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Even the hardest heart can be tempered by love... Cassandra Serek is a true innocent in a wild and insecure place, but her indomitable spirit and gentle soul make her stronger than anyone suspects. The owner of the Colorado mining empire, the wealth and position of Luke Taggart can buy him anything, but he is tired of the life of salons, gambling and free women. Nothing soothes his restless inner aspiration - until he spies a cassandra as fresh and clean as a spring morning, and swears that he will possess it. The radiant, charmingly naive young beauty seems blind to the depths of Luke's desire or the lengths he is willing to go to seduce her. But the lady is wise, with an unwavering belief in the magical powers of love. And she is determined to awaken a good man hiding in Luke's jade heart, for only one precious gift will truly defeat her: his deep, passionate and unsullied love.477 printed pages to which he wanted... Spencer's racing in the gunglinging days is far behind him. Now he's a reliable, respectable rancher, but it's a solitary life. Destiny then leads the Race to the earthly angel - the lost and lonely only survivor of the attack of criminals - and even his hardened heart moves. He sweeps the ivory of the beauty skin in his hands and carries it away from danger. A Woman to Cherish When innocent Rebecca Morgan wakes up in someone else's arms, her life has changed forever. The touch of race makes her blood sing and evokes emotions in her she never knew existed. But this man has a stinging reputation. And while her life may depend on him, can she trust him? Is this the love she sees in the dark eyes of her savior.? It's a work of art. Names, characters, places and incidents are either a product of the author's imagination or used fictitiously, and any resemblance to real people, alive or dead, business institutions, events or places is completely accidental. Separate beds Jove Book / published by agreement with the author all rights reserved. Image copyright © LaVyrle Spencer, 1985, this book cannot be reproduced in whole or in part, by mmeographer or by any other means, without permission. The manufacture or distribution of electronic copies of the book constituted copyright infringement and could place the offender under criminal and civil liability. For information address: The Berkley Publishing Group, Penguin Putnam Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014. Penguin Putnam Inc. World Wide Web Address Site is ISBN: 0-7865-0372-6 JOVE BOOKS® Jove Books first published by Jove Publishing Group, a member of Penguin Putnam Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10014. JOVE and J Design are trademarks owned by Penguin Putnam Inc. First edition (electronic), September 2001. With love for mine, Dan, what ever happened in my life Chapter 1 Circumstances that they were, it was ironic that Katherine Anderson knew a little more Clay Forrester than his name. He must be rich, she thought, she, foyer, which showed quite clearly how good the Forrester family was. The deep side of the vast entrance opened into the sprawling formal living room of pale yellow and muted gold. Above was a large crystal chandelier. Behind her, the ladder rose sharply to the second story. She collided with a double-door, a console table whose cabriole legs touched the parquet as easily as the ballerina's feet, and a brass accent lamp reflected by a gilded mirror. Next to it stood a huge brass jug bursting with an abundance of irresistibly fragrant dried eucalyptus. Sharp things began to make her sick. She turned her eyes to the massive carved oak front door. The pens were not in the shape of any that she had ever seen. Instead, they were curved and swirling like the handles of thin cutlery. Acid catherine asks how much pens as those should cost, not to mention the pretentious bench on which she stayed. It was a lush brown velvet, armless, beam - the kind of absurd extravagance provided only by the very rich. Yes, the whole foyer was a work of art and wealth. Everything fits in . . . except Katherine Anderson. The girl was quite attractive, her apricot skin and weather blonde hair having a fresh, vital look. Its features bore a strikingly attractive symmetry, often found in Scandinavian ancestors - a straight nose and thin nostrils; slender, bowed lips and blue eyes under arched eyebrows a pleasant contour. It was her clothes that gave her away. She wore a pair of heather colored trousers and a shirt that spoke of the bright days long gone. They were homemade and made of bad cloth. Her trench coat was sluggish, shabby on the hem and cuffs. Her brown wedgies were made of artificial things, worn in heels and curled up on her heels. However, her clean, windy appearance and fresh complexion saved Catherine