

Anything is Possible

by Posse Gal Angie

Jack swung the door open with a smile. His smile got even wider when he saw Bianca on the other side. "Merry Christmas, sweetheart", he greeted her, looking behind her as she came through the doorway. "Is your mother with you?" he asked.

"She will be along later," Bianca told him. "I actually wanted to come early and spend some time with just you." Her eyes held unwavering affection as she looked up at him. Jack's face showed that he felt the same, as he folded her into his arms. Stroking her hair, he whispered, "I love you so much, baby."

"I love you too, Uncle Jack," Bianca answered, not moving out of his arms. Jack held her there, enjoying the closeness, the sweet kinship that he knew with no one else. They were sitting together on the couch in easy conversation when Reggie bounded into the room.

"Is it time to open up presents yet?" he wanted to know. It was actually much less of a question and more of a warning before he flung himself at the tree.

Jack stopped him, warning, "Not until Erica gets here."

Reggie looked crestfallen, his enthusiasm dampened. Dejectedly, he looked at Bianca and asked, "Was Erica even dressed yet when you left?"

Bianca shook her head in the negative, and Reggie slumped to the floor in disappointment.

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Reggie ran toward the door, barely missing a collision with Bianca, who smiled good-naturedly at the young man who had so quickly become her family, wondering how she could share such a short relationship with someone and yet feel so completely connected to them. Reggie flung the door open, letting out a whoop when he saw Erica standing there and enthusiastically pulled her inside, already helping her out of her coat. As Erica smiled at him warmly, Bianca cautioned her, "Don't get too excited, Mom. Reggie's been waiting not

so patiently for you so we can open the gifts." Erica smiled even wider and laughed, patting Reggie affectionately on the shoulder.

"Well let's get to it then," Erica encouraged, prompting Reggie to lean over and confide, "You're my favorite." Erica laughed, nodding, as she reached out to hug him. Reggie took her by the hand and pulled her over to the tree, laden with gifts. Jack and Bianca watched them from across the room, marveling at the ease between the two. To the outside world, there wouldn't seem to be two people more polar opposite, with absolutely nothing in common. Jack and Bianca couldn't resist grinning as Reggie and Erica engaged in a playful argument over who should wear the "Santa hat", each declaring their hair untouchable. Then, in a moment of shared brilliance, they both descended upon Bianca and Jack, a gleam in their eyes. Moments later they were stifling giggles, along with Bianca, as Jack slumped on the couch, attempting to glare at them, but looking ever so festive.

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Reggie was in the midst of shaking one gift and then another, when Bianca announced that she had to go get something. Reggie dropped the box into his lap with a frustrated sigh, until Bianca assured him that he could begin opening gifts while she was gone. "You're my favorite," Reggie called after her.

Erica unwrapped Reggie's gift and smiled warmly, "Oh it's lovely," she murmured. Then, she caught her breath as a lump formed in her throat, her eyes falling upon the inscription. Overcome by emotion, her finger lightly traced the letters that formed a single, wondrous word, "Mom". She fought the tears that were threatening to fall, and looked up to catch Reggie's eyes on her, hesitation in his glance.

"Are you mad?" he asked, with none of his usual bravado, stumbling over the words. Awaiting her response, one that would begin to heal the wounds he hid deep inside, or shatter his dreams. His heart laid on the line, and shining through his eyes, Reggie had wanted Erica to know what was in his heart, but in this moment, he hoped he had not made a huge mistake.

Shaking her head fiercely back and forth, Erica gingerly set the bell down before approaching Reggie, her eyes brimming with unshed tears. "No, I am not mad," she assured him, before taking him into

her arms, her heart bursting out of her chest, as she felt him trembling. Erica knew Reggie, she understood him in a way that few people could ever conceive. She knew what it was to so desperately crave acceptance and love and a family. And she knew that the prospect of getting it - and losing it - was a frightening one. And the uncertainty of whether she deserved it at all. She knew why he built up the walls around himself, and for him to lower those walls and extend himself to her like this touched her so much.

The word was soft, almost uncertain. As if he was trying it out to see how it would sound. But it was enough to release the emotion she was holding tightly in check, and the tears streaked down her cheeks as they held onto each other. Erica pulled out of their embrace and Reggie looked away for a moment, looking slightly embarrassed. "It's just..." he explained, "I haven't had anyone to call 'Mom' in awhile. I wasn't sure how it would sound."

