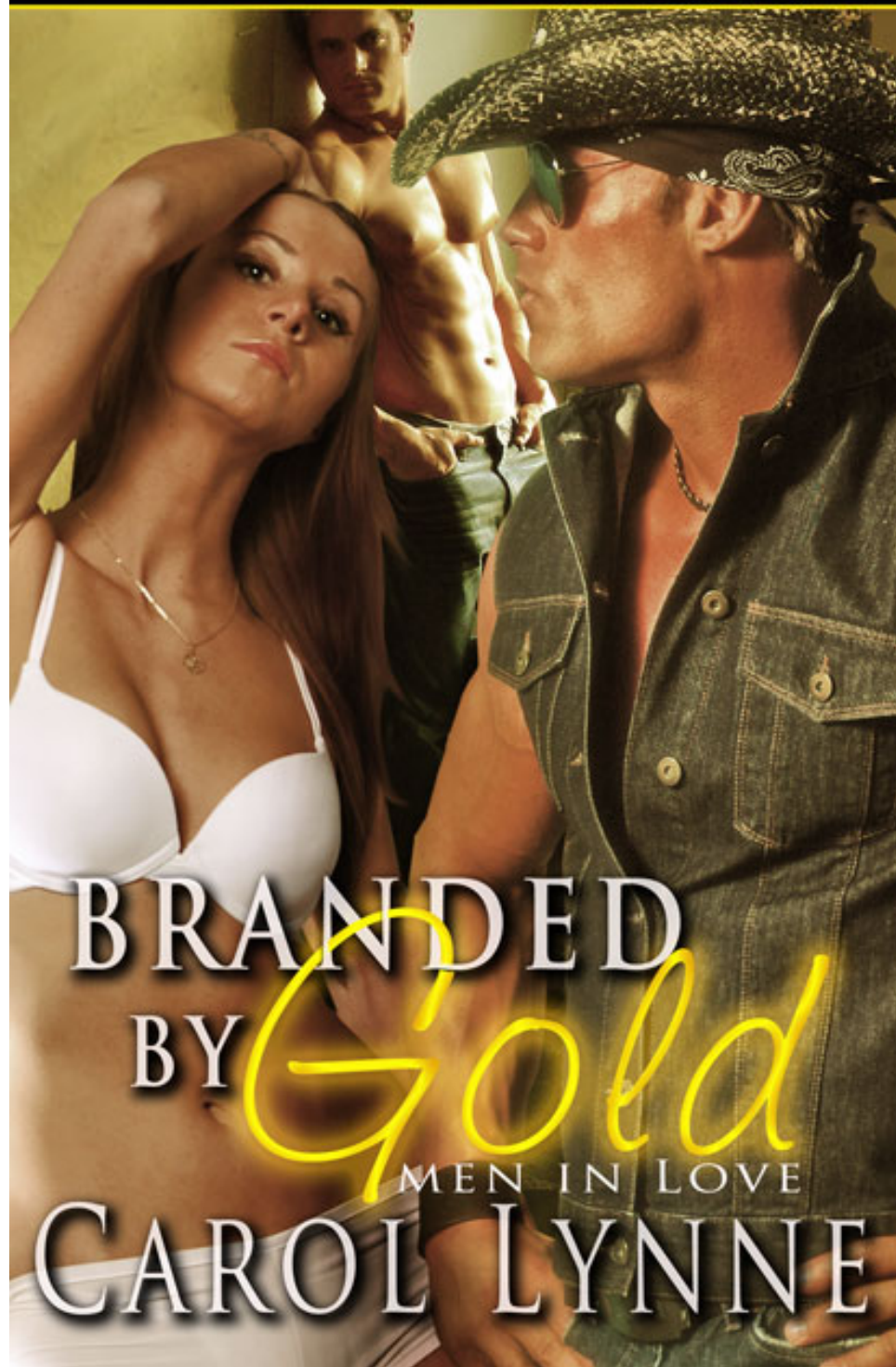


ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS



BRANDED  
BY *Gold*  
MEN IN LOVE  
CAROL LYNNE

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



[www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com)

Branded by Gold

ISBN # 9781419909214

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Branded by Gold Copyright© 2007 Carol Lynne.

Edited by Helen Woodall.

Photography and cover art by Les Byerley.

Electronic book Publication: February 2007

This book may not be reproduced or used in whole or in part by any means existing without written permission from the publisher, Ellora's Cave Publishing, Inc.® 1056 Home Avenue, Akron OH 44310-3502.

This book is a work of fiction and any resemblance to persons, living or dead, or places, events or locales is purely coincidental. The characters are productions of the authors' imagination and used fictitiously.

## **Content Advisory:**

**S - ENSUOUS**

**E - ROTIC**

**X - TREME**

Ellora's Cave Publishing offers three levels of Romantica™ reading entertainment: S (S-ensuous), E (E-rotic), and X (X-treme).

The following material contains graphic sexual content meant for mature readers. This story has been rated E-rotic.

*S-ensuous* love scenes are explicit and leave nothing to the imagination.

*E-rotic* love scenes are explicit, leave nothing to the imagination, and are high in volume per the overall word count. E-rated titles might contain material that some readers find objectionable – in other words, almost anything goes, sexually. E-rated titles are the most graphic titles we carry in terms of both sexual language and descriptiveness in these works of literature.

*X-treme* titles differ from E-rated titles only in plot premise and storyline execution. Stories designated with the letter X tend to contain difficult or controversial subject matter not for the faint of heart.

***MEN IN LOVE:***

***BRANDED BY GOLD***

**Carol Lynne**

### *Dedication*

To my cousin Ali and my sister Rhonda. Thank you for believing in me.

### *Trademarks Acknowledgement*

The author acknowledges the trademarked status and trademark owners of the following wordmarks mentioned in this work of fiction:

Glock: Glock, Inc.

L96 sniper rifle: Accuracy International

Life cereal: General Mills, Inc.

Mr. Clean: The Procter & Gamble Company

Rio Chama Steakhouse: Santa Fe Dining, Inc.

## Chapter One

With rain sprinkling down on her face, she managed to open her eyes just a crack. "Where am I?" she thought. The hard surface under her was cold and wet. She tried to raise herself off the uncomfortable surface only to experience pain so intense her world clouded and the darkness once again took her.

Sirens, she heard them getting closer. She managed to open her eyes again to see a stranger's face looking down at her. "Don't try to move, ma'am, help is almost here."

Help, now she was going to get help, when she'd needed it for the past two days. It was too late for help. Her body was already dead. Killed in a dark room with a knife and a branding iron by the man she'd once called father.

\* \* \* \* \*

With dust still settling on the dry New Mexico ranch, Jake and his old hound dog Blue walked toward the ranch house. Jake took the stairs two at a time then looked back for Blue. "What's the matter, old boy, did I wear you out today?" Blue slowly made his way up the stairs. He went right to the comfortable cushioned settee and jumped up. Within a minute he was sound asleep. Jake shook his head and grinned. "You'd better not let Cree catch you on the furniture, he'll make Blue stew for dinner."

Shaking the dust from his dark brown hair, he entered the kitchen tired and sore. Jake spotted Cree, the local sheriff, bent over getting a beer out of the fridge. "Damn, that's one sexy ass," he said.

Cree stood and it took his breath away as it did every time he saw him. With shoulder-length blue-black hair and eyes the color of the moss growing down by the creek, Cree Sommers was devastating to look at. He stood six-foot, three in stocking feet and had the body of the Indian warriors of his mother's tribe. Wide, strong shoulders narrowed to an incredible six-pack abdomen and lean hips.

Cree looked Jake up and down. "Oh yeah, well, why don't you come on over and give this fine ass a hello." He grinned and bent over to get another beer out for Jake.

"Gladly," he said with a smile and walked smoothly over to Cree. Jake grabbed a handful of Cree's ass and squeezed. "Man, I've missed you this week. How was the conference?"

Before Cree could answer, Jake kissed him with all the love and passion he'd been storing up. The kiss turned into an erotic game of charge and retreat with both of their tongues dueling for position.

"Boring as hell." Cree set down the forgotten bottles of beer and began tugging at the snaps on Jake's dirty chambray shirt. "God, Jake, I need to feel your skin, it's been a

long week." Cree deftly removed his shirt and began licking Jake's neck. "I want you, naked and in me now."

*Fantastic, just what he'd wanted to hear.*

Jake gave Cree one of his smoother than silk smiles and tugged Cree's shirt out of his pants and began unbuttoning it as fast as his fingers would allow. "Take your gun and your pants off and I'll deal with the shirt."

"Oh good, skin."

Jake loved Cree's skin, all bronzed and smooth. He managed to get Cree's shirt off and then started on his own pants, which wasn't easy with his steel-hard erection pressing against his zipper. Cree was dropping his khaki uniform pants to the kitchen floor when the phone rang.

"No, no, not now. Damn.,"

Here Jake finally had Cree naked and he was gonna have to share him again.

"How about we pretend we don't hear it," Jake said, kissing Cree's stomach. His skin felt like velvet on his tongue. Numerous muscles rippled under Jake's lips letting him know Cree was affected by his touch.

"You know I can't do that, cowboy. What if there's an emergency down at the station?" Cree sighed. He reached for the phone as Jake continued on his journey down Cree's stomach to his rock-hard cock. His erection jumped up to hit Jake on the chin just as he tried to put it in his mouth.

*Oh, fruit of the gods.*

Cree's cock was warm and smooth. Cree reached down to grab Jake's hair enough to hold on and began a slow thrust in and out of Jake's mouth. He reached for the phone. "Triple..." Cree coughed and cleared his throat. "Triple Spur Ranch, Cree speaking."

Cree listened to the caller on the phone and stopped thrusting into Jake's mouth.

"Yes, this is Jake Baker's ranch, one moment and I'll get him for you," Cree looked down at Jake.

Jake stopped sucking to look up at him. "Jake, phone for you, it's a hospital in Kansas City."

Jake looked at Cree, trying to determine what was going on. Cree shrugged his shoulders and handed him the phone. "This is Jake Baker, may I help you." Sharing concerned looks with Cree, Jake listened to the caller on the other end.

Cree reached out and wrapped his arms around Jake. He began kissing him on the neck in silent support or pure horniness, Jake wasn't sure which.

Somehow, Jake knew this wasn't going to be good. His knuckles tightened on the phone.

"Mr. Baker, this is Mary English from St. Joseph's Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri, and we have a patient that was brought in to the emergency room with no identification." Jake held his breath waiting for her to continue. "She was carrying a

picture in her back pocket with two men under a ranch sign. The back of the picture had Jacob Baker and Cree Sommers, Junctionville, New Mexico, written on it. We contacted the state police department in New Mexico and they gave us this number."

Gripping the phone until his knuckles turned white, Jake felt the air leave his lungs for a moment and then managed to ask, "Can you give me a description of the woman in question?" *Please no, don't let it be her. Anyone but her.*

"Yes, of course. She's about five-foot, four-inches tall, appears to be in her mid-twenties, approximately one hundred and ten pounds, with long black hair and blue eyes. I don't mean to worry you but the young lady in question is in a coma and we're hoping for some medical information. It appears she has been through quite an ordeal recently and in the past."

His knees threatening to give out, Jake reached for the wall. Cree wrapped his arms tighter around Jake and held him upright. Jake cleared his throat and answered, even though at that minute he wanted to cry. "I know the woman. Her name is Jennifer Barnes and she's my stepsister. I'll be on the next flight out of Santa Fe to Kansas City."

"Thank you, Mr. Baker, I'll have the social worker standing by to speak with you upon arrival."

Cree saw the distress on Jake's face and took the phone from him and replaced the receiver.

Jake couldn't move for a minute. His thoughts swirled around in his head until he felt Cree turn his face to his and kiss him softly. "What's happened to our girl, Jake?"

Jake looked into the dark green eyes of the man he loved and tried to talk around the lump in his throat. "There's been some kind of accident and Jenny's in a coma in Kansas City. They...they got our names off a picture they found in her pocket and called the state police to track me down. Do you know how Jenny got a picture of the two of us standing underneath the Triple Spur Ranch sign?" Jake blew out a calming breath. "I guess it doesn't matter now, the important thing is they found us. I have to go to the airport and get to my Jenny."

Cree looked at Jake more intently and fisted his hands in his hair. "You mean *we* have to get to the airport and get to our Jenny." Jake pulled away and started walking to the bedroom to pack a bag. Cree stopped him with a hand on his arm. "I sent that picture to my momma in a Christmas card a couple years ago."

\* \* \* \* \*

Five hours later they arrived at St. Joseph's Hospital and were immediately met by the social worker.

"Hi, Mr. Baker, I'm Nancy Victor, the social worker on call tonight. I wanted to talk to you before allowing you to see Ms. Barnes. We have some questions regarding her past and present injuries that we were hoping you could shed some light on."

With Cree standing beside him holding his hand, Jake nodded, unable to answer around the tight knot in his throat.

"Mr. Baker, your stepsister has two brands, one old and one new, burned into her skin." Jake's ears began ringing and it took all his concentration to focus on the rest of the conversation. "The police have been notified and are anxious for any information you can give them regarding the identity of the person or persons responsible."

In that instant Jake saw his father's face on the worst day of his life almost five years ago. Cree and Jake thought if they left the Double B, Jenny's part in the affair would be forgiven. Jake now knew all was not forgiven. Jenny had paid dearly for their mistake and Jake knew she would never be able to forgive them. Jake looked over his shoulder to Cree standing behind him with his hand on Jake's shoulder. He could see in Cree's eyes that he was thinking the same thing.



## **Chapter Two**

*11 years ago*

Jenny was twelve when her mother, Helen, married Buck Baker and came to live on the Double B ranch in Oklahoma. Buck always said he'd never remarry after Jake's mother died so it came as quite a shock when he brought home Helen and her daughter after a short business trip and they were already married.

Jenny was a beautiful girl with midnight black hair and the bluest eyes he'd ever seen. She looked so delicate with her porcelain skin and tiny frame. Jenny was also a lonely child out on the ranch with only grownups for company. She began seeking out Jake and his best friend Cree Sommers. They didn't really want a twelve-year-old following them around but they both felt sorry for the sweet little girl.

They began to include Jenny in their daily activities out on the ranch. Cree even saved her life that first summer, when she fell into the deep water of the creek that ran down the center of the ranch. Jenny was picking wildflowers along the bank while he and Cree were fishing when they heard the splash of water and then the screams. Cree immediately jumped into the water to the flailing little girl. He carried her out of the creek and seemed to win her heart and devotion in that one act. That was the summer both he and Cree taught their Jenny how to swim.

The next year both Jake and Cree graduated high school and decided to join the Navy together. Jake hadn't been outside Oklahoma and wanted to see the world. Cree wanted to get away from the reservation and the bad memories of his childhood. Cree's dad was a white man who worked for the government. He met Naomi, Cree's mother and they fell in lust at first sight.

Naomi got pregnant and the elders of the tribe insisted Lyle Sommers do the right thing and marry her. Afraid for his job, Lyle married Naomi and set up house on the reservation. Lyle never wanted an Indian wife or a half-breed kid and he let them know it daily. When Naomi got pregnant for a second time it was more than Lyle could take and he left the reservation never to be heard from again. The lasting damage to Cree's self-confidence was his only legacy.

The summer before they left for the Navy they tried to do everything they could with Jenny. She was so sad that they were leaving her. Cree and Jake took her fishing and swimming almost every evening after Jake's chores were done.

Buck, Jake's father, was distancing himself from Jake even further at this point. Buck hated the thought of Jake joining the Navy. He just assumed Jake would want to follow his example and take over the ranch for him someday. When Jake tried to tell his father that he wanted to see the world before being stuck back in Oklahoma until he died Buck went crazy. "You goddamn little bastard. Are you implying this ranch isn't

good enough for you? That being 'stuck' here is a fate worse than death? Just know this, you little smart-mouthed punk, if you leave this ranch you leave it. Got it, boy?"

"Yes, sir, I understand," Jake mumbled although he was sure his dad would change his mind after he was gone awhile.

As the years followed, Jenny wrote to Cree and Jake almost daily. She told them of her life on the ranch and asked about their days. It was the tone of the letters that became increasingly more despondent as the years went by that had both Jake and Cree questioning Jenny's happiness. Often the letters appeared to have tearstains on the pink pages. Whenever they questioned her about her happiness Jenny would tell them everything was fine and they needed to concentrate on keeping themselves safe so they could come back to her.

Jake and Cree became Navy Seals, which kept them away from home for the better part of the next four years. On their first leave together they decided to go back to the ranch and see their little Jenny. What they found was not their "little Jenny" but a beautiful seventeen-year-old with the body of someone much older.

"My God. Jenny, is that you?" Jake looked at the woman standing in front of him. "Where did my 'little Jenny' go?" Jake couldn't believe his eyes at the changes the past four years had made. Jenny's hair no longer hung in two loose braids on the side of her head but in a silky waterfall of black satin down to her waist. Her body had begun to change as well, her breasts had grown enormously and his body reacted on sight.

*This was wrong, Jake told himself. He couldn't have sexual feelings for his seventeen-year-old stepsister. That would be just, wrong.*

Jake glanced over at Cree who was staring at Jenny's chest with his mouth open. "Cree, close your mouth before the horseflies find it."

"I'm so glad you're home. I've missed you both so much I thought I might go crazy," Jenny cried, wrapping her arms around both men. "Please tell me you're staying awhile."

Jake and Cree stepped back from Jenny not wanting her to feel the evidence of just what her grown-up body was doing to them. "Just three days this time, Jenny. I'm sorry it can't be longer but the Navy has kept us busy and we're to report back for duty in four days," Jake said.

Jenny looked so sad it almost broke his heart. "Let's just make the most of the time we have together." Jake looked at Cree and then back to Jenny hoping to see a sign of acceptance in her eyes.

"Cree," Jenny asked softly, "can you stay here at the ranch with us or are you planning to go see your momma on the reservation?"

"My momma didn't know I was coming and went to Texas to see her newest grandbaby. So I guess if you want me, you got me," Cree said with a sexy grin.

\* \* \* \* \*

That night they sat down at the dinner table just as Buck was coming down the stairs after his evening shower. Jake noticed that even at forty-five Buck Baker was still a very powerful and youthful-looking man. With dark brown hair with flecks of gray and golden brown eyes it was no wonder all the ladies in town were still keeping an eye on him, despite his married status. Jake couldn't help notice his dad had actually come to the table with no shirt on. "Dad, do you always come to supper half dressed or is this a special occasion?"

Buck stopped in his tracks and his head snapped from Jake to Cree. "What are the two of you doing here?" he asked sharply. He seemed to be surprised to find them at the supper table. "It seems to me you made your choice when you decided you'd rather be soldiers than ranchers. We've got no use for soldiers here." Buck walked to his customary place at the head of the table and sat down by Jenny. "How long are you two planning to sponge off me this time? And for God's sake, don't distract Jenny from her priorities." Buck patted Jenny's hand and then squeezed it gently. "We've settled into a nice routine, Jenny and I."

Jake was stunned by his father's hateful words. They hadn't been close since his mother died when he was eight, but he thought the Double B would always be considered his home. He guessed he was wrong in that assumption. Jake noticed the proprietary looks that Buck gave Jenny when he thought no one was looking. He figured Buck had substituted Jenny for the son that had left him.

Jenny's mother Helen had been bedridden for the past three months due to an unknown illness. Jenny told Jake the doctors couldn't find anything to explain the extreme fatigue Helen was experiencing.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next three days flew by for Jenny, Cree and Jake. They went swimming in the creek and rode fences like they did the summer Jenny came to live on the Double B. Jake enjoyed being back on the ranch especially swimming with Jenny in a bikini. He would never forget that tiny green swimsuit. Her breasts spilled out the top and he kept hoping that he would catch a glimpse of one of the large nipples he could see straining through the thin material. Jenny seemed to be totally unaware of her sensual body.

When the three of them swam together, Jenny still jumped on them trying to push them under the water like she did when she was a kid. This Jenny, however, was definitely not a kid. One day as the three of them were swimming, Jenny swam to him and wrapped her legs around his waist, trying to wrestle him under the water. Jake's cock had immediately reacted to the soft mound pressed against it. Jenny seemed to catch on quickly to what was happening with his body. She looked him in the eye and kissed him. The kiss was all he'd been waiting for. Jake grabbed Jenny's ass and pulled her even closer, rubbing his cock on that sweet pussy as he devoured her mouth. Cree

swam up and pulled Jenny out of Jake's arms and kissed her like a man dying of thirst. Jenny looked from Cree to Jake and smiled.

"Make love to me, both of you, please," she asked shyly.

Jake closed his eyes and groaned. "Sorry, Jenny, we can't yet you're still a little young for that. Save yourself for us and when the time is right it'll happen." Jake took a calming breath and tried to get his dick to cooperate.

Jenny formed her kissable lips into a mock pout. "All right, but I'm going to hold you two to that promise."

All too soon it was time to leave and Jake watched the tears run down Jenny's face as she waved them down the drive leading to the county road.

The letters they exchanged became increasingly more personal as the time went on. Both Jake and Cree began to love Jenny like the woman she had become. A year later a telegram came informing him that Helen had died from her lengthy illness. Jake and Cree both took leave to be there for Jenny.

Three days later Jake and Cree pulled up to the ranch house in their rental car. No one seemed to be around to greet them. The house was empty, so they made their way to the barn. As they entered the barn, waiting for their eyes to adjust to the light, they could here Jenny crying.

"Jenny? Where are you? Cree and I are here for ya, baby."

"Jake! I'm in the back stall. Please wait and I'll be there in a minute," called Jenny.

"Jenny, it's Cree, do you need some help?" He couldn't help but hear the sadness and distress in her voice.

Jenny came around the corner just as Cree and Jake decided to go after her. They stopped in their tracks when they saw her. The right side of her face was bruised and swollen.

"Oh God, Jenny, what happened to your face?" Jake rushed to her and touched her cheek. "Who did this to you? Tell me and I'll kill the son of a bitch!" Jake fumed.

"N-no one, Jake, I-I got thrown by my horse this morning. It was my own fault I didn't have the saddle cinched tight enough," Jenny tried to explain but looked everywhere but at the two men standing in front of her.

Jake and Cree looked at Jenny and then at each other. There was no way she was telling the truth. Jenny was the best horsewoman they knew. They wrapped their arms tight around her waist Jake in front of her and Cree behind her. They held her without words, kissing the sides of her neck, letting her know they were there for her. After a while Jenny pulled away and asked them to walk her to the house.

"I'd like to lie down for a while, if you don't mind. I have to cook supper for Buck and the hands in a couple of hours," Jenny said softly. Her hands were visibly shaking and she still wouldn't look either one of them in the eye.

"Why are you cooking for the hands, Jenny? What happened to Ms. Fitzgerald?" Jake asked. Ms. Fitzgerald had been with his family since his mother died.

"Buck fired her last October," she said with sadness in her eyes. "No one really knows why and you know Buck doesn't explain himself to anyone." Jenny shrugged her shoulders. "Since then I've been doing all the cooking and cleaning. I don't mind and with Mother gone, I feel I need to earn my keep."

Cree began rubbing circles across her back as they walked her up the stairs to the house. "Sweetheart, you're eighteen years old now. You don't have to stay with Buck on the Double B. There's a whole world out there. Get a job in town and maybe a little apartment until Jake and I get out of the Navy."

Jenny turned to face Cree. "You don't understand, Cree. I have no one else. No other family. The only friends I have are you and Jake and you're not even in the country most of the time. The ranch hands have been very appreciative of my cooking skills and it makes me feel like I have a reason to get up in the morning."

Jake and Cree kissed Jenny's cheek and sent her on up to bed. After she closed her door, Jake turned to Cree and said what they had both been thinking. "What's going on here?" He stalked toward the front door with a determined look on his face. "I'm going to go find Buck and get to the bottom of this fucked-up mess." The screen door slammed shut at his hasty departure.

Jake left Cree in the living room while he set off in search of his father. The ranch was looking better than ever. Buck had added a few buildings since he'd been gone. It looked like he'd built a new house for his longtime foreman, Rex Cotton.

He found Buck in the garage, putting away fencing supplies.

"Hi, Buck." Jake entered the big shed. "I was sorry to hear about Helen. Cree and I flew in as soon as we could. Sorry it wasn't in time for the funeral." Jake was startled by the look of pure rage on his father's face.

"What in the hell are you doing here, boy! Didn't I make it clear the last time you two came that this was no longer your home? I have Jenny now and have no use for the likes of you two," bellowed Buck.

"Speaking of Jenny," Jake stared at his father, "what in the hell happened to her face? She tried to tell us she fell off Moonbeam but we both know that just isn't possible with Jenny. So who hit her, Buck? Was it a ranch hand or some punk in town? Tell me so I can find him and kill him."

"It's none of your business, boy." Buck threw the wrench in his hand against the wall. "I handle things on this ranch," he screamed as he stormed toward Jake. "I'm the king on this ranch and you're no longer welcome in my kingdom."

Jake was shocked at his father's anger but refused to back down in regards to Jenny. "Cree and I aren't going anywhere until we know Jenny's safe here. I'll go talk to Jenny again and maybe I can get a truthful answer out of her this time." Jake spun on his heels and started striding back to the house.

"You stay the hell away from my Jenny, you fucker!" Buck screamed.

Jake's steps faltered at that statement but he kept going, storming into the living room to find Cree sitting on the bottom step with his head in his hands. Cree looked so lost and confused. His head came up at Jake's entrance. He stood and approached him.

"What did ya find out, Jake?"

"Not a goddamn thing except that we're no longer welcome in 'Buck's Kingdom'. He said he already took care of whoever hit Jenny but he wouldn't tell me who it was. He then proceeded to order us off the ranch. I told him not until I get some answers from Jenny and we make sure she'll be safe here." Jake was shaking with rage and Cree put a calming hand on his shoulder.

Cree looked at Jake then looked up the staircase toward where Jenny was resting. "Let's go see about our girl then."

They climbed the stairs to Jenny's room and knocked on the door. "Jenny?" Cree said. "Can Jake and I come in for a minute?"

There was no answer at first then a softly spoken "Come in".

Jake and Cree found Jenny lying in the center of her bed. Her eyes were red-rimmed and her cheek was turning an awful shade of purple. "Come over here and sit with me," Jenny pleaded. "Please hold me and tell me you're not leaving me again."

"Oh baby, please don't cry. Of course we'll hold you." Jake motioned for Cree to sit on the opposite side of the bed. They engulfed Jenny in their arms and began rocking her back and forth. Kissing the top of her head Jake began questioning her further. "Jenny, you have to tell us who hit you. We know it wasn't falling off Moonbeam." He exhaled audibly. "Was it a ranch hand or maybe a boyfriend from town?" Jake dreaded the answer to that question but knew he needed to know. "Please talk to us, Jenny. We only want to make sure you're safe."

Jenny went rigid and pulled back from them. "You honestly think I have a boyfriend in town?" Jenny asked in wonder. "Don't you know how I feel about you and Cree? Jake, you guys are my entire life. The only people left on earth that I love. I know I'm only a child in your eyes but I love you both with all my heart."

"I love you too, Jenny. I've loved you since you were twelve years old. I've been in love with you since you were seventeen and we definitely don't see you as a child." Jake stopped talking. He seemed to be at war with himself. With a slight shake of his head he continued. "I know it's wrong and I've tried to fight my feelings for the past year but I can't seem to get you out of my heart." Jake looked at Cree and nodded.

"Jenny, I love you too," Cree said as he brushed a lock of hair off her cheek. "That's why we have to make sure you'll be safe when we're overseas. You're our heart, Jenny. You are the main thing that's kept us alive all these years. We'll be out of the service in two years and we hoped you would think about coming to live with us and becoming a family."

"You mean it?" Jenny squeezed both Cree and Jake. Her smile lit up her face despite the awful bruise. "I'd love to make a home with both of you. One of the reasons I've stayed at the Double B is because it's also your home and it makes me feel closer to

you both when you're away." At that moment Jenny couldn't have felt more loved or special. She looked at Jake and softly outlined his lips with her finger. "Thank you, Jake." She leaned in and brushed her lips across his in a mere whisper of a kiss. Jenny turned to Cree. "Thank you, Cree." With another soft touch of her lips she kissed Cree.

Jake squeezed Jenny and fought for breath. "You are the sexiest woman I've ever met and right or wrong both Cree and I want to make love to you. The problem is we'll have to wait until we can be a family away from Buck. He's ordered us both off the ranch and we have no choice but to go." Jake pulled back from their embrace and looked Jenny in the eye. "Do you need us to take you somewhere, Jenny? We can't leave you here unless we know for sure you'll be safe." Jake feathered his fingers over the ugly purple bruise.

Jenny placed her hand over Jake's. "No, Jake, I'll be fine here at the Double B until you send for me." She suddenly looked a little uncomfortable. "It's just that Buck—"

Jenny got no further in her explanation before the door burst open with an outraged Buck storming into the room.

"What in the hell is going on under my roof?" He pointed toward the three of them on the bed. "You queer boy cocksuckers get the hell away from her. I told you to get off my ranch and I meant it," he raged, spittle flying out of his mouth. "Now, get out or I'll go and get the shotgun and blow your asses to kingdom come." He advanced toward the bed in a blind rage.

Jake and Cree both stood up and positioned themselves between Jenny and Buck. Jake and Cree looked over their shoulders at Jenny who had tears in her eyes. "It's all right. I'll be fine until I hear from you. Just go and keep each other safe for me please."

Jake looked from Jenny to Buck and tried to decide what to do. He was afraid that if he didn't leave things would get harder for Jenny. Surely, Buck would keep her safe from now on. He seemed to love Jenny like a daughter. In the end he decided that he and Cree should leave Jenny at the Double B.

## Chapter Three

### *Present day*

Jake looked at Ms. Victor through a haze of shame and self loathing. “Wh-What are the brands of, Ms. Victor?” Jake had to ask even though he knew of only one person capable of putting their brand on someone.

“Well, there’s one old brand and one fresh one with the letters BB. Does that mean anything to you, Mr. Baker?”

“Yes.” Jake started to cry and Cree hugged him from behind to give him strength. “The brands are for the Double B ranch in Payne County, Oklahoma. The ranch belongs to my father Buck Baker. Your patient is my stepsister Jenny. Please contact the authorities in Payne County and have my father arrested or I swear he won’t live another day.” Jake took a deep breath, “Can we see Jenny now?”

