

A shirtless man with long dark hair, wearing a dark cowboy hat and a large ornate belt buckle, stands against a dramatic sunset background with orange and yellow clouds. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and lens flare.

Deirdre
O'Dare

PICKUP MAN

Pickup Man
by Deirdre O'Dare

Amber Quill Press, LLC

www.amberquill.com

Copyright ©2004 by Deirdre O'Dare

NOTICE: This ebook is licensed to the original purchaser only. Duplication or distribution to any person via email, floppy disk, network, print out, or any other means is a violation of International copyright law and subjects the violator to severe fines and/or imprisonment. This notice overrides the Adobe Reader permissions which are erroneous. This book cannot be legally lent or given to others.

This ebook is displayed using 100% recycled electrons.



Distributed by Fictionwise.com

Pickup Man
by Deirdre O'Dare

PICKUP MAN

by

Deirdre O'Dare

* * * *

ISBN 1-59279-305-3

Amber Quill Press, LLC

www.amberquill.com

Pickup Man
by Deirdre O'Dare

Also By Deirdre O'Dare

Karola's Hunt

The Taming Of Jaelle'n

Pickup Man
by Deirdre O'Dare

DEDICATION

*To happy memories and my teenage heroes of The Rodeo,
last real bastion of the Old West, 'cause the best of my heroes
have always been cowboys.*

PICKUP MAN

Jana Tucker paused on the sidewalk outside the Club El Paso. She needed a moment to gather her courage. Over the door, the garish neon sign flashed, dazzling her eyes. *No time like the present. I'll never win that bet with Kim and Tracey if I don't try.* Squaring her shoulders, she pushed the door inward and stepped into hazy cacophony.

Inside the club, a well-amped country and western band rocked the room while the smoke was so thick she could barely see two feet ahead. She paused to let her eyes adjust to the dim light, feeling as out of place as a sheepherder at a tea party.

Why did I ever let myself get talked into this? Damn old friends who know you can't resist a dare!

From what she'd heard, the bar was crowded every weekend, but tonight, with the big rodeo in town, the dimly lit room reminded her of the proverbial sardine can, packed to the brim. She hesitated, trying to get her bearings. The club had live music every Friday and Saturday night, but this time it was a name band, not just local talent like *Alvie and the Muleskinners*.

Down and Dirty performed for the capacity crowd of cowboys and cowgirls, buckle bunnies and locals. On the body-jammed dance floor, couples gyrated to the driving beat. From what she could see, every small table around the dance floor was occupied. With a final crescendo of twanging guitars and pounding drums, the band ended the set. The

musicians stood to indicate it was break time. The dancers reacted at once. Time to grab another long neck, and maybe step outside for a breath of hot but fresh air.

As the crowd parted, a lane opened across the room to the end of the bar. A cowboy sat on the farthest stool, hunched over his drink. The stool beside him was empty as if his dark mood kept the revelers at arm's length. In an instant, Jana recognized Tyler Parton. Nobody else wore those retro-styled red and black shirts that had become his trademark—the ones with contrasting piping around the yokes and embroidered roses, fore and aft. Straight out of the forties. This one was black.

Gawd, he's one hot looking man. An ass to die for, too. Those tight Wranglers really showcase his buns.

Jana's lusty thoughts surprised her. Hardly typical of a prim high school librarian, her normal persona. Maybe it was the atmosphere. The musky odor of beer, hot bodies and rodeo dust would stir anyone's libido.

Better make this good, girl.

She pulled her shoulders back to tighten the glitter-splashed, cropped, black tee across her breasts and sauntered into the gap, swinging her hips.

Thank goodness for that exotic dance video. Now if I can only remember and repeat some of those moves.

She had to admit she'd learned a lot from the video. This walk was one of the best tricks—pure sex on two feet, shod in a brand new pair of scarlet boots. Her spandex jeans couldn't fit any closer if they were painted on. She looked good and she knew it. The old Jana lacked the brass to carry off this

act, but maybe the new one could do it. She gave a little shiver.

Damn, I feel like everyone is looking at me and they all think I'm a hooker.

Dodging departing dancers and hurrying waitresses, she made a bee-line for Tyler. Fierce determination fueled her desire to win her bet and prove she wasn't the bashful and backward twenty-seven-year-old professional spinster Kim and Tracey accused her of being. Of the three old school friends, Kim and Tracey had both been married, but she hadn't. Privately she thought she might be the lucky one, especially after hearing the sad tales of their divorces, but that wasn't the point.