"It sounds wonderful," Erica reassured him, her face lit into a smile. "Actually, this makes my gift a little easier to give," she told him. "It's a bit unusual," she added. Taking in the face he was making, Erica laughed, and placated him, "Don't worry, you still have another one to open up." Reggie broke into a smile of his own and gave her a "thumbs-up". Jack seemed to be caught between wanting to give Reggie a stern glance, and easing into a smile of his own. Erica continued, "As I said, it's a bit unusual, and I will actually need Jack's help with this," glancing in Jack's direction to take in his reaction. Jack wasn't sure what to make of the proceedings thus far, but knowing Erica as he did, he knew to let her continue. Shrugging, he nodded, and Erica took a deep breath and concluded, "I know this is unusual... Jack and I aren't even married, but if it's okay with you - with both of you..." Again she looked Jack's way for his approval, "I would like to add my name to your adoption papers." Jack and Reggie were both stunned into silence. Clearly this was the last thing either had expected her to say. Erica's eyes darted nervously from one to the other, relieved that neither seemed disappointed, nor was running screaming from the room. "It's just," she explained, "I want to show you that no matter what happens between Jack and I, we," gesturing at herself and Reggie, "We will always have each other. We'll always be a family." Erica looked first to Jack, and her nerves were calmed slightly by the pure love streaming from his eyes, as he nodded at her in the way he always did when he was so proud of her

he couldn't even manage to put it into words. She then turned back to Reggie, who crushed her in a tight hug by way of response. Jack watched them for a moment, wondering how, when only the day before he had loved this woman more than life, and yet today he knew he loved her even more. He knew Erica better than anyone else, and yet she still managed to surprise him, and to remind him of exactly who she was - the woman who owned his heart, every inch of it. The woman he was destined to grow old with, and build a family. And here she was taking that step, finally brave enough to take a chance on that life. Crossing the room, Jack put his arms around them both, around his family. And that is exactly how Bianca found them all when she returned.

"So, what did you bring back?" Reggie wanted to know, noticing that Bianca wasn't carrying anything.

"It wouldn't exactly fit in a box," Bianca explained, as Kendall and Greenlee came through the doorway. Jack and Erica beamed, as they looked around and saw their children gathered together. Even Reggie looked happy, even happier when he saw that Kendall and Greenlee were both carrying shopping bags with them.

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Reggie had gone outside with the girls, helping them carry their gifts to their cars. Jack reached for Erica's hand and asked if she would go somewhere with him. She tried to remain nonchalant and not make it too obvious that she would go anywhere with him, but the sparkle in her eyes gave her away. Jack squeezed her hand, and excused himself for a moment. Retrieving her coat, he wrapped it around her shoulders, pausing for a moment to enjoy the feeling of Erica wrapped in his arms.

Jack held Erica's hand in his as he led her to the boathouse. She was about to comment that it was still lit with the same lights from when they danced there, when she heard the words that sliced right through her heart. She swore that she could feel it shattering, the tiny shards killing her slowly. One second at a time. She valiantly attempted to hold back the tears, unable to hear anything Jack was trying to tell her. Only those words roaring in her ears, "Erica could you please take off your ring." How could he hold her hand so gently, why was he looking at her with so much tenderness when he was

ripping her heart out of her chest? If Erica hadn't been caught up in her own assurances that this must certainly be what it feels like to die an inch at a time, she would have heard him assure her, "Just for a moment." Erica slowly removed her ring and handed it to Jack, squeezing her eyes shut in vain against her own ever-threatening tears and his words that continued to thunder in her ears and rip through her, a pain that cut so deep she could barely breathe. Turning away from him, the tears began to fall, cascading down her cheeks as she stared at the finger where his ring had been. His promise to love her always, that he would never ever leave her. She had finally been brave enough to make that promise with him, to take that leap and believe that no matter what, he would catch her. And now she was falling, falling so fast, and all she knew was he had let go and who would be there to catch her?

And then he did just that. Erica felt Jack holding her arm, as he turned her back to him. She heard his voice, and felt him holding her hand. "I, Jackson, take you Erica to be my wife..." When she looked down, through her tears she saw the gold band he had slipped onto her finger. Jack pulled Erica into his arms, stroking her hair as she sobbed in relief against him. When her sobs had quieted some, Jack wrapped his arms around her, making her feel safe again after so many months, and whispered his vows into her ear. Pulling back, Erica gazed down at the wedding band on her finger, smiling through her tears as Jack slipped the engagement ring back where it belonged. When she looked back up at him, her eyes fell upon the other ring, still in the box. Erica carefully held it with her fingers, and holding her breath in expectation, slipped the ring onto Jack's finger. Meeting his gaze, Erica felt something she had never known before, a sense that everything had just fallen into place, at long last she felt complete.

"I, Erica, take you Jackson to be my husband," she promised, her voice thick with emotion, barely above a whisper. Holding his hand in hers, and holding his eyes with her own, Erica promised her life to him, giving herself completely to him for the very first time.

"This is the part where we kiss," Jack instructed her.

"Hey," Erica jabbed him, "So you're the wedding expert now?" She pulled his head down, stating, "I know when we kiss," and claimed

his lips with her own, melting into him as the two became one.

Leaning against each other, Erica and Jack laid their hands on top of each other, their rings glistening in the moonlight. "I wish this could be for real," Erica confided, wistfully.

"It can be," Jack responded, raising her fingers to his lips, "Even if it's just for tonight. Anything is possible. Reggie got his family tonight, and we had our kids."

"Most of them," Erica interrupted, her face clouding.

"Next time," Jack promised. Taking her face into his hands, he added, "And we are together," stroking his fingers gently against her cheeks. Leaning his forehead against hers, Jack whispered, "Anything is possible."