“Mr. Baker, your stepsister is still in a coma. She was found on a country road about twelve miles from here. She’s been severely beaten and has suffered many lacerations to her torso. It seems she was hit on the back of the head with what we think was the same branding iron used to mark her chest.” She reached out and touched Jake’s arm. Trying to offer what little support she could. “I can let you in one at a time to see her but you won’t recognize her.” She looked from Jake to Cree. “I want you to be prepared.”

“When do the doctors think she’ll come out of the coma?” Cree asked because Jake seemed to be in shock.

“At this point we don’t know. Her injuries are very serious but we can’t explain why she hasn’t regained consciousness before now.” Ms. Victor shook her head slightly. “Maybe she has no will to live. The human mind is still very much a mystery. Her doctor does think it would help for her to hear from loved ones. It may give her something to fight for.”

With that Ms. Victor took both men up to the Intensive Care Unit. “Gentlemen, I’ll leave you in the care of the nurses and I’ll go call the local authorities with the information you have provided. I’ll be in touch, or the state police might send someone over to take a statement.”

Jake was the first to go into Jenny’s small curtained off room just in front of the nurses’ station. What he saw dropped him to his knees. How could he have let this happen to her? The small figure in the hospital bed didn’t even look human let alone like his beautiful smiling Jenny. He looked at all the tubes running into her tiny body. Machines beeped, monitoring her vital signs. After a minute Jake rose to his full height and approached the bed. Looking down at the only woman he’d ever loved, Jake felt helpless. Her lip was split and bruised, one eye was purple and swollen shut and her pretty face was marred by abrasions and various other bruises. “Baby, it’s me, Jake.”



Jake ran his fingers through her long hair. He was so glad she hadn't cut it. "Oh baby, please wake up. Please wake up and let me spend the rest of my life making it up to you for all my failures."

Jake closed his eyes and prayed for forgiveness and strength. "Cree and I have a ranch in New Mexico called the Triple Spur. We designed and built it with you in mind. It's not complete without you in it." Jake took a breath and wiped his eyes.

The three years he and Cree had been looking for her seemed like a lifetime. "Why didn't you come to us for help, baby? You know we'd have kept you safe. Why'd you return all our letters after we told you we loved you?" Jake reached to the bedside table and grabbed a tissue out of the box. He wiped his dripping nose and wiped the tears from his eyes. Jake bent over Jenny's head to whisper in her ear. "None of it matters now, Jenny. What matters is that you wake up and tell me you still love me. Because I sure as hell love you. How could a man ever stop loving a woman as sweet and caring and sexy as you?" Jake kissed Jenny on her right temple, the only spot on her face that wasn't swollen and purple. "I only have a few seconds left and then Cree will be in to see you. Jenny, please give us another chance. We love you."

Jake kissed her again and left the room and walked straight into Cree's arms. "God, Cree, what have we done? Please go in there and make our Jenny wake up."

Cree bent his head and gave Jake a soulful kiss. "I'm going in and then we can go to the chapel and pray for our Jenny together."

"K."

Cree entered the room with a lump in his throat and revenge on his mind. In this situation he was not the local sheriff but a man in love with the victim. He would see that justice was done. What kind of justice remained to be seen.

Cree walked to the bed and reached out a hand to grab the guardrail before he too fell over. The smell of medicine and the beeping of monitors all threatened to overwhelm him.

"Sweetheart, can you hear me? It's Cree, sweetheart. Please wake up. I'm worried about you and I'm worried about Jake." Cree had never seen that particular look in Jake's eyes before today. "Jenny, I don't think he'll make it if you don't. I can't lose either of you. You're both my life, my entire world." He closed his eyes and said a silent prayer for forgiveness. "If you wake up for me, sweetheart, I'll see that you're never alone again. You'll be so tired of two lovesick men around you'll beg for quiet time."

Cree took hold of Jenny's hand and being careful of the IV tube, he gently squeezed. He was surprised when Jenny seemed to squeeze back just the barest amount. He looked at Jenny's face and saw nothing, no response. He could have sworn he felt it. Cree pushed the call button for the nurse, not wanting to leave Jenny's side. The nurse came through the curtain with a question in her eyes.

"Yes, sir, is there a problem?"

"I think I felt her squeeze my hand."

"Sometimes the body makes involuntary movements even in a comatose state. Keep watching her and let me know if she shows any more signs of waking up."

As the nurse went back to her station to consult the printouts and call the doctor, Jake came in to stand beside Cree.

Putting his arm around Cree's waist, he gave him a worried look. "What's going on, Cree? Is something wrong?"

Not wanting to get Jake's hopes up, Cree shrugged and circled his arms around Jake. "I thought I might have felt her hand move."

"My God, that's fantastic, Cree." Jake beamed.

Cree shook his head. "Don't get your hopes up. Jake, even if I did feel her move, it doesn't mean she's out of the woods."

Jake shook his head back at him. "It's something, man. It's more than they've gotten out of Jenny in the two days that she's been here."

The nurse returned and told them the doctor would be in to speak to them. After a few tense minutes of silence, Cree turned to Jake and took his hand. "Jake, you know if Jenny wakes up, we can't lose her again. It was hard enough on us the first time, we can't survive a second." Cree looked into his lover's eyes. "Jenny's love for us is what brought our love for each other to the forefront. I love you more than my own life, Jake, but our house is not a home without Jenny in it."

Jake looked at Cree and saw the love in his eyes. "I know. Jenny's the glue that will bind us all for a lifetime. I love you, Cree." He kissed Cree and then looked over at Jenny's bed. "Jenny, did you hear that? Cree and I need your love. Please come back to us, baby. Please make our house a home."

Jenny's eyes fluttered, started to open and then closed again. The nurse, who had been watching Jenny's monitors from the nurses' desk, came running in with a smile on her face. "It seems you two are just what the doctor ordered. It looks like your girl may be trying to fight her way back to you."

Jake and Cree were ushered out of the area while the doctor examined Jenny. He came out in the hall and smiled. "It looks like it won't be long now, although she will be weak for at least seven to ten days."

"Is she awake? Can we see her?" Jake asked hopefully.

"Give her some time to rest and check back in a couple hours."

Jake and Cree decided to spend the next few hours in the chapel asking God to heal Jenny's body. They didn't know about her mental or emotional state. They were afraid that would take a lifetime to heal.

It was two more days before Jenny started waking up properly. Cree and Jake never left the hospital. Even though the doctors wouldn't let them stay in her room for more than a couple of minutes at a time, they wanted to be at the hospital in case she woke up enough to talk to them.

On the third day Jenny opened her eyes to find both Jake and Cree at her bedside. She tried to smile but winced at the pain. Suddenly, she became aware of just what was happening. "You guys can't be here. Get out before he finds you." Jenny looked around the room in a panic. "He'll kill you both, don't you understand, he's crazy." Her throat was dry and scratchy but they should have been able to understand her. Why were they still here looking at her like she was crazy?

Jake bent over the guardrail and laid a hand on Jenny's head, tenderly brushing the hair away from her face. "Shh, don't try to talk, baby," Jake soothed in his deep gravelly voice. Cree and I aren't going anywhere ever again unless you're with us. We can protect you. We didn't spend six years as Navy Seals and not learn how to protect ourselves and the ones we love. Besides, Cree is a sheriff now," he said proudly looking at Cree. "That means we have the law in our corner."

Jenny closed her eyes, looking frustrated and edgy. "No, no you don't understand. Buck hates you both so much it's like a sickness inside him. He blames me because I don't love him." She opened her eyes and looked first at Jake then at Cree. "If you're near me he'll find you. He seems to always find me no matter where I go. I can't let him get to you, don't you understand?" Jenny tried to sit up. She winced and lay back down. "Please leave, I love you both and always will but I can't have your deaths on my conscience."

Trying to calm her, Cree kissed her on the forehead. "Sweetheart, the police are looking for Buck as we speak. They'll find him and we'll have him put away forever for all the things he's done to you." Cree took Jenny's hand and tenderly kissed it. "Now, the important thing is for you to get better so we can take you to the Triple Spur and show you the home we've built for you."

Jake bent over to press his nose to Jenny's. "Get some sleep, our sweet Jenny. Get strong so we can build a family."

For the next ten days Jake and Cree took turns sitting with Jenny. They got a hotel room across from the hospital so they could each take turns sleeping, but they never left Jenny completely alone. They were fortunate enough to have good friends back home who took up the slack for them in their respective jobs. Jake's foreman Hank assured him the ranch would be fine while they were gone and Cree was able to take vacation time without a lot of trouble. Cree's dispatcher at the sheriff's station even sent flowers to Jenny's hospital room. It amazed Jake how much their friends back home rallied around them especially since none of them even knew Jenny.

## Chapter Four

The day Jenny was released from the hospital was one of the happiest of their lives. She still wouldn't go into any details of her attack, only that her attacker was Buck Baker. Jenny promised if they found him she would explain the details at that time. Without Buck being in custody she was just too afraid to talk.

The police were not having any luck finding Buck. The Double B hadn't seen the "King" for about six months. The foreman, Rex Cotton, explained to the police that Buck said he needed some time away to figure out some family issues and he would check in periodically. He hadn't heard from him in a month and didn't know where he called from the last time.

Cree and Jake went on a mini-shopping spree and bought some clothes for Jenny. They made a list of her sizes and favorite things to wear. Just like them, Jenny was fairly easy to please. Simple jeans, t-shirts and a pair of tennis shoes were all she asked for. Cree and Jake had the best time picking out new panties for her. They purposely only bought one bra because they both preferred her without one. It would be a while before she could wear one anyway, with the still healing brand on her breast. After they got Jenny dressed in her new clothes they took her home to the Triple Spur.

As they pulled up alongside the ranch house Cree looked in the rearview mirror at Jake who held a sleeping Jenny in his arms. "As soon as we get Jenny comfortable, I'm going to the station and catch up with the Missouri and Oklahoma State Police to see if there's any word on locating Buck. I shouldn't be gone for more than a couple of hours but I'll have my cell phone with me in case something should happen. I've also been thinking maybe we should call in a few favors from 'The Team'. It would make me feel a lot better, knowing Jenny is well surrounded by men that we trust to keep her safe."

"Good idea," Jake agreed. "I'll start calling around while you're at the station and see what we can come up with. I know some of them have gotten out of the service since we left." Jake shifted Jenny in his arms. She was still bruised and sore but at least the swelling was gone. "Jenny, wake up, baby, we're home. I'm just going to carry you into the house, okay?"

Jenny slowly opened her eyes. She turned her head to look out the side window and gasped. "Oh, guys, it's beautiful. It's probably the prettiest house I've ever seen."

"Glad you like it," chuckled Cree. "We built it for you. Come in and see your new home, sweetheart." With that, Cree opened the front door and waited for Jake to carry Jenny up the fieldstone steps.

The house was set in a stand of trees. They'd taken a great amount of care to incorporate the house into the surroundings. Cree thought they'd done a good job with the stone and timber house. A wide front porch running the width of the house was

bordered by flowers and furnished with comfortable seating. The ceiling fans overhead created a breeze even on the hottest day. The entire back wall of the house was mostly glass in an effort to bring the beautiful views of timber and hills indoors. Cree was justifiably proud of his design. The interior was a combination of Jake's taste, Cree's taste and what they thought Jenny would need and want in a home.

Jake carried Jenny through the front door and stopped so they could get her first impression of the great room. Done in natural woods and leather furniture the room seemed cozy despite its size. The ceiling was twenty feet high with exposed beams. The hardwood floors were wide-planked and had been salvaged from an old barn. Dark red area rugs made the large room feel cozy. The river rock fireplace took up a good portion of one wall with book-filled shelves on either side. The furniture was soft, dark brown leather and deep enough to hold two big men. Jake saw Jenny's eyes light up with excitement. "What do you think, Jenny, will it do?"

Jenny beamed at him. "You have a wonderful home, Jake. Are you sure I won't be intruding if I stay here for a little while?" Jenny looked from Jake to Cree with uncertainty on her face.

Jake shook his head. "Jenny, don't you understand what we've been trying to tell you? This house was built for the three of us. It's never been completely a home until you came into it. And for the record, you won't be staying here for a little while. You'll be here forever if Cree and I have anything to say about it." Jake took a breath and tried to think of a way to get through to her. "The things we told you in the hospital were all true, baby, we love you and we want you here with us. That is if it's still what you want?" Jake probed.

"Oh, loves, of course it's what I want." Jenny looked at Jake, the uncertainty written all over his face. "I'm just afraid it's not safe to be around you with Buck still on the loose." She shook her head. "I'd rather die than to have anything happen to either of you. That's why I stayed away from you for the last five years." Jenny could see the love and anger coming from both men. She knew they would be angry with her but better angry than dead. She still hadn't told them the details of the past five years and wasn't sure if she would ever be able to. Some things were better left to herself. "I'm feeling kind of tired. Do you mind if I take a short nap?"

Jake squeezed Jenny. He wanted answers but didn't want to push too much too fast. "All right, baby, if you think this room is wonderful wait 'til you see our bedroom," Jake said with a devilish grin. He carried Jenny up the stairs to the end of the hall. Pushing open the door he carried her to the large California king sleigh bed. Depositing her in the center, he came down beside her. The mattress dipped again and he looked over to see Cree stretching out on the other side of Jenny.

Jenny took in the room's cool blue and white tones and thought she was in heaven. "This is the nicest guest room I've ever seen."

Cree and Jake exchanged glances. "Sweetheart, this isn't a guest room. This is the master suite built for the three of us." He slid up next to Jenny and put his arm around her. "You have your own bathroom through that door, Cree and mine is on the other

side. We each have our own walk-in closets. You see, Jenny, we built this house, this room for the three of us. Do you understand?" Jake looked into Jenny's eyes.

Looking suddenly uncomfortable, Jenny looked from Cree to Jake. "I'm not sure if you'll want me in here." Jenny was unsure of how much to tell them about her fears. "I will love you both until the day I die, but I don't know if I'll ever be able to actually make love to either or both of you. I don't like sex and doubt that will ever change."

Jake visibly swallowed. "Why don't you like sex Jenny?" The question had to be asked even though the thought of Jenny giving herself to another man made him see red. Jenny was meant for him and Cree. That's the way it was always supposed to be. Who had Jenny trusted enough to give them such a special gift? Or, oh my God, was it taken and not given? Jake looked at Cree. He could tell by the look in Cree's eyes that he was having very similar thoughts. He snuggled up to Jenny and continued.

"Jenny, please answer me, baby." Jake drew Jenny a little closer to his side and began stroking her hair.

"It's painful," she whispered into Jake's neck.

"No, baby, it doesn't have to be." How could he have let someone hurt her? "Who hurt you, Jenny? Please talk to us. Maybe we can help you get past this." Jake's body was as stiff as a board and thunder began booming in his head. He wanted a name even though he was afraid he already knew it.

"B-Buck. He...he forced me," Jenny said softly and began to cry in shame. She was so afraid that if Jake and Cree ever found out what Buck had done to her they would think her a dirty whore. The looks on both of their faces led her to believe she may've been right. She tried to sit up to get away from the disappointed faces of the two men she loved more than life.

Cree and Jake both held her tight, unwilling to let her flee. "Jenny," Cree said, trying to find a level of calm in his voice even though rage swept through his body. "Did you go to the police when Buck raped you?"

"No, Buck said if I told anyone he would find me and kill me and then he would find you and Jake and brag about what he'd done before he killed you both. I believed him, Cree. Heck, I still believe him. After I was healed enough to get away I left in the middle of the night and went to the only other place I thought I would be safe." Jenny looked at Cree trying to figure out how to tell him that not only had she deceived him but that his mother had helped. "Cree, please don't be angry with me but I went and stayed with your mother on the reservation. I begged her to never tell you that I was there. Naomi didn't agree with or understand my actions but I think she could see that if she told you I would've run away again. She kept me safe for another two and a half years until Buck got too close and I had to leave." Jenny took a long breath and waited for the fireworks to begin.

"I'll get back to you staying with my mother at a later date, but first I need to know when the rape first happened and how badly you were injured?" Cree slipped into sheriff mode out of self-preservation.

Jake was sure he already knew the when and the where of that particular question but he thought it was important for Jenny to talk to him and Cree about it. He closed his eyes and buried his face in Jenny's hair waiting for her to talk.

"The night almost five years ago that Buck threw you and Jake off the ranch. I was asleep after crying all afternoon when Buck kicked the door in. He was carrying something in his hand but I was too afraid to move. The look in his eyes told me that he was very drunk and very angry.

"He came over to the bed and pulled the covers off and then reached for the neck of my sleep shirt and ripped it down the center. I tried fighting him. I kicked and screamed but I was no match for Buck." Tears began to trickle down Jenny's face. "The next thing I felt was a blinding pain on my stomach. Looking down, I saw the branding iron in his hand. I looked Buck in the eye and asked him why. He looked at me with a cross between hatred and love and stated very firmly that I was his property and no one else's. He said he'd worked too many years to get me where he wanted me and no cocksucking bastards were going to take me away.

"He started grabbing me and pulling my underwear down, but by that time the pain was so bad I think I must have passed out. The next thing I knew I woke up and Buck was gone but my sheets had blood on them and I was very sore." Jenny began to cry, unable to go on.

Without thinking, Jake placed his hand on Jenny's stomach. He kissed her tear stained face and looked at Cree. Jake needed all the strength he could get from Cree at this moment. Cree, sensing Jake's struggle, leaned over and gave the man he loved a heartfelt kiss. The three of them held each other until Jenny wiped her eyes and smiled at them.

"Thank you both for not being angry with me." She lifted her face to Jake and gave him an incredibly passionate kiss. Jake's lips were so soft for a man's. It felt different than ever before. She began to feel funny all over. Not remembering the feelings swirling around in her mind and body, Jenny just held on for the ride. Jake seemed to sense her needs because he deepened the kiss. Fire caught between them and before she knew it Cree was also kissing her. Cree pulled her tighter into his arms and groaned, rubbing his erection against her thigh.

"Sweetheart, you have no idea how long we've wanted to do this. You're the sunshine in our world and always have been." Cree reached across Jenny and began rubbing Jake's butt. It had been a long time since they'd had the chance at intimacy. Jake groaned and looked at him through lowered lashes.

Jenny reached up to kiss Jake again, then looked over at Cree and gave him a sensual kiss. Cree's tongue rimmed Jenny's lips and they parted of their own volition. The kiss turned primal and Cree began pumping his tongue in and out of Jenny's mouth in a replica of lovemaking. Jake slowly placed his hand on Jenny's breast in hopes of getting her used to his intimate touch. Jenny flinched and it was then that he remembered the fresh brand on her right breast.

Jake stilled and removed his hand as if it had been burned. "Oh Jenny, I'm sorry. I got completely carried away. Are you all right? Did I hurt you, baby?"

"No, Jake, you didn't hurt me. It's just a little tender. You startled me more than anything, but I can't say it didn't feel good. Everything seems so new to me. Like I'm feeling it all for the first time," Jenny said in apparent amazement.

"You are feeling it for the first time, Jenny. This is making love with the people you love, not being forced by someone who's supposed to protect you." Jake began to stroke Jenny's hair. "Let Cree and me teach you what it means to express your love through physical intimacy. We'll go slowly and at the pace you set for yourself." Jake wanted nothing more than to go full steam ahead and undress both Jenny and Cree and show both of them how much he desired them, but, he also knew it would make Jenny shut down. He could be patient a little while longer as long as he knew he was working toward a lifetime of loving.

"Thank you, loves." Jenny needed some time alone to work through the feelings and information that had just transpired. "I really am getting tired now. Would you mind if we maybe practiced some more later, after I rest for a while?" Jenny could barely keep her eyes open.

"Rest, baby. Cree and I'll be here when you wake up." Jake rubbed her cheek until her eyes closed and her breathing slowed. Jake pointed to the hall and he and Cree slowly got up and made their way out there.

Cree grabbed Jake by the back of the neck and slammed him against the wall. Their mouths fused in a searing kiss meant to comfort and diffuse their rising anger and lust. Their bodies couldn't get close enough. Cree kissed Jake with all the love he had. Jake's body reacted to Cree's intensity and began rocking against the hard proof of Cree's desire. The kiss broke so both men could get enough oxygen into their bloodstream to continue with their bodily assaults on each other. Rubbing their erections on each other, both men went for the other's jeans. Jeans undone, Jake grabbed Cree's large cock and squeezed. Cree managed to slide his hand over the head of Jake's erection just as he erupted into Jake's hand. Cree began sliding his hand up and down over Jake's cock as Jake moaned and chewed on his neck. He reached down and fondled Jake's balls and that was all it took for Jake to follow suit. Leaning their foreheads together, the two shared a gentle kiss.

"I love you, cowboy." Cree looked at Jake and seemed to be weighing his words before speaking. "I hope we're doing the right thing by Jenny. I just can't imagine not having her with us but if it'll bring her pain, I can't do it. I would rather cut off my right arm than to hurt that woman again."

"I love you too, sheriff, and I think we're doing right by Jenny. She deserves love and, lord knows we have enough to give her. We'll just have to be patient for now. Jenny'll let us know when it's the right time for her."

Cree straightened his clothes. "I'm gonna clean up in one of the spare bedrooms. After that I'll head to the station and check on things but I won't be gone more than a



couple hours. I'll bring back some fried chicken from Mabel's for dinner, if that's okay." Cree gave Jake one last kiss and headed down the hall.

## Chapter Five

Jenny awoke as the sun was just starting to set. She looked around the spacious bedroom and found that she was alone. Gingerly, she rose from the bed and made her way downstairs. No one seemed to be in the house. Jenny walked through the great room to what she suspected was the kitchen. Walking into the bright and sunny room, she stood in awe.

The kitchen was a fantasy land for any serious cook. The wide-planked floors carried into the kitchen. The cabinets were white with black granite countertops. The walls were painted a sunny yellow that glowed with the added sunlight coming from a wall of windows. A fireplace with a built-in pizza oven took up the wall opposite the cabinets. Down the center ran an old-fashioned farm table with eight chairs. She retrieved a glass from the cupboard and opened the stainless steel industrial-sized refrigerator. She poured a glass of iced tea and drank half the glass, still standing in front of the open fridge. Filling her glass again, she decided to go out to the front porch and watch the sunset. Sitting on the big porch swing, Jenny smiled. How many evenings had she sat watching the sunset with Jake and Cree? They were her center growing up. Helen, Jenny's mother, never paid much attention to her, especially after her marriage to Buck. No one really paid any attention to her until the summer she turned twelve and went to live at the Double B.

Jenny remembered the first time she saw Buck Baker. Her mother had taken Jenny to a bar at the local hotel because she was unable to find a sitter. Jenny was sitting at a table eating chicken strips and her mother was off at the bar talking to some businessmen. Jenny was alone at the table when a man came and sat by her. He was huge and he had big muscles and kind light brown eyes. "Hi there, little one, my name's Buck," he'd said and smiled at her.

"My name is Jennifer but my friends call me Jenny," she'd replied, happy to have someone to talk to. "That's my mother at the bar. She had to bring me cuz no one would babysit me and she said she needed some grown-up time."

"Well, nice to meet you, Jenny. Does your daddy know you're here?"

"I don't have a daddy. It's just my mother and me." Jenny and the big man had caught her mother's attention. Helen, still a beautiful woman at only thirty, walked over to the table and sat very close to the big man.

"Hello, darling girl, are you having a nice time?" Helen had crooned at her daughter. "Hi, my name is Helen Barnes, and you are?"

"Buck, Buck Baker," he'd said and took her mother's hand and raised it to his mouth for a kiss. "I was just talking to your beautiful daughter. I must admit she caught

my eye as soon as I walked in, she's breathtaking." He'd seemed to think a minute and then added, "As breathtaking as her mother."

Jenny didn't really know what happened after that but two days later Buck flew them to Reno, Nevada, and her mom and Buck got married. Buck took them home with him to Oklahoma the next day.

Jenny fell in love with Jake on sight. His hair was a dark sable brown and his eyes were the color of amber, framed by unbelievably long black lashes. He stayed away from her for the first couple of weeks, always hanging around with his best friend Cree Sommers. Cree was a local boy from the Creek Indian Reservation. Cree was taller than Jake by a couple of inches but just as handsome. The two of them finally noticed her a couple weeks later. How could they not when she always seemed to follow them around? She guessed they must have felt sorry for her because they started actually including her in their daily activities around the ranch. All too soon her only friends were leaving her to join the Navy.

The years they were gone were the loneliest of her life. She couldn't wait to get home from school each day so she could write them a letter. Cree one day and Jake the next. Jenny poured her heart into the letters.

It was about three and a half years after they left that her mother started getting sick. No one could figure out what exactly was wrong with her. She took to bed and stayed there until she died.

Jenny knew she should have been more aware of the feelings Buck felt for her. She'd childishly thought his tight embraces and kisses on the cheek were his way of offering support for a teenage girl with a sick mother. At no time, until the day of her momma's funeral, did Jenny feel afraid of her stepfather.

When they'd returned to the house after her mother's funeral she'd gone immediately upstairs to her room to change her clothes. She'd just pulled off her dress when the door had opened and Buck had come into the room. The look he'd given her had made her uneasy and she'd quickly pulled the dress in front of her.

Buck had just looked at her and said, "No sense hiding from me any more, Jenny. You're eighteen now and a grown woman. You'll have to get used to being looked at with tits the size of yours."

"Was there something you needed, Buck?" Jenny asked in an uncertain tone.

"Yeah, there's a lot I'm needin', Jenny, but I came up to tell you the ladies from the church brought supper by so you don't have to worry about cookin'."

"All right, Buck, I'll be down shortly," Jenny said uncomfortably.

The next day Buck had caught Jenny in the barn cleaning out Moonbeam's stall. He had come up behind Jenny and put his hands on her breasts. Jenny spun around with fire in her eyes. "What do you think you're doing? You're my father, never touch me again or I'll leave the Double B and you'll never see me again."

The next thing she knew Buck had backhanded her across the face. His eyes had bored into hers and he'd screamed, "First of all, I'm not your father. I'm your stepfather

which means that we don't share any blood. Nothing says we can't be together in the biblical sense. And secondly, I've done too much to get you where I want ya. Don't even think about ever leaving me or ever threatening me again. You might just end up in the same place your momma's at." With that, Buck had stormed out of the barn. Moments later Jake and Cree had driven up and found her there.

Now as Jenny watched the sunset, she began thinking about Jake and Cree. What exactly was their relationship? She'd never asked but she always wondered. Jenny decided that she would have to take the initiative and ask one or both of them. No sooner had the thought gone through her head that she saw Jake coming back from the horse barn. She smiled at his lazy cowboy swagger. The man sure did look good in a pair of faded jeans.

Walking beside him was a sad-looking hound. "Who's your friend there, Jake?"

Jake climbed the porch steps and looked down at the dog. "Well, hello there, sleeping beauty. I hope you're feeling a little better." Jake went over and sat beside Jenny on the swing. He put his arm around her shoulders and leaned down to give her a soft kiss.

Leaning her head on Jake's shoulder, Jenny smiled. "I'm feeling much better, thank you."

Looking across at the hound asleep in his usual spot, Jake laughed. "That beast of burden is my friend Blue. I adopted him from the local shelter about two years ago. They were about to put him to sleep. I guess no one wanted a thirteen-year-old bloodhound but me." He looked at Jenny and smiled. "Cree's really not all that fond of him. Blue likes to get up on the furniture out here." Jake shrugged his shoulders. "I love him. He's good company when Cree's at the station."

Setting the porch swing in motion once again, Jenny looked out toward the pasture. She felt completely relaxed. It had been a very long time since she'd felt at peace, even if it was just for a few brief moments. "I was just sitting out here enjoying the sunset. There's nothing like watching the sun set over the land. It makes the whole pasture a delicate shade of pink." Jenny lifted her head off Jake's shoulder and looked into his warm amber eyes. "You have a beautiful ranch here, Jake. You should be very proud of yourself."

"I am." He nodded. "There's nothing like owning your own piece of the world to make a man feel good." Jake's eyes looked out over the pastures to the new horse barn and timber and stone bunkhouse.

Jenny took Jake's hand and ran her fingers along the bulging veins of his hand and arm. "Jake, can I ask you a question? If I'm out of line please just say so, okay?"

"Jenny, you can ask me anything. There's nothing that's off-limits between us as far as I'm concerned." Jake pulled her hand up for a kiss which then turned into a lick.

Jenny giggled. She was suddenly nervous about asking him about his sex life. The last thing Jenny wanted was to offend him in any way. "Jake what exactly is your relationship with Cree and how can I fit into your lives if you're gay?"

Jake chuckled, his eyes crinkling at the corners. "I wondered when we were going to get around to this discussion. Well, baby, it's like this." He pulled her hand to his heart and just held it there. "Cree and I are in love, but we're most especially in love with you."

Jake shook his head trying to come up with the right explanation. "You see, I've always loved Cree. We pretty much just had each other growin' up. Oh sure, we fooled around a little here and there. Most farm kids do I think, but it wasn't until we joined the Navy that we fell 'in love' with each other. As time went on and our feelings for you began to change, we realized that we wanted you with us. Cree and I didn't seem to be a complete family without you.

"That's when we called the Double B and talked to Rex Cotton and were told you no longer lived there and no one knew where you'd gone. I asked him how long you'd been gone and was floored when he told me almost two years. I asked him if he knew anything about the letters that were returned to me unopened and he said that Buck took care of all the mail in and out of the ranch.

"We hired private investigators to help us find you but never had any luck. I honestly think that's why Cree became sheriff once we moved to New Mexico, so he could continue to use legal resources to search for you." Jake stopped talking and looked deeply into Jenny's eyes. "Jenny, you have to believe we never would have given up looking for you." He kissed the top of her head and looked around the ranch yard.

"We built this ranch for the three of us. We're hoping someday you'll be comfortable enough to marry us." At Jenny's look of confusion he decided he'd better clarify. "We know the law only recognizes one husband but we were hoping we could also have a ceremony under the stars that would unite the three of us."

Jenny was crying by the time Jake finished his explanation. "Oh Jake, I didn't mean to cause you and Cree so much trouble." She stroked his chest as she talked. "I thought the only way to keep you safe would be to disappear." Jenny knew she had been wrong to stay away from Jake and Cree so long. "I hope that I can eventually become the woman you want me to be for the two of you. It may take a little time but please don't ever doubt how much I love you both. This is your home and I want to make sure you don't change things between you and Cree because I'm here. The only way I'll ever feel comfortable with the three of us is if I know that you and Cree aren't suffering while waiting for me. Does that make sense to you?"