He's hung like a Brahma bull, too, from what those tight jeans showed today.

At that brazen memory, Jana felt the heat wash over her face. Thank goodness no one could see her blush in the dim light. But she'd noticed. She couldn't help it, just as half the female population of Riverbend had also. At today's rodeo, she could hardly take her gaze off him. Whether he won or not, he was one hot hunk of cowboy.

But today hadn't been one of his good days. Coming out of the chute his bareback bronc had stumbled. When the horse fell in a leggy awkward heap, Ty had barely scrambled clear. He'd get a re-ride tomorrow morning, but that wasn't much consolation. Then with one of the bull's infamous tricky moves, Big Trouble had unloaded him in the seventh second, hardly a heartbeat short of the whistle. Up until then, he'd had a good ride. Not that it mattered. No money, no points,

in either event. He was clearly taking the run of rotten luck hard.

Finally reaching him, she slid onto the stool at his side. He ignored her.

"Lousy luck today." Her voice came out gritty and low, like she needed a drink.

"G'wan," he slurred. "Buckle bunnies don't hang around losers."

Somehow, she sensed he wasn't really all that drunk. "I'm not a buckle bunny and you're damn well no loser."

He turned then, raked her with a pair of pale gray eyes, every inch of her from the fire-hued Stetson with the rhinestone band to the toes of her scarlet boots. His gaze held a heated tactile intensity. *God, what eyes.* She went hot and cold under their steady gaze. People said he was part Apache. With that shoulder length black hair clubbed back by a rawhide thong, he looked the part.

"And just how would you know, little girl? I've never seen you in here before. How come you're here tonight, and why are you hitting on me?"

"I'm here 'cause I like to dance, to soak up the atmosphere. Anyway, one day doesn't make a loser," she retorted. "There's always tomorrow and the next rodeo."

He snorted. "Tell that to Tawny."

Who's Tawny? Then Jana recalled the petite blonde. The girl had been plastered to Ty's side at the last several rodeos she'd attended. Tonight, the blonde was conspicuous by her absence. Jana wanted to make a snippy comment about blondes not being known for their powers of reasoning, but

she suspected that wouldn't go over well, especially seeing as how her hair was dark auburn.

Just then someone crammed some coins in the jukebox and Trace Adkins' latest began to play. She took a sip of her beer, fighting a grimace at the unfamiliar bitter flavor. The harried bartender had simply shoved a mug her way, not even asking. *Was beer all they served in here?* Given a chance, she would have opted for just about anything else cold and wet. She seldom drank alcohol, but when she did, her beverage of choice was a nice dry wine.

When Ty turned away as if to dismiss her, she felt a surge of panic. *Oh no, I can't fail! I wouldn't have guts to try this again.* Reaching out, she put a hand on his shoulder. Under her fingers, his flesh felt hot and hard as the tight muscle of a good Quarter horse.

"Come on, cowboy," she said in her lowest husky voice, the voice that was totally inappropriate for a high school librarian. "Let's dance. I didn't come in here to sit around and be someone's crying towel."

"You don't know one goddamn thing," he muttered, but he stood and followed her onto the dance floor, walking as steadily as if he were stone-sober. "One bad day—or a dozen..."

As she turned to face him, he looked at her again, really looked. As that fierce gaze slid over her body, she felt it as keenly as a touch. Her nipples hardened, thrusting against the clinging tee and her knees wobbled. She could see he didn't miss any of her reaction, which proved he wasn't nearly

as drunk as he'd pretended to be at first. *Bet he's nursed that one beer for quite awhile.*

His angular lips quirked into a parody of a smile. "Okay, little girl, if you came to dance, I'll give it a try. In that outfit, you're looking sexier than Dolly Parton at her best with a little Shania Twain on the side. I hope you're not just for show 'cause I could sure use a dose of warm woman tonight."

In answer she snuggled close to Ty's big hard body as they stepped off to the music. *Take his mind off the blonde, off anything except me.* She'd bet he was just lonely and angry enough to let his guard down. In fact, she was counting on it.

As they moved around the floor, Jana thanked her lucky stars that all the tunes someone had chosen were slow ones. That kept her close to Ty, body to body, in a contact that felt more intimate with each passing second. Still, in the heat of the crowded bar, she began to perspire.

The moisture heightened the scent of her musk perfume which rose up in an invisible cloud around them. With every breath, they both inhaled the sensual odor. Before the set was over, she sensed him growing hard, felt the unconscious tightening of his embrace. His hand slid from the middle of her back to the swell of her bottom. She relaxed and let her body meld to his.