from finding the dubious. It is, and the proud men with which she carried herself. Even that was slipping now, the longer she sat here. For Katherine realized that she was left as a naughty child about to be reprimanded, which was actually not far from the truth. With a resignation sigh, she dropped her head back against the wall. She vaguely wondered if people like Forresters would object to the girl as she lay her head against their elegant wallpaper if they would, so defiantly held it there. Her eyes glided closed, blotting out of lush elegance, unable to wash away the angry voices of the study: her father, harsh and accusing, followed by Mr. Forrester's limited, angry response. Why am I staying? she wondered. But she knew the answer: her neck was still aching from the pressure of her father's fingers. And of course there was her mother to consider. She too was there, along with the unlucky Forresters, and - rich or not - they did nothing to deserve a lunatic like her father. It was never Catherine's intention to make it happen. She's still. Shocked expressions of both Mr. Mr. Mrs Forrester when her father broke into their pastoral evening with his bald accusations. At first they tried politeness, suggesting that they all sit down in the office and talk about it. But after a few moments they realized they were against it when Herb Anderson pointed to the bench and roared at his daughter, just plant your little girl right there, girl, and don't move, or I'll beat livin' hell outa you! No, the Forresters didn't do anything to deserve a lunatic like Herb Anderson. Suddenly the front door opened, letting in a gust of leafy scent of autumn air and the man whose clothes looked like an interior decorator planned to mix it with the foyer. He was a tapestry of earthy tones: camel trousers made of soft wool, European cut, sharply crumpled, falling on a stylish gap on brown Cordow's loafers; sports jacket of muted rust and camel plaid flowing over his shoulders like soft caramel over ice cream; a soft shade of rust is repeated in a woolen lamb sweater underneath; white collar left casually open to tear off a narrow gold chain around his neck. Even nature seemed to collaborate in creating his color scheme, for his skin bore the remnants of a deep summer tan, and his hair was burned red and gold. He whistled as he breezed, unaware of Catherine, who was sitting partially protected by a eucalyptus. She flattened her back against the wall of the stairs, taking advantage of her rare camouflage, watching as he crossed to the console table and glanced through what should be the Daily Mail, still whistling softly. She saw his classically beautiful face in the mirror, his straight nose, long cheeks and sculpted eyebrows. They may have been cast in bronze, so flawless and firm were their lines. But his mouth-oh, it was too perfect, too mobile, too memorable to be anything but flesh and blood. Unaware of her presence, he shrugged off the stylish sports coat, casually caught him in the curve of one wrist and bounded up the stairs two at a time. Catherine withted against the wall. But it froze again as the cabinet door swung open, and Mr. Forrester stood framed against the bookshelves inside, his slate-grey eyes submerged under rocky eyebrows with menacing expression, his anger barely kept in check. He spent not so much as a look at the girl on the bench. Glue! The invincible tone stopped the young man's ascent. Sir? The voice was the same as Catherine recalled, though the official word of the address surprised her. She's not used to hearing fathers named sir. I think you'd better step into the study. Then Mr. Forrester himself did so, leaving the door open as another team. If the circumstances were different, Katherine could have felt sorry for Clay Forrester. His whistling is gone. All she heard now was a soft shush of his steps coming back down the stairs. She squeezed her chest with both hands, struggling with an unexpected stream of panic. Do not him to see me! she thought. Let him go straight past and not turn around! However, common sense told her that she could not escape it indefinitely. Sooner or later, he'll know she's here. He re-emerged around the newel post, shrugging once more in his sports coat, telling her even more about her relationship with her father. Her heart beat in a high throat cavity and she held her breath, a slick of awkward ent now coloring her cheeks. He went up to the mirror, checked his collar and hair. For Catherine, in the shortest moment he seemed vulnerable, observed because of this, unaware of her presence or what was waiting for him in the study. But she reminded herself that he was not only rich, he was degenerate; he deserved what was to come. Then he moved, and her image became visible in the mirror. His eyes recorded a surprise, then