"That makes perfect sense to me, baby." Jake gave her another kiss. This time the kiss went a little deeper. When Jake wrapped his arms around Jenny, she seemed to breathe a sigh of relief. Jake touched her lips with his tongue and she parted for him. The kiss became hungry. He couldn't get close enough. He wanted to crawl inside her body, so he pulled Jenny onto his lap. Their tongues dueled as Jake ran his fingers through her waist-length hair.

"Is this a private party or can anyone join in?" Cree said, coming up the steps with a couple of takeout bags in his hands. The sight that greeted him warmed his heart and his libido.

"Not just anyone but you can, sheriff." Jake grinned, breaking the heated kiss with Jenny.

Cree leaned over and gave them both long, deep kisses. "Well, as much as I'd like to continue, I say we'd better eat before our dinner gets cold."

## Chapter Six

Over dinner, Cree informed them that the police still had nothing on Buck's whereabouts. "Don't worry, Jenny, no one is giving up the search. Since it may take a while Jake and I have decided to call in a few Seal buddies to help protect the ranch. According to Jake they should start straggling in over the next couple days." Cree reached across the table and took Jenny's hand in his. "I want you to know you can trust any man on this ranch to treat you with the respect you deserve."

"Do we really need outside people coming in, Cree? What about all the ranch hands already on the Triple Spur?" Jenny asked.

Jake answered for Cree. "The ranch hands are all good men, every one of them, Jenny. We just need a few trained friends around to concentrate solely on making sure you stay safe. Ranch hands can't always be around if they still have jobs to do. Besides they're trained for taking care of horses and cattle, not for stopping psychotic assholes."

They finished dinner and played a couple hands of cards while discussing the upcoming week. "Cree will have to go to the station every day but I'll be here along with the ranch hands and the four guys that are coming in to town. You should be absolutely safe around the house but make sure you aren't alone outside even though you're on the ranch. I don't want to take any chances," Jake stated.

They finished up downstairs and all three went up to the master suite. "Um, would you rather I slept in a guest room so that you two can be alone?" Jenny asked shyly.

"Hell no!" Jake spun around to face her. Realizing he had startled her, Jake softened his voice. "I don't want you out of my sight, baby. Cree and I'd like a chance to hold you and be with you. We won't pressure you, but we want you to get more comfortable with us and the way to do that is by including you not excluding you," Jake declared.

"All right. I'd like that very much. It's been a long time since I've had a chance to sleep in relative safety. I usually sleep with one eye open. It may take a while to get used to sleeping with someone else though. I've never done it before." With that, Jenny headed for her bathroom to take a quick shower before bed. She stopped and turned around looking at both of them sheepishly. "Um, do either of you have a shirt I could borrow to sleep in?"

"Sure, sweetheart, I have a shirt you can have. Although I must admit I'd prefer you slept in nothing like Jake and I do." Cree grinned and wagged his eyebrows in a lecherous gesture.

"Please give me time, loves. I'm not ready to expose either of you to the mess of scars my body has become," Jenny confessed.

Walking into her bathroom was a pleasure. Done in pink and white marble, it was a bathroom fit for a princess. A chaise lounge sat in one corner along with a makeup vanity and pretty pink stool. A walk-in shower big enough for three and a whirlpool bath big enough for six sat on the other side of the large bathroom. Jenny could tell Jake and Cree spared no expense on her private space.

Taking off her clothes, Jenny noticed herself in the large mirror over the sink. Healing wounds littered her stomach. Like crosshatches, one for every time Jenny had refused to denounce her love for Cree and Jake.

Running her finger over the healed brand on her stomach, Jenny tried to look at herself the way a man would see her. She shook her head—no, that wasn't right—the way Cree and Jake would see her. The brand was pretty small, only one and a half inches by two inches, but the skin was raised and puckered a bit. If it had been on either Cree or Jake, would it make her sick? The answer came to her immediately. "No," she said out loud.

Jenny took her time in the shower thinking about everything that had happened in the last few days. "Don't be such a scaredy cat, Jenny," she admonished herself. She knew the two men in the other room would be with her forever if that was her choice. Jenny decided to push herself to get beyond her fear of intimacy. Besides, everything she had done with her two loves thus far had felt right and absolutely fantastic.

With her new outlook in place Jenny got out of the shower and dried off. She still had some self doubts and dressed in the extremely large flannel shirt Cree had given her. It went past her knees and she had to roll up the sleeves but at least she felt well covered. She turned the bathroom light off and made her way to the big bed.

Jake and Cree were already in it and in a heated embrace it seemed. Jenny stood beside the bed not quite sure if she should interrupt them. Their hands seemed to be all over each other petting and pulling. The kissing was like nothing she had ever witnessed. Jake and Cree looked like they were actually chewing on each other's lips and neck. Their bodies rubbed together and moans filled the room. It was the most erotic thing she'd ever seen. She must have made a noise because the men stopped what they were doing. "Darn!"

Jake glanced up and smiled. "Get on in here, baby." He pulled the covers back in place and climbed to the end of the bed so Jenny could crawl into the middle between him and Cree. Jake crawled back up to Jenny's side. Stretching his arm across Jenny, Jake gave Cree's abdomen an affectionate rub then a grazing brush to Cree's erection and sighed. He turned on his side to face Jenny and kissed her tenderly. "Goodnight, my loves, thank you both for completing my world."

Jenny's heart warmed. These two men were nothing like Buck. They would never hurt her, so why shouldn't she reach for all the love life was finally offering her. Jenny made her decision and turned her back to Jake's front and scooted back against him spoon fashion. She pulled on Cree's arm, silently telling him it was okay to move closer. Both men reacted to her silent commands. Jake began kissing the back of her neck as Cree took her mouth in a lustful open-mouth kiss. The feelings these two men stirred in



her were like nothing she had ever thought possible. Jake's hands came to rest on the front of her shirt, silently asking permission to continue. Jenny covered his hand and moaned. Jake took that as a yes and began unbuttoning her shirt. Cree got into the act, while still devouring her mouth and started from her bottom buttons, working his way up. Very soon her shirt was totally open and she felt very exposed. She made a small squeaking noise but Jake was there to reassure her.

"It's okay, baby." He ran his hand down the front of her shirt. "I think it might be best if Cree turned the light on so you can see for yourself who is making love to you. You'll be able to see our faces and know that nothing about you could ever disgust us." With that, Jake turned Jenny onto her back while Cree turned on the small bedside lamp.

Jake slowly separated the front of the shirt, while keeping an eye on Jenny's face, searching for any signs of distress. What he saw when he looked down threatened to break him in two. Jenny's chest and abdomen looked like a roadmap of scars and brands. Even though the wounds were not completely healed yet, the stitches had been removed at the hospital and they were healing as well as could be expected. Knowing his reaction to the sight would directly reflect on their future, he lowered his head and began softly kissing each scar.

"I'm so sorry, baby. If I could take the pain away and pull it into myself I would in a heartbeat." Jake ran his tongue along one incredibly long pink puckered area of skin. "Please tell me if I hurt you or if you are uncomfortable with anything we do, okay?" Jake looked into her eyes once more. When he saw the tears pooling in her eyes he started to get worried that he had already hurt her. He stopped and held her face in his hands. "Jenny, you'll be honest with us, won't you?"

Jenny nodded her head. "Yes, Jake. I'm not crying because of pain. I'm crying because of the love and acceptance I'm experiencing right now." Jenny tried to think of a way to make him understand the roller coaster of emotions she was going through. When Jake kissed her chest for the first time and her nipples pebbled, she knew that nothing these two men did to her would feel wrong. She would never feel like a whore when it came to making love with Cree and Jake. "I think I'm ready to continue. I want to learn everything you and Cree can teach me about my own body's desires as well as what I can do for you both. I want you both to feel just as good as I do."

A groan sounded from the other side of Jenny and Cree took her mouth in a blistering kiss. "God, you amaze me, sweetheart. To trust me and Jake to the extent you do after everything you've been through is a testament to your love. I hope that in time you can forgive us for failing to keep you safe so long ago. We should've never left you at the Double B that night and we'll spend the rest of our lives regretting our decision."

Jenny put her fingers to Cree's lips. "Shh, don't talk like that. No one could have known that Buck would go crazy. Let's just move forward with our lives."

"I love you, Jenny." With those words, Cree began kissing Jenny again at full force, wanting to climb inside her body. He lowered his hand and began stroking her torso in tandem with the caresses Jake was already bestowing on her. Their hands traveled up

and down, always aware of the bandage on her right breast, where the most recent brand was. When Jenny arched into their hands, trying to get closer to the heat in their palms, Cree knew she was ready for more.

As Jake lowered his lips to the raspberry-tipped nipple of her left breast, Cree began wandering down her torso to the black patch of her womanhood. Jenny moaned and began moving restlessly on the bed. Cree found the heart of her and began to probe with a soft but sure touch. Jake reached down and subtly spread her legs farther apart. Jake continued the assault on her breast with teasing nips and licks as his fingers worked in cooperation with Cree's to bring her to heights she had never known. Cree found her clit plumped and ready. He began drawing her moisture up from her channel to lubricate the area around her clit. He drew circles around her clit with tiny flicks to the hard nub thrown in. Jake probed her heated entrance with his finger as Cree assaulted her clit. Jenny's moans were the best aphrodisiac they had ever known. Things escalated quickly and Cree left Jenny's mouth to move down to the hard nub demanding his taste. Jake continued to move his finger within her helping to prepare her for their imminent joining. One finger became two and Jenny's arousal kicked up a notch. Jenny's breath panted out of her body between moans of pure satisfaction.

"Oh God, *Oh God, OH GOD!*" she screamed as her orgasm took her for the full ride. Her breathing slowly returned to normal. When she looked down her body, two pairs of eyes looked up at her in smug satisfaction. "Wow, can we do that again?"

Cree and Jake looked at each other and started laughing. Their laughing increased to belly rolls as their tension slid away. Jake withdrew his fingers from inside Jenny and slowly brought them to his mouth. Licking them clean, his eyebrows raised. "Mmm, better than maple syrup." For someone known around the area as having a major thing for pancakes with hot maple syrup it was quite a compliment.

Cree, not wanting to feel left out, went straight to the source and pierced his tongue into Jenny's channel. Jenny's sensitized body registered the new invasion in another mind-blowing climax. Closing her eyes, Jenny's exhausted body slipped into sleep.

Jake reached down to Cree and grabbed him by the hair, pulling him up and across to his side of the bed. "Come here, sexy." Jake's mouth slammed into Cree's, thrusting his tongue into the moist depths as if he was dying of thirst. Jake's hands traveled down Cree's body to the waiting erection. Cree broke the kiss and began biting and licking Jake's nipples. Jake started rubbing against Cree's erection but he wanted to be closer. "I need you in me, sheriff."

Cree reached immediately to the bedside table and retrieved the bottle of lube. Kissing Jake, Cree squirted a generous amount of lube on his fingers and reached down to find Jake's puckered hole.

"Oh God...yes...yes, that feels so good, sheriff. It's been too damned long."

Cree started rimming Jake's hole with his lubed fingers and then pushed one, then two inside Jake. Using a scissor action with his fingers, he quickly stretched Jake out preparing him for the invasion of Cree's rock-hard cock. Cree's breathing was so fast he

was afraid he'd pass out before he could get inside Jake. Jake spread his legs farther apart and began begging Cree to hurry.

"Now...God, now please."

Cree lined up his cock with Jake's ass and plunged in to the hilt. He liked making love to Jake this way, face-to-face. They both moaned a sigh of relief. Cree couldn't go slowly. It had been too long since he'd been with Jake. He slammed their bodies together in a force that drove them to the top of the bed. Jake grabbed the headboard so they wouldn't hit their heads. Thrust after thrust, there was no stopping Cree. "Oh, cowboy... I'm gonna."

"Me too, gonna."

"Uhhh!" Cree thought his head was going to blow off. He reached down and took Jake's cock in his hand and began pumping it. He gave Jake another blistering kiss and Jake's cum spurted up between their bodies.

Cree collapsed between Jake's spread legs with his head resting on Jake's chest.

"Too long, Cree. It's been way too long," Jake's head landed back onto the pillow. "Let's get cleaned up and get some shuteye. I have a feeling we're going to be busy for the next couple days."

\* \* \* \* \*

Jenny tossed her head from side to side, dreaming.

*Buck was there hiding behind her car when she got off work. She thought she'd run far enough this time. He grabbed her from behind and put something over her mouth. Jenny woke up in a dark room that smelled like dirt and mildew. Where was she? She remembered Buck and sat up. Her head began to spin and reached a hand out to steady herself. He was there in the dark, she could hear him breathing. A light blinded her, was that a lantern? Naked, Buck stalked toward her with a knife. "NO, BUCK!" Jenny tried to fight him off but he was so much stronger. He tied her hands and feet to the bedposts. Sitting on the bed beside her, Buck's face looked totally void of sanity. "Here's the way it's going to be, Jenny. I'm going to ask you a question and every time you don't give me the answer I'm looking for you'll get a cut. I'll come back every four hours and ask you the same question again. If you still can't give me the answer I want I'll cut you again. We'll continue the routine until you've learned your lesson. In the end, I'll be the only man you love. Got it, Jenny? Now, tell me who you love?" Jenny thrashed out at him but the ropes holding her wrists and ankles were too tight. "I love Jake and Cree," Jenny shouted at him. "Wrong answer, my sweet." Jenny felt the cold steel of the knife against her skin and then the warm trickle of blood as the knife cut into her flesh.*

"No...no...Buck...Stop..."

"Wake up, baby, it's all right, you're safe now. Come on, Jenny, open your eyes for me."

Jenny gasped and sat up in bed. She turned her head around the room in confusion. Cree reached over and turned on the lamp. "Where...what happened?"

Jake and Cree enveloped her in a tight embrace, lowering her back until her head hit the pillow. Jake smoothed the hair out of her eyes. "It's okay, baby, it was just a nightmare. You're safe. No one is going to get past us baby." Jake continued to soothe her with his deep bass voice.

Wrapping his arms even tighter around her, Cree leaned in and kissed the tears from her cheeks. "Can you talk about the dream, sweetheart? Sometimes bringing evil into the light vanquishes it." He rubbed her arms and waited patiently.

Licking her lips, Jenny fought to calm herself down. "Buck t...tied me to a bed in a basement in some abandoned house out in the country. He had a knife. He...he would come into the room every four hours and ask the same question over and over. If I didn't give him the answer he wanted he would cut me with the knife and then leave the room for another four hours. It went on and on for two days." Jenny took a breath and wiped her tears. "Finally, at the end of the second day I was too weak to answer him at all. Buck was so angry that I'd failed his test that he brought in the same branding iron he'd used before and put it to my breast. I think Buck thought I was going to die. He became enraged and hit me in the head with the iron. The next thing I remember was waking up on the road. He must have dumped me on the side of the road like a bag of trash." Jenny sobbed into Cree's chest.

Cree kissed the top of Jenny's head and rubbed her back. "What question did he ask you?"

Closing her eyes, Jenny took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. She opened her eyes and looked from Cree to Jake. "He wanted to know who I loved. Every time I said your names he cut me."

Cree closed his own eyes and tried to breathe through the rage that rolled through him. Jake leaned over and kissed Jenny softly. "Go back to sleep, baby. I'm just going to go check on one of the mares that's about to foal." Jake got up and slipped his jeans on, closing the door softly behind him.

Jenny looked at Cree with fresh tears in her eyes. "Did I do something wrong? Is Jake mad at me for what I said?"

Cree was quick to reassure her. "No, sweetheart, you've done absolutely nothing wrong. You remained true to your love for us. Hell, most men I know wouldn't have been that strong without breaking first." Cree kissed her hair and ran his hands up and down her arms soothing her. "Jake just needs a little time to digest everything you told him. Don't forget Buck's his father. Believe me, it takes a lot out of a person to hate their own father. He'll be fine in the morning, sweetheart. Now close your eyes and go to sleep. After you're asleep I'll go and check on Jake."

Thirty minutes later Cree entered the horse barn. He found Jake curled up in the corner by the mare's stall. Jake's sobs broke Cree's heart. To see such a strong man break down and cry like a baby was almost more than he could stand.

Kneeling beside him, Cree put his hand slowly around Jake's neck and pulled him close. Jake grabbed on to Cree like a lifeline. "It's okay, cowboy. I've got ya now." Cree sat on the dirt and pulled Jake even closer.

Jake couldn't control his emotions. Every time he began to talk nothing would come out but more sobbing. Finally, after a good fifteen minutes Jake leaned back and looked at Cree. "Why? How can anyone deserve to be loved that much? I don't think I deserve her, Cree. For so many years I put my own wants and needs first. Now I find out that Jenny paid the price for my own selfishness. How can she still love us?"

Cree looked into Jake's eyes. He knew Jake was looking to him for answers. "Because she's our Jenny. There is no other person on earth like her. Why don't we just thank God that she finds us worthy." He kissed Jake and hugged him tighter. "Let's both make sure we spend the rest of our lives living up to that kind of love, okay?"

Wiping his eyes, Jake nodded. "Yeah, why don't we do that?" Jake got up and pulled on Cree's hand. "Come on, sheriff. Let's go wrap Jenny in her very own security blanket while she sleeps."

## Chapter Seven

Jenny opened her eyes the next morning to sunlight streaming through the windows and two gorgeous men in bed with her. She took a minute to study her loves. Jenny had never really looked at a naked man besides in a magazine she saw once. Buck didn't count because he never got fully naked and she was too busy crying to see anything. Now though, she had the time and the opportunity to look her fill. Both men were gorgeous, both tanned and muscled. Jenny noticed that neither one had hair on his groin. That was strange. As she studied the differences between the two cocks, she decided that both were going to be way, way too big for her. Cree's cock had to be at least eight and a half inches long with a rather large circumference. Jake's was a little shorter than Cree's but he definitely had him beat in circumference. There was no way she would even be able to get her hand around that fat beast. Jenny was in her own little world studying the two cocks in front her when all the sudden they both began to grow. "Oh my," Jenny said, fascinated at the changes being made before her eyes.

"See something you like, sweetheart?" Cree grinned down at her.

Embarrassed by getting caught looking, Jenny looked up at Cree. "Uh...I'm sorry. I've never really looked at a real live one. I hope you don't mind?"

"As you can see, I don't mind at all and from the looks of it Jake doesn't seem to mind either," Cree chuckled.

"Can I ask you a question?" At Jake's nod she continued. "Why don't either of you have any hair down there?"

"We have our groin area waxed. It enhances our pleasure. Don't you like it?" Jake suddenly looked a little worried.

"No, I mean, yes, I do like it. It looks so soft and smooth. Can I feel it?" Jenny asked shyly.

"Baby, I would love for you to feel it...lick it...and nibble it...whatever you'd like to do to it but I think right now I hear a car coming up the drive," Jake groaned.

"Later you can take us both for a test run." Cree reached down and hauled her up for a morning kiss. He smacked her lightly on the bottom and climbed out of bed. "Up and at 'em, lazybones. That means you too, Jake."

While Jenny and Jake were dressing, Cree went downstairs to see who had arrived. It was Remy Boudreaux, the "Crazy Cajun", and Ben Thomas, both ex-Seals and good friends. Remy was living down in Key West now. Cree didn't know about Ben, he'd heard that he'd become a mercenary after retiring five years ago. Ben was at least ten years older than Jake and Cree.

"Hey there, long time no see," Cree greeted his old friends. The men shook hands and sat down at the kitchen table. "I'm getting ready to make up some pancakes. Could I interest either of you in some breakfast?"

"No thanks, Cree. We ate in town at Mabel's before coming out here. We both could use some coffee though." Ben flashed his white teeth and reached down to pet Blue.

"Comin' up. Blue, you'd better get out to the porch where you belong." Cree opened the screen door and let the dog out. "And stay off the furniture." Cree started making coffee while the griddle heated for the pancakes. "So did Jake fill both of you in on why we need your help?"

"Jake say yer honeychile in trouble," Remy returned. "Tell me and Ben what do now."

"Before Jake and Jenny come down, let me fill you in on Jake's crazy daddy. It seems Buck has been torturing our Jenny. It started five years ago but she managed to get away from him and then he found her again a couple weeks ago. We didn't know until recently but Buck claims to be in love with Jenny. The first time he attacked her he branded her with the Double BB logo and raped her." Cree took a drink of his coffee hoping his voice would return to normal.

"She ran away and managed to stay one step ahead of him until he found her again just recently. He did the same thing this time. Raped and branded her but this time he got creative with a knife to her chest and damn near killed her. Put our poor Jenny in a coma."

Cree emptied his cup and got up to pour himself some more. "Buck's under some delusion that she's his property and can do whatever he wants to her. I don't think I need to tell you how much Jake and I love Jenny. Hell, you guys have heard us talk about her for the last ten years. The police have been searching for the bastard but haven't tracked him down yet. I have my department helping with the search locally just to make sure every one is watching out for him. What I need from the two of you is to stick close to the house and keep Jenny safe. We've got ranch hands all over the damn place but they've got their own work to do. I'll be gone most days at the sheriff's station. We've told Jenny not to go out of the house unless she has an escort. That's where you two will come in. Sound good?"

Both men nodded their agreement as Jake and Jenny came into the room arm in arm.

"Hey, guys, I'd like to introduce you to the love of my and Cree's life. This is Miss Jenny Barnes. Jenny, these two rascals are Remy Boudreaux—don't worry if you can't understand him, he's Cajun no one can understand him—and this tall bald guy is Ben Thomas."

Jenny held out her hand to both men. "Thank you both for putting your lives on hold to come to my aid. I tried to tell Cree and Jake that if Buck wants me he'll find a way but they think you two can help keep me safe." Jenny smiled at the two men. *What does the Navy feed these men?* she thought.

Remy was every bit as big as Jake and Cree. He was gorgeous, with overly long black curly hair, deep green eyes and naturally tanned skin. Ben was older than the rest of the men. He was a giant, standing at least six-feet, seven-inches. The muscles in his arms and chest strained his black t-shirt. His eyes were a steel gray and not a single hair was present on his shiny head. He looked tougher than Mr. Clean. He even had the small gold hoop earring.

Ben took Jenny's hand and placed a kiss on it. "Think nothing of it, ma'am. Cree and Jake have talked about you for so many years we feel like you're part of the family. Family sticks together no matter what in the Seals."

"Weh," seconded Remy.

Jenny looked at Cree in confusion at Remy's reply.

Cree laughed. "That means 'Yes' to this crazy Cajun. Remy, if you want Jenny to be able to understand, you speak English."

"Okay, boss man." Remy grinned, also bending over to place a kiss on Jenny's hand.

After breakfast, Cree left for the sheriff's station and Jake went out to the horse barn to give out the day's duties to the hands.

Jenny cleaned the kitchen then wandered around the house. The house had five bedrooms. She wondered if they were all guest rooms or if Jake and Cree were hoping to fill them up with children. Jenny hadn't really thought about children. She wasn't sure if she would make a good mother, but she was positive both Jake and Cree would be excellent fathers and role models. Jenny began to wonder what they would tell their children about the relationship the three of them had. Would they be honest about it and "let the chips fall where they may"? Yes, she decided. She wasn't in the least bit ashamed of loving two men.

A couple hours later Jenny began to get really bored. Looking out the window she saw a hot tub outside the French doors leading from the family room. The hot tub had a privacy fence on the other side of it, so she wouldn't have to worry about anyone outside seeing her. Ben was working on the computer in Jake's office and Remy was taking a nap on the sofa. Slowly, Jenny opened the doors to go outside. She didn't have a suit but no one would be able to see her. She grabbed a towel from the little rack just inside the door. Once outside, Jenny peeled off her shirt and shorts and left on her panties. Slowly lowering herself in the water, Jenny let out a relaxed sigh. God, this felt good on her sore muscles. She must have dozed off because the next thing she knew she heard Remy open the door and call her name.

"Honeychile, don't you know better than to be out here by yourself?"

Startled, Jenny sprang up out of the water and grabbed for her towel. When she realized that she had just exposed herself to Remy, she spun around and put her back to him.

Remy swore, "What that *bon rien* do to you, honeychile? I never saw the likes of it. Dat bastard better hope de cops find him before any of us do. Shor nuff!"



Jenny quickly put her clothes on after a quick dry off and tried to hurry past Remy. "I'm sorry. I didn't think anyone would see me out here. I won't do it again."

Remy reached out and gently stopped her progress. "Do not fret yer pretty head, we'll get de bastard." With that, he let Jenny flee into the house.

Late in the afternoon, Jenny began fixing a big dinner for her loves and her protectors. She decided on pot roast, potatoes, carrots and homemade rolls.

At five o'clock, she was just taking the roast out of the oven when two arms circled her. Jenny gasped and nearly dropped the hot pan.

"Whoa," Cree cried, helping her to regain balance of the pan. He reached over and put it on the table. "I'm sorry if I startled you, sweetheart. I've been thinking all day about getting you back into my arms and I guess I just made a bad decision with the whole 'grab you from behind' thing. Forgive me?" he asked sheepishly.

Jenny turned around and put her arms around Cree's neck. She leaned in and ran her tongue over his lips. "It's fine, Cree. I've missed you too."

Cree smiled and held her tighter. Leaning in, he took her mouth in a provocative kiss. The kiss escalated into a tongue bath on the side of Jenny's face and neck. Cree licked and sucked on her neck while his hands mapped out her stomach and breasts. He put his hands around her waist and lifted her onto the counter.

Jenny spread her legs so Cree could get closer. She took a chance and went with her emotions and began rubbing her mound against the large, hard bulge in his jeans. She was so caught up in her feelings she wasn't even aware that Cree had unbuttoned her blouse. His tongue began traveling down her neck to her breast. Cree reached her bra and pulled her overly large breasts out and began suckling. Jenny moaned and began panting and begging—for what, she wasn't sure. "Please."

Cree's hand came up to rub against the crotch of her denim shorts. Moving back and forth across her hard nub, Cree moaned. "Oh God, sweetheart, you feel so good. If we weren't in the kitchen I'd take these shorts off and bury my face in your sweet pussy."

That seemed to snap Jenny out of her fog, just as she heard the kitchen door shut. She looked over and saw Jake standing there with lust in his eyes.

"That's the prettiest picture I've ever seen in my life. As much as I'd like to join you, I guess I'll have to just settle for a kiss because I hear Ben and Remy headed this way." Jake came over to Jenny and Cree and gave them both big wet kisses. He couldn't resist and bent and took Jenny's nipple into his mouth for a quick suck. "Okay, I'm officially horny now, thanks, lovers."

Jenny giggled and began righting her clothes. She was just being lifted off the counter when Ben and Remy walked in with knowing grins on their faces. "All set for dinner?" Remy smiled with a quick grin at Jake and Cree.

After dinner, Jake took Jenny's hand. "The peanut gallery can do the dishes. I have a surprise for you and by the sound of it, it's here. Come on." With that, Jake pulled her up from the table and led her outside.

From the porch she could see a bright red king-cab pickup pulling a horse trailer coming down the drive. "Who is it, Jake?"

"That, my dear, is the rest of the cavalry but they also brought a surprise for you that I asked them to stop and pick up for me."

The truck stopped in front of the house and two large men got out. "Man, they grow them big in the Navy," she murmured to herself. The men came up the porch steps and shook hands with Jake and Cree, who had joined them. The first man, tall and gorgeous with military short brown hair introduced himself as Gabe Whitlock. The second man seemed hard as stone and very wary of his surroundings. He was Latin, with the dark black hair and skin to go with it. His eyes were deep brown pools of distrust.

He reached out to take Jenny's hand. "*Buongiorno*. I'm Niccolo Bellinzoni, nice to finally meet you, Jenny." Even with his aloof manner his hand was warm and hard. A tingle went up her arm, surprising her.

"Very nice to meet you both. I'm very grateful for your help." Jenny looked past the men at the horse trailer and then back at Jake. "Jake did you say you had a surprise for me?"

Jake chuckled and put his arm around Jenny. "You never could wait to open your presents." He bent down and brushed a kiss across her lips. "Well, come on then, let's go see what Santa Gabe brought ya." He led Jenny to the horse trailer. "I figured since this was to be your home you might be able to use this old nag."

"Moonbeam!" Jenny's face lit up as she rushed to open the trailer gate to get to her beloved pure white mare. "Oh Jake, I can't believe you did this. I thought I'd never see her again. How did you manage to get her?"

"Easy. I called and talked to Cotton over at the Double B. I informed him of what was going on with you and told him in no uncertain terms that one of our friends would be by to pick up Moonbeam. Cotton was happy to oblige and said to tell you he was thinking about you."

Jenny led Moonbeam to the barn with Jake and Cree in tow. "Can I ride her in the morning? I know I'll need guards but surely one of those men in the house can ride."

"It just so happens that both Gabe and Ben are good horsemen but I'll go with you. You can take your pick as to which of the two you want to accompany us."

## Chapter Eight

The next day by sunup, Jenny was riding through the pasture with Jake on one side and Ben on the other. She had to pick Ben because he'd been cooped up in the house longer than Gabe. The morning was beautiful. The sun just coming up was slowly burning the morning fog off the hills. The wildflowers were in full bloom and she couldn't remember ever being happier. "This is just what the doctor ordered, Jake. I feel totally free on the back of Moonbeam. I'm glad I've kept up on my horseback riding otherwise I'd be getting saddle sore by now."

"Good to hear you've been keeping your hand in the horse business. I could sure use your expertise on the Triple Spur. Besides it'll be nice having you with me all day." Jake brought his horse, Sergeant, closer to Jenny so he could lean down and kiss her. The kiss reminded him of last night. God, he was getting hard just thinking about it. Jenny had come alive in their arms. She had sucked and licked both him and Cree to completion. A shiver raced up his spine. He dropped his hand to his cock and gave it a good thump. No way could he stay on horse back for long with a steel pole in his jeans.

Jake looked over at Ben. "Doin' okay, Ben?"

Ben looked like a man at peace with himself. "This is great, Jake. It's been too long since I've felt like this. I don't suppose there are any ranches around here for sale? I've been thinking about starting up my own spread. I've never owned my own place but I've done my share of working them in my younger days."