"I don't know who you are, gal, but you're coming across as one hot mama. How about we go outside?"

Jana nodded, too pleased and too anxious to reply. When he turned her to walk directly in front of him, she smiled inwardly. *Bet the zipper and denim of his jeans are stressed to the max.* The notion that she, plain timid little Jana, could

arouse a hard-bitten cowboy to that extent was headier than a whole pitcher of beer. They made their way through the shifting crowd to the door through which Jana had entered a half hour or so ago. Outside it must have been close to a hundred degrees at ten o'clock. Dry heat or not, she felt it and sensed he did, too.

He turned to the side once they were clear of the door and propped himself against the wall, drawing her close. She opened her mouth to ask what he was doing, but before the words were out, his lips closed over hers. He gave her a hard, urgent kiss, tasting of beer and cowboy, a kiss that hit her like striking a match over a dish of gasoline. A flare of desire surged through her so fiercely she went weak all over. She clutched at his shoulders for balance, for something to hang onto in a world that whirled crazily around her.

"I've got a room in the motel across the highway," Ty said, finally lifting his mouth clear of hers. "It's there or my truck. Truck's closer but not as comfortable."

"Or we could go to my place. It's just down the road."

"You live here?"

She nodded, almost hating to admit that the dull little town was home. "All my life. Well, as long as I can remember, anyway. Riverbend is the only home I know."

"I'll be damned," he muttered. "Home grown sin and I never saw you before. How could that happen?"

"Maybe you weren't looking," Jana answered lightly. "So where will it be?"

"Lady's choice," he replied. "But don't take too long making up your mind."

There was never any question. From the first, Jana had intended to take him home. Leaving both his pickup and her compact in the bar's huge parking lot, they walked down the sidewalk, hand in hand. It only took a few minutes to reach her apartment. She used her code to pass through the gate, the one feeble attempt at security and propriety the complex's owners made.

Glancing around the cluttered courtyard of the complex, she sighed. *Place looks like a dump.* Ty didn't seem to notice. When she moved ahead to climb the stairs to her second-floor unit, she could feel the heat of his gaze on her butt. Well, wasn't that what skintight jeans were for?

Inside, the room felt stuffy, the mingled scents of someone's spicy cooking, her cosmetics, and dirt both old and new dulled the giddy sweetness of her perfume. She had barely closed the door when she felt Ty approach. He enfolded her in his arms again. Turning her face up to his, she took his kiss with unfeigned pleasure.

This time she opened her mouth under his lips and initiated a duel of tongues, a darting dance that foreshadowed the deeper round of eager thrusts sure to follow. At the thought, moisture pooled between her legs, dampening the jeans past the nonexistent barrier of her thong panties. She hadn't wanted anyone this badly in a long, long time.

Really, there hadn't been that many times, ever. Maybe that was why Kim had made the bet.

Measuring Jana with her photographer's keen eyes, Kim had cocked her head and grinned, pure sass. "Betcha can't

pick up a cowboy and bring him home. If you do, steak dinner Sunday night is my treat."

Tracey, grinning wickedly, had seconded the notion. "I'll buy the drinks."

Ty deepened the kiss, plundering Jana's mouth with hunger that shook her to her toes, driving all thoughts out of her mind. *Oh, my God, he's hot. And making me hotter!*

As they had strolled down the street, she'd noticed his hands, how big and hard they were. Now they were all over her, but his touch was surprisingly gentle. When he palmed her breast, her nipple went pebble hard in an instant. He cupped her left buttock and pressed her closer to the burgeoning erection straining at the fly of his Wranglers.

Pausing for a deep breath, he dragged his mouth off hers. "Tell me your name, little lady. I can't screw a nameless woman, badly as I want you."

"I'm Jana. Just Jana."

She felt his grin as his mouth covered hers again. "Okay, Just Jana. Hell of a name, but you taste sweeter than wild honey straight from the bee-tree."

Her efficiency apartment was little better than a motel room—one big room with a kitchen nook and a utilitarian little bath off the end. She'd felt lucky to get it when she moved out of her grandmother's restrictive old house and somehow had never gotten around to finding a bigger, better place.

The bed could be folded up against the wall, but Jana seldom bothered. She didn't entertain that often. Now she wished she had. The bed dominated the room, growing larger

and larger until she felt like there was nothing in the room but him and her and that damned bed.

