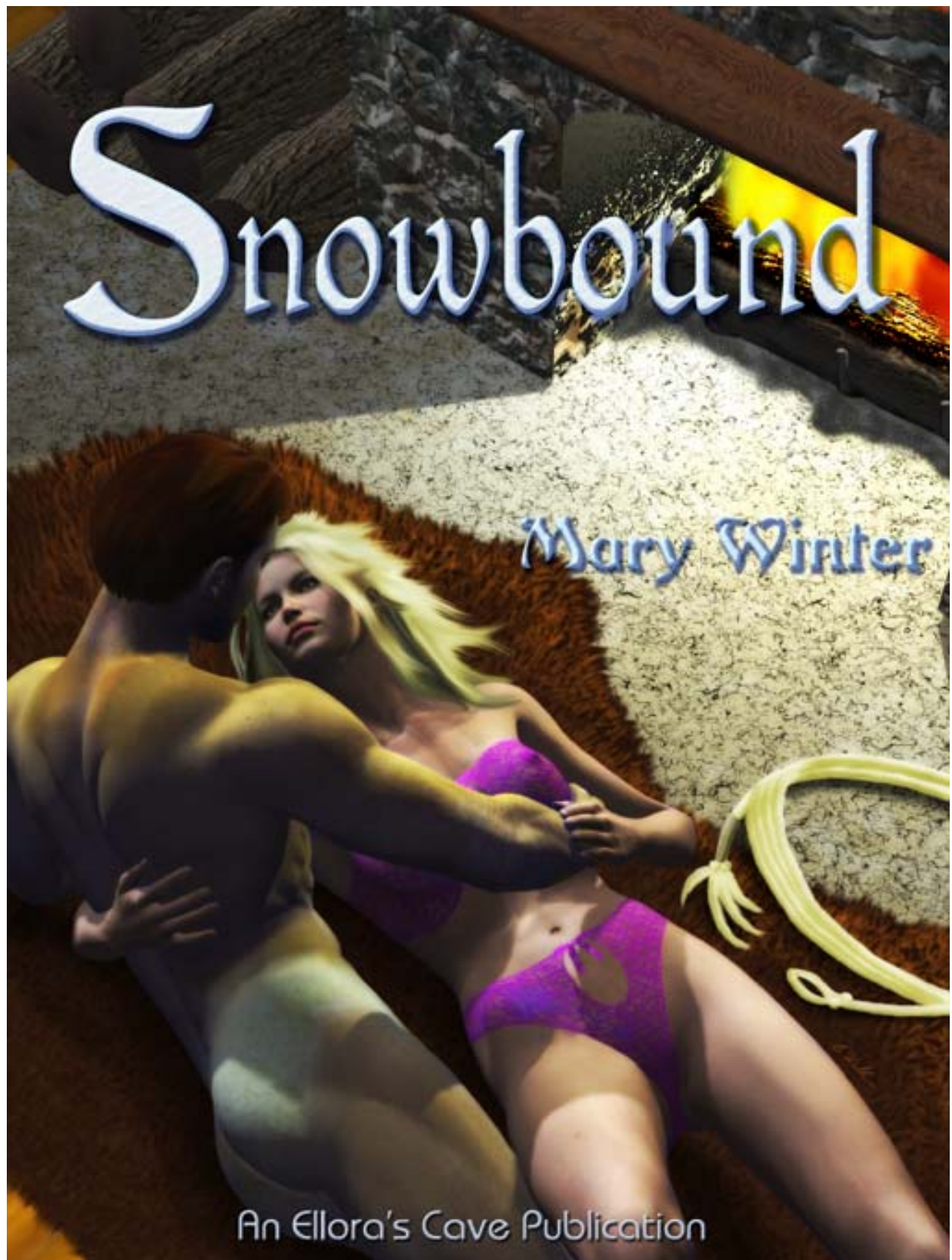




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SNOWBOUND

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Warning:

The following material contains strong sexual content meant for mature readers. SNOWBOUND has been rated NC-17, erotic, by a minimum of three individual reviewers. We strongly suggest storing this electronic file in a place where young readers not meant to view this e-book are unlikely to happen upon it. That said, enjoy...

Prologue

Taver James hunched over the neck of the big draft-cross gelding and cursed the snow swirling around them. He pulled his hat lower on his forehead and patted the ski band to be sure it covered his ears. That piece of fleece and this horse were all he had left of his little sister Tracy.

Looping the reins over the horn of the saddle, he rubbed his gloved hands together to keep them warm. The temperature was dropping. Probably best to get inside and get warm. As he turned the horse to go home, a flash of red in the snow caught his attention. He peered through the swirling flakes and nudged Beau forward.

Closer now, Taver quickly discerned the back end of some kind of SUV. *How long has it been here?* Images of Tracy's crumpled car filled his mind, and his heart leapt into his throat. *Please God, don't let anyone be in the truck.* Nearly four years ago this week, Tracy had gone into a ditch and died of exposure. He couldn't let that happen to anyone else. He wouldn't. Just because he had been two states away when it happened didn't mean that he didn't blame himself. Not when they had fought just the week before, and Tracy was determined to prove her big brother wrong.

Beau halted behind the red SUV, and Taver thanked the horse's good sense in remaining calm. He patted the horse and dismounted, then looped the reins over the rear bumper to keep Beau from wandering off.

"Hello," Taver yelled. The wind snatched at his voice and whipped it away. He tried again louder. "Hello. Anybody there?"

Only the howling wind answered him. He took stock of the vehicle, realizing it was a candy-red Ford Explorer with out-of-state plates. *Shit*, the Explorer had landed nose

down in a steep ditch. Only a large, fallen tree kept the vehicle from tumbling to the bottom of the ravine.

He descended the steep incline, one hand on the vehicle to steady himself. The layer of snow that had crusted against the vehicle's windows kept him from seeing inside. *The driver better be all right.* Taver inched his way to the driver's door aware of the treacherous footing. Not knowing what to expect, he closed his gloved hand around the handle and opened the door.

And looked into the face of an angel. She lay across the steering wheel, eerily still. Her honey blonde hair had come loose from her stocking cap, spilling over full, sensuous lips. Her nose wasn't quite straight, and for a moment, Taver wondered how it had gotten broken.

"Miss," he said. He reached for her and lightly touched her shoulder. "Miss." Looking over her body, he saw the contents of her purse had spilled all over the floorboards. Her cell phone lay partially open on the floor near the passenger door. The woman didn't move.

