the hairpins out and let it drape down over her shoulders, making it gleam a little in the morning light that crept in through a slight part in the window shades. “You want to take a picture first?”

Max blushed a little, reaching into his pocket to fish out his cellphone, and as he did, she opened the robe and let it expose those full pink breasts of hers to his eyes, her nipples a slightly darker shade, larger than he’d expected. He was also surprised to see a heart shaped patch of auburn curls above her pussy. “I thought you didn’t do nudity for pictures.”

“I think I probably owe you one,” she said with a smile, giving him her best portfolio expression as he lined up his camera and snapped a picture of her in the buff. He set his phone down on the nightstand, kicked off his shoes and climbed up into the bed.

Within moments, Brooklynn had moved to peel his clothes off of him, lifting them to her face to breathe in the scent of his cooking first. “Anyone who doesn’t think that smell is dead sexy is a fucking moron,” she told him before undoing his pants.

Max laid down on his back, as Brooklynn pulled his pants and boxers down, exposing his cock. With all the sex he’d been getting lately, he was surprised it could still get stiff, but the look of this regal Hollywood beauty pressing her lips to it was something no man could ignore. The expression on her face as she took his dick into her mouth was one of pride, of happiness, of a desire to please.

She started to bob her head quickly, but also closed her thumb and forefinger around the base of his cock, as if to make sure he wasn’t getting any ideas about a quick release. Once she’d gotten him primed, she moved to straddle his hips and lowered her copper fur lined pussy down onto his cock, a wanton and satisfied moan melting into the air like sexual syrup. “Fuck, it’s been too fucking long,” she told him. “You feel so fucking nice... Can I kiss you, Max? It could’ve just been sex, but I... I like you, and I want to kiss you. I won’t if you say no, though.”

When she leaned down, he leaned up and placed his hand on the back of her neck, bringing her face in to match his, his lips pressed hard against hers, holding that kiss even while he felt her hips doing their best to snap back and forth along his shaft.

He wanted to last longer, he genuinely did, but the intimacy of the moment was unlike anything he’d had in days, their lips trapped in a soulful kiss, even as he felt his orgasm crash in much sooner than he would’ve wanted. When it hit and he began to spurt inside of her, however, it seemed like it might have set her off as well, as she clamped down harder on his cock, and the moan being passed back and forth between them in the kiss echoed on until they both began to lie still, except for their lips that were mashed together, eventually breaking the kiss as she purred into his face.

“What a lucky girl am I...”