"You know, I think the old Crawford place is for sale. It's only about ten miles from here. You could buy it and we could be neighbors. It has a real nice setup. A two-story farmhouse with barn and about a thousand acres. No bunkhouse though, so you'd either have to build one or plan to do all the work yourself. I'm not saying the place doesn't need a few repairs but the bones are good. I can put a call in to Kate Crawford to see if she's still going to sell. Sad story, Kate's folks died in a car accident five or six years ago. Kate's an only child so the ranch and mortgage all went to her. Poor Kate loves the ranch but she knows she can't run it by herself. I heard some strange things have been going on over there. Might work in your favor though. I'm sure Kate's ready to be rid of all the headaches."

"Give her a call, if you would, and when this mess is over I'd like to take a look."

They rode through the east valley headed toward the creek. Suddenly, the hairs on the back of Jake's neck stood up. Jake looked around, watching the hills. "Ben, keep a look out. Something isn't right."

"I've got the same feeling, Jake."

"Jenny, head Moonbeam over to those trees as fast as you can. When you get there, get off and hide behind the biggest tree you can find and wait for one of us to come and

find you. I love you, baby, now go." Jake slapped Moonbeam on the rump and the horse took off at a full run.

Just as Jenny took off shots were heard and the dirt around them felt the brunt of the bullets. "Split up!" Jake yelled. Drawing his rifle from the scabbard he starting firing into the hills where the shots were coming from. Ben joined in, firing just to the left and then just to the right of where Jake was firing. When the gunshots died off Jake looked around, trying to figure out what in the hell was going on. That's when he saw it. Moonbeam and Jenny were both lying on the ground about a hundred yards away. The breath left Jake's body and he was temporarily paralyzed. Ben took in the scene and raced past Jake to get to Jenny. Jake shook himself and followed Ben. Ben had just gotten to Jenny when Jake jumped off his horse. "So much blood. Oh God, there's so much blood. Jenny...oh God...Jenny, baby." Jake grabbed for her.

"Jake, I think the blood's coming from the horse not Jenny," Ben surmised.

Jake ran his hands all over Jenny's body searching for bullet holes. When none were found, he lifted Jenny into his arms and turned toward Ben. "Go up into the hills and see if you can find that bastard. If you shoot him, well, I guess that might be the easiest way out for him because if I ever catch him I won't be as humane."

Ben nodded, saying nothing and rode off toward the hills. Jake kissed Jenny's forehead. "Baby, wake up. I'm here and I'll get you home." He looked over at Moonbeam who was covered in blood. It was obvious the horse was already dead. Jake lifted Jenny and out of pure determination lifted them both up onto Sergeant. Riding for home, Jake took in Jenny's pale complexion. She was so still in his arms, he thought he might die before he ever got her back to the ranch.

Remy saw Jake ride in hard from the pasture with Jenny in his arms. "Not good," he said to himself as he took off toward the barn. He dialed Cree's cell as he ran. "Cree, get home now, something's happened to Jenny. Jake just rode up with her in his arms like the fires of hell were chasin' 'em." Remy disconnected before Cree could say a word. He made it to the barn just as Jake pulled to a stop.

Jake handed Jenny to Remy and hollered for Gabe to bring the truck around to the barn. "Call Cree and have him meet us at Doc Nelson's office in town." Jake knew she probably needed a hospital but the closest one was over seventy miles away.

Remy handed Jenny back to Jake once he was seated in the truck. "Gabe'll drive. What can I do, Jake?"

"I know you aren't used to riding a horse so get the four-wheeler out of the shed and go just past the east valley. Up in those hills to your left you'll find Ben. Help him track down Buck. Ben will tell you what to do from there."

Gabe pressed the gas pedal to the floor and they took off toward town.

Jenny started to stir on the way to town. She gasped and tried to sit up. "It's okay, baby, just relax and put your head back down. We're just taking you into town to get checked out by the doc. You fell off Moonbeam when she went down. You probably just got another good bump on the head but better safe than sorry." Jake ran kisses over

her face. He was finally able to breathe and now the shakes started. *Why couldn't he just keep her safe?*

They made it to town in record time thanks to Gabe's lead foot. "I'm going to pull up front and let you out and then I'll park the truck and be back."

Cree was pacing out in front of the doctor's office when Gabe pulled up. Cree ran to the truck and threw open the door. He took Jenny from Jake. "What happened?"

"Let's get Jenny inside and then we'll talk."

Cree carried Jenny through the doors and the nurse was standing there waiting. "Remy called and said you'd be bringing us a patient. The doctor is in the examination room waiting for you." The nurse showed them the way to the exam room.

Jenny was awake and able to answer the doctor's questions, so the nurse escorted Jake and Cree out to the waiting room. Cree turned to Jake and put a hand on his shoulder. "Now tell me what happened."

"Jenny, Ben and I were riding in the east pasture and Buck started shooting. I knew he was in the hills so I told Jenny to head for the trees. When the shooting stopped Moonbeam and Jenny were down. Moonbeam's dead, shot through the back of the neck. The bullet must have barely missed Jenny in order to go in by that angle. When we got to Jenny she was unconscious but with no apparent injuries. I sent Ben and Remy up into the hills to find that son of Satan." Jake closed his eyes, reliving the entire event once again in his head. He opened them to find a strange look on Cree's face. "Are you okay, Cree?"

"No, not when I think about what could have happened to either one of you or both of you. I want to pull you into my arms so badly I can taste it but now's not the time or place." He squeezed Jake's shoulder a little tighter. "I love you, cowboy," Cree whispered.

"Ditto, sheriff."

Doc Nelson came out to the waiting room and looked at both men. "She has a slight concussion, maybe a few more bruises to go along with the ones she's already got. What in the hell has that poor woman been through?"

"Hell," Cree stated simply. "Her stepfather abused her and I reckon he's found her again." Cree shook his head at the implications.

Jake and Gabe took Jenny home. Cree wanted to swing by the station and call the state police to see if he could get some backup. After all, with the day's activities Buck was wanted in three states now.

\* \* \* \* \*

That night, Cree and Jake ate dinner in the master suite with Jenny. She kept insisting she was well enough to eat at the kitchen table but they'd put their foot down. They both told Jenny to stay in bed for another day. Just like Doc Nelson had ordered.

Jenny finished her soup and put the spoon down. "He's found me again, loves," she sighed. "Buck won't stop until I'm finally dead." Jenny realized that Jake and Cree might think she was blaming them for not keeping her safe. "I know you're all doing everything you can but it won't be enough. He'll find a way to get to me eventually. Your friends can't put their lives on hold indefinitely. Sooner or later they'll leave and Buck will come again." Jenny said, sounding very resigned to the fact that Buck would kill her.

Cree got up and took the dining tray from her. He set it down on the dresser and climbed into bed.

Jake, who was already in bed, put his arms around her and kissed the salty tears from her face. "We aren't going to let Buck win this thing, Jenny."

Reaching out to embrace both of them, Cree thought his heart would break. Jenny was starting to slide back into depression and Jake was starting to follow her. Cree couldn't let Buck do this to his family. Hoping to take their minds off Buck for a while, Cree started undressing first Jenny and then Jake. When both of his lovers were naked he tackled his own clothes. The three of them curled into each other and began petting and kissing. Cree's hand traveled down the long line of Jake's muscled back to his butt. Smoothing his hand around the tight twin globes, he slowly began probing his back entrance.

Jake moaned around Jenny's breast and started to push back into Cree's hand. "So good, sheriff, so good."

Cree reached across and grabbed the lube from the drawer. "I need to fuck you, cowboy."

"So good."

Jake ran his hand down Jenny's abdomen, feeling smooth skin over sleek muscle. He parted her nether lips and began preparing her for his cock. They hadn't had intercourse with Jenny yet but it seemed to be the right time. Jenny was pushing against his invading fingers, trying to get closer.

"Oh, Jake, that feels good. More please."

Cree had Jake well lubed and began to position himself. Jake stopped him, "Wait, Cree, I need to position Jenny first. I want us to all fuck each other this first time." Jake spread Jenny's legs and climbed between them. Positioning his cock at her entrance, "Are you ready for me, baby?"

"Yes. Now, Jake." Jenny wound her hands in Jake's hair and held on.

Jake plunged his cock into Jenny's channel as Cree took him from behind. God, Jenny felt good. She felt so tight around his cock, milking him as he pushed in and pulled out in an age-old rhythm. Cree pumped into him in at a steady pace, reaching over him to caress Jenny's breast. They found their rhythm and the room was filled with "please" and moans.

Jenny clenched the walls of her channel around Jake and threw her head back in a scream of ecstasy. Jake completely lost it at the same time and Cree spurted his seed

into him. All three collapsed back onto the bed. Both men curled around Jenny. "I never knew that sex could feel like that. I think you two might have just created a monster." Jenny looked at them with a mischievous grin on her face. She reached up and licked both of their faces.

"Let's get a little rest. It's my turn to be in the middle next." Cree reached out to pat both of his partners on the butt.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next morning Cree came to the kitchen thirsty for his morning coffee. Nicco and Gabe were sitting at the table. "Mornin', guys. Have you heard anything from Remy and Ben?"

Nicco set down his cup. "They got in about two o'clock this morning. No luck though. They lost his trail south of Santa Fe. It seems he was headed out of town. Ben said they were going to get a little shuteye then fill you in later."

Cree nodded. "When Jake gets down here tell him I'm heading into the station but I'll be home early. Jenny is supposed to stay in bed today as per the doctor's orders. I warn you though, she can be a feisty little thing, so watch her." He put on his hat and headed out the door toward his sheriff's SUV.

As he drove in to town he couldn't shake the feeling that Buck was gone for a while. It seemed to fit his pattern of hit and hide. Cree decided to give Rex Cotton, the Double B foreman, a call and have him keep a close lookout for Buck. He knew Cotton would cooperate with him, Cotton always liked Jake and no one approved of the things that Buck had done to Jenny.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jake woke up with his typical morning wood and looked at the woman sleeping next to him. Jenny was so beautiful and peaceful in sleep. Black lashes fanned out over her cheekbones. Her nose was perfect and her lips plump and swollen from the night before. The more he looked the hornier he became. He needed to taste her, to reaffirm that she was indeed safe and finally in his bed. Jake slowly pulled the covers away and scooted down the bed so he was eye level with her pretty pussy. He snaked his tongue out and licked up her slit. Gently, he pulled apart her pussy lips and French-kissed her channel. Jenny shifted on the bed, beginning to wake up. Jake swirled his tongue around her clit and sucked the hard nub into his mouth.

Jenny began grinding her pussy into his face. "Mmmm...now that's what I call an alarm clock. Oh, Jake, you make me feel so good."

Jake was devouring her cunt when his cell phone started ringing. Without even lifting his head, he snagged the phone off the nightstand. "Hello."

"Jake, it's Cree, what are you doing?"

"I'm just having breakfast which includes eating a beautiful pink pussy. Why? You wanna join me?"

"God, Jake, you know I do but I'm getting ready to go into a meeting with representatives from the state police in New Mexico, Missouri and Oklahoma. Thanks for making my dick stiff enough to pound nails though. I wanted you to know that it looks like I won't be home until after dinner tonight. We're trying to set up a task force of sorts. Now, that said, why don't you tell me exactly what that sweet pussy tastes like first thing in the morning?"

"Well." *Lick*. "It's better than maple syrup," *lick*, "and hotter than the Fourth of July." *Lick*. "Maybe if you're a good little sheriff today I'll save you some for dessert."

"I hope I can get a serving of both of you for dessert. I love you, Jake. Keep our girl safe today."

"Bye, sheriff, see and taste you tonight." Jake chuckled and hung up the phone. "Now where were we, baby. Oh yeah, right here." Jake stabbed his tongue into Jenny's channel giving her the best French kiss of her life.

Jenny reached down and grabbed Jake's head, holding it to her as she pumped her hips toward his mouth. "That feels good, cowboy, but now I wanna taste you."

"I aim to please, ma'am." Jake swung his body around so they could both indulge in their favorite flavors.

Jenny giggled and settled in for breakfast. She took the tip of Jake's cock and swirled her tongue around the large, dark, plum-shaped head. Jenny knew she must be doing a pretty good job as she heard him moan. She wrapped her fingers around as much of it as she could, but the man was huge. Pumping in a rhythm that he seemed to enjoy, Jenny swallowed the head and took as much of him as she could without gagging.

Jake's hips started pumping to the rhythm Jenny was establishing. Around licks to her pussy Jake moaned and inserted two fingers into her tight cunt. He followed her movements so they work in tandem on each other. "Feels so good...so good."

Jenny reached down and started fondling Jake's testicles. She scooted a little and took one of his balls into her mouth and sucked hard. Jake jumped and started fucking her hand even harder. Jenny went back to his cock and swallowed as much of it as she could while she reached between his legs and ran her finger around his anus.

"Gonna blow, baby."

Taking a breath, Jenny barely got out the words. "Yes, give me all you've got, cowboy."

"Uhhh."

Jake came so hard Jenny must have thought she was swallowing Niagara Falls. Her body tensed and shook just as he was getting air back into his lungs. He quickly and efficiently sucked up the proof of her orgasm.



They moved positions so they were spoon style and enjoyed their afterglow. Jake kissed Jenny behind the ear. "I've got to get up and head to the barn, Jenny, but you are staying put today. I'll come up and check on you at lunch and I'll expect you to be in this bed. No arguments."

"Yes, sir!" Jenny saluted and giggled.

Jake smacked her ass and strode to the door. "Sassy little thing, aren't ya?"

Jenny just laughed and buried her head under the covers, completely content and in love.

## Chapter Nine

The sun was setting when Cree finally got out of the station and strode to his sheriff's vehicle. He was tired and stiff from sitting in a meeting all day with his newly formed task force. The other police representatives seemed to be on the same wavelength as Cree. Detective James Scott from the New Mexico State Police thought they had a lead on Buck that ended at the Mexican border. He was sending inquiries to the Mexican police to try to find out if Buck Baker had really been spotted in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Cree had begun to think Buck'd decided to take a little vacation until things cooled down at the Triple Spur. With any luck the Mexican authorities would pick him up or at least the border police would seize him upon reentry into the U.S.

Cree drove down the county road toward home. A level of calmness came over him when he thought about home now. Jenny was finally where she should have been for the last three years and he would do everything in his power to make sure she stayed safe. Five years was too long for anyone to be on the run.

Cree remembered he still needed to call his momma to thank her for keeping Jenny safe for the two and a half years she stayed with her. He shook his head and chuckled to himself. It was just like his momma to keep a secret like that from him. Even though he probably should be angry with her he just couldn't do it. Naomi Sommers was loyal to the people she loved. If Jenny made her promise not to tell Jake and Cree she was on the rez, nothing would have made Naomi go back on her word.

The sky was a deep magenta when he pulled in to the ranch. The weather was starting to turn cooler in the evenings. Cree stopped his SUV in front of the barn. He wanted to talk to Jake alone for a minute.

Cree got out and made his way to the barn, stripping off the piece of rawhide he used to tie his hair back for work. The breeze felt good blowing through his long hair. He sure didn't miss the mandatory short hair that the military required. Cree noticed the other members of his old team, with the exception of Gabe and Ben, also liked the feel of longer hair. Maybe it was just a way to rebel against authority for men in their thirties. Cree entered the barn. Letting his eyes get used to the dim lighting, he called for Jake.

"Back here, sheriff," Jake called from the back of the barn.

Cree made his way to Jake and found him in a stall with one of their pregnant mares—although from the looks of things she wouldn't be pregnant for much longer. Jake was sitting by Miss Candy's head and crooning softly in her ear while stroking her neck.

Jake looked up briefly and continued his calming crooning. "It's okay, sweet girl...that's it...just stay calm and before you know it you'll be a new momma." Jake

once again looked up at Cree and smiled. "Ready to be a daddy, Cree? It looks like Miss Candy is ready to drop her foal. I was thinking maybe you could go get Jenny and bring her out here. She always loved watching births."

Cree nodded, knowing that the horse would prefer no talking while she was in distress. He headed toward the house. Jake's comment about becoming a daddy still lingered in his mind. Cree always hoped he would make a good dad someday, even though he didn't have a good role model growing up. He shook his head to get rid of the thought. "Plenty of time for that later, dumbass," he said to himself.

Cree entered the house. Although he didn't see anyone he could hear what sounded like a party coming from upstairs. "What the hell is goin' on up there," he said as he started climbing the stairs. He walked down the hall and stood outside the door of the master suite.

"Pay up, Seal-boy!" Jenny's laughter came through the door.

"No way. You cheated," answered Remy.

"Man, just pay the lady and deal the next hand," Nicco's voice chimed in.

Smiling, Cree opened the door and looked at the scene before him. Jenny, Remy, Nicco and Ben were all sitting on his bed playing poker. From the stack of money in front of Jenny, Cree could guess who was winning. She looked so young and carefree at that moment. She looked like the Jenny before Buck had put the wariness in her eyes. "Uuh-um," Cree cleared his throat and leaned against the doorjamb. "What are you yokels doin' on the bed with my woman?"

Remy looked over and grinned. "Just losing our shirts. Why? Is there something wrong with that?"

Cree looked over to Jenny and smiled. "How much you take 'em for, sweetheart?"

"Oh let me see." Jenny put her finger to her mouth and looked down at the pile of change in front of her. "Yep, I'm pretty sure we have enough to run away to the French Riviera," she giggled. "Or maybe just the Riviera hotel in Vegas for a night. No matter, I'll get the rest tomorrow."

"Cree, this woman is a card shark, did you know that?" Ben got up from the bed and shook his head. "Try to keep a girl company and she cleans you out. Isn't that just a hell of a thing?"

"That's okay, let's see what she does for fun tomorrow when we all take our marbles and go home," Remy added with a mock pout on his face.

Cree entered the room and stood beside the bed. "Well, I came up to get my girl and take her to the horse barn. Miss Candy is having her foal. Are you interested?" He bent down and kissed her.

"I'd love to go to the barn but what do I do about all my winnings? I'm not sure that I can trust these unsavory characters you have floating around here." Jenny stood up and went to each of the men and kissed them on the cheek. "Thank you, gentlemen,

please come back and play with me again sometime." Jenny looked at the proprietary look on Cree's face and smiled.

The other three men laughed and filed out of the room.

Cree wrapped Jenny in his arms and kissed her. "I hope you had a nap today because I've been suffering a hard-on all day thanks to Jake's little image this morning. And tonight I plan to get my own taste."

"Okay, if I have to." She smiled mischievously and kissed him back. "Now take me to the barn."

Cree led her to the barn where they found Jake still talking softly to Miss Candy. The gray broodmare was lying on her side breathing heavily, her eyes taking in the scene around her.

Jake looked up and smiled. "Hey, beautiful, come on over and sit with me and help me keep Miss Candy calm."

Jenny inched closer to Jake, not wanting to upset the mare. She sat down in the straw beside Jake and put her hand on top of his as they stroked Miss Candy together. Cree joined them after retrieving a blanket from the storeroom to put around Jenny's shoulders.

Jake turned his head to Cree and kissed him, using a lot of tongue for such a brief kiss. Jenny loved watching the two of them. She could feel her panties getting wet. When Jake and Cree slowly turned their heads toward her and gave her the same kind of kiss in turn her panties were soaked. "Hey, guys, stop doing that or I'm not gonna be much help with Miss Candy." At their devilish grins she stuck her tongue out. "I told you two you'd created a monster."

The three of them sat with the mare most of the night. At about three in the morning a beautiful new foal came into the world. Gray with a black mane and tail she was the spitting image of her mother. Jenny's eyes grew moist. "She's so beautiful, Jake." She looked at Jake and he reached out his thumb and wiped the tears that had trickled down her face.

"You're beautiful, Jenny. It amazes me that with all you've been through you can still see the beauty in the world. Do you realize this is the first foal to be born since you came to the Triple Spur? I'd say this foal will always be special to us. Our first production as a family and to mark this special occasion I think you should name her."

"Hope, her name should be Hope." Jenny said softly, remembering Moonbeam. Cree reached over and took Jenny's hand. "That's a perfect name, sweetheart. My wish is for our children to grow up riding Hope."

"I think mother and daughter can take it from here. They both look good and healthy. Let's go back to the house, I'm pooped." Jake stood and stretched out his legs then reached down to help pull Jenny up who pulled Cree up.

The three of them walked arm in arm toward the house. Jake looked over at Cree. "What did you find out today in your meeting? Are there any leads yet?"

Cree shook his head. "No, I didn't find out much but we do have a few theories. I'll fill you in tomorrow when I brief the rest of the team. Tonight I'm just too tired."

\* \* \* \* \*

The next morning around the dining table Cree filled the men in on what the task force had discussed the previous day. "So until we can get official word that Buck has fled to Mexico I'd say business as usual. I know you guys all have lives of your own but I should hear something by the end of the week and then we can take it from there."

"We're here for as long as you need us, brother. Remember our motto, 'Loyalty to Country, Team and Teammate', that hasn't changed for any of us just because we're not Seals anymore." Nicco stood and walked out the door toward the porch.

Cree watched Nicco leave the room and shook his head. Nicco was one of the most loyal men he'd ever met. Cree knew there had to be an enormous heart behind the aloof manner and haunted eyes. Nicco had always been a loner but it had gotten much worse since he got out of the military. He hoped someday Nicco found happiness again.

\* \* \* \* \*

Three days later the Border Patrol confirmed that Buck wasn't spotted coming into Mexico, but the Mexican Police did find his car abandoned just outside Ciudad Juarez. Because all had been quiet for nearly a week it was time to have another meeting with the team.

Cree sat at the head of the table. "I think it's safe to say that Buck must be taking a break to regroup. However I don't think the threat is totally gone. Buck will be back, I have no doubt. I've been talking to Jake and with your approval I'd like to set up a schedule of two weeks on, two weeks off. We know you all have your own lives and responsibilities. Jake and I were hoping that this would be a good compromise. If any of you can't meet the schedule there will be no hard feelings. We know you've done everything you could and we couldn't be more grateful to all of you." Cree looked around the table and made eye contact with each man.

Ben pushed his chair back and stood. "Cree, I hate to sound like a sorry piece of shit but I don't really have anything else waiting for me. I've rented an apartment in Missoula, Montana, since getting out of the Seals but that's it. I don't really have a job or responsibilities. I've just been living off my investments trying to decide what I want with the rest of my life. So if it's okay, I'd like to stay here until we deal with Buck once and for all. I figure that way Remy can go back to Key West and run his bar until we need him."

Cree looked over to Jake who nodded. "We'd appreciate that, Ben. Maybe the police will catch up with Buck before long but we'd be grateful for your help."

"Uh. Cree, I'm pretty much in the same boat as Ben so that could let Nicco off the hook for a while too." Gabe looked at Cree and Jake for their nod of approval.

"Good, then that's settled. Remy, you go back to Key West and run your bar and Nicco, you go back to...whatever top-secret stuff you do." Cree smiled at Nicco who gave him a sharp nod.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two weeks later the ranch was finally calming down and they were all starting to get into a routine. Jenny had grown very fond of her two constant shadows, Gabe and Ben, and found herself opening up to them. She was coming out of her shell more every day. With a trip to Santa Fe under her belt to get more clothing, she felt she had finally found the one place on earth that she was meant to be. Her days were busy with the house or the horses. Jenny enjoyed working with Jake out in the corrals although, at times, Jake could be a little overprotective. She had been around horses since she was twelve years old but some days Jake treated her like a greenhorn. Whenever she questioned him about it he would hold her and tell her he just didn't want to take chances.

On one such day, Jenny sat on top of the corral watching Jake work with a mean-tempered stallion named Satan's Son. Jake had a lead rope on the stallion and was trying to get him calmed down enough to try a saddle. Jenny lowered herself into the corral and went to hold the lead rope for him so he could get the stallion saddled. When she approached Jake, the stallion reared up, pawing at the air. Jake pushed Jenny out of the way and got the horse calmed down. He marched the stallion back to the corral gate and tied him off. Jake spun around with fire in his eyes. "What in the hell was that, Jenny? Are you trying to get yourself killed? Do you have any idea what that mean son of a bitch could have done to you?" He reached out and grabbed Jenny to his chest, blew out a breath and just held her.

Jenny pushed him away. "Yes, I knew what I was doing. I'm a damn fine horsewoman, Jake, have you forgotten that? I was just trying to help. It could have happened with anyone, it just happened to be me this time." Even though she was furious with him she understood his fears regarding her. Jenny shook her head. "You can't wrap me up in cotton wool, Jake. I finally have a life worth living. Please, cowboy, just let me live it."

Jenny gave him a kiss on the cheek and left the corral without saying anything else. She went to the house looking for Ben or Gabe. Jenny found Ben reading a ranching magazine. "Hey, Ben, do you want to take a little ride with me and go swimming in the creek? I need to get out of this house for a while and the corral is not an option."

"Sure, I could go for a ride and swim but are you sure you wouldn't rather wait for Jake to take you?" Ben looked a little uncomfortable with the idea.

"Jake is the reason I can't go to the corral. Right now if I saw him I might be tempted to wring his gorgeous neck." Jenny ran up to her room to change into her two-piece bathing suit. She put her jeans and t-shirt over the suit and went back downstairs.

Jenny found Gabe in the kitchen baking. "Hey, Gabe, what're you baking for me today?"

"I got a new cookbook in town so I thought I'd experiment a little. I've got a chocolate soufflé in the oven so don't make any sudden movements." Gabe grinned.

Whispering, Jenny smiled back. "Okay, I'll tiptoe out of here and go find Ben. If anyone asks we're going swimming in the creek."

Jenny found Ben waiting for her on the porch. "Let's go swim, buddy. The day's a wastin'."

It was a beautiful day for a ride and Jenny raced Ben to the creek. They dismounted alongside the creek. Ben took the horses to the shade and ground tied them so they could graze.

Jenny undressed and walked toward the creek. She turned around to tell Ben to hurry when she heard his audible gasp. Jenny's hands immediately went up to cover her stomach and chest. She looked at Ben and closed her eyes. "I'm sorry, Ben. I should've prepared you for the sight of me. I didn't think about it, I guess. Jake and Cree don't seem to notice so I guess sometimes I forget about all the scars." Jenny looked down sheepishly, unable to look Ben in the eye.

Ben did something he'd never done to her before. He walked up to her and gave her a hug. "Don't ever be ashamed of something that wasn't your fault. Cree and Jake don't notice your scars because you're beautiful inside and out. They love you no matter what. Hell, I've known them for quite a few years and besides each other they've loved no one else but you. So dry those pretty blue eyes and let's go for a swim."

They walked hand in hand into the cool, flowing creek. It wasn't deep enough here to really swim so they both sat on the pebbled bottom and let the water rush around them. Relaxed and content, Jenny looked over at Ben. "Ben, can you tell me why Nicco is so quiet around me? Does he not like me or do I just make him uncomfortable?"

Ben took a minute before answering. "It's not that he doesn't like you, Jenny, he's that way with everyone. I think he's still figuring himself out like the rest of us. Nicco came to the Seals with his ghosts. The rest of us got them while in the Seals. He cut himself off from his emotions a long time ago but maybe if he's lucky...damn, if we're all lucky, we'll find someone as special as you who can exorcise our demons."

"Thank you."

Standing up, Ben reached down for Jenny's hand. It looked like a child's hand in his big tanned paw. "We'd better get going or I'll have Jake mad as hell at me for keeping you out too long."

They dressed and rode back to the ranch. Jenny felt at peace once again. She knew Jake loved her. It would just take him a while to calm down enough to let her live her life. He'd been patient with her in everything else. She guessed it was her turn to learn patience.

They rode into the ranch yard and were met by a sheepish-looking Jake. "Did you enjoy yourself, baby?"

Jake looked like he really wanted to know. Maybe it was his way of smoothing things over. Jenny let him lift her off her horse. "Yes, thank you. Ben and I had a wonderful time." Jenny smiled and reached her arms around his neck and kissed him. He parted for her and her tongue stroked the inside of his mouth.

Jake squeezed her tighter. "Well, if that's what swimming does for you I think we'll have to put in a pool," he chuckled and nipped her bottom lip then soothed it with his tongue.

Jenny sighed and put her head on his chest. "We okay, cowboy?"

"Good as gold, Jenny girl."



## Chapter Ten

Three weeks later they still hadn't heard anything from Buck. Jenny was happier than ever until about a week before when she started getting sick in the mornings. She knew what it was but didn't want Cree or Jake to know yet. Jenny hid her sickness from them and when they asked about her pale complexion she would pass it off one way or another. She had a lot of thinking to do before she talked to her men about her suspicions. Jenny played hooky from her chores one day so she could think. She took a pillow and a blanket out to the hayloft one afternoon to do some serious thinking. Sneaking up the ladder to the loft, she spread out her blanket. Lying down with her favorite goose-down pillow behind her head she settled in.

As Jenny lay upon the hay she thought on her life, more precisely her future. What would happen if she was pregnant? She wasn't even married yet and she didn't know which man to marry. Would Cree and Jake be jealous of another man's child? Jenny didn't think so. They loved each other too much for jealousy. She ran her hand down her body to rest on her stomach. Jenny knew in her heart that she was pregnant. She had a follow-up doctor's appointment in a few days for her injuries. Maybe she could get an official pregnancy test run then. Thinking about the reason for the doctor's appointment made her sit bolt upright. "Oh my God. What if the baby is Buck's?" she whispered to herself.

Tears began falling down Jenny's face. Wondering whether the doctor would be able to give her a precise date for conception, Jenny tried to count her days. She had just finished her period when Buck raped her. She had sex with Cree and Jake two weeks after that. "Boy, does that make me sound like a slut," she mumbled. With everything going on she hadn't given her lack of a period a second thought but she was thinking now.

How was she going to tell Cree and Jake that their enemy could be the father of her child? Jenny decided to wait and tell them when she had more information. Hopefully the doctor would be able to help her. The questions in her head got to be too much and Jenny closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep.

"Sweetheart, are you up there?" Cree's voice brought Jenny out of her nap. She could hear him walking the barn floor calling her name.

"I'm up here in the loft, sheriff." She could hear him climbing the ladder and then his head poked up above the floor of the loft. Jenny smiled a sleepy smile. "I'm sorry, I hope I didn't worry anyone. I needed some time alone to think."

Cree yelled to the men outside the barn. "I found her, guys, and she's all right." Cree finished crawling up the ladder and walked over to Jenny and lay on the blanket beside her. Taking a piece of hay in his fingers, he ran it up Jenny's arm very softly.

