

Romance in Pajama Pants

Stories to Beguile Your
Happily Ever After

by

Susan Brown



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This is dedicated to the people we love – past, present and future, in the firm belief that everyone deserves a Happily Ever After!

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Pajama Pants Romance

I admit I have a thing about pajama pants. They're warm and comfy and soft... and you never have to worry what kind of fashion statement they make. There *is* no fashion statement. Not even a fashion whisper. They're the clothing equivalent of a pint of chocolate fudge cookie dough ice cream. And when you work at a fashion magazine in New York, both are as secret as guilty secrets can get.

Friday afternoon...make that evening (there was a deadline – there's always a deadline) and I'm trying not to collapse against the brass fittings of the elevator as it slowly grinds its way to the first floor. Everyone else is also being propped up by walls or the press of the glum crowd heading home for the weekend. I have a sheaf of fabric swatches under my arm, but all I'm dreaming of is kicking off my high heels, unzipping my chic skirt, and sliding into my pajama pants with a pint of guilty pleasure ice cream in hand.

Then it happens – a super gorgeous, broad-shouldered, extra-tall, designer-suited guy squeezes into the elevator. I *know* I’ve never seen him before. He murmurs apologies and his clearly muscular arm is pressed against me. My heart starts to hammer as I get a whiff of his scent – a tiny trace of leather from his briefcase overlaying fresh-ironed cotton and the indefinable aroma of clean male. How, I wonder, can a man smell so good after a day in New York City? I didn’t think it was possible.

The elevator dings its way to the first floor and the miserable hordes are disgorged. My nose is following big, dark and handsome’s scent and so I wander a few steps out of my way across the lobby. Dave, the security guy waves, and I wave back as always. Then he stands and practically salutes the guy from the elevator. “Evening, Mr. Hernando,” he says.

Hernando owns the magazine I work for. And the building. And a lot more besides. Not being suicidal, I stop following my nose and duck out the side exit. The ride home in the subway is boring, smelly and crowded. My mind is equally divided between s’mores ice cream and Mr. Hernando’s multiple charms.

My building is very upscale – a lot more than I should be able to afford. But my parents gave me the rent-controlled apartment when they decided to live in Miami and seeing as I don't have a couple of million available to switch it out, I'm happy where I am. I grew up there and as people grow old and bring in their families, it's the closest thing to a village a person can find in the big bad city.

I'm mulling this over as I pull on my pajama pants (brilliantly clashing pink and red squares) when I fixate on Mrs. Aiden who went off to hospital last night after a fall. She has a cute little rescue mutt, and I wonder if anyone has remembered to take care of Molly. Damn. Poor thing would have been alone, unfed and unwalked for close to 24 hours.

Ignoring my pajama ensemble (no one here needs to think I'm a sophisticated professional – they've known me too long to believe it!) I go shooting out of my apartment and take the elevator to the manager's suite. A little card is displayed by his door saying he will be unavailable until Monday and listing numbers for emergency services. None of them include dog rescue.

Double damn.

Well, maybe someone is in the apartment or has already been there to see to Molly. Back

up the elevator to hammer on Mrs. Aiden's door. I hear Molly crying piteously on the other side.

"Oh, baby," I say through the door. "I'll figure this out."

From my apartment, I first call the hospital. They can't give me any information and visiting hours for non-relatives won't open again until tomorrow afternoon. Molly had been a frightened, half-starved little girl when Mrs. Aiden adopted her. My heart froze up thinking about how scared she must be by now. All the work and love Mrs. Aiden had showered on her would be undone. And Molly was crying alone in the apartment.

I went out onto my balcony to assess the situation. Mrs. Aiden had the second floor apartment right below mine. Her balcony was longer, jutting out another four feet beyond the extent of mine. Looking down, I judged the distance from the edge of my balcony floor to the flower pots on hers. I took a deep breath which didn't calm me at all. Extreme measures. Maybe doable. Probably won't join Mrs. Aiden with a broken leg.

Taking another deep breath, I climbed over the side rail, and straddling like a drunken gymnast, somehow flopped my legs down so that my feet dangled only about four feet

above her balcony with my straining fingers slowly slipping loose from my railings.

“Oh damn!” I screeched and hung there, helpless. Too scared to drop. Too feeble to climb back up. When I couldn’t hold on any longer, I fell.

But I didn’t. Strong male arms grabbed me and pulled me against a damp naked chest. OMG. I stared up into Mr. Hernando’s frowning face. Double OMG.

He set me down none too gently. “What the hell are you doing?”

He appeared fresh from the shower, the dark hair on his chest just loosening into curls as they dried. He was naked...except for a pair of fluorescent green and blue plaid pajama pants.

I’m pretty sure I turned every shade of pink and red to match my ensemble, while I explained about my Molly rescue mission. His hard face eased into a smile and then he laughed. Believe me, that was a delight to behold.

Molly pranced around me ecstatically, providing further proof that I was not a cat burglar. Mr. Hernando...Mike...explained that Mrs. Aiden was his aunt and he’d be here until she was home and able to manage again.

He invited me to stay for take-out, and we finished the evening at my place with some Sinfully Delicious Extra Fudge Ice Cream. The rest would be telling.

It was almost two months before Mrs. Aiden's broken leg allowed her to get around, so Mike and I shared a lot of take-out in addition to dog walking duties. And then there were those long, lazy evenings watching old movies in our off-work casuals.

I do so love pajama pants.