he turned to her for a moment. Oh, hello, he greeted her. I didn't see you hiding there. She suddenly felt a terrible thud of her heart, but she carefully kept her face calm, giving him nothing more than a silent, wide-eyed nod. Never planned to put an eye on him again, she wasn't ready for it. Sorry, he politely added, as did any of the customers who often waited there to work with their father. Then he turned to the office. Inside came his father's team. Shut the door, Clay! Her eyes slid closed. He doesn't remember me, Katherine thought. The confession made her suddenly, inexplicably cry, though it made no sense at all when she hoped he would walk straight past like a stranger, and that was exactly what he did. Well, she scolded herself, that's what you wanted, wasn't it? It sparked anger as an antidote to tears that Katherine Anderson never allowed herself to shed. Feel like they're threatening, and here, from all places! It was unspeakable. Weakings were crying! Weaks and fools! But Katherine Anderson was neither weak nor a fool. Circumstances may seem different only now, but in twenty-four hours everything will be very different. From behind the study door, Clay Forrester's voice exploded: Who! And her eyes were falling apart. He does not remember me, she thought again, resigned herself to that, once and for all, straightening his shoulders, telling herself not to let this matter matter. The study door swung open and it affected the relaxed and indifferent air as Clay Forrester collided with her framed in that doorway, just like his father had before. His eyes - gray, too- punctured her. His frown immediately told her that he did not believe a word about it! But she was pleased to note that his hair now looked combed with his fingers. Pushing both front panels of his sports coat, hands on hips, he challenged her with those angry eyes. He scanned her in total, allowed his look to float down to her belly and then back up, not to mention her separate air. She suffered insolent manner his gaze roved down like a slap, and keenly studying it his lower lip, which she remembered quite well, given the brevity of their association and the time that has expired since then. But with little or no knowledge of him, Katherine decided that she should take care of dealing with him, so she was carefully silent under his close attention. Ekaterina? He asked at last. She expected to see his breath, the word was so cold. Hello, Clay, she replied brazenly, keeping the false air from the side. Clay Forrester watched her rise, slim and seemingly confident. Almost arrogantly, he thought, but certainly not frightened... and hardly a plea! You belong here too, he said with the time points, holding this unapologetic position when she gave him one extended look, which she hoped seemed cool. Then she walked past him into the office. He was antagonistic. She could almost smell it as she passed so close in front of him. The room was like staging a collection of stories: pre-dinner fire burning on the grille, stem glasses half full on polished tables, books lined with walls, original Terry Redlin wildlife oil on the wall behind a leather loveseat, soft carpet underfoot. Male, but warm, all about the room talked about the interrupted cosiness, which was why Herb Anderson chose this time of day to make his appearance when he realized that all the Forresters would be home. His exact words were: I'll get their rich sons-bitches when they're all hid together in this quaint brick mansion, wearin' they're all family jewels and we'll see who pays for it! The contrast between Clay and Catherine's parents was almost ludicrous. Mrs. Forrester was tucked away in a wing chair on one side of the fireplace. She was shocked, but very proper, her legs crossed at the ankles. Her clothes were flawless and up to date, her hair done in a tasteful coiffure which made her features appear young regal. Herb Anderson's jewels glistened on her slender arms. Ada Anderson, in a matching chair on the opposite side of the fireplace, took to slub her bargain basement coat, keeping her eyes down. Her hair was mousy, her shape dumped. On her hand was only a thin gold stripe, the design of the apple frown worn smooth from years of hard work. Mr. Forrester, twice endowed with a well-tailored grey business, stood behind a Morocco-topped table that held several leather books in a pair of jade bookends worth as much as Anderson's entire collection of living room furniture. Then there was her father, decked out in a red nylon jacket, showing off the words Bar Varpo on his back. Katherine avoided looking at the bulging beer belly, bloated face, constantly present expressions of cynicism that constantly claimed that the world was out to beat Herb Anderson out of something when in fact it was the other way around. Catherine