"Hell," Taver swore. He yanked off a glove with his teeth and pressed two fingers against her exposed throat. Faint, but discernable, her pulse beat. He pulled on his glove. "I have to get you out of here."

Taver reached for her. He tucked one arm around her shoulders and pulled her body against his chest. With his other arm beneath her legs, he held her. The woman made no sound.

Her stillness unnerved him. She definitely suffered from the onset of hypothermia—he had to get her to warmth quickly. Struggling up the ravine, he tried to ignore how fragile and feminine she felt in his arms. But when he looked down at her, he couldn't help noticing the way her honey lashes fanned against her pale cheeks.

"Damn it." His foot slipped, jostling the woman in his arms. He wobbled like a top for a moment, then regained his footing.

The woman didn't even stir. "You're fine now, honey. I'll take care of you."

Chapter One

She lay completely still on his bed. So still, that Taver fought off memories of his sister Tracy. Lightly, he stroked her cheeks, frowning at her icy skin. He needed to get her warm and fast. He wanted her beneath the covers and warm. Tracy had died because no one found her. He couldn't let it happen to this woman. He wouldn't.

He yanked her sweater over her head. *Didn't she have enough sense not to be driving in a storm like this?* The wind howled around his cabin, making him thankful for the roaring fire in the fireplace and the purr of his furnace. The woman made no move as he swiftly removed her turtleneck. A lavender lace bra barely constrained her full breasts, and he saw the nipples poking against the fabric. He nearly groaned aloud.

She's beautiful. His cock tightened as he followed the slight curve of her stomach down to her jeans. He bit his lip—he had to stay in control. *Get this over with and get her beneath the covers.* His mental warning galvanized him into action. Maybe he shouldn't be undressing her, but the only way he knew to warm her quickly was body heat. With several blankets on the bed and himself, not to mention the fireplace, he'd be able to keep her quite warm.

The image of his body wrapped around hers made his cock stiffen painfully. His hands shook as he unbuttoned her jeans and lowered the zipper. Pale lavender lace poked through the opening, and Taver suppressed a growl.

He took a deep breath. *I can do this. I can hold this woman in my arms without fucking her. Hell, she's unconscious. I have to control myself, at least until she's better.* He bent to her feet and unfastened her heavy hiking boots. He wrapped his hands around her feet, making sure the socks weren't wet. Not even damp from perspiration. He left her socks on and tried not to remember how her feet nearly fit in his hands. She was so small and delicate that every part of him wanted to tuck her against him and never let go. A single

pull removed her jeans, and he scooped her up in his arms. He pulled back the covers, a comforter, two blankets, and his flannel sheets, and then slipped her inside, pulling the coverings back to her chin.

Frail. She looked so helpless lying there in his king-size bed. More blankets. She needed more blankets. He went to his linen closet and pulled out two more blankets and an afghan his grandmother had made for him many years ago and spread them on the bed as well. His briefs did little to conceal his heavy erection, but he left them on as he crawled into bed beside the woman.

He pulled her against him, wincing as her ice-cold body touched his own. “C’mon, honey. You can warm up,” he whispered. He stroked her hair, marveling at how soft the blonde strands felt beneath his fingers. He wrapped his arm around her middle, pulling her into the curve of his body. Her icy flesh forced his erection to retreat. “You’re better than a cold shower, honey.”

He held her tight against him, even though she froze him to the marrow. With his arm around her waist, he felt each breath she took. Her rib cage expanded, brushing the undersides of her breasts against his hand. Her ass, firm yet soft, against his cock made him want to make love to her until they both went up in flames. Leaning forward, he rested his chin against her shoulder and tried to think of something else. The floral scent of her shampoo wafted to his nose, smelling like a meadow full of wildflowers, and Taver bit back a moan as he tried not to think of laying her down on perfumed petals and fucking her.

Torture. That’s what this woman was, pure torture. *C’mon buddy. Focus. You can’t jump her bones until she’s healthy. Put it aside until she’s better.* Taking deep breaths, he willed himself to only hold her, even if he did pull her a little closer to his body.

She shivered, a slight movement that he might not have even noticed if her ass hadn’t been pressing against his groin. He held his breath, afraid she wouldn’t move again. Another shiver raced through her. Whoever this woman was, she was a fighter.

* * * * *

Cold. She was so cold. Angelica Daley shivered. A steel band held her around her waist, and it felt like a roaring furnace pressed itself to her back. A ridge poked her butt, and she wiggled against it, trying to find a more comfortable position.

A man groaned.

Angelica's eyes snapped open. A fire crackled in a stone hearth across the room. Heavy pine shelves held books and western statues. She recognized a miniature of a Remington bronze on the hearth, and a bearskin rug on the floor. An assortment of covers ranging from a crocheted afghan to a heavy comforter in shades of brown tangled around her. The sheets beneath her felt like flannel, and she smelled the soft musk of a male body.

Her head throbbed. A dull throbbing, nothing a few aspirin wouldn't take care of, but it throbbed nonetheless. Slowly, she turned her head.

A man slept behind her. His arm held her pinned against him, and now that she was more aware, she realized that it was a hard cock that pressed against her buttocks. She gingerly peeked beneath the blankets. Her heart hammered, when she saw that she wore only her matching bra and panty set. *How did I get here? And why am I almost naked?* She rummaged through her memories a few moments longer, finally coming up with the answer. *My SUV went in the ditch.* She remembered now, sliding off the road. The truck had landed nose-down, and her head had bounced off the steering wheel. Then darkness, all encompassing darkness.

Maybe I'm in heaven and he's an angel. The hand around her middle slid higher, brushing the underside of her breast. He moaned again, the sound full of need. Low warmth settled in her pussy as he rubbed his engorged cock against her. His fingers caressed the fullness of her breast, his palm settling over her nipple. He squeezed gently.

Angelica bit her lip to keep from making a sound. *If he's an angel, then he's a fallen one,* she thought as she turned in his arms. She snaked a leg over his hip, drawing him

close to her. Looking at his face, her breath hitched. Wavy, chocolate brown hair spilled over the pillow, his thick eyelashes fanned against his cheeks. A hint of stubble covered his chin. She cupped her palm against his cheek. She rubbed her thumb over his lips, and smiled when he parted them in response.

Sparks flew, and the hand that had been around her stomach moved to her hips. He drew her closer to his hard cock. Demanding warmth filled her cunt, and she felt herself grow wet as she rubbed against his thick length. *Headache, what headache?* she thought as she nibbled along the line of his jaw.

