

THE BIG LOVE



MRS. FLORENCE AADLAND

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AS TOLD TO TEDD THOMEY

SPURL EDITIONS

CHAPTER ONE

There's one thing I want to make clear right off: my baby was a virgin the day she met Errol Flynn.

Nothing makes me sicker than those dried-up old biddies who don't know the facts and spend all their time making snide remarks about my daughter Beverly, saying she was a bad girl before she met Errol.

Nothing is farther from the truth, and I ought to know: I'm her mother and she told me everything.

She never lied to me. Never.

It's true that she didn't always tell me something as soon as it happened. She would be busy with her career, and I would be busy. But later she *always* told me. She loved to tell me things, loved to tell me her secret thoughts the way any good daughter likes to talk to her mother. She told me these things because she loved me.

When the time came, she told me everything she did with Errol Flynn. And everything he did with her. Everything. And

in detail, because she and I love details and get a kick out of sharing things like that.

She told me he made love to her the night of their very first date. That was when she was still fifteen. Later – much later – she told me how it really was that night, what really happened at the lodge in Hollywood. He overwhelmed her. He tore her dress, the black one with the bolero ruffles in the back, and he was so eager she cried and she fought him. She never expected anything like what happened.

“And, oh, mother!” she told me later. “The noises he made – like an animal!”

But immediately after it happened, I didn’t even know about it. She was too shocked and scared to tell me.

She was working at Warner Brothers, dancing in *Marjorie Morningstar*, when she first met Errol. As I said, she was fifteen then. But even when she was only thirteen or fourteen, she could pass for eighteen or nineteen.

So, in order to get jobs for her at the studios, I passed her off as being over eighteen, and it worked fine. She often made five hundred dollars for just a few days’ work. She had lots of jobs like that: she was working on one picture or another, singing or dancing, every week.

But there was one disadvantage to all of this: since Beverly was supposed to be over eighteen, it wouldn’t look right to have her mother tagging along with her to the studios.

So when Errol first saw her, I wasn’t along. That was in October 1957. But sometimes I think that even if I *had* been there, I couldn’t have prevented what happened afterward.

I think their meeting the way they did was preordained. It was bound to happen – she had been heading for just such an experience.

But it's true that Beverly was a virgin before she met Errol. For years, for the first fifteen years of her life, I kept that girl in a cellophane bag. I saw to it that no one touched her. Everywhere she went, I went with her. It got to be a standing joke around the studios. You think I didn't know how she appealed to men? Why, she was desirable to men and boys in that way from the time she was twelve.

I know that Errol guessed she was a virgin the very first time he met her – and that this fact was one of the reasons she appealed to him.

Anyway, there she was, working as a dancer on the *Marjorie Morningstar* set. She wore high heels and a black leotard, and her legs were just beautiful.

There she was on the set in that black turtleneck leotard and those black net stockings. And, of course, Errol Flynn was working on the same lot, doing his role of John Barrymore in *Too Much, Too Soon*, with Diana Barrymore.

It was inevitable that Flynn would notice her. It wasn't her figure that attracted him, because Beverly is a small bosomed girl. It was her legs, of course – her long legs in those black net stockings. Later, when Errol and I became good friends, he told me why: "I'm not a breast man," he said. "I'm a leg man. You can't make love to a breast."

Beverly was stretching her legs, waiting to start one of the dance routines when all of a sudden someone tapped her on

the shoulder and said: "What's your name? Errol Flynn wants to meet you."

When Beverly turned around there was Orry Kelly, the Hollywood dress designer, a close friend of Flynn's. He took her across the lot to meet Errol.

Beverly told me she was trembling all over when she was introduced to him. Errol Flynn, can you imagine? The Swashbuckler himself. The great actor and lover. Six feet two inches of beautiful man, with that terrific boyish smile, that cleft chin and lots of ISA – Instant Sex Appeal. He was forty-eight then, and in his prime.