stopped beside her mother's chair, knowing that Clay had stopped behind her. She kept her shoulder turned away from him, choosing instead to With my father, father, the most formidable man in the room. Even his position at the table was strategically chosen to mean the team. Realizing this, she decided to confront him on his feet. Her own father may swear and continue like a drunken sailor, but this other stern adversary has been by far a great threat. Catherine felt the complete control of the man, felt, too, that if she faced him with a hint of a challenge on her face it would be the worst possible mistake. He was one of those people who knew how to deal with hostility and defiance, so she carefully kept them from their dignity. My son doesn't seem to remember you, does he? His voice was like the first edge of November's ice on Lake Minnesota - cold, sharp, thin, dangerous. No, he doesn't, Catherine said, looking directly at him. Do you remember her? The father snapped at his son, laughing to be true. No, Clay replied, raising Catherine's anger not because she wanted to be remembered, but because it was a lie. She really didn't expect the truth from him anyway, had she? - More than once she suspected that he had enough money to support any lie he decided to tell. However, his answer rankled. She turned to find him closer than it was convenient, and approached him with blue eyes that rivaled the frost in his father. Liar! Her eyes seemed to scream while he smugly perused her features, then glanced at her blond hair and saw the fire set up sundogs on it, dancing behind her that way. And suddenly he remembered him lighting fireworks. Oh, he remembered her... Now he remembered her! But he cautiously kept it from showing in his face. What the hell is this setup? He's the defendant. I'm afraid not, and you know it, Catherine said, wondering how long she could keep that feigned calm. But then Herb Anderson jumped up, squealing and pointing. Your damn right isn't, lover boy, so just don't think you're in my house. Mr. Forrester interrupted explosively, and if you want it. . . This debate will continue, you will control yourself while you are here! There was an undeniable note of sarcasm in the word discussion; it was obvious Herb Anderson did not know the meaning of the word. Just get busy and make a lover boy here own, or, so help me, I'll squeeze the truth outa it as I did outa it. Something slymy seemed to creep through Clay's innards. He glanced sharply at the girl, but she remained in the line-up, her eyes now on the table, where the white knuckles were depressingly shiny skin. You will remain rational, sir, or you and your wife will leave immediately and take your daughter with you! Forrester ordered it. But Anderson waited all his life for his ship, and this... God! . . . Was it! He turned to confront Clay's nose to nose. Let's hear it, lover, he chuckled. Let's hear you say you never eye on it before and I'll make you the sorriest lookin' mess you've ever seen in your life. And when I'm done, son, I'm going to sue yours. The man for every damn penny he has. A rich bastard like you think just because you have a few bucks your look can walk all in skirts. Well, not this time, not this time! He shook his fist under Clay's nose. Are you going to pay this time or I'll scream rape so fast, it will make you wish you were a faggot! Humiliated, Katherine knew it was useless to argue. Her father drank all day, getting primed for this. She saw it happen, but there was nothing she could do about it. Clay, do you know this woman? His father demanded grimly, keenly ignoring Anderson. Before Clay could answer, Herb Anderson pushed his face next to his daughter and scoffed: Tell him, girl. . . tell him it was a lover boy here knocked you! Instinctively Catherine moved away from the hideous smell of his breath, but he reached out and grabbed her cheeks and dissipated: You tell him, sister, if you know what's good for you. Clay stepped between them. Now, wait a minute! Get your hands off her! She's already pointed the finger at me, or you wouldn't be here. Then, more calmly, he added: I said I didn't know her, but I remember her. Catherine flashed his warning look. Actually, the last thing she wanted from Clay Forrester was a noble sacrifice. Over there! You can see! Anderson made an offer as he hit trump on the table from above. Mrs. Forrester's face trembled. Her husband showed the first sign of defeat as his lips fell open. Do you admit that this woman's child is yours? Claiborne Forrester exclaimed to the unbelievers. I don't allow anything like that. I just said I remember her. Separate beds from LaVyrle Spencer / Romance and Love / History - Fiction have a rating of 4 out of 5 / Based on 32 votes votes

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