He stilled, his hand conspicuously sliding away from her skin. She closed her fingers around his bicep. "What's the matter?" she asked in a husky voice.

He stared at her. "You're awake," he said and inched away.

"Yeah so?" She wanted to pull her leg away from his hip, cross her arms over her chest and bully him into resuming his caresses. Instead, she inched closer to him, hearing his swift inhalation as her sex brushed against his cock. Her pussy throbbed. She wanted to feel the length of his cock inside her, and from the insistent pulse against her thigh, she knew he wanted her too. "Yeah," she replied again, deepening her voice. Her fingers released his arm and she traced designs on his pectoral, moving ever closer to his nipple.

"I think you're awake too." She wiggled against him to punctuate the statement, and when she saw the Stetson hanging on the rack across the room, she added, "Cowboy."

Taver was all too aware that he'd put her to bed in nothing more than a few wisps of lace. Between that knowledge and her fingers caressing his skin, his cock threatened to explode. Taking several deep breaths, he looked at his mystery woman once more. Her heavy-lidded eyes and pouty lips just begged for his kiss. *She's been in an accident for Christ's sake.* The mental admonishment did little to cool his raging libido. "We shouldn't be doing this."

The woman raised her gaze to him and smiled. "Really?" she purred. Reaching out, she trailed her fingers over his chin and down the column of his throat. Her hand continued its path south, skimming over his pectorals and playing across his stomach. She halted at the waistband of his briefs.

Taver gulped uneasily. He wanted to give her a chance to recover, not ravish her, but each touch of her fingers shattered his self-control a little more. He raised his hands to push her away, and then a hint of her perfume teased his senses.

She cupped the length of his cock through the thin cotton fabric. Dear God, he thought he was going to come right there in her hand. Her dainty fingers massaged his shaft, her thumb playing over his cockhead. He knew she couldn't help but feel the drop of wetness that soaked into his briefs.

Then the imp smiled. A simple tilt of her lips that lit up her face like the northern lights. She gently squeezed his cock.

He was lost. Utterly and totally lost. A groan of defeat passed his lips.

She had him. One more stroke of her fingers against his shaft, and he rolled towards her. He dipped his head and her eyes closed. Her lips parted. *Yes*, she thought with pleasure. *I told myself I would start over, and by damned, I'm going to.* His lips claimed hers, a hard and hungry kiss that left no doubt as to his intentions. He took advantage of her parted lips, his tongue sliding into her mouth as if it belonged there.

Angelica moaned. She didn't even know the man's name, but that made their sex all the sweeter. A hot rush of dangerous thrill coursed through her. Her hand slid from his crotch to glide up his chest and lay flat against his heart. She felt the revving beat beneath her palm and loved that she caused such a reaction. Her tongue twined with his, and one aggressive male arm pulled her roughly towards him. Her arms came around his neck, and she pressed herself flush against his body from chest to groin.

She was on fire. She felt alive. Alive! Her body flamed for his touch, a burning in her pussy that demanded satisfaction. With deft fingers he unfastened her bra, then

pulled it away from her body as he rolled her onto her back. She watched Taver through half-lidded eyes as he drew in a shaky breath and let his gaze wander over her body. "Perfect." He moaned. Reaching out, he slid his thumb over one erect nipple. "Like ripe cherries begging to be tasted."

He dipped his head and wrapped his lips around a turgid nipple. Drawing it gently into his mouth, he suckled her. Angelica moaned at the gentle pressure of his warm mouth against her skin. *I never knew it could be this way*, she thought as his lips worked their magic on her body.

Her back bowed off the bed. Cupping his cheek in her hand, she fed him her breast. His tongue swirled around her nipple, then he scraped gently with his teeth, and she nearly came. His calloused hands caressed her other breast. The contrast of rough hands and a warm tongue made her lift her hips against him.

She quickly wiggled out of her panties, wanting to feel him skin to skin. He rolled from her long enough to shed his underwear. The tearing of a foil packet sounded loud in the room, then before she could catch a glimpse of him, he covered her. Her hands trailed down from his nape. Well-defined muscles moved beneath the skin—she reveled in touching such a virile man. When she reached his ass, she squeezed gently. The rock hard globes of his buttocks tensed beneath her touch. His cock brushed against her, and Angelica longed to feel it thrust into her cunt and have him buried balls-deep inside her. She shifted restlessly beneath him, lifting her hips towards his cock. "Take me, cowboy," she growled. She shivered with the thrill of fucking a stranger.

He thrust into her. The exquisite sensation of being filled by his long cock nearly drove Angelica to the edge. She clenched her vaginal muscles around his steel shaft and surged against him. He plunged into her body again and again. He filled her, like the second half of her whole. She met his thrusts, her body spiraling higher. Her nipples brushed against his chest, the friction only adding to her arousal.

She clenched her hands on his shoulders. Suddenly, she was flying. Shudders raced through her body as she came. Her joyous cry surrounded them both. He thrust once more, then with a hoarse cry, followed her into orgasmic bliss.

Chapter Two

Taver stared down at the sleeping woman in his arms and bit back a curse. His body ached pleasantly from their frantic sex. Their coming together could hardly be called lovemaking, and it certainly wasn't proper. He didn't even know her name. She could have internal injuries and he'd only thought with his dick. *God, I'm such a jerk! If anything happens to her, I'll never forgive myself.* Lying beside her, he inhaled the floral scent of her hair. His cock tightened once more, and he quickly slid his hips away from her so he wouldn't feel her soft curves against him. *I took advantage of her. I can't do it again. I won't.*

He slid from the bed, careful not to disturb her slumber. He tucked the blanket firmly beneath her chin, then turned from the bed. He donned his briefs and jeans.

The sight of her clothing strewn over his bedroom stirred him. Glancing back at the woman sleeping in his bed, he tried to fight the conflict inside him. She needed rest. Probably needed a doctor. Yet, all he wanted to do was crawl back beneath the covers and make slow, sweet love to her. Instead, he released a breath he hadn't realized he'd held and picked up her clothes. He set them on a nightstand. He thought about offering her one of his own shirts. After all, she had presumably spent most of yesterday traveling. He dismissed the notion with a shake of his head. *If she wants different clothes, she'll ask.*

He risked one last look at her in the bed. As soon as the snow cleared, he'd call a tow truck and get this woman out of his house and his life.

He paused in the doorway to his bedroom. He could call a tow truck right now. Feeling in control for the first time since he pulled her body from her Explorer, he strode to the kitchen.