"Well, you did worry us but I can understand a person's need to get away once in a while. At least you came to the safety of the barn, but next time, please tell someone where you're going, okay?" Cree bent down and kissed her nose.

"Okay, I'm sorry, Cree." Jenny lifted her hand and traced the shape of his face. He was so handsome. His face was chiseled to perfection and his eyes were the windows to his stalwart soul. She ran her finger over his lips. The bottom one looked too good to pass up so she reached out and licked it. He seemed to catch fire.

"Oh, Jenny, what is it that you do to me." Cree took her mouth in a passionate kiss. His hands roamed down to her buttons and one by one they sprang loose. Cree undid the front clasp of her bra and her breasts sprang free. "God, I love your breasts," he said as he began raining kisses and licks upon them. Cree held her left breast in the grip of his fist and suckled like he was starving.

Jenny squirmed on the pallet of hay, grabbing handfuls and thrusting upward. "Please, Cree. I need you."

Cree let go of Jenny's breast and sat back on his haunches and unbuttoned his shirt, throwing it in the corner. He gave her a sexy smile and took off his gun belt and jeans. Jenny didn't see where they went because she was looking at the most beautiful erection she'd ever seen. She reached her hand out and touched the tip of his cock, swiping the fluid pearled there and bringing it to her lips. Jenny slowly opened her mouth, while maintaining eye contact with Cree and licked the tip of her finger.

Cree groaned and closed his eyes. "That's one of the most erotic things I've ever seen. Let me take a minute or I'm not going to last long enough to get in that sweet cunt of yours." He stretched himself out beside her and kissed her neck. "How do you want it, sweetheart, slow and sweet or fast and hard?"

"You're always slow and sweet. How about we go for what's behind door number two."

Cree positioned Jenny onto her stomach and then up onto her hands and knees. Her pink pussy lips were dripping with desire. Cree bent down and swiped her pussy with his tongue. "Damn, that's good." He placed one hand on her hip and held his cock with the other lining it up with her channel. One strong thrust and he was seated to the hilt inside her. They both froze for a second just enjoying the sensations they were each experiencing.

Cree began to pull out slowly. He smiled when Jenny made a protesting sound. He slammed back in and ground his pelvis against her. Picking up the speed, sweat began running in rivulets down Cree's face and chest. Cree pumped into Jenny with no mercy. He felt her pussy tightening around his shaft as she let out a scream of pleasure.

"Good. Oh so good, Cree. Uhhh!" Jenny would have collapsed if Cree hadn't held her up. Stroking faster Cree managed another couple of pumps before his seed was spilling into the woman he loved. They drifted off to sleep in each other's arms.

Jake finished his work for the day and went looking for Cree and Jenny. He strolled out to the barn after having no luck in the house. He spotted Gabe sitting outside the

barn on a stool. "Hey, Gabe, have you seen Cree and Jenny?" The man went red-faced and pointed to the barn.

"Uh, yeah. They're up in the loft, Jake. I'll...uh...just go on back to the house."

Shaking his head at Gabe's strange behavior, Jake entered the barn and climbed the ladder to the loft. He swallowed a deep breath. On a pallet of hay lay two entwined naked bodies. Jenny's face buried in Cree's neck. Cree had his mouth open snoring. God, he loved these two people. Jake looked down at Jenny. Even though her burn was mostly healed he worried about dirt from the loft getting into the wound.

Jake undressed where he stood. That completed, he crawled over to his two lovers. He kissed Cree's neck and worked his way down the bumps and ridges of his spine ending at his sweet ass. He held the twin bronzed globes in his hands and separated them to get to the sweet little pucker he called home. Jake could tell that Cree was playin' possum so he decided to give him a bigger wakeup call. With Cree's cheeks spread wide Jake rimmed his asshole with his tongue. Jake stuck his fingers in his mouth and put first one then two slowly up Cree's hole. Thrusting them in and out, Cree finally started to move.

"I hope that's you, Jake."

Chuckling, Jake inserted a third finger. "And just who else were you expecting to stick their fingers up your sweet ass?"

"Just you, cowboy. It feels so good. As you can see Jenny and I are kinda worn-out but come on up here and we'll see if we can't accommodate you." Cree reached down and pulled Jake up by his hair, kissing him when they were finally face-to-face. "Good evening, cowboy. How was your day at the corral?" Cree smiled and kissed Jake's face and neck before moving on to his nipples.

"Hot and sweaty just like any other day. Can I tell you that what you're doin' is really helping."

Jake looked over to find Jenny watching the two of them. "Come here, baby, and get in on this Jake smorgasbord. Eat all you want for a very low price, satisfaction guaranteed."

"Okay, although you know I enjoy watching the two of you." Jenny reached out and wrapped her fingers around Jake's erection. Not wanting Cree to feel left out she wrapped the other hand around Cree's cock. She slid down and took first Jake into her mouth and then Cree. They both started thrusting upward as she swallowed them in turn.

"Just like that, baby. You're getting so good at that Cree might have to worry about his championship title."

Cree let go of Jake's nipple and laughed. "Well, we'll just have to see about that, won't we." Cree slid down Jake's body to press himself against Jenny's side. "Scoot over, sweetheart, let me show this cowboy that no one can take my title." Cree flicked his tongue up one side of Jake's cock and down the other. He made his way back up to the head and devoured him.

Jenny watched in awe as Cree took all of Jake's incredible girth into his mouth and down his throat. Cree began to swallow around Jake's cock. Jake moaned and pumped into Cree's face. Seeing her chance, Jenny bent her head and took one of Jake's balls into her mouth, sneaking her finger back until she actually had the nerve to insert a finger into Jake's rectum. Jake jerked up off the blanket with a roar as loud as any lion's, shooting his cum down Cree's throat. Cree swallowed every drop of seed Jake gave up.

"Yeah, Cree, I had a great day."

\* \* \* \* \*

Jake noticed at the dinner table Gabe wouldn't look any of them in the face. Concern knitted his brow as he followed Gabe out to the porch after supper. "Got a minute, Gabe?"

Gabe turned toward Jake but looked over his shoulder instead of at his face. "Sure, Jake. What's up?"

"I just wanted to apologize for this evening in the barn. I hope we didn't offend you. Believe me that was never our intention."

Finally looking into Jake's eyes, Gabe shook his head. "You didn't offend me."

"Then what seems to be the problem? You can hardly look at any of us."

"Problem. No, there's no problem, Jake. It just makes me feel... Ah hell, I don't know."

"Disgusted?"

"No, never that." Gabe looked at his boots and said softly, "Envious."

"Envious? Are you saying you want to be with Cree and Jenny?" Jake's voice was starting to get a little louder and whole lot meaner.

Shuffling his feet from side to side, Gabe shook his head again. "I don't want your family, Jake. I want my own. I look at the three of you and get jealous. Why can't I find what you've been lucky enough to find?"

Cooling down quickly, Jake patted his friend on the shoulder. "Open yourself up to all possibilities and you'll find it, buddy. And you're right, I am one lucky son of a bitch."

He slung his arm around Gabe and walked him into the house where a game of cards was getting under way. Not poker. No one would play poker with the little card shark he loved.

## Chapter Eleven

It was finally Thursday. Jenny's doctor's appointment in Santa Fe had her jumping out of bed before Jake or Cree awoke. Slipping under the hot spray of the shower, Jenny worried about the day ahead. She had to make sure neither Cree nor Jake accompanied her to Santa Fe. If the doctor did a pregnancy test she wanted to stay for the results. Cree and Jake would worry about a supposed routine appointment taking so long. Jenny decided to tell the guys she needed to do some clothes shopping while in the city. That would convince them to stay home. Neither one of them liked shopping of any kind. "Good plan, Jenny," she whispered to herself.

The shower door opened and Cree and Jake both stepped inside. Jenny licked her lips and got a wicked look on her face. "'Step into my parlor', said the spider to the flies."

"Did you hear that, Cree, we've been downgraded to flies now." Jake reached for Jenny and pulled her into his arms. Kissing her soundly, he murmured, "Good morning, Miss Spider, you can eat me anytime." He began grinding himself against Jenny's mound and pulled her leg up to his waist. "Wrap your legs around me, baby. I want to get closer."

Cree moved in behind Jake and reached for the lube they kept in the soap dish. "I do love our morning showers." He squirted a liberal amount on his fingers and set about slicking up his lover.

Jake found Jenny's entrance and thrust, seating himself to the root. "God, you feel good in the morning. You're all warm and soft. I could do this every day for the rest of my life." He proceeded to pump into Jenny's channel while delivering equally forceful thrusts into her mouth with his tongue.

Once Jake was prepared for him, Cree stilled Jake's ass enough for him to plunge into his hot, tight heat. Working like a well-oiled machine the three lovers kissed, touched and pounded their way to completion.

Afterward, soaping each other clean, Jake asked what the plans were for the day. "I have to go into the feed store and pick up an order but I should be back in time to take you to Santa Fe for your doctor's appointment."

Jenny worried her lip. "Thank you, Jake, but I was hoping to go into the city early so I could do some shopping and go by the hair salon. I know you guys did the best you could with my clothes shopping when I came but I'd like a few more things."

"Oh yeah...okay, so do you want to take Ben and Gabe? I mean, I can send someone else to the feed store if you want me to go." God, he hated shopping, just stick bamboo under his fingernails.

Stepping out of the shower, Cree handed both of them a towel from the warming rack. "I have to go into Santa Fe on business today how 'bout I meet you somewhere and we can grab a bite to eat before coming back?"

"That sounds good. I should be done with everything by four o'clock. Meet us at that Rio Chama steak place I've been hearing about. Then we can drive back together. I'm sure by then Gabe and Ben will want a break."

Cree kissed her. "Sounds good, sweetheart." Cree crossed to his closet and pulled on his jeans, *sans* underwear as usual and a uniform shirt. Patting Jake's ass on the way out of the room, he called over his shoulder. "Better luck next time, Jake. I got myself a date with a red-hot woman today."

"Oh you're a real comedian, Cree." Jake dressed in his customary ranch clothes jeans, boxer briefs and snap-front shirt. "Jenny, are you sure you don't want company at the doctor today?"

"No, Jake, I'll be fine. It's just a routine follow-up. My wounds are almost healed and the burn is no longer tender." Jenny chewed on the inside of her cheek, contemplating her next question. "Jake, do you think I should ask about being referred to a plastic surgeon for the scars? They might even be able to do something about the brands. I know you've said they don't bother you but it can't be easy to look at what Buck did to me every day."

Crossing the room in a couple long strides, Jake reached out to hold Jenny in his arms. Kissing the top of her head and letting him calm down before answering her. "Baby, when I see those scars I don't think about Buck anymore. I think about the strength of the woman wearing them. You've been to hell and back yet you're still my sweet happy little Jenny. Why cause your body more pain? Cree and I hope to put our own brand on you someday soon in the shape of a wedding band. That's the only brand we care about, baby."

Jenny looked up into Jake's eyes, her own brimming with unshed tears. "That's the nicest thing you could have said to me Jake and I'll be proud to wear your 'brand of gold'."

Jake kissed her nose, then eyes, licking the tears that had escaped under her lashes. "I love you, Jenny."

\* \* \* \* \*

Ben drove to Santa Fe with Gabe riding shotgun and Jenny in the backseat. Jenny looked out the window in contemplation. The scenery was majestic and she knew she'd found a new home. "Hey, guys, I'm going to be going to the outlet mall for some clothes shopping but it shouldn't take long. After that I have an appointment with a salon down the street for some pampering. I thought you guys could hang out while I shop and maybe grab something to drink while I'm at the salon. Sound good?"

Ben looked at Jenny in the rearview mirror. "Sounds good to me. You did say something about meeting Cree after the doctor's appointment, right? My mouth is watering for a good thick steak," he said with a smile.

"Yeah, the appointment is at one-thirty. I told Cree I should be done by four."

"If you don't mind me asking, Jenny, why do you think the appointment will last that long?" Gabe finally spoke up, turning around in his seat to face her.

"W...well, I'm going also to get a pregnancy test and I want to wait for the results. Please don't tell Cree or Jake. There are extenuating circumstances at play what with the rape and everything. I just need a little time to prepare them both. I'm hoping the doctor will be able to give me a best-guess conception date." Jenny looked down at her lap and worried the tissue she held.

Ben slowed the car so he could focus on Jenny through the rearview mirror. "We won't tell, darlin', but do you think it will matter to them whose child it is?"

"No, it won't matter to them but I need to deal with my feelings if I'm carrying Buck's child." Jenny turned to look out the window, cutting off any further discussion of the matter.

\* \* \* \* \*

After the mall and the salon Jenny took a deep breath and entered the doctors' building at the local hospital. She looked at the directory and found where she needed to go. Douglas A. Higgins, Family Practitioner, Suite 223. Jenny decided to climb the stairs to the second floor office with her bodyguards in tow. Ben and Gabe sat in the waiting room while she was ushered to the exam room after filling out papers and showing proof of insurance.

Dr. Higgins gave her the all-clear sign in regards to her most recent injuries. "I'm sorry such a thing can happen in this day and age" was his only comment regarding the scars and brands.

Jenny asked him about a pregnancy test and about a conception date.

"Well, the test is easy enough. It shouldn't take too long to get the result back. As for the conception date, that might be a little trickier to determine. All I can do at this point is to examine you and try to determine a date by the size of your womb."

The test came back positive, as she knew it would. The exam results weren't as comforting.

"I'd say by the size of things you're well into your second month of pregnancy. If I had to guess I'd say six to seven weeks."

Jenny didn't remember much after that. The nurse gave Gabe instructions for a follow-up visit with an obstetrician and Ben and Gabe got her to the car.

Ben looked at Gabe and then at Jenny. "Are you going to be okay, darlin'? We can call Cree and have him come here to pick you up."

"No, Ben, that's all right. It'll just take me another minute to get my bearings. I wanted to stop off at a restroom somewhere along the way and change into the new dress I bought. I think if I do that it will perk me up. D-Did the doctor tell you anything?"

Gabe looked at her with a slight smile. "Not the doctor but the nurse did. I think she thought I was the father."

Jenny's head snapped up to face him. "I'm sorry to put you through that, Gabe."

"Don't be sorry, hell, I was flattered. Anyway, the nurse told me your test was positive and you're about six weeks along. Is that a good thing, Jenny?"

"No, I don't know. The rape happened seven weeks ago, two weeks before I moved into the ranch house with Cree and Jake." She was still a little dazed by the whole thing. She put her hand on her stomach. "Even though it's possible that Buck is the sperm donor, I will be this child's mother and Cree and Jake will be its father. Right?"

Grabbing her hand, Ben knelt in front of her, looking into her eyes. "That's absolutely right, Jenny. Just keep thinking that way and everything will be fine."

\* \* \* \* \*

Ben stopped off at a clean-looking gas station so Jenny could change into her new dress. When she was done they headed for the restaurant.

Rubbing his belly, Gabe chuckled. "I'm so hungry I might need to order two steaks."

"I'm sorry you two didn't get a proper lunch. By the way, have I told you both thanks for everything you've done? Not just today's counseling session but for everything all along this terrible ordeal."

"No need, Miss Jenny, that's what teammates do for each other. Just because we're out of the service doesn't stop us from still being a team," Gabe said with pride.

Cree was waiting for them when they pulled into a parking space in front of the restaurant.

Ben laughed, "Look at this great parking place just for you, Jenny."

Jenny laughed back, already feeling much better.

Cree opened her door for her and whistled. "Wow, sweetheart, you look fabulous. I'm glad you went shopping after all today. I hope you got a few more of these sexy outfits in the trunk." He leaned down and kissed her neck. The canary yellow sundress was cut halter-top fashion with no back. He walked her into the restaurant with his hand drawing circles on her spine. Her skin was so soft he just wanted to skip dinner and take her back to his vehicle so he could lick her entire body.

Dinner was very nice, the food was good and the company even better. When they'd finished their dessert Cree led them out to the parking lot. "I'm going to take my lovely woman with me. You guys head on back and we'll be along eventually. I want to take Jenny up to the hills and show her the city lights and maybe do a little necking



before I have to take her back to the ranch and share her with Jake." Cree winked at Jenny and waved goodbye to Gabe and Ben.

Cree took Jenny up into the hills above Santa Fe to a scenic lookout and parked his SUV. "C'mere, you sexy woman. I've been waiting all evening for a taste of that skin you're showin'." Jenny slid over and snuggled up to Cree, putting her head on his shoulder. "So, sweetheart, talk to me and tell me how your appointment went today."

Jenny thought about telling him all through dinner about the pregnancy but decided to wait and tell Cree and Jake when they were all three together. "The appointment went well. Doctor Higgins said although I need to keep an eye on the burn for a little while longer, everything seemed to be okay." She didn't want to talk about her appointment so she brought up a subject she'd been wondering about.

"Cree, has Naomi ever been to the Triple Spur?"

Head snapping around to face her, Cree looked puzzled. "Where did that question come from?"

"I'm sorry, you don't have to answer. I was just wondering and I really miss her and thought maybe we could invite her down for Thanksgiving this year."

"Well, to be perfectly honest, Jenny, I've never really invited my momma to the Triple Spur. After what happened when I confided in my sister Tori about my relationship with Jake, she cut me off. I guess I didn't want to take the chance with momma. I don't think she would approve of my relationship with Jake and I'm too in love with the man to hide it. I guess it's just been easier to talk to her on the phone and send cards back and forth." Jenny thought Cree looked a little ashamed of himself.

"You know you're wrong. Naomi does know about you and Jake and she's happy for you. She's the one that told me. I imagine she never said anything to you because she wanted you to be the one to bring it up but, Cree, she loves you very much."

"Really? Damn, I guess my feelings for Jake are apparent even over the phone. Is that where you got the picture of Jake and me under the ranch sign that the hospital found in your pocket?"

Jenny nodded and slipped her arms even tighter around Cree's neck. "Yes. She gave it to me the last time I stopped in to see her about a year and a half ago. I can't tell you what that one picture meant to me. It was the only thing I owned that never left my sight. Too often I'd have to leave wherever I was at a minute's notice but I kept the picture in my pocket at all times so it would never get left behind.

Reaching out, Cree pulled Jenny onto his lap. "You don't need that picture anymore, Jenny. Now you can see and feel the real thing whenever you want." His mouth took hers in a heated kiss that set her eyebrows on fire. They eventually broke the kiss when oxygen deprivation became an issue. "Let's get home and show Jake this pretty new dress."

## Chapter Twelve

They drove toward the ranch in a comfortable silence. Jenny sitting next to Cree with her hand on his thigh. Cree kept both hands on the wheel. He wasn't about to take any chances with Jenny's life.

About twenty miles from home driving down the old county road the windshield shattered. It all seemed to take place in slow motion. Jenny turned her head to Cree and she heard him scream to her, "Get down." The SUV swerved off the road into the ditch and flipped over onto its roof and back down onto its tires.

Jenny came to almost immediately. She looked at Cree and saw all the blood. Cree's head was resting against the driver's side door but he was unconscious. Blood was running down his face and neck onto his shirt, Jenny tried to get him awake. Aware that she shouldn't move him, Jenny touched his face. "Cree, come on, honey, please wake up. You can't do this to me now, Cree, come on, you have to be here for our baby." When it was obvious she wasn't helping him she looked around for her cell phone.

Calling Jake, she continued to touch Cree's arms and hands. "Come on, Jake, answer the damn phone."

The phone was finally answered on the seventh ring. "Hi, baby, when are you two getting home?"

Jenny started to cry into the phone. "Jake, please help us. Cree's unconscious and he won't wake up." Jenny began to ramble into the phone out of shock. "Jake, there's so much blood. The windshield just exploded and Cree won't wake up. Jake, ple—"

Jake cut her off as he ran toward the front of the house where Gabe and Ben were watching TV. "Jenny...baby...calm down and tell me where you are. Please, Jenny. I can't help if you don't tell me."

"Ah yeah, okay. We're about twenty miles from the ranch, I think, on the old county road. Please, Jake. I don't know what to do."

"We're on our way, baby, just stay calm and stay on the phone with me." He gestured to Gabe's cell phone. "I'm having Gabe call the sheriff's station. They'll get an ambulance out to you." He motioned for the men to follow him out the door.

"Oh, someone's coming. I'll call you back."

The phone went dead just as they started the truck. "Damn it!" Jake tried to call her back as the truck pulled out of the drive, but the phone rang and rang. "Come on, Jenny, pick up, baby, please pick up." The call switched to voice mail. "Goddamn it. She cut me off. She said something about someone coming."

Ben looked over at Jake with an intense look on his face. "Did she say what happened?"

Shaking his head, Jake tried to calm down enough to drive the twenty miles. "No, just that the windshield exploded and Cree is bloody and unconscious."

"Sounds like a gun shot through the windshield to me." Gabe looked at Ben silently, asking him if they should tell Jake about the baby. Ben nodded his head for Gabe to continue. "Jake, I know you don't need to hear this right now but make sure they take Jenny in the ambulance with Cree."

"Why? Jenny sounded fine. A little shook up but that's to be expected."

Gabe once again looked at Ben. "Um...Jake I know she's going to kill me for telling you this but Jenny found out today that she's pregnant."

"*WHAT!*" Jake almost drove off the road. "Oh fuck." He threw the phone over to Ben and told him to try to call her again.

"Jake, someone stopped to help us." Jenny was still frantic.

"No, honey, this is Ben. Jake's busy drivin' but we should be there in about three minutes. You need to sit down and try to slow your breathing, honey. You're too excited it can't be good for the baby."

"Oh I...um I forgot... Yes, you're right. I'll...um...just go sit next to Cree and hold his hand."

"One minute, baby, hang on," Jake shouted hoping she would hear him over the phone Ben had to his ear.

They pulled up at the accident scene. Someone was talking to Jenny through the passenger side door. The helpful citizen turned and ran to Jake's truck.

"I just came upon it. I didn't want to move the driver but I did check and he still has a pulse." The elderly man looked from Jake back toward the SUV. "The little lady is finally calming down a little. She was hysterical when she flagged me down."

Jake jumped in the passenger seat and slid over to Cree and Jenny just as the Life Flight helicopter touched down. Jake gently slid Jenny out of the vehicle and passed her off to Ben. "Please take care of her for a minute." Jake jumped back into the SUV and touched Cree's face. From what he could tell he hadn't been shot, but the side of his face was split from brow to just under his chin. He must have either hit either the window or the steering wheel during the rollover.

Jake squeezed Cree's hand and exited the vehicle so the medical technicians could take over.

The technicians put a collar around Cree's neck and checked his vitals. Speaking in hushed tones to each other, they signaled for the backboard. They loaded Cree and rushed toward the waiting copter.

"Wait, where are you taking him? Tell me he's going to be okay?"

One of the technicians looked over at him. "We're transporting him to County General and his pulse is good. Keep your fingers crossed and get to the hospital as soon as you can."

Jake ran to Ben and retrieved a crying Jenny. "Ben, you and Gabe stay here and wait for the deputies. Fill them in on all that we know and then get to the hospital. Oh shit, I almost forgot you won't have a car. Ask one of the deputies to drive you back to the ranch to pick up another car and then get to the hospital."

Jake gently got Jenny into the car and took off down the road. "Jenny?" Jake reached out and took her hand kissing it over and over. "Jenny? Talk to me, baby. Are you sure you're okay?"

Jenny looked over at Jake with a bewildered look on her face. "I think I'm all right. Cree pushed my head down as soon as the windshield exploded. I think I might have cut my back though. I'm sure they can look at it when we get to the hospital."

"Lean forward, baby, and I can take a quick look."

Slipping out of the shoulder harness, Jenny leaned forward. Jake saw a piece of plastic embedded in her lower back. It wasn't bleeding very much, but he decided it would be better to wait for the doctors to remove it rather than for him to touch it. She had some minor cuts and scratches on her arms where she had covered her head during the crash but that was all he could see.

"Okay Jenny, you've got a piece of plastic in your back. My guess is that it's a piece from the dash. Do you think you could just stay bent where you are until we get to the hospital?"

"Yes, I'm fine, Jake. What about Cree? There was so much blood, Jake. I couldn't tell where it was coming from it was just too much blood. I'm sorry I'm not handling this very well." Jenny looked at Jake, tears still streaming down her face.

Shock, Jenny was in shock. Jake kept telling himself to drive safely, but his foot kept pushing a little harder on the accelerator.

By the time he got to County General some seventy miles away Cree had already been there for almost thirty-five minutes.

Jake pulled up to the emergency entrance and ran inside to get someone to come out and look at Jenny. He didn't really want to move her just in case the piece of plastic was more serious than it appeared.

A nurse came out and looked at Jenny's back and then signaled for a gurney to be brought out.

"Please be careful with her, she's pregnant." He looked over at a startled Jenny. "Sorry, baby, Gabe told me. He felt it might be relevant in getting you medical attention."

"I was going to tell you and Cree together." Tears started streaming down her face again as they wheeled her into the ER on her stomach. "I will be able to tell him, won't I, Jake?"

Bending over the gurney, brushing her hair back, Jake kissed her cheek. "Yes, baby, we'll tell him together."

It was a long night. The emergency room doctors' removed a small piece of the rearview mirror out of Jenny's back. Luckily the sliver hadn't hit anything vital and she ended up with only a few stitches. They treated her for shock and released her to Jake.

Cree was in surgery to repair his face. The hospital called in a plastic surgeon because the injury was so extensive. He had a concussion that would probably keep him in the hospital for a couple days but then they would release him. Jake and Jenny could care for him at home better anyway.

\* \* \* \* \*

*"Hey, goddammit, someone get up here!"* Cree was yelling down the stairs from where he lay naked in bed.

The three people around the kitchen table all look up toward the screaming then around the table at each other.

Gabe finally was the first to speak, "Ben. Go see what the hell Cree wants now."

"I'm not going to do it, you do it." Ben looked at Gabe like he was crazy.

"I'm not going to do it. Hey. let's get Jenny. She'll do it. She'll do anything." Gabe looked at Ben and chuckled, remembering back to his youth and the Life cereal commercial.

"What do you say, Jenny?" Ben gave her that heart-stopping smile of his. "It's only fair you go. It's your turn. Besides, Cree loves you more than he does us so he doesn't yell as loud at you."

Throwing down her cards onto the table, she looked at both men. "You just know I had a better hand than either one of you but I'll go." Jenny got up from the heavy antique butcher block table and headed for the stairs. "If I'm not back in fifteen minutes call the cavalry or at least Jake to come and rescue me."

Jenny walked up the stairs, mumbling to herself. "Some men are such babies. You'd think no one else had ever had stitches before." She made it to the bedroom just as Cree was winding up again.

"Hey, doesn't anybody care about me anymore."

"Of course I care about you, sheriff. Now stop whining or I'm going to buy you a pretty pink nightgown and call you sissy." Jenny walked over to the bed and sat down beside the grumpy but deliciously naked man. "What can Jenny do for her little baby?"

Cree narrowed his eyes at her and stuck his lips out in a pout. "First thing you can do is stop making fun of me. Second thing you can do is to get me some clothes to put on so I can get the hell out of this bed. And the third thing you can do is to get closer to me and give me a poor baby kiss to make me feel better."

"I'll take what's behind door number three." Jenny stretched out onto the bed beside Cree and closed her lips over his.

Sighing, Cree brushed her lips with his tongue and Jenny opened right up for him. He swirled his tongue in her mouth and groaned. "As much as I love door number

three, sweetheart, I need some clothes. I know you and Jake think it was really funny to take all the clothes out of the closets in here but I need to get up now. I need to check in with the station and I need to check in with the task force."

Jenny kissed his eyes and his nose then moved carefully over to the left side of his face and feathered kisses all along the six-inch line of sutures that ran down the side of his face from brow to chin. "Cree, you know you still need to rest. Jake and I are just trying to get you well and the only way to do that is to keep you in bed for one more day."

Cree put his arm around Jenny. "Okay, then you be my girl Friday and tell me what's going on?" Cree nibbled on the side of Jenny's neck down to the hollow of her throat. His wicked tongue made swirling patterns down her neck to the top of her breasts as he burrowed beneath her shirt. "Take this off, sweetheart. I want to see those beautiful breasts."

Blushing, Jenny pulled her shirt over her head and tossed it to the chair in the corner. Cree evidently didn't need help with her bra because that soon followed and sailed through the air toward the chair.

Drawing slow circles around her nipples, Cree watched them stand up and demand his attention. He withdrew his hand and substituted his tongue. Using just the tip, he drew circles around her nipple until he latched on and sucked so powerfully the tension in her womb brought her up off the bed.

Grabbing handfuls of his hair, Jenny cried out, "Cree, that feels.....mmm." Sweat beaded on her brow and her legs were restless. Jenny needed this man inside her now. "Please, I need you inside me, love."

From the doorway they heard a throat clear. "So while the cat is away the mice will play, huh? Jake entered the room and began to undress. "You both know I have other things I need to be doing. Ben said you needed rescuing, he didn't say you needed fucking."

Jake crawled into bed on the other side of Cree. "How's our patient today, nurse?" He looked over at Jenny and grinned.

"He seems to be doing much better but I'm concerned about the swelling I feel." Jenny looked, Jake drawing his eyes down to where her fingers were wrapped around Cree's cock. "I think maybe it would be wise to drain some fluid, don't you agree?"

"Drain away," Cree said, stretching his arms out and spreading his legs.

Jenny gave each man a kiss and rose off the bed. "I think you two need a little time together so I'm going to go win some more money from your boys and start supper."

"You don't have to leave, sweetheart. There's plenty of me to go around." Cree began stroking his rock-hard erection.

"I know I don't have to leave, love. Sometimes it just feels right to give you two one-on-one time." Jenny kissed Cree again and withdrew from the room.

Turning away from the door toward Jake, Cree licked his lips and wiggled his eyebrows, slightly wincing from the pull of stitches. "Well, how about it, cowboy." He looked down at his cock and started stroking it again. "This swollen piece of love isn't going to drain itself."

"Oh yummy, Cree's horny." Jake licked his lips and proceeded to lick his way from Cree's ear to his cock. He swooped down on his cock in one deep-throated swallow.

Grabbing Jake's hair, Cree thrust in and out of his hot mouth, begging for more. "Mmm...yeah, cowboy, just like that."

Slowly withdrawing the cock from his mouth, Jake licked down the length to the root. He used one hand to caress Cree's sac. Jake took one of the smooth hairless orbs into his mouth and sucked. His other hand was probing Cree's tight puckered hole. As he sucked, his finger began pumping in and out of his hole.