I wish I could have been there to see that meeting, to see how she looked, to see the sparkle in her big hazel eyes, to see how thrilled she was. They must have made a beautiful pair – Beverly's blonde hair shining with the lights in it, her cheeks all flushed and pink. Such a doll, with her perfect 34, 18, 34 figure. She was, and still is, a willowy 5 feet 6 and weighs 108 pounds.

So of course Errol made a date with her right off. He asked her little questions about herself and found out that she was an actress and a singer as well as a dancer. At that time he assumed like everyone else that she was over eighteen, but he was so sharp I think he had an inkling she was younger.

He used a very corny approach on her, but being so suave and smooth, and being Errol Flynn, he could get away with it. He said he was getting ready to do a play, *The Master of Thornfield*, based on *Jane Eyre*. And he asked her if she would like to go over to his lodge and read for one of the roles in the play.

Beverly went right to the phone and asked me if she could go. Her voice was still shaking when she talked to me. And I was just as thrilled.

“Be careful of that man,” I told her. “Remember all the things I’ve told you. Don’t do anything foolish.”

So later that day she changed clothes and went with him to the lodge. And she read for a part in the play. Beverly’s a very intelligent girl (her I.Q. is over 140), and she told him right off that she didn’t think the play was very good. Errol agreed with her. He told her he thought it was terrible. And I guess it was, because it folded in Cincinnati shortly after the Detroit opening.

Beverly didn’t get a role in the play. She didn’t want one because the play was such a clinker. And, besides, the play wasn’t the real reason Errol had invited her over.

She phoned me from the lodge and said Errol had invited her to go to dinner at the Tail o’ the Cock restaurant on La Cienega Boulevard. She asked my permission to go and I said it would be all right because there would be other people there, many of them.

And there were. They had dinner with twelve of Errol’s lawyers. Yes, twelve. A few nights before that Errol had been in one of his frisky moods at a party and had stolen a policeman’s badge and been tossed in jail for a few hours. So he and his lawyers had this get-together at dinner to talk the thing over.

Poor Beverly just sat at one end of the table eating her dinner while all this lawyer talk went on and on.

But later Errol took her back to the lodge and they drank pink champagne together. That was one of the few times he ever let her have liquor. Later, when he knew for sure that she was only fifteen, he never let her touch the stuff.

It must have been quite a scene there in the lodge, in front of the fireplace, the two of them alone. Beverly told me they watched an old movie of Errol's which he showed for her, and then they talked for a long time and then he kissed her. She was very happy about that, she told me later, and I guess they did a lot of kissing.

But I know that even then she was thinking about me and the things I had warned her about. Because later that night the phone rang at our house on Crenshaw Boulevard in Inglewood and it was Beverly.

"Mama," she said. "Do you want to speak to someone?"

Then this marvelous voice of Errol's came through, with its appealing British-Australian accent. It was the first time I had ever heard him speak.

"*Helloooooooo*," he said, drawing the word out like that, so smoothly. "Is this the charming mother of a very charming young lady?"

I was thrilled, of course. But I didn't clutch the phone or gasp or do anything hokey like that. I had talked to plenty of big name celebrities for years, in person and on the phone, and I was used to it.

"It's very nice to talk to you, Mrs. Aadland," Errol said. "I want you to come out to my house to a party next week. I want to meet you."

And then they hung up. I assumed that everything was all right, that they were still at the restaurant.

But they weren't. They were at the lodge then, kissing and everything. And it wasn't long afterward that he picked her up and took her into the bedroom.

She never had a chance to defend herself and, besides, what could she do against a man as big as that, and so strong? He grabbed her in such a hurry. He threw her on the bed and tore her dress. She hit him. She told him not to. She tried to get away, but he just clamped those big hands of his on her shoulders and held her.

She cried and cried. She was completely shocked, and she was simply petrified with fear.

And after it was all over she ran out of there, ran out of the bedroom to get away from him.

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