Automatically, he glanced out the window over his sink. Snow swirled beyond the glass. *Damn, the storm hasn't stopped.* He grabbed the phone off its hook by the refrigerator, frowning when he didn't hear the ever-present dial tone. Replacing the phone in its cradle, then holding it to his ear a few times confirmed his fears. The phones were out. Apparently his mystery woman wouldn't leave his house so easily.

He stormed to the window and stared outside into the blowing white mass of the storm. Snow still fell heavily outside. He sucked in great gulps of air, satisfied that he could always go outside to cool off if things got too hot. *I can keep my hands off of her long enough for the storm to clear and for her to get her SUV out of the ditch. I can be a gentleman.* An image of her lying in his bed, her hair tousled against his pillow rose in his mind. *Damn it.* However long it took the storm to clear, it would be much too long for his peace of mind.

* * * * *

Angelica rolled over in bed, immediately sensing the empty expanse of mattress on either side of her arms. So he'd left her to sleep. How gentlemanly.

As if her thoughts conjured him, he paused in the doorway to the bedroom. "I put out some clean towels for you in the bathroom. It's right through there." He grinned and gestured to a door opposite him. "I figured you might want a shower. I can get us some breakfast too, if you like?"

"Thanks," she replied. A sudden sadness at the thought of leaving filled her, and she banished it. He lingered in the doorway a moment longer, and she looked back at him. "Would you mind horribly if I borrowed one of your shirts? I just don't feel like putting on the same clothes I had on yesterday. My jeans will have to do until we can get back to my truck."

He gestured to the closet. "Help yourself."

"Thanks," she said, feeling suddenly awkward. Not only had he pulled her unconscious from her SUV, they'd also had mind-blowing sex. Gingerly, she felt the

back of her head, but found no lingering soreness. *Damn, I don't even know his name, and I want to do him again.* She stared at the man as he stood in the doorway, wondering if she should invite him back to bed. Some time in a hot shower to sort out her thoughts seemed in order.

Her rescuer turned and went back to the kitchen. As soon as she saw him leave she scurried out of bed. Gathering the clothing on the nightstand, she darted into the bathroom and shut the door behind her.

Fluffy navy blue towels sat on a wooden shelf. As she ran her fingers over the thick material, she glanced around. The bathroom really said a lot about this man, she decided. Hardwood shelves housed neat rows of towels and extra toiletries. She noticed a large skylight above the shower, now crusted with snow and ice from the storm.

She adjusted the water, still admiring the view through the skylight. She could imagine seeing budding trees and birds flying overhead in spring, and the thought of being so intimate with nature sent a delightful shiver down her spine. She hadn't come here just for her horses, but for her too. She'd wanted this intimacy with nature. Kansas City just didn't have it. She stepped beneath the spray, sighing with ecstasy as the hot water cascaded over her skin.

She soaped her body. The water massaged away tiny aches she hadn't known she had. As she ran the washcloth over her breasts, her nipples tingled to life. They puckered against the fabric, and she swirled the cloth around them. The rough cloth only made her nipples ache more. Her lips parted as desire flowed through her body, and she easily imagined him standing before her. She wished it were his fingers guiding the washcloth.

He wouldn't stop at her breasts. No, he would stroke over her stomach, then down the outside of each thigh. Angelica parted her legs. She gathered the bar of soap in her hands and once she had a plume of lather, stroked her labia. She slipped a finger inside her cunt. Her breath hitched. The bar of soap fell unheeded from her hands. She heard it

clatter to the tub floor in some distant part of her mind, but ignored it in favor of her own pleasure.

She stroked two fingers inside herself. Closing her eyes, she wished he would walk into the shower. He would see her naked body, shrouded by steam, then push aside the shower curtain and step inside. His fingers, rough and calloused from outdoors work would replace her own. She rotated her thumb against her clit.

Bracing a hand on the wall, she leaned forward. Maybe he'd press her against the cool tile and slide his hard cock into her right there. The shower spray pounded against her nipples, hardening the peaks even further. She moaned, the sound swallowed up by the pounding water.

Oh yeah. In her mind, his cock pounded into her, the frantic rhythm of her fingers matching his. He'd reach between their bodies and flick her clit. *Yeah, just like that.* Her breath quickened. Her vaginal muscles tightened around her fingers. Breathing in ragged pants, she bit her lip as the first wave of her orgasm pummeled through her. The sheer force of her release startled her.

Yes. Yes. YES! That, was what this unknown man did to her. Leaning against the shower wall, she rested her head against the cool tile, panting. Her muscles still twitched from her mind-shattering orgasm.

Licking her lips, she reached down and picked up the bar of soap, a little lightheaded from the force of her release. *Something has to be wrong with me. I've NEVER reacted this strongly to someone before.* Again, she remembered hitting her head on the steering wheel and decided to chalk it all up to a head wound.

The water ran tepid against her back, so she hastily finished washing. Her body tingled from her orgasm. The rapidly cooling water hardened her nipples even more.

Turning off the taps, she grabbed a fluffy towel and wrapped it around herself, then stepped from the shower. She grabbed a second towel and began to dry her hair.

She took extra time in drying off and brushing out her hair. Breathing deeply, she forced her chaotic thoughts to still. *I was in a storm. He saved me. It was natural that we sleep together.*

She hung the towel over the towel rack. *But is it natural to want to do it again?* She shook her head. Was it natural to want to sleep with a ruggedly handsome apparently single man? Of course!

But not now. Right now she wanted her land, her horses, and the freedom to do whatever she wanted to do. *I want to savor my freedom, before I attach myself to anyone else.*

She gulped great breaths of air, trying to calm her racing heart. *The snow has to stop sometime, if it hasn't already. I'll ask him to call me a tow truck and I'll get out of here. Before I get myself into any more trouble.* Angelica shook her head. *More trouble, yeah right.*

She finished and dressed in her jeans, deciding against wearing the same underwear again, and his shirt. The shirt fell to mid-thigh, and beneath it, her unbound breasts swayed against the fabric. She buttoned it up to her chin, and then deciding she looked silly, unbuttoned the top two buttons. Swallowing hard and bracing herself against seeing him once more, she opened the door to the bathroom. No noises came from the kitchen.