Lifting her hat by the brim, he skimmed it neatly across the room to the small table and sailed his own black Stetson after it. Then, nudging a knee between hers, Tyler drew her astride his thigh as he edged her backwards toward the bed. A shudder rocked her at the intimate pressure. She felt the solid heat of his thigh as if there weren't two layers of denim between his muscle and her throbbing clit. She was wet and ready, no doubt about that. She clutched at his wide, powerful shoulders, feeling the room dip and sway. For an instant panic assailed her.

What in the hell am I doing? Have I really picked up a man I never met before and an hour later, I'm falling into bed with him to hump each others brains out? I don't do things like that!

But her body had other plans. Eagerness wept from her throbbing female core, drenching her new jeans. Her breasts tingled and ached, wanting his strong hands and hot mouth on them.

When he suddenly released his hold, she staggered, almost falling. He caught her with one big hand in the middle of her back. The other was busy dragging the short black T-shirt up and over her head, revealing the shiny black demi-bra she wore beneath it, a barely-there scrap that made her thirty-four B look like at least thirty-six C, which made it worth every cent of the incredible price. For a minute his gaze caressed her cleavage.

His breath came in a ragged rasp. She wasn't sure she was breathing at all. *Maybe oxygen deprivation is causing my spinning head. The half glass of beer I drank certainly wasn't enough to do it. Or maybe I'm just drunk on cowboy.*

The backs of her legs hit the bed. She staggered, trying to keep her balance.

"Easy there, little filly," he murmured. "Don't go skittish on me now. I swear I'll never hurt you."

Oh Lord, I wish that were true. She knew in an instant's blinding clarity that she'd never forget this night, this man, if she lived to be a hundred. It wasn't as if he was the first, but compared to the awkward fumbling of teenage dates and her brief affair with the man she'd later found out was married, Ty Parton was a masterful lover. He showed it in every kiss, every touch. He'd give her a ride with all the finesse he used on the broncs and bulls, all the power and passion and yet still with an underlying tenderness she could not resist.

He scooped her up, one arm under her legs and the other supporting her shoulders. For a heartbeat or two, he held her. Then he laid her on the bed. For a dozen more heartbeats he just looked down at her, the hot caress of his eyes turning her bones to liquid. A lazy smile played across his tanned, hard-boned face.

"Damn, but you're a pretty little thing. I can't figure how I missed you all this time."

Still watching her, he began to unsnap his shirt. Each snap opened with a metallic pop, revealing a widening wedge of bronze chest. Small male nipples and areolas made a pair of darker rosettes on the smooth skin, which was molded over

an athlete's solid muscles. Recalling one of Tracey's disparaging remarks about a local guy who thought he was a hunk, Jana grinned inwardly. *No tits on this one*. She had to agree with Tracey that overdeveloped pecs could really be a turn off. What woman wanted a man with a bigger set than she had?

When the shiny fabric slithered free of Ty's wide shoulders, he tugged the tails from his jeans and let the shirt fall. Moving a half step closer, he rested one knee on the bed, not quite touching her hip.

"Ought to get them boots off," he said.

Suiting action to words, he caught her right leg, lifted and tugged the boot from her foot, repeating the action with her other leg.

Jana didn't want to simply be a spectator, a passive recipient of his attentions. *That's no way to ensure he'll come back*. The ardent wish he would come again was no surprise, but she tried to shove the notion aside. *About an ice-cube's chance in hell of that. But I can enjoy tonight, anyway*.

With a quick twist, she sat up and then got on her knees. She reached for the heavy gleam of his belt buckle, twisting it to slip the prong from the leather. She almost lost track of what she intended when he flicked the clasp of her bra free and pushed the cups back, baring her breasts. Her hands stilled as he cupped them, one in each big hand, and brushed his thumbs lazily over the throbbing nipples. She sucked in an urgent gasp of air, which only served to thrust them higher, as if they were reaching for his caresses.

"Pretty isn't a powerful enough word," he said, almost as if speaking to himself. "Not near enough. I know a couple in Apache, but they don't quite translate."

Leaving her breasts for a moment, he skimmed his hands down her sides to her waist, spanning his fingers around her until they almost met, front and back.

"I'm scared of hurting you, though I can see you're strong for all your small size. But I'll go slow and careful."

Jana shook her head. "You don't need to do that. I'm not made of china. I may not be big, but you're right, I'm tough, strong. I want you to ride me like a cowboy, like a man with a burning hunger, because I'm that hungry for you." She gazed up at him, willing the intensity of her need into her expression, hoping he could read it.