"Suck my cock, cowboy." Cree was wild with lust, thrashing his head from side to side on the white satin pillowcase. "Damn, Jake, you sure know how to give a man a big head."

Taking a breather from the cock in his face, Jake looked up at Cree and narrowed his eyes. "Oh ha ha, very funny, sheriff."

"Okay, I'm sorry just please continue your ministrations on my cock before I explode," Cree cried, thrusting his cock against Jake's cheek.

Jake swirled his tongue around Cree's cock head a few times before once again swallowing him whole. Cree seemed to want to thrust so Jake stayed still and hummed an old Willie Nelson tune around his cock.

That did it. Cree shot his cum all the way down Jake's throat in a roar of release. "God, I love you." He pulled Jake up beside him and thrust his tongue in his mouth. Jake tasted of cum and it was damn sexy. They stroked and kissed and nibbled on each until their heart rates came down.

Cree looked over at Jake. "What did you find out today?"

"Well, it was definitely a shotgun shell that hit the windshield. The state police found the shell casing about eighty yards from where the truck rolled. They're sending it off to the lab to see about prints." Jake looked Cree in the eye. "You and I both know it was Buck and that means he's back."

"Yeah, I figured that's what they'd find. Well, Jake, I guess it's time to call the team back in on this one. Buck isn't going to give up until one of us or all of us are dead."

Reaching over, Jake turned Cree's head to face him. "I can't lose you, sheriff. When I got the call from Jenny my heart stopped beating. I don't think it started again until you were out of surgery and they said you'd be fine."

Cree lifted his fingers to the side of his face. "Does this look fine to you? Hell, Jake, I'm going to look like Frankenstein's monster." Cree shook his head and looked away.

Turning his head to face him once more, Jake softly kissed the stitches all the way up Cree's face. "First of all, I think it'll make you even sexier. Kinda like an Indian warrior with a battle scar. Secondly, do you think any less of our Jenny for her scars?"

"Of course not, but Jenny's aren't on her face right there to scare little children and old women."

Jake looked into Cree's eyes and petted his chest. "You're right. Jenny's scars aren't on her face. They're on her soul."

"Damn. Okay. I'll get off the pity party wagon and start thinking about ways to take down that bastard Buck."

Grinning, Jake bent over and kissed Cree again. "Now you're talking, sheriff. I...um...have one more thing I need to discuss with you if you feel up to it?"

"I'm fine really. What else is going on?"

"I found out that Jenny's pregnant. She didn't tell me, Gabe did the night of the accident. Jenny confirmed it but she hasn't talked to me about it since. I've been worried about her so I asked Ben and Gabe if they knew what was wrong with her. Cree, the doctor told her his best estimate was that she was six to seven weeks along. That puts conception right about the time of the rape. She first had sex with one of us five weeks ago so it's not impossible that the child is one of ours but we won't know until she's a little further along and the doctor does more tests."

"Pregnant? Our Jenny is going to be a mother? Jake, don't think I'm a bastard for saying this but I don't really care who the father is. Jenny's going to be our wife and she's going to be a fabulous mother. If we find out that Buck is the father of the baby at least it will still have your blood running through its veins." Cree's eyes were closed and a single tear ran down his chiseled cheekbone.

Drawing Cree closer, Jake licked away the tear. "I don't think you're a bastard. I totally agree with you but Jenny is having a hard time dealing with it right now. I think she's ashamed of the rape. Even though everyone's told her she didn't do anything wrong it still bothers her. Let's keep this conversation between us until she comes to us with her concerns."

"Okay, cowboy, I can do that. Now can you please get me some damn *clothes*?"



## **Chapter Thirteen**

The team came together over the next several days. After Nicco finally arrived on the third day the team sat at the long dining room table and discussed their options for finding Buck.

"Has Cotton heard anything from Buck?" Remy looked from Jake to Cree.

"No, nothing, but he's still keeping his eyes and ears open for us. It's like Buck has totally abandoned the Double B." Jake shook his head. What had gotten in to his father? Jenny told him that Buck thought he was in love with her, but it wasn't love, more like a sick obsession. He doubted anyone would ever be able to understand what went on in Buck's head that he would willingly give up a lifetime of work for a woman that couldn't stand him. Jake looked around the table at his friends and teammates. They were all damn good men to put their private lives on hold to help him, Cree and Jenny out. He hoped when this was all behind them there would be a way to repay each and every teammate.

Cree spoke up, "I think we should set up watches twenty-four hours a day. I was thinking two men taking shifts in the hayloft using night scopes after dark and two men circling the house in shifts. That leaves Jake and the two men not on shift still in the house with Jenny. I'll be in and out during the day working with the local and state police departments. We got word two days ago that Buck slipped through the US border when one of the regular border patrol officers was out sick and a part-time guy was taking his place. Of course we already knew that information since Buck decided to take a potshot at Jenny and me the other day." Cree ran his fingers through his long hair in frustration.

"What can I do?" Jenny stood in the doorway, having come in while Cree was outlining the plan.

"Nothing, sweetheart. Your job is to stay indoors and stay safe." Cree met Jenny's eyes with a "don't argue" thrust to his chin.

Jenny shook her head, "Not good enough, sheriff." She entered the room closer to the dining table. "I've got a stake in this too. I won't have all of you putting your lives on the line while I sit in the house doing crossword puzzles."

Jake got up from his chair and went to her. Slipping his arm around her he pulled her up next to him. "Baby, listen." He kissed her temple. "Keeping you safe is the reason every one of these men is putting his life on hold. Just let us do our jobs. We're all damn good at it." He kissed her on the top of the head.

Looking at Jake through narrowed eyes, Jenny pulled from his embrace. "I know you want to keep me safe but I know more than anyone in this room about Buck's way of thinking in the last five years. I evaded the man for five years before he found me

again. Do you think it was just luck? Give me a gun and tell me what I can do in this operation. And Tell. Me. Now."

Cree drew in a deep breath. "Jenny, think about all of these men in front of you. If you insist on doing this not only will you be putting your life in danger but their lives too."

Jenny looked at the men around the table. She reached down and pulled apart the snap-front shirt, exposing her scars and brands to the men at the table. Shocked faces met hers, some of the men began to squirm in their chairs and at least one, Nicco, looked as if the image before him would haunt him forever.

"Gentlemen, this is why I deserve to help hunt down that son of a bitch. Now who can look at me and tell me I don't have the right?"

All four men looked at Cree who leaned his elbows on the table and buried his face in his hands. "You can have a gun and we'll include you in the planning sessions but I will not—I repeat, will not—put you on patrol outside." Cree raised his head and looked at Jenny in need of a compromise.

"All right for now, but don't try to hide anything from me." Jenny took one of the empty chairs and sat down, snapping her shirt up as she went. "Are there any questions I can answer for any of you? From now on, ask me not Cree, not Jake, if you want to know something about my past with Buck."

Gabe softly cleared his throat. "I have a question, Jenny. Do you know why he's doing this to you?" He leaned toward her with compassion in his eyes.

"Not really. I mean he says he's in love with me but it didn't feel much like love when he raped and branded me. He told me I was his property and that he married my mother for me. You see... I met him first. Let me tell you the story of how Buck came in to my life." Jenny told the story of meeting Buck in the hotel bar. When she was finished she saw a look of surprise on Jake's face.

"I never knew that's how things went. I just always assumed Buck and Helen fell in lust at first sight. Buck has always been popular with the ladies." Jake walked over to Jenny and put his hands on her shoulders. "I don't think I ever told you I'm sorry that Buck's my father." He bent down and kissed Jenny softly on the cheek.

\* \* \* \* \*

Later that day, Cree found Jenny baking bread in the kitchen. She looked so cute with her hair up in a haphazard bun with a dusting of flour on her cheek. The state-of-the-art kitchen he and Jake had designed for her looked even better with her in it, more homey. Cree strode over and wrapped his arms around her. "Hey, sweetheart, it sure smells good in here. The bread doesn't smell bad either." He turned her around and brought their bodies together. Cree never got tired of kissing her so he began a path that went from her forehead to her chin. "I brought you a gun from the safe. It's a Glock semiautomatic. I know you're already good with a gun after all the target practice Jake and I made you do growing up but I want you to get used to this one. Hold it. Feel the

weight. Let your hand become accustomed to it. We'll go out with the guys after supper and do some more target practice. I'm going to have them secure the area first and then one of them will come back in and get us. Okay?"

Leaning in to him, Jenny rested her head on his chest. "I'm sorry if I embarrassed you today in front of your friends. I'm just tired of being a victim. It's time I stopped running and started fighting now that I have something to fight for. This home and you and Jake are mine and I won't let anyone run me away again."

"I understand. I really do. Jake and I just worry about you, that's all. You're our reason for living, Jenny. We love you."

"Amen to that, sheriff," Jake said, coming into the kitchen to give them both a kiss. "You've grown up, Jenny, but you'll always be 'our little Jenny', got that?"

"Got it, cowboy. Now you two get out so I can finish supper. I made a turkey and all the trimmings. I know it's not Thanksgiving but I wanted a way to let the men know I was thankful for all of them." Jenny grinned and kissed them both saucily. She grabbed the towel off the counter and winding it up, gave each man a snap on the ass with it. She turned around and started separating her dough for rolls.

Cree and Jake left the kitchen chuckling at her and her good mood.

Supper was a real feast, Jake thought. The men really seemed to appreciate the thought and effort that went into it. After he finished he sat back and rubbed his belly. "I do believe I just put five pounds on this old body."

Rolling his eyes, Cree looked over at Jake. "Well, then I guess you just need some exercise. I think it would be a good workout for you to straighten the loft and drag that mattress in front of the loft door for Ben and Gabe." He looked at the two men with mischief in his eye, looking for backup.

Ben turned the knife a little deeper. "Yeah, Jake, that would be great. If I'm gonna have to be on my belly peering out through hay bales for twelve hours a day I'm gonna need a mattress."

Gabe joined in the fun, "Coffeepot and a blanket for when it gets cold and a—"

Jake cut him off. "All right. I get the idea, you pansy-ass little girls."

\* \* \* \* \*

Working on the books sucked as far as Jake was concerned. Still it was all a part of horse ranching. Jake decided to send the bulk of the horses along with the ranch hands to the far pasture for safety. There was a small cook cabin up there, big enough for the hands to get out of the rain if need be. Most of the men took their bedrolls, preferring to sleep under the stars on a nice night.

The team thought it might be easier to spot Buck without all the horses and cowboys milling around the barn and corral. Of course that left them to tend to the mares that had either just foaled or were getting ready to foal but Ben and Gabe seemed to love the work so more power to them.

He was just finishing up printing out the payroll checks for the week on his computer when Cree knocked at the door. Jake looked up and smiled.

*Man, that guy is hot. Hair just as black as a crow's wings and soft as silk.* Cree'd left it loose and just looking at it made Jake hard as a fence post. "Hey, sexy, got something for me?" Jake pushed his chair back from the desk and spread his legs. He reached down and started rubbing at the steel spike in his jeans.

Eyebrows lifted, Cree swaggered over to Jake and knelt between his legs. Running his long-fingered hands up and down Jake's thighs, he grinned. "That would depend on what you have for me."

Jake reached down and unbuttoned his jeans, letting his erection spring free. "Is this enough for you, sheriff?"

Reaching for Jake's cock, Cree bent and swiped the head with his tongue. "Just about right, I'd say, but I think I need to taste it to make sure." Cree took Jake's cock in a single swallow all the way to the base. He began pumping up and down on the big, fat beast. Cree slid his mouth to the head and released him, going instead down to Jake's balls. He licked and nibbled, sucking first one and then the other into his mouth.

Jake managed to get his boots and jeans off while Cree was busy playing. He grabbed Cree's hair and slid farther down into the big red leather office chair, giving him better access.

Pulling Jake's legs onto his shoulders and down his back, Cree inched his tongue toward Jake's sexy puckered entrance. Cree rimmed the hole with his tongue and moved his tongue inside.

Jake grabbed his own cock and started pulling. "More...oh sheriff....more....need."

Cree pumped his tongue and out of Jake's ass, groaning. He needed his cock inside this man now. He sat back and looked down at Jake. "Do you still have stuff in here? I need to be in you, cowboy. I need to ride you."

Jake reached up and opened the top drawer of the desk, grabbing the small bottle of lube. Handing it to Cree, he opened farther and adjusted his legs on Cree's shoulders. Cree got him lubed up and positioned his cock at the entrance to Jake's hole.

"Ride me, sheriff."

Cree thrust his cock inside and immediately started pumping in and out, hard and fast. Cree knew he wasn't going to last long, he needed this too badly. "Sorry, cowboy, it's going to be short and fast." Cree continued his assault on Jake's ass.

Pumping his own cock, Jake quickened his pace, timing his jerks to the thrust of Cree's hips snapping in and out of him.

Neither one of them saw Nicco standing in the office doorway. Nicco's eyes fixed on the pair with an unreadable expression on his face.

Cree let out a roar and Jake felt the wet heat deep inside him. A few more pumps of his cock and he shot his seed into his hand. Both men rested their heads together and

Cree slipped out of Jake. "That was damn good, cowboy." He leaned in and gave Jake a passionate kiss.

Nicco slipped back out into the hall and cleared his throat. "Um...Jake, are you in here?"

Jake and Cree broke apart and scrambled for their clothes, laughing. "Yeah, Nicco, I'm in here, just give me a minute." He finished pulling his jeans and boots on, looked to make sure Cree was covered and called for Nicco to come in.

"Sorry to bother you two but Rex Cotton just called. It seems he got back after a night in the city and the house on the Double B's been boarded up. He figures that's a sign that maybe Buck will be gone a while. Cotton said he would stay on in his foreman's house and take care of what he could until the money ran out or he heard differently from you." Nicco looked from Cree to Jake, nodded and left the office.

Looking over at Cree, Jake smiled. "Uh...did you notice something funny about Nicco?"

"If you mean the hard-on he was sporting and the red face, I'd say yeah." Cree's eyes twinkled. "I guess he must have gotten a little more show than we thought. It also explains a few things about Nicco."

Jake looked at Cree, confused. "What things?"

Cree sat back in his chair and smiled. "The aloofness and the broodiness, you know, the all-around sour disposition of our friend. I think maybe Nicco's gay but doesn't want to admit it to himself or anyone else."

"Huh, do you think one of should talk to him about it?"

"No, I think he's finally starting to work it out on his own. We'll just let him be unless he wants to talk." Cree looked at Jake and thought of another problem they had. "Do you think it's time we talked to Jenny about the baby?"

Scratching his head, Jake nodded. "Yeah, I know that she knows we both know about the baby. I'm afraid if we don't talk to her about she'll take it we don't want the child and nothing could be further from the truth. We also need to decide which one of us is going to be her lawful wedded husband."

"I've been thinking about that and I've got an idea. I need you to be totally honest with me if the idea I have offends you in any way." At Jake's nod, Cree continued to tell Jake of the plan for the future he'd come up with.

"Sounds good to me, Cree. I agree with you about the whole name thing. It will also solidify us as a family."

"Good, now let's go find our girl and propose." Cree jumped up from his chair and walked out of the office with a spring in his step.

## Chapter Fourteen

They found Jenny watching television with Nicco asleep on the couch. "Jenny, can we have a word with you? We thought maybe you'd like to go out to the corral and see Hope and Miss Candy." Cree pulled her up out of the chair and began walking to the door.

"Sure, I'd love to see Hope. No one has let me out of the house long enough to see her since the birth." Jenny snuggled up between Jake and Cree as they walked to the corral. Hope was the prettiest little thing she'd seen in a long time. Dark gray with black mane and tail she was a little spitfire. Bending down to nuzzle the skittish foal's neck, Jenny sighed in contentment.

"What did you two want to talk to me about?"

Jake and Cree came up on either side of her and pulled her up from the ground. Cree looked at Jake and nodded for Jake to tell Jenny the news about Buck. "Couple things really. First we got a call from Cotton over at the Double B. It seems Buck boarded up the house. Rex thinks it means he won't be back for quite a while."

"Is that a good thing or a bad thing?" Jenny questioned, looking from Jake to Cree.

Cree took her into his arms and kissed her nose. "Well, it could be either. On one hand maybe Buck has decided that there's too much heat to stay around and is going back to Mexico or it could mean he's planning on camping out around here for a while waiting to get to you."

At the sad and troubled look Jenny got on her face, Cree knew it was time for the next part of their discussion. He looked at Jake and Jake came up against Jenny's back and wrapped his arms around both her and Cree.

Jake kissed Jenny's neck and moved his arms down to rest on her abdomen. "We need to discuss the baby, Jenny. I know you wanted time but Cree and I are about to burst with happiness over it and we want to share that with you."

Jenny looked over her shoulder at Jake. "But you don't understand everything, Jake. There's a very real possibility that this baby was fathered by B—"

Cree interrupted Jenny with a kiss. "That baby belongs to the three of us, no matter what. Do you understand? Baker blood is Baker blood. Jake and I will be the best daddys you'll ever see."

Letting out the breath she'd been holding, Jenny placed Cree's hands on top of Jake's on her stomach and then placed her own hands over them. "Thank you both for understanding."

"Next thing on the agenda is to get married." Cree kissed her soundly. Jake and I've discussed it between the two of us and now it's time to get your reaction to the

proposition. But first let me do this." He separated himself from Jenny and went down on one knee. Jake came around Jenny and knelt beside Cree.

Both men took a hand and kissed it. Finally Cree spoke, "Jenny, would you do us the incredible honor of becoming our wife? We promise to love and cherish you every day of our lives."

Tears pooled in Jenny's eyes. "I love you both more than my own life, of course I'll marry you." She got a troubled look on her face. "How am I supposed to choose between the two of you? Legally I can only marry one man."

Getting up, Cree took Jenny into his arms once again. "We've decided for you. We knew it wouldn't be fair to you to have to do it. You'll marry me and become Jenny Sommers and Jake is planning to legally change his last name to Sommers. That way any children that we are blessed with will have both our names." Cree smiled at Jenny, proud of himself for finding the perfect solution to their problem.

"Can Jake change his name just like that?" Jenny looked to Jake for answers.

"Well, not 'just like that' but we can get an attorney and have him file the necessary papers with the court. It'll take a little while but it can be done." Jake squeezed Jenny and kissed Cree.

"Okay, then let's do it. Um...when are we going to get married? Because I'm going to start showing before long and even though I don't want a big wedding in a church, I do want pictures." She chuckled and looked at the two men. "I don't think I want to advertise to our baby my condition before our wedding."

Nuzzling her neck, Cree stopped and looked into Jenny's eyes. "How about next week? We could do it here at the ranch with just close friends."

"Sounds perfect to me," Jake said. "Then after the reception is over we can come back out to the pasture just the three of us and you two can marry me."

"Oh it all sounds so lovely." Jenny's face took on the troubled look again. "Cree, what about the people in Junctionville? Will they approve of their sheriff living with two other people?"

"Absolutely, Jenny. Junctionville is kind of an artists community. Most of the people here have their own idiosyncrasies. That's why Jake and I moved here. You'll see, our baby won't be treated any differently because of our living arrangements."

\* \* \* \* \*

That evening Remy and Jenny were on cleanup duty. Jake had grilled steaks and corn on the cob so she volunteered to do the dishes. Jenny washed as Remy dried. She looked over at the man beside her. He was so devastatingly handsome. Black curls against perpetually tanned skin. She began to wonder what his life was like away from the Triple Spur. "What is it you do for a living, Remy?" She looked over at him and passed him another plate to dry.

Remy looked at her and took the dish Jenny handed him. "Well, I grew up outside New Orleans but wit de hurricane I had ta find a new base o' operation. My best friend Anton and his wife owned a bar in Key West so I went dere and bought into de business. About two years ago Anton was killed in a boating accident. Since den I run de bar wit his widow Corrine."

Jenny looked over at Remy. He had a very sad and troubled expression on his face like he was suddenly lost in thought. "What's the name of your bar?"

His eyes came back to her with a little headshake. A smile spread across his face showing two of the deepest dimples she'd ever seen. "'The Crazy Cajuns'. Jake came up wit dat name while we were in de Seals and it jus kinda stuck."

Remy put the dishes away and just stood looking at Jenny like he wanted to ask her a question but didn't know if he should. "*Cherie*, why would a woman feel guilty if a man abused her? I mean, it's not like dat was her fault, right?" He ran his fingers through his hair and looked down at the floor.

Jenny saw the need to really understand in his eyes and on his face. She thought about it and pulled on his hand until they were both sitting at the kitchen table. Licking her lips, Jenny wasn't sure of how to make him understand.

"I can't speak for anyone but me, Remy, but I can tell you my feelings and you can judge for yourself if it fits whatever situation you're asking about, okay?"

Remy reached across the table and took her hand in his. "Please."

"When Buck hurt me I couldn't help feeling guilty because I feel I should have seen the signs. He was my stepfather, for God sakes. I never knew my real father. Heck, my own mother told me when I was fifteen that she'd never loved me but I thought Buck did love me. He was always so attentive. He was always pulling me down on his lap for a morning or nighttime hug. I just assumed that's what all fathers did. If Buck found out I wanted something it was in my hands that same day." Remy's hand raised and wiped the tears from her face.

"You don't have ta go on, *cherie*. I'm sorry I brought it up. Come, let's go see what everyone else is doin'." He got up from his chair and tried to pull her up.

Jenny shook her head no and pulled him back down. "No, Remy, I need to talk about this with someone." She dried her eyes and took another deep breath.

"I thought Buck was doing all those things for me because I was his daughter. I was wrong, he...he was courting me. He was just waiting for me to turn eighteen so he could marry me." It was strange how she'd misread him for so many years. "When Jake and Cree showed up at the ranch five years ago Buck finally saw that my love was not for him but for them. He went out of his mind and branded me that night. He punched me and kicked me until I thought I was going to die."

Remy continued to squeeze her hand while Jenny wiped more tears. "The guilt comes from knowing I loved someone capable of such violence and not seeing it in time." Jenny looked at Remy and knew she was somehow hitting close to home.



"Remy, I don't know why you need to understand this unless someone you care about has been abused. Is that it, Remy? Do you know someone like that besides me?" Now it was Jenny's turn to squeeze his hand.

*"Oui, cherie, de woman I've loved all my life."* Remy let out a weary breath and continued. "I've tried being patient wit her but she's always doin' sometin to try to get me riled up. She looks at me wit de same haunted eyes dat I see in you at times."

Jenny thought about Remy's situation for a minute and smiled. "She's testing you."

"Testing me for what? I love her, I'd never lay a hand on her in dat way."

Standing up, she crossed to the fridge and got out two cold colas. Passing one to Remy, she wound up their conversation. "She wants to see you get mad to see if you can control your temper in a nonviolent way. Get mad, Remy, and show her that you won't raise a hand to her. That and patience will win her in the end if she loves you."

Draining the cola, she threw the can in the trash. "I'm lucky I've always known Jake and Cree would never physically harm me but some women have to be shown." Jenny kissed Remy on the cheek and went to find her men.

## Chapter Fifteen

Jenny couldn't find Cree or Jake in the house so she grabbed her gun and asked Ben to take her to the barn. The evening was awash in pinks and oranges as the sun set across the pastures. The air smelled of horses and dust and home. She loved this place. Jenny couldn't wait until Buck was found so she could work the horses alongside Jake again.

On the way to the barn Jenny heard a loud popping sound. Her body was forced down into the dry yard. Ben was on top of her, shouting for help. More shots rang out. Too many for just one gun, evidently the good guys were shooting back. The longer she lay there, the harder it became to breathe. Jenny tried to push herself up but Ben wasn't budging.

"Stay down, Jenny. Buck's shooting at us."

She could hear Jake calling her name but she was starting to get dizzy. The yard was suddenly quiet except the sound of running feet. Ben crawled off her but Jenny still couldn't get a good breath.

Jenny looked up at Ben to thank him when she saw the look on his face. Uh-oh. Ben's eyes widened and he began screaming for Jake.

"Get over here now, Jake. Remy, call for an air ambulance. The rest of you find Cree and go after that SOB." Ben brushed the hair off Jenny's forehead. "It's going to be all right, Jenny, we'll get him. Just lie still."

Jake reached Jenny's side and crumpled beside her. "Oh God, baby, what has he done?" Jake was crying and pushing his hand down hard on her side. Damn that hurt. Jenny looked at where he was pushing and saw all the blood. It seemed Buck had got her again. When would she be allowed to stop paying for not loving him?

"Ben, come over and keep pressure on this wound for me." Jake stretched out beside her and wrapped her in his arms. "That's better, baby. I need to hold you."

Blue came over and flopped down at Jenny's side. Resting his head on her leg, Blue whimpered and licked Jenny's jeans.

Jenny could feel her breath getting shallower every second. She struggled to speak. Jenny had to let Jake know how she felt in case she didn't make it.

"C-Cowboy, I love you. I have since I was twelve years old." She paused to catch what little breath she had. "Please take care of Cree for me. Even though he's the sheriff I don't think he's as strong as you. Tell..." Jenny couldn't seem to catch her breath. "Tell him I love him and I'm sorry about the baby. He wanted it so b-badly." The darkness claimed her.

"Jenny? Jenny, baby, don't you die on me." Jake looked at her pale face and he was sure that Buck had finally won. "Where the hell is that ambulance?" He was so angry nothing more would come out of his mouth. Jake curled against Jenny's side and whispered his love to her. "Don't leave me, baby. Please, baby, don't leave me. I've finally found you again. You need to be here to help me take care of Cree." He heard a vehicle drive up and slam on its brakes. The next thing he saw was Cree kneeling down at Jenny's head.

Jake looked at Cree, the tears making it hard to see his face. He blinked and reached for his hand. "It's bad, Cree. It's so bad. There's too much blood. Help us please."

Cree let out an anguished sound and dropped his forehead to Jenny's. "No, not again. Jenny Barnes, I will not give you up. Wake up, Jenny, and look at me."

Jake reached for Cree and pulled him down beside him so they could both hold their Jenny. They must have been in shock because they didn't even hear the air ambulance land. Jake felt someone tugging on his shirt and looked up. It was Ben.

"Come on, cowboy, you need to let these people work on her." He tugged at Cree and Jake until they shook themselves off and became aware of their surroundings.

Jake stood up and helped Cree. Wrapping his arms around him, Cree rested his head on Jake's shoulder and continued to cry. Jake rubbed his back and waited while the medical technicians worked on Jenny. They were carrying her toward the helicopter when Jake managed to extricate himself from Cree and catch up to them.

"Please tell me she'll live?" Jake held his breath waiting for the answer.

"Sorry, too soon to tell. She's got a collapsed lung and is losing blood fast. I normally wouldn't say this, but get to the hospital as fast as you can."

Jake grabbed Cree's hand and headed for his brand-new sheriff's SUV. "You can arrest me after if you need to, but I'm driving with the lights and siren on." Jake got Cree in the passenger side and went around to the driver's side. A big hand stopped him from opening the car door.

"Neither one of ya are in any condition ta drive. I'll take ya. I've always wanted ta ride wit de light and sirens." Remy opened the back door and Jake got in.

The ride to the hospital was ninety miles. Jake crossed his fingers that Jenny would still be alive when they got there. He reached up to the front seat and took Cree's hand and patted and soothed him.

They got to the hospital in next to no time thanks to Remy's excellent driving skills and the lights and sirens. Remy pulled up at the emergency room entrance and Cree and Jake ran inside. Jake looked around the crowded room for a nurse.

Spotting one, he rushed over to the plump, gray-haired woman. "The helicopter brought in a patient with a gunshot wound. Where can we find out how she is?"

The nurse looked over the top of her glasses at them with a sympathetic look on her face. "They took the dear child up to the operating room after we inserted a chest tube. Her breathing was much better when they took her up." She reached out to touch Jake's

arm. "Take the elevator to the second floor and turn to your right. You'll see the OR waiting room and when they know something someone will be out to speak to both of you."

Remy came running through the door. "What ya find out?"

Cree relayed what the nurse had said and Remy nodded. "I'm gonna get a taxi and head back to de ranch. I'm sure dey could use all de help dey could get." He shook Cree's and Jake's hands and went outside to find a taxi.

Instead of waiting for the elevator, Cree and Jake ran up a flight of steps. They found the waiting room and began to pace. The room was small—only about twelve by twelve feet with lime green vinyl seating and beige walls.

After they'd had many cups of coffee and an equal number of trips to the restroom a doctor finally came into the room and called their names. He introduced himself as Dr. Ross Hamilton, shook their hands, guided them to a more secure room and sat them down.

"Miss Barnes is a very lucky lady. She had a collapsed lung upon arrival which the ER dealt with before she was brought up to surgery. We had to go in to repair the lung but she was lucky the bullet passed through her body without hitting any other vital organs. The loss of blood concerned us as well as her pregnancy. We gave her two pints of blood and did a sonogram and mother and babies seem to be doing all right for now."

Jake's eyes just about popped out of his head. "Babies? As in plural?"

"Yes, didn't you know? Miss Barnes is approximately six to seven weeks along. We almost missed the second fetus but it's definitely there."

Jake looked at Cree and then back at Dr. Hamilton. "Dr. Hamilton, according to Jenny's family doctor she should be more like eight to nine weeks pregnant. How can that be?"

He looked a little surprised and then smiled. "Well, if all he did was a physical examination he could have very easily been a couple weeks off on his estimation. You see, with twins the uterus becomes larger than with a single birth. Usually most doctors determine the age of the fetus by measuring the uterus. It isn't until later that an actual sonogram is performed."

Jake got up from his chair and enthusiastically shook the doctor's hand. "Thank you so much, Dr. Hamilton. When can we see Jenny and take her home?" He was sure he must have been looking at him like a begging puppy.

"Miss Barnes is in the recovery room right now. She should be moved to a private room in about an hour or so. We want to watch her closely for a while in case there are complications with the pregnancy. We'll be keeping her here at the hospital for several more days at least. Better safe than sorry I always say."

Doctor Hamilton patted Jake on the shoulder. "I don't know the lady's full medical history but her body's been through about all it can stand. When you get her out of here

take care of her." *A little better.* Jake heard what he was implying, but didn't know how to defend himself. Luckily, Cree stepped up to the plate.

"It's her stepfather and we do plan to catch him one way or another."

The doctor nodded his head and, taking in Cree's uniform, shook their hands one last time. "You do that, Sheriff."

\* \* \* \* \*

Jenny tried to open her eyes but they wouldn't cooperate. Her throat felt like she'd swallowed sandpaper. "Thirsty," she managed to croak.