She took the opportunity to look at his home. Decorated mostly in hardwoods with slashes of greens and browns, the home exuded a masculine grace. The hall boasted pictures of him on various horses, and even a few covers of rodeo magazines with him riding a spinning bull. The idea of man pitting himself against beast always turned her on, and she forced herself to tear her gaze away. His living room had another fireplace with comfortable-looking furniture. Several trophies and award buckles took up a large bookcase, and she suspected those were from his rodeo wins. Finally, she stepped into the dining area. The aroma of frying bacon came from the kitchen. Through the open space, she saw him standing at the stove. He'd thrown on a blue chambray shirt, and it hung unbuttoned over faded blue jeans. His feet were bare, and she suspected he had radiant floor heating in his house, for the floor felt toasty warm beneath her feet.

She let her gaze linger, noticing the way his broad shoulders filled out the shirt. She followed the long line of his back with her eyes, a little disappointed that the shirttails covered his sculpted ass. He expertly slid two eggs onto a plate, heaped it with bacon, then turned to set it on the table.

His hand paused in midair. His gaze lingered on her, from the strip of skin displayed by the open collar of the shirt, down over her breasts. Her nipples hardened under his scrutiny, and she swore she could feel his hands taking the exact same path his eyes had followed moments earlier. He stroked the long line of her legs with his gaze, stopping only when he got to her hot pink toenails. Reluctantly, it seemed, he dragged his gaze back to her face.

"I don't think we were ever properly introduced. I'm Taver James." He set the plate down on the table. "Go ahead and eat. I'll join you in a minute."

"Angelica Daley. I just bought the Marshall place down the road a bit."

He frowned, so quickly she might have missed it, if she weren't staring at his full lips.

She sat down, pondering the look. Maybe he wanted the property, or something. *I'm not going to let it bother me.* Smiling, she enjoyed the view of his broad chest, from the smattering of hair between his pecs, down over a set of washboard abs that made her drool. Her gaze settled on the telltale bulge of his erection.

Taver turned away long enough to grab two glasses of milk, then set them on the table. He picked up his plate and seated himself across from her.

"I've got some bad news for you," he said after he'd eaten a forkful of eggs. "The phone is out and it's still snowing like the devil outside. I'm afraid you're stuck here until this storm clears."

Angelica couldn't squelch a quick burst of happiness. She shrugged nonchalantly. "At least I have a roof over my head."

Glancing down at her shirt, she traced the opening at her neck, watching Taver's gaze follow the seductive movement of her finger. "And I have a great wardrobe unless you think we can make it to my truck to get my clothes." She continued to eat.

Taver gulped his milk. He made a sound suspiciously like a moan, then swallowed hard. "You can't see the barn from here. I'm not risking one of my horses in this storm. You're lucky I found you when I did."

Angelica finished the last few bites of her breakfast. She wiped her mouth with her napkin. She couldn't remember the last time a meal had tasted so good. Trying to keep her grin in control, she pushed her chair back. She strode over to Taver, her strides long and loose. She stopped behind his chair, letting her arms drape over his bare chest. Sliding her fingers over his skin, she blew gently in his ear. "Mister, I think you're the lucky one."

Chapter Three

Taver rose to his feet. Wrapping his arms around her, he turned and pinned Angelica between his body and the table. He pulled her against him. Her eyes widened, the only sign she felt the press of his hardening cock against her. He inhaled her fresh, clean scent. For a moment he flashed back to his days on the rodeo circuit, when he would wake with some buckle bunny lying tangled in his sheets.

He shoved the image aside. Angelica wasn't like that. This felt different, more solid than any of those fleeting moments.

He breathed deeply, her scent cleansing the past from his mind. Slowly, he slid his fingers over the cotton shirt, then slipped his hands beneath the tails. He caressed her stomach, his hands moving upwards to stroke the underside of one breast. Her breath caught. The sound went straight to his body, sending him to full mast.

"Mm..." she murmured. Her head tipped back and he saw her honey-tipped lashes fan against her cheeks.

Capturing her breasts in his hands, he palmed her nipples to hard little nubs. He had a sudden urge to carry her back to bed and spend the next ten years learning her scent, her responses, until he could drive her mad with just one touch.

She clutched the table. He saw her knuckles close around the blonde pine. She spread her legs, rubbing her pussy against him.

He wanted to take it slow and easy. The tiny moans she made when he toyed with her nipples made it hard. Harder. God, he couldn't remember when he had been this hard for a woman.

Probably last night, when she'd curled her fingers around his cock.

She cupped his cheek with a dainty hand and pulled his lips to hers. She kissed him hungrily, her tongue delving into his mouth to taste him. Arching, she pressed her body full length against his, and he slid his hands down her back to cup her buttocks. He pulled her closer to him and slanted his lips across hers.

Her taste intoxicated him. Sliding his hand around her thigh, he stroked her mound with his fingers. Through the denim of her jeans, he felt her heat, her need, and it turned him on even more. He lifted her and settled her on the edge of the kitchen table, then he reached for her shirt.

He could have pulled it over her head. Instead, he slowly unfastened each button. He wanted to drive her nuts, make her writhe in ecstasy beneath him. The mental image made him hot with desire. As he parted her shirt, he skimmed his knuckles across the peak of her breast. She leaned back and a soft mew of pleasure escaped her throat.

Taver grabbed her ass and hauled her against him. Her denim-clad pussy fit snugly against the ridge of his hard cock and he bit back a groan by dipping his head to her breast. He sucked hard on her nipple, drawing it into his mouth. He swirled his tongue around the hard bead. Angelica threaded her fingers through his hair and held him to her.

He wouldn't last much longer. Damn, he wanted to make it good for her, but the demanding pulse in his jeans urged him onward. *I should stop this, should tell her about the Marshall place, but I can't. Not when she feels so hot, so sweet in my arms. Forgive me, Angel, I'll tell you later.*

He reached into his hip pocket for the condom he'd put there this morning, just in case, and laid it on the table beside her. He stepped away, only long enough for him to work the button and zipper on her jeans. He stood her up, just long enough to shove the denim down over her hips, then he placed her back on the table. He pulled off her jeans, and his soon followed.

Angelica parted her legs. With a sly grin, she reached for the condom he'd set beside her on the table and tore open the foil pack. Taver stepped into the cradle of her thighs, and she expertly sheathed him in latex.

He kissed her then. His tongue delving into her mouth as his finger slipped into her pussy. He found her hot and wet when he stroked her clit with his thumb. She writhed on the table, his kiss swallowing her needy moans of desire.

She pulled her lips away and gulped air. Her hand dropped to his cock. "Take me," she said, inching closer to the edge of the table. "Take me now."