They undid each others' belts then and reached for zippers. He stilled as she grasped the tab to tug his down. His cock strained against the front of his jeans, stretching the zipper until it bent in an outward arc.

"Be careful, darlin'," he cautioned. "Pete's going to bust out of there like a bull from the chute when that zipper goes down."

She giggled at that, part nerves and part excitement. It seemed so unreal, a man like this in her cramped little apartment, a man so aroused by her that he could hardly wait. Surely she'd wake up in a minute and find it all a dream. Carefully she lowered the zipper. He wasn't wearing underwear and he hadn't lied. He sprang out into her hands, hot and hard, throbbing in time with his pounding heart.

He was big, too. No false advertising—he was all man. *And for tonight, all mine.* She gasped again when she realized just how big he was. Could she take him? Would it hurt? Brief frantic fears tumbled through her mind. As if he sensed them, he drew her close, flattening her aching breasts to the heat of his chest, covering her mouth with his before she could voice any of her sudden uncertainty.

With one hand, he smoothed her hair, slow gliding strokes as if he soothed a spooky horse, an anxious dog. There seemed to be kindness, even love in that touch. The other hand splayed across her bare back, a steadying, warming, comfortable touch. By slow degrees he eased her down onto her back, tugged the jeans down her hips, then from her legs and off her feet. His own went sliding slowly down, dragged by the weight of his belt. They settled around his knees. Impatiently, he kicked them off, and his boots went with them.

He was beautiful, the most masculine, gorgeous man she'd ever seen. Caught up in their foreplay, he seemed to have forgotten his despondency over the day's bad luck. Maybe he saw that luck had now changed. He eased down on the bed at her side and reached to draw her close. Now only her bikini thong remained between them.

Jana wanted to touch him all over. Her hands flew, shoulders to back, down his arms, cupping his solid buttocks, stretching to feel the backs of his taut thighs. She felt the quivers run through his muscles, like a roper's horse straining in the box for the barrier to fall. She ran her hands over his chest, hard with muscle and almost void of hair, only a faint

tee of dark strands between his nipples with an arrow running down to his navel and past it, into the thicker mat that cushioned his shaft.

His hands weren't idle either. They might be big and hard and strong, but slipping over her flesh, his touch stayed light, controlled and easy. Slow, he took it slow, just as he had said he would. Long smooth strokes down her back, down her arms, down her legs. Her skin tingled with it, wanting more and yet joyously absorbing every bit of contact.

With a fast twist, he swapped ends and reached to wrap one hand around her right ankle. She went still as he lifted her foot and brought it to his face. First his tongue traced a line across the instep, just past the toes. The warm moist tickle was the most erotic thing she had ever felt. Then he licked lightly between each of her toes. Her nerves screamed with the mixture of agony and pleasure stirred by the sensation.

"Pretty little feet," he murmured, as he reached for the other one.

Jana lay still, the skittering excitement leaving her too weak to struggle away. Swirling his tongue around her left big toe, he looked up at her, his eyes glittering with mischief. "I bet no one ever did that for you before, did they?"

Jana shook her head, panting for breath. Before she could respond, he moved again, now kneeling to push her legs apart and settle himself in the vee between them. More strokes, rising ever so slowly from ankles to calves, calves to knees, and finally up her thighs to the needy feminine hollow between them. Slowly, slowly...

The room was dim, lit only by the light filtering through the drapes from the security lights around the complex. Still she could see him clearly, watching with a tiny detached part of herself, the part that catalogued information and collected data. Her skin twitched, tingling, as if stretched too tautly over her flesh. Beneath it, muscles drew tight and the rush of blood seemed to heighten every sensation.

I can't take much more of this but, oh, it's sooo wonderful!

He paused, one hand on each of her thighs, his thumbs feathering across the lower curve of her abdomen, just short of the thatch of auburn that protected her sex. Involuntarily, her back arched a little, lifting that part of her closer to him, reaching for the ultimate touch that had been so slow in coming. He hitched his thumbs under the thin elastic of her panties and peeled them down.

"You ready, little Jana?"

When she nodded, he rose over her on all fours, hands on either side of her chest, knees between her thighs which spread apart still wider in readiness. His hair had come undone. Now it fell down over his shoulders, around his face. She reached to touch it, found the inky strands slick and smooth, softer than she had thought they would be. She wove her fingers through the thick dark threads, moving up to cup the back of his head and pull his face down to taste his lips again.

He nibbled at her face, butterfly kisses sifting over her cheeks and chin, nose and eyelids and finally her mouth. Then he sucked her lower lip in between his and drew on it gently. She felt the tug to the hollow depths of her body.