She could hear rustling noises around her and then Cree's voice so low and melodic. "Here, sweetheart." He lifted her head a little and put something cold against her lips. "Open your mouth, Jenny. It's just ice chips but it'll help."

Jenny fought again to open her eyes as the cold ice melted in her mouth. After several attempts she managed to get her eyes open. To the side of Jenny's bed stood Cree and Jake, looking at her anxiously. "Good. Thank you."

Cree bent over her and brushed the hair out of her face. "I'm going to put your hair into a braid, sweetheart. There's no sense fighting with it while you're in bed." He pulled Jenny's hair to the side and began to lovingly braid it. She knew he needed to feel useful so she just smiled at him.

When he was finished he took the rawhide thong from his own black silky hair and tied the end. "There, all better. Would you like some more ice?"

"No thank you, love. Seeing your faces is enough." Her men looked tired, worn-out and strung out. She started feeling guilty for everything she was putting them through.

"I'm sorry about this...about the baby. Did the doctors say if we could have more?" Jenny couldn't believe what she was seeing. Both men were smiling at her, practically bouncing on their toes like little boys at Christmas.

*What's wrong with them? Have they no heart or did they really detest the thought of her carrying Buck's child?*

They both bent down and kissed her and then turned to each other and kissed. Jake got a grin on his face and looked at Cree and then Jenny. "You didn't lose the baby. In fact you added another one." He chuckled like he'd just told a big secret.

What did he say? How is that possible? "I know my head is still a little funny but what are you talking about?"

Cree looked over at the childlike look on Jake's face and rolled his eyes. "He's trying to tell you that we aren't having one baby, we're having twins!"

"Oh my God, twins? I'm going to have twins. Oh my God. I'm going to have *twins*." Now she understood Jake's bouncing glee. "You're saying I'm having twins and they're both all right?"

Jenny couldn't take it all in. She had been sure she was going to die. Jenny knew she would lose the baby at the least. But this!

Jake kissed her again. "That's not all we found out. According to the sonogram you're only six to seven weeks along. That means Buck can't be the father." Jenny's head started swimming again. She tried to focus on Jake and Cree, willing them to pull her back to earth.

"That means Cree and I both get one to play with." Jake was still bouncing and Jenny began to giggle.

"You mean you both get one to wake up with in the middle of the night when it's feeding time."

Cree's brow shot up at that remark. "With those boobs you're packing I assumed you'd breastfeed." He seemed to realize what he'd said and tried to dig himself out of the hole. "I mean, sure. Whatever you want, sweetheart. Jake and I can get up in the night with them."

Jenny couldn't help but feel sorry for the poor goofball. "Relax, I'm actually planning to breastfeed but I'll want help getting the babies' diapers changed and then brought to me to feed. I'd much rather stay in bed between the men I love and feed our children. Wouldn't you like that too?"

Knowing he was forgiven, Cree decided to try to be funny again. "With boobs like those I'm not completely sure there will be enough to go around after Jake and I get our milk and cookies before bed."

Thinking he'd made the funniest joke in the world, Cree looked at Jake and poked him in the chest. "Isn't that right, Jake?"

Jake looked at Jenny with sympathy in his eyes. "Please forgive numb nuts. He's working on very little sleep."

They did look so tired. Jenny began to feel guilty all over again. They didn't have any of these troubles until she came back into their lives. Jenny looked at Cree, so strong and beautiful, her own private Indian warrior. Jake with his shaggy hair and amber eyes, how could a girl get so lucky as to have both of them love her?

Letting out a contented breath, Jenny reached out and touched both her men. "Go home, loves, and get some rest. You can see what your team found out about Buck. I'm fine for the night. In fact, I'm feeling really tired and sore. I think I'd sleep better knowing you two were taking care of yourselves as well."

They both looked at her and scowled but they all knew she was right. "We'll let you sleep, sweetheart. One or both of us will be back first thing tomorrow morning." Cree bent and kissed her softly. He stepped back and Jake bent and kissed her a little more hungrily.

"It's almost midnight, baby, get some rest. We love you, Jenny." With that, Jake and Cree walked out of her room.

\* \* \* \* \*

"What did you guys find?" Jake asked into the cell phone. Even though it was after midnight he knew the guys would be waiting up for his call.

"Damn, it's about time you called, Jake," Ben said with a heavy sigh. "How is Miss Jenny? We tried to call the hospital but no one would give out any information."

"She and the babies are doing fine. Did you get that, Ben? Babies as in plural. Jenny's having twins and they both came through the shooting just fine."

"That's fantastic, Jake. Here's some more good news. We captured Buck. We'll tell you all about it when you get here."

"Roger on that, Ben. We'll be home in about thirty minutes, put some coffee on, will ya? We're both beat but we'll want to hear every detail."

Cree and Jake arrived to a kitchen smelling of coffee and bacon and eggs. As they sat down at the table Gabe handed each of them a cup of coffee and plate with bacon and egg sandwiches. "I thought you two might be hungry since you missed supper. I'll go round up the guys."

Cree reached across the table and took Jake's hand. "We've got damn good friends, cowboy."

Jake squeezed back and leaned in for a taste of Cree's mouth. Tasting Cree filled him up more than the plate of food ever could. "I love you, sheriff."

"Geez, you two, can ya give us a break fer once." Remy chuckled but came up and pounded each man on the back. "Congratulations on de twins."

"Thanks, Remy. Now who's going to tell us about Buck? Nicco, why don't you fill us in. I know I'll get the facts from you with no wishy-washy stuff thrown in." Cree chuckled and sat back in his chair rubbing his belly.

Nicco looked a little surprised and cleared his throat. "Well...uh...after you left to go to the hospital we split up and started searching the tree line where the shots had been fired. Remy caught sight of a blood trail, so we knew someone hit him. We followed the trail to the hills in the east valley. There we found the trail leading into a small cave about half the way up the hill. It wasn't hard to get him to come out. He was passed out from blood loss by the time we found him."

"Ben called the state police on his cell phone and we carried him back to the ranch. The police were here along with an ambulance. You have good friends, Cree. They refused to call in the helicopter for him. They said he could ride in the ambulance to the hospital."

Jake nodded his head in thanks to the team. "So how bad was he hurt? Critical, I'm hoping. Am I right?"

Nodding his head, Remy put down his coffee. "Sorry, buddy, it looked like de bullet grazed his temple. Lots of blood but I'm thinking very little damage."

Cree looked around the table. "Please tell me they didn't take Buck to the same hospital they took Jenny."

He waited for an answer and only got uncomfortable looks. Ben cleared his throat, "Uh...yeah, Cree, I think they did."

Cree stood up so fast his chair fell back and crashed onto the floor. "Shit. I gotta call the hospital and check on Jenny. I can't believe she's there alone with that bastard." Cree was so angry it took him several attempts to dial the correct number.

Finally, he was put through to the nurses' station on Jenny's floor. He asked the nurse if she was okay. "Yes, Mr. Sommers, I gave her some pain medication and a good sedative in her IV not a half-hour ago. She'll be sleeping like a baby until morning."

Cree thanked her and hung up the phone. "Jake, do you think one of us should go watch her room until they get Buck locked up?"

Nodding his head, Jake got up from his chair. "I'll go. I'd like to take a quick shower first to wake myself up a bit." Jake nodded to his team and headed upstairs.

Cree sent the other men off to bed and followed Jake up the stairs.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jake was already in the walk-in shower when Cree got undressed. Opening the door, Cree saw the lost look on Jake's face. "Come here, cowboy," Cree opened his arms and Jake walked right in.

Wrapping his arms around Jake, Cree only meant to comfort him but evidently his cock had other ideas. Springing up between them Cree's cock was heavy and full. "God, you feel good."

Jake's cock must have been thinking the same thing because it too became hard and thick. Jake grabbed Cree and urgently began thrusting his tongue into his mouth. They couldn't get close enough.

Rubbing their cocks together, Jake and Cree began pinching each other's nipples. Cree left Jake's mouth and bit and licked his way down his neck to his chest. Sucking up marks around Jake's nipples, he swirled his tongue and bit the ever growing nub. Cree continued down Jake's chest to his navel and laved and sucked the tiny hole.

Head thrown back, Jake grabbed two handfuls of Cree's long black hair and held on for what he knew was coming next. Cree's lips nipped their way down to the bulbous head of Jake's cock.

"Oh that's good, sheriff."

Taking as much as possible into his mouth, Cree nodded his agreement. Jake shifted his hips and began thrusting into Cree's mouth. "Do me, Cree."

Cree looked up at Jake and pulled off his cock with a loud pop. "Turn around, cowboy."

Jake turned around and braced his hands against the tile wall. Cree reached up and found the tube of lube on the top shelf of the shower. Squirting a liberal amount onto his fingers, Cree went to work on Jake's ass.



While he prepared Jake's hole he used his other hand to massage Jake's heavy sac. Jake fucked the air while Cree stretched him.

Lining up his cock with Jake's well stretched and relaxed hole, Cree shoved in to the hilt. "Oh, cowboy...so tight...so good...gonna make me come."

Pushing back into Cree's thrusting drives, Jake took his own cock in hand and began pumping. He threw his head back and Cree bit his neck. "Gonna, sheriff...gonna...uhhh." Jake came in a blaze of glory.

Jake's orgasm milked the cum right out of Cree's cock. "Oh it's good, cowboy." Cree and Jake both collapsed onto their knees both still shaking with aftershocks.

"Love you, cowboy." Cree kissed and stroked Jake lovingly.

"Love you, sheriff." Jake stood and rinsed himself off, reaching down to pull Cree up when he was finished. "I've gotta get back to the hospital. Did you want to come or do you want the second shift?"

Rinsing off, Cree shook his head. "No, I'm coming with you. No tellin' what you might do with Buck in the same hospital. We can send one of the guys for the second shift."

As they were drying off they heard the phone ringing. Cree looked at Jake. "It's past two in the morning, that can't be good news."

Cree wrapped the towel around his waist and ran to the phone. He reached for the phone just as Gabe knocked on the bedroom door. "Cree, the state police are on the phone for you, they say it's urgent."

Closing his eyes, Cree took a deep breath, afraid of what he was about to hear. "Thanks, Gabe, I got it in here." Cree picked up the phone. "Sheriff Sommers. What's wrong?"

## Chapter Sixteen

Jake could tell something big had happened by the red in Cree's face and the white of his knuckles as he clutched the phone. He could only hear Cree's side of the conversation but it was enough to make him break out into a sweat.

"Assholes! What about Jenny? Is she safe? So help me God, if you assholes let him get her there will be hell to pay!"

Cree nodded and walked to the closet and withdrew a pair of jeans, t-shirt and a clean pair of socks. "Okay, put me on hold while you have someone check on her but don't you dare hang up on me."

Looking grim, Cree nodded his head toward the closet. "Get dressed, Jake. The assholes let Buck get away from them at the hospital. They're checking on Jenny right now."

Cree got dressed with the phone tucked under his chin. "What! What do you mean you can't find her? Fuck! Of all the incompetent... Fuck it, my crew will find her and you can expect a full report on your commanding officer's desk as soon as we find her." Cree slammed the phone down and looked at Jake with fury in his eyes.

"Better stick your head outside the door and yell for the team to get dressed. Full battle gear. That bastard's taken Jenny from the hospital. Meeting in the dining room in five minutes."

Five minutes later the team assembled in the dining room in full military gear. All six of them checking and loading their numerous weapons. Knives went into boots, guns into ankle straps and shoulder straps.

Nicco was the sharpshooter of the bunch, so he was cleaning and testing the scope on his L96 sniper rifle. As always, Nicco seemed to be in a zone.

Jake looked up at Cree. "I called my foreman Hank and told him to leave two men with the horses. The rest of them are to fan out around the hills in that section of the ranch and look for any place Buck could have taken Jenny."

Cree gave him a quick nod. "I think you were right to do that. My thinking is that Buck wants to torment us with the fact he has Jenny. What better place than on our land?" Cree stood up to address his team. "Okay, guys, here are the plans. I'll need two of you to go into the city and check out the hospital. Find out how in the hell a man could just walk out carrying an unconscious woman. See if you can pick up any kind of trail. Talk to everyone you can. I'd say Remy and Gabe would be the best to go. Ben and Nicco are too unapproachable. That leaves Ben and Nicco to help Jake and me cover the front half of the ranch.

"Take your cell phones and your hands-free communication radios. I'm not taking any chances with missed calls or dead batteries. If you get in a situation with Buck and you see no other option, shoot to kill. The only thing that matters is that Jenny gets out of this safely."

Cree nodded to the men and the table emptied as each man went about his assigned tasks. Cree grabbed his radio and phone off the table and grabbed his rifle. "Come on, cowboy, you're with me."

\* \* \* \* \*

Jenny woke the next morning to the musty smell of dirt. She opened her eyes and looked around. "This isn't my hospital room," she murmured to herself.

"Damn straight it's not."

The bottom fell out of her stomach and she snapped her head around to see Buck sitting on a chair in the corner. Even though there was very little light in the room Jenny could see the sweat-dampened pale face of Buck. "Please not again, Buck. Please don't do this to me. If you've ever really loved me as a daughter you'll let me go now."

Buck got up from his chair and staggered over to her holding a gun. "Dumb bitch. Haven't you figured it out yet? I've never loved you like a daughter. When I walked into that hotel bar and saw you at the age of twelve I knew you were meant for me. You were supposed to be mine. The only reason I didn't take you then was because I was afraid you'd sic the law on to me."

Looking into his eyes, she could tell something was wrong with him. Not just the fact that he'd gone completely insane but something else. Jenny saw the bandage on his temple. That along with the clammy look about him and the feverish flush to his face told her that infection had set in to Buck Baker's body.

She knew the longer she kept him talking, the weaker he'd become. That would give her guys more time to find her. "What about Helen? Didn't you love her?"

"Christ, you're dumber than you look, aren't you? I hated that woman. The only reason I married her was to have some kind of legal right to you. I told her as much a couple months after we were married." He gave Jenny a leering grin. "Your momma liked my money too much to put your welfare first."

Jenny remembered a conversation she'd had with her mother when she was fifteen. Jenny was in her room changing her school clothes so she could go help with the chores. Helen came into the room and looked at Jenny disdainfully. "If you want to keep a roof over our heads you need to stop putting so many clothes on. Try not wearing a bra once in a while, you prude."

Jenny was shocked at her mother's outburst. "Momma, I can't go out there without a bra."

Helen's eyes blazed. "You're so selfish." She stormed across the room to Jenny and slapped her across the cheek. "Listen and listen good. You will do whatever it takes to

keep us here on this ranch. Now get outside and show your stepdaddy how much you love him."

Walking out the bedroom door, Helen turned once more to face Jenny. "You have always held me back. I should have aborted you when your father refused to marry me. Who wants a woman with a kid around all the time? It's no wonder I've never loved you. Be thankful that someone does and that someone is Buck Baker."

Jenny had always thought her mother meant Buck was the only one that felt parental love for her but more recently she had learned differently. Buck was staring down at her like he was ready to pounce. She tried to sit up but grabbed her side in pain.

"My momma was always looking out for herself." She looked at Buck. "You were perfect for each other."

Buck was in front of her in a flash and backhanded her across the face. "You bitch. Don't try to get me mad enough to kill you. I've got my own plans for you."

Pacing back and forth across the floor, Buck pinched the bridge of his nose. Jenny could tell the infection was getting worse. "Where are we, Buck? What are these plans you mentioned?"

Buck stopped fingering his nose and his head shot up to stare at Jenny. "Just sit tight. We're going to wait for Jake and that faggot friend of his to come lookin' for you. I can't wait to see the look on his face when he figures out I brought you home where you belong. When he and that queer sheriff show up I've got a plan to trap 'em. Once they're tied up they're going to watch us making love before I kill them both.

"You see, Jenny, all this could have been avoided if you'd just remembered where your loyalties should have been. Now you won't have a choice because they'll be dead. Then I can fuck you all day long every day. I haven't fucked since the last time you gave it up for me." Buck reached down and started rubbing his erection.

Bile rose in Jenny's throat and she thought she was going to faint. "I gave up nothing to you. You took it with force. Didn't you get enough sex from my mother and every other woman in town?"

Buck chuckled and rubbed his chin. "Sure, I fucked your mother. What else was I supposed to do with the hard-on you gave me every day? Fucked practically every woman in town at least twice but none of them was a proper substitute for you, blue eyes."

Disgusted, Jenny spat out, "You're sick."

"Yeah, so I've heard. That's what finally did your momma in. Helen started getting mouthy about wanting more money to keep you around." Buck shrugged his shoulders. "So I had to get rid of her."

Frozen, Jenny looked at the monster before her. "What do you mean you had to get rid of her?"

"Hell, girl, the woman was only thirty-six years old. Do you really think she died of heart failure?" Buck smiled to himself. "Well, okay, she did technically die of heart failure but I guess you could say it wasn't because of natural causes. Do you have any idea how many poisons there are around a ranch?"

Buck stalked toward the door. "I'm going to find me something for this headache. Don't try to get out or I'll chain you to the bed. Don't bother screaming either. The house has been boarded up and the cowboys have all been let go." Buck left the room and locked the basement door.

\* \* \* \* \*

As he was guiding his horse over yet another expanse of rock, Cree's cell phone rang. He grabbed the phone and looked at the caller ID. "Hey, Gabe, what've you found out?" He brought his horse to a stop beside Jake.

"Nothing really, Cree. The nurses on Jenny's floor didn't see anything. I found a janitor that saw Buck leave with her though. He said he questioned Buck about the unconscious woman in his arms. Buck pointed to his own bandage and told him that Jenny was his daughter and they'd been in a car accident and he was taking her home."

Cree was gripping the phone forcefully and Jake placed a hand on his thigh. Cree took a breath and rubbed Jake's hand. "What else have you found? Anything about where they went after the hospital?"

"I'm not sure. I got a report that a guy was seen getting into a cab with a woman about the same time Jenny went missing but I haven't been able to track down the driver yet. He should be coming back on shift in about an hour."

"Keep on it, Gabe." Cree disconnected the call and relayed the information to Jake.

Leaning over his saddle, Jake gave Cree a sympathetic kiss. "We'll find her, sheriff."

Nodding his head, Cree took one more quick kiss. "Yeah, cowboy, we will. Riding around here I've been thinking. If Buck wanted to torment us with Jenny, where would be the best place?" Cree tilted his head sideways, his eyes in thought. "Do you suppose he boarded up the Double B for a reason? That's the place he considers Jenny's home, after all."

"Damn, Cree, you may be right. Do you have Cotton's number on ya?" Jake grabbed the little bit of hope Cree was offering.

Pulling out his phone, Cree found Cotton's number and called it.

"Cotton."

"Hey, Cotton, it's Cree. Say have you seen anything of Buck? He kidnapped Jenny from the hospital after he shot her and we're trying to find him."

Cotton exhaled loudly. "Sorry, Cree, I've not been to the ranch for a couple days. I've been helping a friend. I'll go over now and check it out."

Cree knew he could trust Cotton but he didn't want Buck to take off if he saw him snooping around. "Play it cool, Cotton. We don't want for Buck to see you or he might take off."

"No problem, Cree. I can ride my horse over there. The friend I'm helping bought the old Sampler Nursery that butts up to the Double B. If Buck's there he won't see me. I'll call as soon as I know."

Cree disconnected the call and looked at Jake. "I think we should call in Nicco and Ben and regroup up at the house."

## Chapter Seventeen

After Buck left the room Jenny tried once again to get to her feet. She had to get some of her strength back if she was going to go toe to toe with Buck. The stitches pulled as she sat up but so far so good. Taking a deep breath, Jenny eased her feet to the floor. Putting one hand on the old white iron footboard and one hand on her side to keep pressure on the wound, Jenny managed to get to her feet.

Pain shot up and down the side of her body. Jenny took a few calming breaths and started to walk toward the door. It was slow going but she reached the door and tried the knob. She knew it was locked but she was trying to determine what sort of lock it was when she heard footsteps coming down the stairs.

As quickly as she could Jenny made it back to the bed. The door opened and Buck came in carrying a lunch tray. "I brought you something to eat, my dear little bitch."

Buck set the tray down beside her and sat back in his chair. "So have you decided to be a good little girl? Because you know bad little girls get punished. You've already been punished enough, Jenny. It's time to know your place."

He was right. She sure had been punished enough and she had the scars to prove it. Jenny didn't even want to think what being a "good little girl" would entail, but she needed to keep him talking to buy more time. She knew Cree and Jake were searching for her.

Rex Cotton called back within an hour. "I think he's there. I didn't see his pickup but I did see what appeared to be fresh tire tracks leading into the tool shed. I tried to check out the shed but it was locked up tight. Tell me what you want me to do."

Cree looked across the table at his team. "Stay put, Cotton. I don't want to bring the police in yet so don't call them unless you see or hear something. We're headed to Oklahoma now. We should be there in about three to three and a half hours depending on how fast we drive."

"Sounds good, Cree. I'll stay put behind the barn so don't shoot when you see me."

"Ain't gonna happen, Cotton. Just don't remember names or faces after my men leave."

Pushing *end* on his cell phone, Cree turned to Jake. "She's there with Buck. Let's go. We need to take two vehicles because Jenny's riding home with you and me."

\* \* \* \* \*

"So tell me, Buck, what is it that makes a man fall in love with a twelve-year-old girl? Was I just special or do all little girls strike your fancy?"

Buck exploded out of his chair, pointing his finger at Jenny. "Stop trying to make me out to be some kind of pervert." He backhanded her once again. "What I always felt for you was true love. I waited for you to turn eighteen, didn't I? Hell, your momma would have let me have you at twelve if it meant she could keep spending my money."

Jenny dabbed the blood from her split lip and scooted back a little farther on the bed. "Okay, I get that you love me but I love your son and Cree. I'm sorry, Buck, but I didn't plan it. Sometimes things just happen and no one is to blame. Forget about killing Jake and Cree. It won't make me love you. Nothing will."

Buck grabbed Jenny by the hair and hauled her off the bed. "Get over to the sink and clean yourself up." He shoved her toward the sink.

Jenny lost her balance and slammed into the sink, hard. The pain was unbearable in her side. She looked down and saw the blood seeping through the hospital gown she still wore. "Fuck!"

Another backhand to the face and Jenny was on the floor. "No woman of mine is going to talk like trash. Get your ass up and clean your face. I'll go get some bandages for your side." He stalked out of the room and locked the door.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jake and Cree arrived a couple minutes ahead of the rest of the guys. They were strapping on their weapons when Ben's black SUV drove up. Everyone quickly readied themselves and looked to Cree for further instructions.

Cree drew a map in the dust on the hood of Jake's truck. "The house is around the bend. The tool shed is on the back side of the house, the barn is on the side of the house. Spread out and use what you can for cover. Put your headsets on. Gabe, Ben and Remy meet behind the tool shed and wait for further instructions. Nicco, I want you in the hayloft with your sniper rifle. Jake and I'll go to the back of the barn and meet up with Cotton. Good luck and stay safe."

The men headed out. Jake couldn't believe the state of the Double B. How could a man become so obsessed with a woman that he'd let everything he'd worked his whole life for go to shit? That more than anything clued him into Buck's mental state.

They made it to the back of the barn and found Cotton. They shook hands with their long-time acquaintance. "Anything new?"

Rex shook his head. "Nothing that I can tell. I've been sitting here thinking about how odd Buck acted before he disappeared this last time. I remembered Buck had me pick up a new doorknob and deadbolt for the door to the storeroom in the basement. Now why do you suppose he'd need those things?"

"Fuck, not the basement. He kept her in a basement the last time he kidnapped her." Jake rubbed his forehead, thinking. "Gabe, you guys sit tight until you see me



unlock the front door. Nicco, keep that rifle aimed on the front door. If Buck comes out without one of us, shoot him between the eyes. Got it?"

"Roger that," Nicco replied.

"Roger," came from Gabe, Ben and Remy.

Jake turned to Cree. "I'm going in through my bedroom window. We sprang that lock so many times growing up, it's a piece of cake. You come in the front door with the rest of the team."

Cree shook his head. "No, Jake, I don't want you going in there by yourself. I'm coming with you, no matter what."

Jake thought about it for a second. "Stay behind me and only step where I step. The house has a lot of creaks but I know them all."

Jake started to walk off and stopped suddenly turning toward Cree. "No matter what happens in that house, know that I love you, sheriff." He grabbed Cree and gave him a quick kiss.

"Ditto."

\* \* \* \* \*

When Buck brought back the bandages, he also brought his electric branding iron and plugged it in to the electrical outlet. Jenny's eyes grew big as saucers. "Please, no more branding, Buck."

Buck shook his head in apparent disgust. "It's not my fault you keep forgetting whose property you are. If it's the only way to show you then I have no choice. Now take off that gown and clean yourself up."

When Jenny just sat there without moving, he became impatient. "Goddamn it. Do you need me to teach you another lesson right here and now? Now strip and clean yourself up."

Slowly, Jenny rose to her feet and untied the hospital gown. She pulled it off her shoulders and went to the sink where Buck had put the bandages. Using a washcloth, she gently cleaned the blood off around the wound. Jenny placed four thick gauze pads over the wound and used some first-aid tape to secure it in place.

She started to replace the gown, when Buck ripped it out of her hands. "Don't even think about it. Now go lay down on the bed." He gestured toward the bed and began taking his clothes off.

Jake successfully unlocked the front door and let the team in. Putting his finger to his lips, he led the way down the basement steps. At the bottom of the steps he assessed the lock. Looking back at the men, he drew his weapon and pointed it toward the lock.

Unplugging the red-hot branding iron on the way to the bed, Buck smiled. "So tell me where you want this reminder located, Jenny? Shall I put it on the other tit or maybe on your cute ass? I'll let you choose today but make it quick. My dick's hard and as soon as I mark you I'm gonna fuck you."

Buck sat down on the bed, branding iron in his hand. Jenny knew it was now or never for her. She looked sweetly at Buck and kicked him as hard as she could in the balls. Buck bent over wheezing.

Jenny rolled off the bed screaming and reached for the dropped branding iron. She swung it at Buck and knocked it against the side of his head. Jenny felt empowered. She straddled Buck and brought the branding iron down on his forehead just as the door blew open.

Buck was screaming bloody murder by the time Jake and the team filed into the small room. Cree had his gun aimed at Buck's head. Jake noticed the look in Cree's eyes and the barely controlled fury at seeing Jenny naked.

Jenny saw it too. She had to stop Cree from killing Buck in cold blood. "Cree, put the gun down. Buck isn't worth it. As a matter of fact I can't wait for him to go to prison and suffer." Jenny glanced at Buck. "He's a pretty man for a psycho. I'm sure all the men will be fighting over him, don't you think? Cree, look at me. I'm all right. Buck deserves to suffer slowly, don't give him the easy way out."

Cree flicked his eyes toward Jenny and took a deep breath. Slowly, he lowered his gun. Turning to Ben and Gabe, he motioned toward Buck. "Could you two please take out the trash until the police get here?"

Ben easily picked Buck up and threw him over his shoulder like a fifty-pound bag of dog food. His head was bleeding and he had a nice BB brand on his forehead. Jenny was happy with that one. She was proud of herself. She felt vindicated.

Jake and Cree pulled her into their arms and they all collapsed onto the floor in a tangle of limbs. Jake kissed Jenny and wiped the tears from her eyes. "How are you, baby?" Taking in her bruised face and split lip, Jake began to worry all over again. "Please tell me he didn't rape you again."

Jenny put her hands on either side of Jake's face and looked him in the eyes. "I'm fine and the babies are fine. Buck didn't rape me this time. I kicked him in the nuts when he got close enough to try. Then I hit him with the branding iron and branded his forehead. All in all, I'd say it's been a pretty productive day."

Jenny smiled and they both knew she'd be okay. She had finally taken control of her fear and fought back.

## Chapter Eighteen

Sitting in a hospital bed the next day, Jenny could finally relax. Buck had been taken to jail in Oklahoma City awaiting state charges to be filed. He also faced charges in Missouri and New Mexico. They currently had him on suicide watch.

Jenny reached down to rub her stomach. "It's over, babies. We can finally get on with the rest of our lives."

Cree and Jake strolled in at that moment. Cree looked at Jake and smiled. "So are you about ready to make an honest woman of yourself, sweetheart?" He bent down and kissed her.

"Of course. What took you so long? I've been ready since I was twelve." Jenny giggled and squeezed his hand. "They're going to let me out tomorrow for good behavior. But no sex for one more week until the stitches come out. So I guess I can marry you two a week from tomorrow. How does that sound?"

Jake took hold of her other hand and kissed her. "Perfect. Just like you." He pulled up a chair and sat beside the bed opposite Cree.

"We need to talk about what to do with the Double B. I was talking to Gabe and he'd like to put an offer on the table to buy it. I was wondering what you thought of the idea."

Jenny smiled and tilted her head toward Jake. "I think that's a wonderful idea. He told me he really enjoyed living and working on the Triple Spur so it makes perfect sense for him to buy it. I do feel a little guilty about Rex Cotton. He's been at the Double B for twenty-five years. It's really the only home he's ever had."

"Well, we'll just have to think of something then. I totally agree that we have to find a way to let him keep his little foreman's house."

Jenny sat up with a sparkle in her eye. "That's it! Why don't we sign over the foreman's house to Cotton and make a stipulation in the sales contract that he is foreman as long as he's able and willing. Do you think Gabe would agree to that?"

Rubbing his stubbly jaw, Jake thought about his old friend. "I think it would put his mind at ease. I'm sure he's going to need all the help he can get. He may be a good horseman but I don't know how much he knows about raising cattle and Cotton's the best. I'll talk it over with him tonight after supper."

Jenny smoothed the blankets over her legs. "Now let's talk about the wedding."

\* \* \* \* \*

The following week was full of activity. Jenny drove herself into Santa Fe to see her new obstetrician. While she was there she went shopping for a wedding dress. She ended up with a simple off-the-shoulder ivory tea-length dress with a lavender sash around the waist. She also made a trip to the salon. Jenny had her hair trimmed and a special treatment done as a wedding gift for Cree and Jake. Jenny smiled wickedly to herself as she left the salon.

The wedding was in two days and Nicco and Remy would come back into town tomorrow. They'd gone back home for a few days to try to catch up on their own work. Ben was still in talks with Kate Crawford about buying her parents' farm. Things didn't seem to be going as smoothly as he'd hoped.