He grabbed her hips, her wish his command. He thrust into her, a long, deep stroke that left him gasping for breath. A growl wound its way from his throat at the exquisite sensation of being wrapped in her body. It was as exhilarating as riding a bucking bronco and as smooth and sweet as a cold beer at the end of the day. He slowly withdrew, Angelica's little whimpers of need only inflaming his desire further.

She wrapped her arms around his neck, pressing close to him. He wanted her, hard and fast against the dining room table. Nearly a year and half since he'd had sex, and now he was acting like a starved teenager. Angelica deserved more from him, but his body wouldn't let him savor her. Not when she clung to him and her lips pressed open-mouthed kisses against his neck and jaw. He pumped into her, the only sounds in the kitchen the rhythmic slide of their bodies together and husky sounds of desire.

He captured her lips, kissing her. Sliding his hands over her back to her rear, he shifted her against him, stroking deeper inside her body.

Her head tipped back, exposing the column of her throat. He nipped her, laving the tiny wound with long strokes of his tongue. "Taver, yes," she whispered.

Her body tightened around him. His own responded, and he quickened the pace of his thrusts. *These few days will never be enough. I can't let her go.* His thoughts echoed in his mind as Angelica came. Her body spasmed around his, and he crushed her against his chest. He thrust once more and stiffened as his own release washed over him. "Oh Angel," he growled. "My Angel."

Awkward silence settled around them. *I've said too much too quickly.*

He realized he should move her. The edge of the table probably bit into her legs, but he wanted to keep her wrapped in his arms a few moments longer. *I want to hold her while I can. Once I tell her about her new place she'll bolt like a scared filly back for the comforts of home. Tracy used to complain to me often that things got pretty rustic out here – and we grew up here.*

* * * * *

Angelica stood by the window amazed at the swirl of white outside. The porch lamp barely penetrated the inky darkness. White flakes swirled into darkness, an impenetrable wall that made it impossible to see the barn. She knew it was there. Taver had stepped outside to feed the horses earlier today, and every moment she had worried about him. Now, he sat in a wooden rocker, his sock-clad feet propped on an ottoman reading a recent issue of *Horse & Rider*.

"When do you think it will end?" She felt surreal trapped in the house with Taver, and while she referred to the storm, she wondered about their relationship as well.

Taver lay his magazine face down in his lap. Turning to look at her, he shrugged his shoulders. "I've seen storms last for a week, darlin'." The simple endearment slid over his tongue and warmed her heart. "I know you're worried, but we're fine. We have plenty of food. The horses are safe in the barn." He gestured to the ceiling where the overhead light burned steadily. "And we have power."

The light flickered, then burned brightly once more.

"Well," he said with a smile, "for now."

"For now." She chuckled.

* * * * *

He ruffled his fingers through his hair, then picked up the magazine once more. *I have got to tell her sometime. That place she bought isn't fit for human habitation. Only the barns are in any shape at all, and that's because Marshall needed the barns.*

Angelica turned from the window and padded barefoot across the living room. She stretched, the motion pushing her breasts against the fabric of her shirt, then lay down on the rug in front of the fireplace. "Mmmm..." She wiggled into the soft fur and he wished she were rubbing those hips into him instead. His cock instantly hardened.

"What made you buy the Marshall place?" He hoped he wasn't prying, but damn it, he felt a need to know more about the beautiful woman in his house. He wanted to know why she bought the place, before he told her that the Marshall house was a total loss.

She shrugged against the rug. "I raise Rocky Mountain Horses. It only made sense to bring them back to their home. Besides, I wanted to get away from Kansas City." Her face clouded.

Someone had hurt her, and hurt her badly. Taver knew it, even though she didn't elaborate. *And if you don't tell her, you're going to hurt her too.* The mental accusation stung.

She could always stay here until the house was fixed up. I wouldn't mind. He felt like he had a demon and an angel on his shoulders, arguing. *Wouldn't mind? Ha! She's the best sex you've ever had, and she likes horses. You'd probably tie her to the bed if given half a chance.*

His gaze wandered over to his head rope and a smile quirked his lips. *Now that's an idea!* Rising to his feet, he crossed the room and quickly snagged it from the metal horn of the black, wrought iron practice steer that stood in the corner. He stroked the rope's soft fibers. He used this lariat when he trained his roping horses.

He knelt behind her head. Angelica looked up at him and grinned. "What are you doing, cowboy?" She reached her arms toward him invitingly.

Perfect. In less than a minute he had her hands bound with one end of the rope. *Yep. I've still got it.* He picked up the tail and rubbed the frayed end over her breast. Beneath her shirt, her nipple pebbled. "Capturing a pretty filly." He leaned forward and brushed his lips across hers, bringing the tail of the rope between her legs. He stroked it against her pussy.

Angelica moaned. She parted her legs, then reached up with her bound hands and stroked the bulge of his hard cock. She scooted up so that the back of her head lay against his knees. "I think the stallion better make the filly mind," she said with an impish smile. Rolling over, she inched forward until she pressed her lips against his erection.

Taver rose to his feet. He quickly shed his clothing, before kneeling naked beside her. As an afterthought, he grabbed the condom out of the pocket of his jeans and tossed it onto the rug beside them.

Angelica knelt before him. He untied her long enough for her to pull the shirt over her head and skim out of her jeans and panties. She held her hands out to him, wrists together ready to be re-bound. His heart contracted seeing her kneeling before him naked, and her submissive posture touched him. The trust it took to offer herself to him filled him with awe.

Quickly tying her up again, he pulled her down to the rug. The fur lay soft beneath his knees, and he could only imagine how it felt beneath her. Leaning over her, he drew a line of kisses down the center of her chest, following his lips with the tufted end of the rope. He skimmed it over her ribs, then teased her nipples into tight little buds.

He tasted her, drawing his tongue along her outer lips until he tasted her sweet nectar. From the way she whimpered and bucked her hips beneath him, he knew she was as hungry as he. He drew her clit into his mouth, sucking on the engorged nub. She cried out, parting her legs wider, and he seized the opportunity to slide the furry rope along her inner thighs. She squirmed beneath his touch.

Releasing her clit, he speared her once with his tongue, then reared back to draw the rope between her legs. Her juices quickly wet the fibers. Bringing the rope to his nose, he inhaled the scent of horse and woman. He reached for the condom and sheathed himself.

He tossed the rope behind her head. Leaning over her, he let his cock brush against her damp pussy. "What do you want?" He grabbed the end of the lariat, pinning it to the fur rug and keeping her from moving her hands.

