



Season Two:

Episode Seven

Pippi didn't have Jimmy's number. And she couldn't ask Herman for it. He had enough on his plate. Besides, it was probably outside the limits of a professional request. But she *had* to speak to Jimmy. It couldn't wait one more day.

But she did know where he lived. Sometimes, she would drive by the small apartment on the outskirts of town and watch him as he ate dinner or played video games. She told herself she wasn't being creepy, or at least not *too* creepy. Of course, she would die from embarrassment if he ever found out...

She'd only been inside one night a couple of months ago and that was by invitation. It had been a steamy night of pleasure and even now she could remember every sensation like it happened yesterday.

But none of that was important right now. What was important was that she find him. Fortunately, his truck was parked in front of his apartment building and his living room light was on.

When he opened the door, Jimmy looked startled. Then that big, stupid puppy dog grin of his broke out on his face.

"Pippi! What are you doing here?"

"Is this a bad time?" Pippi asked, noticing that Jimmy had a napkin splotted with a reddish-orange sauce tucked into his shirt collar.

"No! I was just finishing eating my Spaghetti-Os. They're my favorite."

"I like them, too," Pippi said. "Do you add ketchup to yours like I do?"

"Is the sky blue?" Jimmy asked. They both laughed.

We're made for each other, thought Pippi. She was certain little cartoon hearts were fluttering around her head.

Pippi followed him inside, looking around the apartment at the ragged furniture, the dirty laundry thrown in corners. Funny, in her memory it was cleaner. More grown up.

“I was actually going to head back to Shady Bluff. I’m taking the overnight housekeeper shift,” Jimmy said.

“Oh, really? Why?”

“You know Trevon? His wife just had a baby so he’s starting paternity leave. And I could use the extra cash.”

“Do you have time to talk?”

Jimmy squinted and looked at his watch. “Not really, Pippi. The shift starts at 7 p.m.”

“Oh, well...,” Pippi thought and thought about what to do. She didn’t want to put this off any longer than she had to. “I know! What if I rode with you? Herman asked me to meet him there, but I’d originally told him I couldn’t. He could give me a ride to my car later.”

Jimmy smiled. Pippi liked his dimples. Guys with such good physiques didn’t usually have such deep dimples.

“Sure thing.”

They rode in silence for the first 15 minutes. Well, mostly silent. Jimmy was humming something that alternately sounded like Mary Had a Little Lamb and Amazing Grace. *He’s so musical*, she thought.

Drawing a deep breath, she said. “I think I might be pregnant, Jimmy.”

Jimmy was silent for a moment, his brow furrowed. “I didn’t know you had a boyfriend or a husband or whatever,” he said.

“I don’t.”

“Did the rat run out on you?”

“No, Jimmy. You’re gonna be the father.” Before he could respond, she went on. “Remember that night we all went bowling? And after the game everyone left? Herman had all that paperwork to do and Regina said she had some letters to write and Philip said he was going home to polish some chrome, so it was just you and me? So we went back to your place and you had that really nice bottle of Bartles and Jaymes and we... you know...”

Pippi felt herself blushing.

“I’m gonna be a dad?” Jimmy asked. And to Pippi’s surprise, he began to cry.

“Jimmy, don’t cry! I’m sorry. I didn’t mean for it to happen. I mean, maybe it hasn’t happened. I have to go to the doctor on Monday, so maybe I’m wrong.”

“Did you take a test?”

“They don’t make you test to become a parent, Jimmy. This is America.”

“I mean a pregnancy test.”

“Well, no, but there are other ways of knowing.”

“Like what?”

“Oh, Jimmy, I’m not going to get into all of that with you. We can go get a test right now if it means so much to you. I was hoping you’d be happy, but obviously I’m a big fool!” And Pippi began to cry too.

Jimmy turned to Pippi. He took a deep breath. “I am happy, Pippi. I’ve not known how to tell this to you, but I love you. I loved you even before that night we, well... you know...”

“But you’re this smart, intelligent, professional woman and I figured I didn’t have a chance. I mean, I know I’m really handsome and all, but that doesn’t mean people treat you any differently than anyone else.”

“So you want to be a daddy?”

Jimmy thought of his own father and how absent he’d been in his life until he wasn’t a part of it at all. He couldn’t quite remember when that happened. He’d just woken up one day and realized he’d not seen his dad for a long time and that he never would again. His mom never talked about him.

But how could a convict in hiding raise a child or be in a relationship? He was supposed to be laying low, keeping his head down, until the Countess gave him the money to flee the country. He couldn’t be a father. Hell, he didn’t want to be a father.

Jimmy opened his mouth to tell her all of this, but then surprised himself. “More than anything in the world, I want to raise this child with you, Pippi. I love you.”

Pippi squealed and leaned over, kissing Jimmy’s cheek.

They drove in silence for a few moments, then Pippi said. “It feels good to have some good news after today.”

“What’s been going on?”

“Oh my gosh, Jimmy. I guess you haven’t heard. Herman got a call this afternoon right before the pickleball tournament. Regina’s in the hospital. And that’s not even all of it, there’s this new...”

“What happened to Regina?” Jimmy practically yelled. The color had blanched from his face. “Is she okay? What happened?”

“It’s so sad. Someone attacked her. She’s in a coma. Herman said she may never wake up.”

Jimmy was turning in the Shady Bluff parking lot. “Oh my god,” he said.
“No, no, no.”

“Jimmy?”

“I’m sorry, Pippi, but I gotta go.”

“Go where? What about Trevon’s shift?”

“I don’t know, talk to Herman. That’s his job, isn’t it? He can find someone.”

Pippi got out, but turned back, still holding the door open. She looked at Jimmy, whose eyes were red. He was staring at her, his jaw clenched. She expected for him to be sad for Regina, but this was different; it was unconcealed rage. It was a look she very much didn’t like. It made her feel afraid.

“Are you okay, Jimmy? Did I say something wrong?”

“No, Pippi. Don’t worry about me,” Jimmy said. Then his face softened a little. “The most important thing for you right now is to be careful and just think about our baby.”

Then before Pippi could close the door, he pressed the accelerator.

Pippi stood for a moment in disbelief, then turned to the community entrance.

Millicent was standing at the door, smoking.

“Ms. Trueworthy, you know you can’t smoke on campus.”

Millicent looked Pippi up and down, then took a drag of her cigarette and blew it in Pippi’s direction. “Baby, huh?”

Pippi didn’t like the look on Millicent’s face, either.

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