Jenny caught up with Ben when she got home from shopping. "So, how are the talks with Kate going?"

Ben got a funny look on his face and shook his head. "Not so good, Jenny. I feel bad because she really doesn't want to sell the ranch but she just can't do it all by herself."

Rolling her eyes at Ben, Jenny shook her head. "Why is it that a woman always has to come up with good compromises? Here's what you do. You buy half of the ranch. Kate gets to keep half and you two become partners. I'm sure you two can figure out the living arrangements easily enough. You're easy to get along with and you'd be better than a guard dog at keeping the place safe." Jenny smiled mischievously at that last comment.

Slapping his palm to his forehead, Ben laughed. "Why didn't we think of that? I don't need the whole ranch. I just need somewhere to belong. Something physical to do. I'm not cut out for desk work."

Ben grabbed Jenny up in a fierce hug and kissed her on the forehead. "God, you're smart, Jenny."

"And damned sexy too." Cree came strolling into the kitchen. "Now can you tell me why you have your hands on my woman or do we need to take this outside?" Cree looked at Ben with a stern expression but blew it when his lip couldn't help twitching into a smile.

Ben backed away from Jenny and put his hands up. "Hey, man, I was just thanking her for solving my real estate problem."

"Yeah well, you've thanked her, now get out." Cree looked at Ben then looked at the door through narrowed eyes.

Backing toward the door, Ben still had his hands up. "Okay, I can take a hint. Do you want me to post a guard so no one comes in to interrupt anything?" he said with a smiling face.

"Just tell everyone to stay the hell out for a while."

Ben left snickering and Cree pulled Jenny into his arms. "Have a good day, sweetheart?" Before she could answer he ran his tongue over her lips seeking entrance. Jenny's lips parted and he thrust his tongue inside the hot depths of her mouth.

Jenny tasted coffee and mint and Cree. She broke the kiss and smiled up at him. "My day was fantastic. Dr. Warner said next month when I go in for my appointment you and Jake should come with me. We should be able to listen to the heartbeats then. I'm not scheduled for another sonogram for two more months though." Jenny stopped talking and nibbled his neck.

Suddenly she thought of something and looked up at Cree. "What are you doing home? Is there something wrong?"

"No, nothing's wrong, Jenny. Everyone at the office told me to take off early because I was growling like a bear." He shrugged his shoulders. "I can't help it. I know you're here and there's no other place I want to be."

Kissing him again, Jenny rubbed her hands up and down his chest. "I kinda like you being here too but you're going to have a lot of mouths to feed before long. You need your job, sheriff. Besides, Cree, I'll always be here when you get home."

Pulling her even closer, he sank in to her mouth once again. "I'm sorry we're not going to get a honeymoon, sweetheart. I've had to use all my vacation time in the last month." Cree bent his head and nibbled her neck. When he rubbed his erection against her soft mound, she stiffened and made a small squeak. Stilling him immediately, Cree drew back and looked at Jenny's face.

"What's wrong, sweetheart, did I hurt you? Is it your side? Please tell me what I did, Jenny?"

Jenny looked toward the floor. Oh boy, this was going to be embarrassing. "No love it's not my side. I um...I had a little procedure done today as a wedding present for you and Jake. It's still sore that's all but it should be fine by the time the wedding night gets here."

With a puzzled look on his face Cree put Jenny at arm's length and tilted her chin up with his finger. "Exactly what kind of procedure, Jenny?"

Gosh, now he was looking really worried. She'd have to tell him her surprise before he gave himself an ulcer. "I uh...had a wax job done. I thought you and Jake would like that."

A smile of relief passed over Cree's lips. "Like it? We'll love it. And kiss it and lick it and eat it. Let me see, Jenny."

Cree was as giddy as a schoolboy. Jenny just shook her head, resigned. "Okay, but don't touch it. I had no idea I would be this sore."

Cree lifted her onto the kitchen counter and pulled her skirt up. "Damn, sweetheart, you aren't even wearing underwear. Guess it's my lucky day." Looking at Jenny's bare pussy made his mouth drool. Flicking his tongue out to wet his lips, Cree swallowed. "It's the prettiest thing I've ever seen."

Backing up on the counter, Jenny put her hand out. "Cree, you promised no touching."

Looking up from her pussy to her face, Cree smiled. "I know I promised it's just hard. Hell, I'm hard. It does look a little too red though. Have you put anything on it since you left the salon?"

"No, I can't get myself to touch it."

"Stay right there, sweetheart. I've got some salve that Jake and I use."

Cree walked off, leaving Jenny on the counter with her skirt around her waist. "Hey, you can't just leave me here. What if someone comes in? Cree?"

Striding back into the kitchen carrying the salve, Cree grinned. "Not that anyone would mind the sight of you sitting half naked in the kitchen but I told them to stay out. Now scoot your butt back up here and lean back. Believe me, it won't hurt it'll make it feel much cooler."

Jenny nodded her head and got into the position he asked. Putting a good dollop of salve on his fingers, Cree leaned over her pussy. "Just one lick." He snaked out his tongue and licked in between her lips, getting a good deal of her previous arousal.

"Mmm, good." Cree stood and replaced his tongue with his fingers covered in the salve. He drew little circles on her bare pussy. "See, doesn't that feel a lot better?"

"Heaven."

When he was finished he washed his hands in the sink and dried them on the towel nearby. Going back to Jenny, he slowly lifted her off the counter and held her in his arms. "Thank you for doing this for us, sweetheart. Jake's going to flip his lid. He's the one that got me to finally try it. You'll see. You'll be a lot more sensitive. You'll think your pussy's never really been touched before."

Jenny looked up at Cree. "Speaking of Jake. Promise you won't give away my surprise?"

Reaching back to swat her ass, Cree laughed. "As much as I'd like to brag to him what I got to do this afternoon, your secret is safe with me, sweetheart."

## **Chapter Nineteen**

Jenny's wedding day finally arrived. The weather was perfect for the outdoor ceremony. She stretched and yawned as the sun slowly lit the sky. "I do believe this will be the best day of my life so far." Of course she said it to no one since she'd slept apart from the men for the past week. Jenny told them she wanted their wedding night to be extra special and it would be better if they missed her for a while first.

Both men had been walking around with a hard-on and a bad attitude all week but they'd agree with her choice after tonight. She sat up and reached for her robe when someone knocked on the door.

Looking at the door through narrowed eyes, she called out. "If that's Jake or Cree don't come in. It's bad luck."

The door opened and a petite blonde came through the door carrying a breakfast tray. "Hi, Jenny. I'm Kate Crawford from down the road. Jake and Cree asked me to bring this up for them."

Jenny was a little surprised to see a stranger in her bedroom but Kate looked as uncomfortable about it as she did. "Come in, Kate. You can just put the tray on the bedside table. I need to get my robe on."

Kate smiled and put the tray down. "Um...the guys wanted to know if there's anything I can help you with today." She looked down at her feet seeming at war with herself. "To be totally honest," Kate took a deep breath, "I wanted to know if there's anything I can do for you. Ben's told me a little of what you've been through and it doesn't sound like you have many female friends. So I thought maybe you could use one today."

"Well, Ben's right, I don't have any female friends except for maybe Cree's mother who I lived with for a while." Jenny chewed her lip and thought about letting Kate into her life. "I'd like your help." Jenny looked at Kate through narrowed eyes. "Even if you are the most beautiful woman I've ever seen in my life. I'm just glad I trust my men or I might've had to run you off. As it happens I do trust my men and I could really use a girlfriend in a house full of testosterone."

Kate's face lit up like a full moon on a dark night. "Thank you, Jenny. To be perfectly honest with you I don't have any real friends at all. I've spent all my time the last seven years trying to make a go of the ranch." Shrugging her shoulders Kate continued. "Working fifteen-hour days hasn't left me any free time for socializing. Not that I had a lot of friends when I was in school either. The girls would have nothing to do with me and the boys only wanted one thing."

Jenny looked at the gorgeous woman in front of her. Long blonde, naturally curly hair and eyes so dark they almost looked black. Kate's body would have put a

centerfold to shame. She was only about five-foot-two, but with her double D breasts she sure didn't look like a child. She looked worn-out and a little sad. "Well, I'd say you're well on the way to having a good friend now. It sounds like the girls and women around here are all just jealous of your beauty." Jenny shrugged her shoulders. "How are the negotiations going with Ben on the sale of the ranch?"

Rolling her eyes and taking a deep breath, Kate sat down on the bed. "We agreed on being partners in the ranch. I've tried to do it by myself but it's just too much work. I can't leave the ranch. I've spent my whole life there and it's my home. What we can't seem to agree on is the living arrangements. Ben wants to fix up the house and have us both live there but I don't think I could ever live with a man." Kate looked into Jenny's eyes for understanding. "Men scare me. They're so much bigger and stronger than I am." She shrugged her shoulders. "They can make you do things you don't want to do just by their superior strength."

Kate stood and started pacing the room. "Ben appears to be a very nice man but appearances can be deceiving and I'm just a little afraid to take the risk. Besides, Ben is the biggest and strongest man I've ever met. He makes me feel all shaky when he's around."

Lost in her thoughts Kate stopped talking and sat back down on the bed. "Well, enough about that, what would you like help with today?"

Jenny hated the lost and lonely look on Kate's face. She thought Kate might've been a little more like her than she'd previously thought. "For starters, you can be my maid of honor. I thought of asking one of the guys but I didn't figure any of them would go for it. Jake's standing up with Cree for obvious reasons so unless you say yes it will look out of balance."

Smiling, Kate got up and hugged Jenny. "If you're sure about it I would be honored. I've never been in a wedding before." Kate pulled away from Jenny with a hint of moisture in her eyes. "Well, we'd better get you ready."

\* \* \* \* \*

The sun was low in the sky. The few guests that had been invited to the wedding waited on the front porch under the ceiling fans and Jake and Cree were in their bedroom. Cree was trying to tie his tie and not getting very far. "Jake, can you help me with this blasted thing? My hands are shaking so badly I'm about to strangle myself with it."

Smiling, Jake came across the room to stand in front of Cree. He took the tie out of Cree's hands and quickly tied it into a neat Windsor knot. "Why are you so nervous? Are you having second thoughts about getting married?"

Cree looked at Jake as if he'd lost his mind. "Hell, no, I'm not changing my mind. I've wanted this day for seven years. I'm just really horny and anxious for the wedding night. I hope I can keep my hard-on under control until all the guests leave tonight." He flashed Jake a quick smile.



Brushing his hands down Cree's suit jacket, Jake leaned in for a very welcome kiss. "Do you want me to take the edge off for you, sheriff? Don't forget your momma is in the audience. You wouldn't want to shock her with that impressive bulge you're sportin'."

Cree looked at Jake and then at his watch. "We don't have much time, Jake, but I'd appreciate any help I can get."

Jake smiled and kissed him again, undoing Cree's belt and then his zipper. Cree's erection sprang out of his opening. Typical of Cree there was no underwear to act as a buffer. Stroking Cree's erection, Jake went down on his knees and took Cree's cock into his mouth.

Eyes rolling in back of his head, Cree moaned. "Yes, just like that, cowboy. Oh man, it feels so good."

Pumping Cree's cock with his mouth and throat, Jake fondled Cree's sac. His other hand snaked back to find the hole that was waiting for attention. Jake inserted his finger and found just the right spot to make Cree go wild. Cree started bucking and thrusting into Jake's hot moist mouth.

Cree was delirious with pleasure. "Good. Good, cowboy...I'm gonna...oh....uhhh."

Jake licked him clean then got to his feet and held the man he loved through his aftershocks. "Why don't you go into the bathroom and clean yourself a bit? I'll see you downstairs in five minutes. Oh and Cree, I love you."

Cree met Jake five minutes later and ushered their guests to the wedding awning put up to shade people from the sun.

Approaching his mother, Cree wasn't sure how he felt. He'd blamed his mom for a lot in the past, but she'd helped Jenny out so maybe it was time to forgive and forget. As he bent down to give her a kiss on the cheek, her scent brought back memories. Vanilla, his mother had always smelled like vanilla.

"Hi, Momma. I'm glad you came. I wish Tori had come too but she still doesn't agree with my lifestyle choices." Cree shrugged his shoulders and looked over his mother's head.

Naomi patted Cree on the cheek and wrapped her arm around his waist. "Son, it doesn't matter what anyone thinks but the three of you. Tori will come around eventually. I guess I had a hard time accepting it until Jenny stayed with me. I grew to love her as much as one of my own. All anyone has to do is to look at you, Jake and Jenny together to see the love you three share."

"Thank you, Mom that means a lot to me. Jenny wanted me to ask you before things got too crazy around here if you'd come back for Thanksgiving?"

Naomi eyed him up and down. "Of course I'll be here for Thanksgiving. I have to keep up with that child growing in her."

Cree's jaw dropped. "How do you know she's pregnant?"

Rolling her eyes at her son, Naomi chuckled. "I wasn't born yesterday. I know what a pregnant woman looks like even if she is just starting to show."

"Well, here's something you don't know. Jenny's going to have twins. They should be here by St. Patrick's Day."

Naomi threw her arms around Cree. "Congratulations, son."

Jake came strolling down the aisle and took Cree's elbow. "Come on, Mr. Groom, it's time."

Cree kissed his mom again and seated her in the front row. Of course there were only three rows of six chairs with an aisle down the middle for Jenny to walk. They'd only invited the cowboys from the ranch and their girlfriends or wives. Then there was Naomi and the team.

Speaking of the team, Cree saw all of them except Nicco. Surely he didn't leave to go home before the wedding? Cree was sure he'd heard him down in the kitchen that morning. *Oh well*, he shrugged to himself, *I guess he must be around somewhere*.

The minister from town stood on the little stage the cowboys had built. Jenny didn't want any fancy flowers or decorations. Instead wild flowers and sunflowers sat in tin buckets on either side of the stage. It was perfect. Perfectly Jenny.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jenny heard the music begin. She'd opted for Lester, one of the hands, to play the wedding march on his fiddle. She turned and gave Kate a quick hug. "Thank you for all your help today."

Hugging her back, Kate wiped a tear from her cheek. "Believe me when I say it was my pleasure. I've always wanted a sister and today I felt as if I had one."

Kate walked slowly down the aisle followed by Jenny. She felt beautiful today and two times lucky. This may be the legal part of the ceremony but the real ceremony would happen tonight under the stars. That's when she would marry Jake and Jake would marry Cree.

Jenny got to the end of the aisle and took Cree's hand. The music stopped and the minister began the service. Jenny wasn't sure about everything he said because she was mesmerized by the looks on both Cree's and Jake's faces.

She turned to face the minister, still holding hands with Cree. The minister got to the part about objections and a shot rang out above everyone's head. Cree grabbed Jenny and folded his body over her.

Buck ran down the aisle with a gun pointed at Cree and Jenny. He started shouting incoherently. "You won't have her. I'll kill you all. She's mine..."

That was as far as he'd gotten. One minute he was running toward Jenny and Cree, the next he was facedown in the grass, a bullet hole between the eyes.

The whole thing had lasted about ten seconds. When the chaos died down Cree looked around him. Ben was comforting a shaken Kate under a shade tree. Buck was

dead, but how? Then Cree spotted Nicco in the hayloft with his sniper rifle. He motioned Nicco to come down.

Jake bent over Buck's body and gently lifted his father off the ground. Taking him to the side of the house, he called the state police. Jenny could hear Jake screaming into his cell phone.

"What do you mean you didn't know he'd escaped? You're the police, for Christ's sake!" Jake paced around the side of the house around his father's body. "Just send someone to pick up his body. I've got a wedding to attend."

Jake walked back to the front of the aisle. He stopped in front of Jenny and Cree. "Can we please finish the wedding? Buck's ruined enough of our lives. Let's not let him ruin this."

Cree looked from Jake to Jenny. "I say we continue and deal with the mess afterward."

Jenny nodded and the minister began again. Luckily, no one at the wedding thought badly of the strange turn of events. Everyone there either knew of Buck's atrocities or had seen them firsthand.

When the minister turned to Cree and said he could finally kiss the bride, Cree practically devoured her mouth. Jenny could hear a lot of oooing and aaaahing from the small audience.

Cree let her go so Jenny could kiss Jake. By the time she came up for air the ranch was swarming with law enforcement. Looking around at the guests, Cree spotted Nicco sitting in the shade talking to someone from the state police.

"I'll be right back, Mrs. Sommers. I need to speak with Nicco and the police for a minute." He kissed her once again and left her in Jake's hands.

Cree made his way through the crowd and joined Nicco in the shade. The policeman was just finishing up. As the policeman walked away Cree looked over at Nicco and raised his eyebrows in question. "How?" was all he said.

Nicco looked at Cree and gave him a hint of a smile. "Gut feeling. I just had a feeling that Buck wasn't through. Thought I'd take a chance and watch the wedding from the loft through my scope."

Cree gave a slight nod. "Appreciate it, friend." He got to his feet and Nicco did the same. Both men shook hands and nodded at each other. Cree knew there would be an investigation of the shooting but it would turn out fine. Nicco was co-owner in a renowned safety and security business.

The rest of the festivities went on as planned. When the last guest left the ranch, Cree turned to Jenny and kissed her lightly on the cheek. "Why don't you go up to the bedroom and take a good soak in the hot tub? Jake and I have a few more details to take care of for our ceremony tonight."

Smiling, Jenny stood on tiptoes and kissed each of her men. "That, my loves, sounds like a perfect plan. Come up and get me when you're ready." Jenny turned and went inside the house.

When she got to their room, Jenny saw a large white box on top of the bed. It was tied with a cream-colored ribbon. Walking over to it, Jenny couldn't keep a smile off her face. She picked up the note on top of the box.

*Tonight is our real wedding. Please wear the enclosed gown for our midnight ceremony.* Jenny looked at the clock beside the bed. It was only ten-fifteen. She would have plenty of time for a good long soak.

Carefully, Jenny took off her wedding gown and hung it in the closet. She walked into the bathroom to start the water for her bath. When she reached the threshold of the bathroom she stopped suddenly.

Jenny put a hand to her mouth and started to giggle. The Jacuzzi was already filled. The steam still rising from the water. The tub was filled with multicolored rose petals dancing in the swirling water.

She looked around the room, candles covered every available surface. The guys had outdone themselves. Jenny felt like a pampered princess. She slowly lowered her body into the bubbling water. "Heaven on earth must have been the work of two beautiful angels."

After about an hour Jenny forced herself out of the soothing bath. She had just enough time to dress and do her hair before the guys came to get her.

Standing in front of the full-length mirror a half an hour later Jenny couldn't believe it was her. The gown the men had chosen was a dream of ivory silk. The bodice was ivory lace with spaghetti straps. The dress fell to the floor in a full swishing skirt. Jenny left her hair down. The shine of her black hair contrasted beautifully with the shine of the ivory silk.

A knock on the door startled her out of her daydream. The door opened and Cree and Jake stepped into the room wearing nothing but white silk lounging pants. They immediately stopped and dropped their jaws. Jake came toward her and held out his hand. "Will you marry me Jenny Sommers?"

\* \* \* \* \*

In front of the house sat a big white Cinderella-style carriage pulled by two white horses. Jenny's eyes grew big as saucers. She turned to the men standing on either side of her and smiled. "It's perfect. How did you know that when I was a little girl I dreamt of this?"

Jake got a sheepish look on his face. His ears turned red around the edges. "Actually I heard you talking to your doll Francine one day when you first came to the Double B. I guess I just have always remembered that part of your dream wedding."

Jake looked into the blue depths of Jenny's eyes. "You're making all my dreams come true tonight so I thought I could make some of yours come true at the same time."

With tears pooling in her cornflower blue eyes, Jenny put her hands on both sides of his face. "Thank you, Jake, but I didn't need the horses or the carriage to make my dreams come true. All I need is you and Cree and the babies growing inside me."

Jake took her hands off his face and brought them to his mouth, kissing her fingers one by one then opening her hands and kissing each palm. "I promise tonight will be magical, my princess." Jake bent at the waist in a deep bow. "Your carriage awaits, your highness."

Cree stepped up and ushered Jenny to the awaiting carriage. Jenny gave a startled squeak when Cree picked her up and placed her on the royal blue velvet of the cushioned carriage seat. Cree climbed up to the driver's seat and Jake joined her in the back.

Leaning her head against Jake's shoulder, they took off toward the pasture. Looking around, Jenny felt like a giddy schoolgirl. "Where are we going to do the ceremony?"

Kissing her nose, Jake smiled and shook his head. "Out in God's country and that's all you're going to get out of me until we get there."

The carriage bounced and bumped along the rutted ranch road. Jenny didn't think the owners were going to be too happy if they broke one of the carriage axles. It was worth taking the risk though. After about twenty minutes they pulled up next to the creek. The water sparkled in the moonlight.

Looking around, Jenny's breath caught in her throat. To her right a canopied tent glowed with more than a hundred candles set in buckets of sand as a precaution against fire. In the center of the big tent sat a real king-sized bed up on a raised platform. The bed was dressed in a white comforter and fluffy down pillows. A garland of wildflowers draped the headboard. The buckets of wildflowers from the wedding had been brought down here and placed on little tables beside the bed. "Oh, my loves, it's the most magical setting I've ever seen."

Jake and Cree took Jenny's hands and drew her over to a grouping of rocks beside the creek. The rocks were covered in little votive candles in jewel-toned glass holders. They stopped in front of the rocks and both men moved to stand in front of her.

Clearing his throat, Jake took hold of Cree's hand and then Jenny's. Jenny held hands with Cree forming a circle. With tears in his eyes Jake began the ceremony. "Tonight I vow under the heavenly stars to protect and love you both until the day I die. I'll do everything in my power to be a good husband to both of you."

Lifting Cree's hand to his lips, Jake softly kissed Cree's palm. "Cree, will you take me as a partner and husband? I promise to love you and work beside you all the days of my life."

Cree lifted Jake's palm and kissed it. "I will take you for my husband, Jake. I love you with my heart and soul." Cree wiped a tear from his eye and reached over to kiss Jake. The kiss was a seductive melding of tongues and teeth.

The kiss broke and Jake looked over at Jenny. Raising her palm to his lips, Jake kissed her. "Jenny, will you take me as your husband and lover? I promise to be a friend when you want one and to be a lover when you need one. I promise to cherish you every day and to keep you safe from harm."

Wiping the tears from her face, Jenny took a deep breath and kissed Jake's palm. "I would love to be your wife, Jake. I promise to love you, work beside you and try my best to fill those five guest rooms with children." She smiled a teasing smile at Jake and reached up to kiss him. Jenny's kiss was also full of passion.

Breaking the kiss with Jake, she turned toward Cree and kissed him passionately. Jake withdrew rings from his pocket. Jenny and Cree also had rings for Jake.

Jake and Cree had talked about what to say to Jenny at the ring exchange portion of the ceremony. They both agreed that in order to move forward with their lives they would need to erase some of the past and substitute it with new beginnings. He hoped what he was about to say would help Jenny and not cause her more pain.

Jake took Jenny's hand and slipped the band of gold with his name on it onto Jenny's finger. "With this simple band of gold I brand you into my heart forever." Jake bent and kissed the ring on Jenny's finger.

Turning toward Cree, he withdrew another ring and slipped it on Cree's finger. "With this simple band of gold I brand you into my heart forever."

Cree took Jake's hand and repeated the words to him, slipping the ring on Jake's finger. Cree handed Jenny the ring he had held for her.

Jenny took the ring from Cree and took Jake's hand. Looking deeply into his amber eyes Jenny placed the ring on his finger. "With this simple band of gold I brand you into my heart forever."

All three of them looked down at the rings resting on their fingers. They had decided on gold bands with a twist. Instead of having an inscription on the inside of the ring, they had the jeweler inscribe their names all around the outside. So when Jenny looked down at the two rings she now wore, they said Cree and Jake.

Holding out her hand toward Cree and Jake, she sighed. "Perfect. They look absolutely perfect on my finger." Another look of mischief passed over her face. "Now let's see how they look from atop that big bed over there."

Picking her up in his arms, Jake carried Jenny to the awaiting bed. Cree pulled back the pristine white bedspread and Jake laid her down.

Jenny stretched out on the bed and held her arms out, noticing the way their cocks had tented the silk pants they were wearing. "Come and get me, husbands. Tonight I want both of you to hold nothing back from me or each other. This is about us. There will be no right or wrong, just feelings."

Cree had to practically wipe the drool from his chin. "Lord, I can't tell you how much I've been looking forward to this night." He moved onto the bed in sync with Jake. Both men wrapped their arms around each other as they clung to Jenny.

Touching his lips to Jenny's, Cree closed his eyes. "I love you, sweetheart, let me show you how much." Cree kissed her mouth, her cheeks and eyes. Slowly he nibbled and licked down her neck to the hollow at her throat. He couldn't resist so he sucked a mark on her throat and swirled his tongue around the hollow.

Moving down, his tongue blazed a wet trail down her chest to the bodice of the gown. Cree outlined her nipples through the lace with his finger. Soon he substituted his finger for his lips. Soaking the beautiful lace over her nipples, he reached up and pulled the spaghetti straps down her arms. Cree pulled the bodice down to her waist and went back to the hard raspberry-colored nipples.

He shifted his eyes to Jake who was sampling Jenny's mouth. Jake's hand was slowly pulling up the gown from the bottom. Cree reached over while still suckling Jenny's breast to run his hand along the outline of Jake's huge cock through the silk of his pants. Jake moaned and a drop of moisture made the pants translucent where it touched.

Jake was getting closer and closer to revealing Jenny's surprise and Cree couldn't wait to see Jake's reaction.

Reaching his hand toward Jenny's pussy, Jake groaned and pulled away from the kiss and looked at Jenny's face. "Baby, what have you done?" He sat up, still allowing Cree's hand the room to explore his cock.

Jake reached over and managed with a little help from Jenny to pull the gown down her hips and off. Jake's breath hissed out between his teeth. "Damn, that's a pretty pussy." He ran his hands over the now bare pussy and slipped a finger between her bare lips.

Squirming around on the bed, Jenny opened her eyes to look down at Jake. "That's your wedding present, cowboy." Jenny looked down at Cree still attached to her breast and fondling Jake's cock. "Cree's present is on the other side."

Cree looked up with a questioning expression on his face. "Ooooh, really? Can I see?" Cree moved to the foot of the bed with Jake. They turned Jenny onto her side so that Jake could still play with his present. Cree grinned and looked up at Jenny. "Are you trying to tell me something, sweetheart?"

Cree reached out and squeezed the white globes of Jenny's ass. Peeking out the crack was an electric blue butt plug. Cree gave the plug a little wiggle.

Jenny moaned and pushed her butt into his hand. "That feels wonderful, Cree. I've been wearing it all week so I'd be ready for tonight." She moaned, looking down. Jake began to eat her pussy and Cree was moving the plug in and out slowly. "Tonight I want both of you to fill me at the same time."

Cree looked over Jenny to watch Jake circle her clit with his tongue. Two of Jake's fingers were pumping in and out of her pussy while his mouth was latched to her clit. It was so hot he had to touch Jake.

Sitting up, Cree kept one hand around the plug, continuing the movement Jenny seemed to love and with the other hand he reached over and pulled Jake's pants down

and off. Jake gave him a quick glance and smiled, spreading himself out for Cree. Cree bent down and took Jake's cock into his mouth and down his throat.

Pulling up and off Jake's cock, Cree pumped it a couple of times. "You taste good, cowboy." He went back down to swallow him once again.

Trying to see over the tangle of bodies, Jenny raised her head. "Hey, don't forget me. I want to taste too. Isn't there someway we can all get in on the fun?"

Cree and Jake raised their heads and looked at Jenny. Cree shrugged his shoulders and Jake cleared his throat and winked at Jenny. "Daisy chain!"

They repositioned themselves so they were in a circle, each eating the pussy or cock in front of them. Jake continued to lick and nuzzle Jenny's soft pussy while Jenny explored Cree's cock and Cree continued his ministrations on Jake's cock.

Before long they were all three thrusting into the other. Jake raised his head and looked from Jenny to Cree. "I can't wait any longer."

Sitting up, Cree looked to be in the same boat as Jake. "I think that's an excellent plan, cowboy. Are you ready for us, Jenny?"

At Jenny's nod they repositioned themselves. Jake got on his back in the center of the bed with Jenny straddling his pelvis. Cree reached over to the little table beside the bed and grabbed the tube of lubricant.

Cree's hands were shaking so bad it took him longer than usual to get the lid off. Squirting a generous dollop onto his fingers he removed the blue plug and replaced it with first one finger and then two. Jenny had done a good job of stretching herself. Cree used a little more of the lube and slicked down his rock-hard and dripping cock.

Nodding to Jake that he was ready, Jake pulled Jenny down onto his cock. Jenny arched her back and moaned. "Damn, that's sexy." Cree positioned his cock and slowly entered Jenny's virgin ass. "You're so tight, sweetheart. I don't know how long I'm gonna last."

Jake and Cree found their rhythm. Jake pushed in as Cree pulled out of her. The position allowed both men to feel the other's cock through the thin membrane that separated them.

Jenny began to shake and moan. Her head thrown back, she climaxed. The tightening of her body brought both Jake and Cree to their orgasms. Grunts and howls filled the air as both men pumped their seed into their wife.

They all collapsed in a pile on the center of the bed, too spent to move for several minutes. Finally, Cree scooted over to lie on Jake's side. Jenny rolled in between her husbands. "Thank you both for a wonderful day." She held her hand up to the candlelight. The two rings reflected the light of the candles. They read Cree and Jake. Jenny pulled the hand with the rings to her lips and kissed them. "Branded by Gold," she whispered to herself as she drifted off to sleep.



## About the Author

I've been a reading fanatic for years and finally at the age of 40 decided to try my hand at writing. I've always loved romance novels that are just a little bit naughty so naturally my books tend to go just a little further. It's my fantasy world after all.

When I'm not being a mother to a five-year-old and a six-year-old, you can usually find me in my deep leather chair with either a book in my hand or my laptop.

Carol welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

### *Tell Us What You Think*

We appreciate hearing reader opinions about our books. You can email us at [Comments@EllorasCave.com](mailto:Comments@EllorasCave.com).



Discover for yourself why readers can't get enough of the multiple award-winning publisher Ellora's Cave. Whether you prefer e-books or paperbacks, be sure to visit EC on the web at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com) for an erotic reading experience that will leave you breathless.

[www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com)