She writhed beneath him. "You," she whimpered.

He thrust into her, burying himself balls-deep inside her body. Her pussy clenched him like a vise, all hot and wet and deep. She shuddered beneath him, coming nearly instantly. Her pussy spasmed around his cock, the tiny contractions driving him crazy with need. He was close too, but forced himself to slowly withdraw. He hovered with his cock just inside her. Then, he slid forward again.

Their mutual cries filled the room. Taver let the passion stampede over him. He plunged into her, feeling Angelica wrap her legs around his waist. Her heels pressed against his ass, as she accepted him deeper and deeper into her tight cunt. Oh God, he was going to come. He thrust forward again and couldn't stop himself. With a roar, he came, his cock pumping inside her.

For long moments, he stayed there, his body buried inside hers. He released a long breath and looked down at her, realizing he hadn't kissed her in far too long. He teased his lips across hers.

Slowly, Angelica's eyes fluttered open. "That wasn't bad, cowboy." Then she lifted her neck and claimed his lips in a bruising kiss.

* * * * *

A snowball whizzed past Angelica's face. Laughing she ducked behind a drift to grab more ammunition. Rising on her tiptoes, she flung the snowball at Taver. It landed right in the middle of his ass. He turned, a wicked gleam in his eye. Over the last few

days, she had learned to be wary of that look. Her pussy grew wet, when she thought of him taking her right there in the snow bank. Sure, it might be cold, but she knew Taver could generate enough heat to keep them both warm. She threw another snowball at him, hitting him in the chest.

Taver retaliated. He lobbed a volley of several missiles at her. The snowballs hit her breasts and stomach. A tuft of snow drifted down the collar of her parka and she shivered. "Hey! That wasn't fair," she bellowed. "You got snow down my coat."

Taver grinned wickedly. He advanced, another snowball packed in his hands. "What are you going to do about it?" His taunt made her think of all sorts of deliciously nasty things she could do for paybacks, and she ducked down beneath her drift to form another snowball.

Taver rushed her. He raced behind the snow bank, then proceeded to drop fistfuls of snow down her parka.

"Brrrrrrrrrr." She shivered. Grabbing his coat, she stuffed her snowball beneath it, then took off her mittens and slid her cold hands beneath the hem of his coat.

"Hey, that's not fair!" He flung his mittens into the snow and shoved his frigid hands beneath her sweater. Soon they rolled in the snow giggling like a couple of teenagers.

Angelica raised her head, aware that she straddled his hips and a very real erection pressed against her pussy. "So," she said as she brushed snow off the brim of her stocking cap. "Do you think I can head over to my place soon? Like maybe in a couple of days?"

Taver frowned. "I, uh, wanted to talk to you about that."

"Oh?" She rose to her feet and started to brush snow from her jeans. Something about Taver's comment didn't sound right.

"Yeah." Taver gulped. "The Marshalls didn't keep the place in the best of condition. You might not want to live there."

Angelica shrugged. "What are we talking about. Some dust? Some cobwebs? You'd be surprised the places I've lived, and I like to fix things up." She grinned. "I think I can handle just about anything."

"The last time I went past there, honey, the place didn't even have a roof."

"What?" She shrieked. "No roof! The realtor said it was a prime horse farm with new barns and corrals and described the home as rustic."

"Yeah, to a pioneer. You can't live there, babe."

"Why not? I can bring in an RV or something until spring. I've been in worse situations." She backed away, suddenly wary of him. Why hadn't he told her this before? They'd had ample time to discuss things over the last few days. Surely he could have told her about the house then. She could have made plans, worked on alternate arrangements. Even if the phones were out and her cell had no service out here, she still could've started the process. Now, she was probably hours away from getting her truck out of the ditch, had horses arriving shortly, and he decided to tell her this.

"You can stay with me, if you want."

"Why would I want to do that?" She turned away before she could see how her words had affected him. Storming towards the door, she pounded her gloves against her jeans harder than was necessary to dislodge the snow. *Typical man. We've had great sex and now he thinks he owns me. I bet he's lying about the place so I can stay dependent on him--exactly why I left Doug back in Kansas City. He was so damn controlling of everything in my life. My clothes. My hairstyle. Even when I saw my friends. I will not go through that again.*

She turned by the door. "Were you afraid I'd cut off the sex, cowboy?" She flung the words at him, wanting to hurt him as much as he'd hurt her. Tears stung at the corners of her eyes.

She heard an exasperated sigh behind her. "That's not how I wanted—" Taver mumbled, but the slamming of the door cut off his words. She flung the coat down on a chair just inside the door, then pulled off her boots, suddenly feeling trapped. She

wanted to see her place now, wanted to know that Taver lied to her. Instead, she wrapped her arms around her and stormed through the house.

When she shut his bedroom door behind her, the tears came in earnest. Damn him. He could have told her this sooner. She needed time to make plans. Now he had backed her into a corner, and she hated being forced to do anything. Bastard. She curled up on the pillow and cried.

Chapter Four

Angelica woke alone in the empty bed. Sunlight streamed through the windows, casting patterns on the bedspread. Outside the window, the snow swirled in flurries, a far cry from the storm that had raged before. She blinked her eyes, sticky from her tears, and sat up. The blankets fell back revealing her dressed in the same clothes she had worn yesterday. She recalled lying down, then nothing more. Had Taver tucked her in last night?

The question brought with it a stab of hurt. He'd kept information from her. Relationships were built on trust.

Did they really have a relationship? Angelica tried to keep the question from surfacing. After all, they'd spoken little about what would happen once the storm let up. Sliding out of bed and padding over to the window, she peered outside. Apparently it had.

"You're awake." Taver's soft words filled his bedroom, and she turned away from the window to see him standing in the doorway. Sleep had mussed his hair, and he wore only a pair of jeans that hung low on his tanned hips. His chest and feet were bare. For a moment, Angelica tried to stifle the rush of lust that poured through her. She wished he'd woken beside her, instead of in the guest bedroom across the hall.

"Yeah," she said. "The snow's stopped."

"Yeah."

Well, this is a great conversation.

Taver sighed and dragged his fingers through his hair. "Hell, Angel, I'm sorry."

His rough apology startled her. She wanted to shout back at him that he should be, that he shouldn't have kept such information from her, but that seemed childish. "For what?" *I want to hear him say it. I want him to 'fess up.*

"For not telling you." He raked his fingers through his hair again. With long strides he crossed the bedroom until he stood in front of her. "I should have told you about the place, but damn it, I was scared."

He brushed his knuckles across her cheeks. "I was afraid you'd leave. You're the best thing that's happened to me in a long time. I want more than sex with you, honey. You know I wouldn't force you to do anything you didn't want you to. I want you to stay with me, but I want you here because you want to be, not because I left you no choice." He wrapped his arms around her and pulled her against him.

His words started a bubble of emotion inside her chest. She didn't want to go anywhere, wanted to stay here with her cowboy while she dealt with her property. *I care for him more than I should.*

"When I pulled you from that truck, I was scared. I've told you about my sister, how she died in a storm like this. I didn't want to lose you." He pulled his head away to look in her eyes. "I don't know how it happened, but in the days we've spent together, you've come to mean something to me."

Angelica swallowed hard. *I can't believe he's saying this.* Taking deep breaths, she focused her gaze on his lips, full and sensuous and spilling out the most romantic words she'd ever heard before.

"Aw hell, Angel, tell me you feel the same way."

"Yes," she breathed. Standing on tiptoe she brushed her lips across his. "Yes."

Wrapping her arms around him, she slid her fingers along his spine until she cupped the back of his neck. She pulled his head down to meet hers. Her lips moved across his, her tongue seeking entry. Taver parted his lips beneath hers. His hands slid over her back, cupping her ass.

Angelica felt the pulse of his hard cock beneath his jeans and wriggled against it. Stroking his tongue with her own, she drew him to the bed.

Without breaking the kiss, she pulled him on top of her. Nestled between her thighs, Taver kissed her hard and hungrily. His hands skimmed over her sides, back up to her breasts. He cupped their weight in his palms, flicking his thumb across the nipples. Beneath him, Angelica arched. She belonged here, in Montana, and most definitely in Taver's bed. She moaned, the sound echoing around them, and reached for his waistband. *I can't believe I denied myself this, even for one night.*

With a flick of her wrist, she unbuttoned his jeans, then slowly drew the zipper down over his hard shaft. She stroked her fingers along his length, rubbing her thumb across the head. Taver groaned.

"Oh God, honey." With a ragged breath he pulled back. "We can't."

Angelica quickly unfastened her shirt, tossing it over the side of the bed. She removed her bra, then yanked off her jeans. "Why not?" She leaned back against the pillows. Lightly, she followed the trail his fingers had taken across her breasts, circling each hard nipple with her finger.

Taver licked his lips. His gaze followed her movements. Grabbing her wrist, he halted her. "We can't. We ran out of condoms yesterday."

"Shit!"

"Yeah." Keeping one hand around her wrist, he worked on her jeans with the other, tugging them down around her knees. He yanked her panties down, then brushed his fingers across her damp curls. Stroking her cunt, he slipped a finger inside her wetness. "Damn baby, you're so wet for me."

His fingers stroked her, finding the perfect rhythm. He knew her pleasure so well, and they'd only been together for a few days. Angelica parted her legs as best as she could with the denim and lace tangled around her knees. "Fuck me Taver. I don't care about the condoms." She'd take the chance. If she and Taver made a baby, she knew it would be loved. After what he'd just told her, she wanted him inside her.

He didn't need to be told twice. He whisked away her jeans and panties, then knelt between her legs. "You're so beautiful," he whispered as he kissed her. His tongue plunged into her mouth, and Angelica wrapped her legs around his hips. Her heels pressed against his ass, and in a single motion, Taver sheathed himself inside her.

He pulled his lips from hers. He looked down at her, hungry, with his body hard inside hers. Looking up at him, Angelica flexed her inner muscles around him. She moaned at the exquisite sensation of skin against skin. Slowly, he slid out, his eyes closed, his head thrown back, as he savored the slick wetness of her pussy against his cock.

"Yes..." She moaned as he thrust forward again. Nothing had ever felt quite so right, so perfect, as Taver buried deep inside her.

Her hands seemed to be everywhere. His shoulders. His ass. Each stroke, a long, sensual slide into bliss. Her body tightened around him, and Angelica knew she was going to come. He thrust once more, his body stiffening above her. Angelica screamed. Her body spasmed around his, pleasure rushing through her. She clung to him, feeling his taut posture.

He thrust again. Angelica clung tighter to him, feeling him pump inside her. With a growl, he came, burying himself deep inside her. His hot rush of seed filled her, warming her deep inside. He hugged her tightly, then eased himself beside her. She lay next to him, feeling his body warm and comforting. *Perfect*, she thought, *this is absolutely perfect*. She sighed contentedly.

Angelica laid her head against his chest, feeling the steady pounding of his heart.

Taver wrapped his arm around her, his hand flat against her stomach. "Almost a shame that I have to call Mick to get your truck, isn't it?"

"Yeah," Angelica agreed, rolling against him. She suspected that they would have plenty of chances to be snowbound again.

Epilogue

Caught up in the rocking motion of the horse beneath her, Angelica didn't hear the truck pull into the drive. Birds chirped nearby, and a slight breeze ruffled the green grass. She caught a quick glimpse of her house, now resplendent with a new roof and vinyl siding, then saw Taver's blue truck. She reined in Silverado Storm Chaser, affectionately known as Chase, her Rocky Mountain stallion. His chocolate brown body looked like the rain-washed Earth, and his mane and tail were as white as the fluffy clouds that filled the sky. She halted him by the fence, and watched as Taver stepped from his truck, a bundle of mail in his hands.

"He's looking good," Taver called, though his gaze never once strayed to the horse.

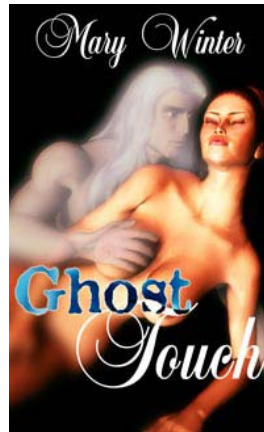
Angelica nodded. "Thanks."

"Your registration papers for the new crop of foals arrived." Taver lifted a large envelope from the pile. "And I think you're starting to book some breedings. There's a few smaller envelopes in here addressed to Mountain Angel Farms too."

"Great!" Chaser shifted beneath her, and she soothed the stallion with a pat on the shoulder. "Let me put this guy through his paces one more time, then I'll be home." She leaned forward in her stirrups. "Wanna pretend we're snowed in tonight?" She winked at him.

Taver's grin was the only answer she needed.

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