Slowly he lowered his big frame onto hers. His cock nudged at her, seeking entrance. She lifted her hips, spread her legs as wide as they would go. For a split-second she remembered how big he was and an involuntary tightening of her inner muscles resisted his entrance. He felt the tension, paused, but then her hunger and need roared to the fore and she pushed up against him with no thought save the demanding urgency to sheath him fully inside her.

Suddenly, she wanted it hard and fast, a wild ride such as she had never experienced. Slow was good for foreplay, but this was the real event, like the wild eight seconds between heaven and hell, and she wanted to feel every bit of it.

He rocked his hips and thrust into her, hard and deep. She clenched her legs around his body as they moved together, breathing in harsh panting gasps, soaring higher and higher, spinning and twisting in a wild dance of desire. She felt the pressure building inside; the first tremors started in her womb and began to spread like waves from a stone dropped in a pond. The waves surged faster and stronger until she felt she'd turn inside out from the intensity of it. She thought she must have cried out, but from where she was, far out in the realm of pure feeling, she couldn't hear a thing.

An instant after her final fierce spasm, he gave a bellow and she felt the strong spurt inside her depths. Even as he collapsed in the aftermath, he turned so as not to put his full weight on her, and brought her with him, until they again lay side by side, face to face.

"Lord a'mighty, girl. Was that a winning ride or not?"

"Ninety, maybe even ninety-five," Jana replied. "Day money for sure."

He laughed, a deep rumble that swelled from his solid chest and burst out in a joyful roar.

"So today wasn't a total loss, anyway, little Jana. Is that what you're telling me?"

She nodded, carried past the moment of self-consciousness by his humor. "You sure changed my luck, cowboy, and I hope you feel like I changed yours."

For a moment, he sobered. "Will you come with me tomorrow, be there when I ride? I think I need you to keep the luck."

He might as well have asked her if the sun would come up or if she'd still be breathing. "Of course I'll be there, and I'll go with you if that's what you want."

* * * *

She had no awareness of falling asleep, but she came awake with a start, hemmed by two hard, heavy bands pinning her body close to a wall of heat. For a few seconds she was totally confused and disoriented.

Where am I? What in the blazes is ... oh, my God, is it what I think it is?

The bonds resolved into a pair of muscular arms and one long leg, wrapping her tight and close to the slowly moving wall of his massive chest.

Ty. And me. Am I remembering or is this some bizarre dream?

At that instant, one big hand at the end of one of those steely arms began to move, sliding ever so softly over her sweat-sticky skin, tracing the arch of her hip, the hollow of her waist, the rise of her breast.

If this is a dream, it's sure the most realistic one I ever had.

And incredibly, she wanted to do it all again.

That caressing hand was leading her to it, quicker even than the first time. He spread his fingers, palm rolling in a circle over her belly and fingers just brushing the auburn curls, still sticky and moist. She moved, writhing under that enticing torment, and then felt his cock stir against her butt. Without thinking, she pressed back against him and felt the leap of tension as his erection grew.

His hand drifted lower, parting the thatch to seek the hot moist slit within. She exhaled a sharp gasp as he fingered her clit and slipped another finger into her. A small moan of pleasure escaped.

"Oh, that feels soooo good."

"You do, too," he said, a rumble somewhere just behind her right ear.

His tongue traced along the outer edge of her ear, curling around the lobe and tasting the texture of her turquoise earring. He began to move slowly, sliding his cock along the groove between her buttocks.

"You've got one of the cutest asses I've ever seen," he continued. "In those red jeans, you had me going from the start."

He kissed and nibbled along her neck and shoulders until she was shivering. One hand found her left breast and teased it to an aching peak while with the other he continued to taunt her with fleeting caresses on her most sensitive flesh. She whimpered a faint protest, wanting, no, needing more.

"Are you sore, hon? Will I hurt you if we go at it again?"

She shook her head, unable to form a coherent reply.

"No," she gasped out finally. "It'll be lot more painful to me if you don't!"

Again he laughed. "All right, little cowgirl. Cowboy up!"

He lifted and turned her, setting her on all fours on the bed, facing the far side. An instant later, he rolled off to land on his feet, turned and faced her, catching her with a hand on each hip to pull her back to him. Her trembling arms refused to support her. She sank until her chest hit the bed, leaving her butt high because he was holding her there.

This time she didn't tense in anticipation, and he slid into her with one long smooth thrust. A shudder went through her, a shiver of pure pleasure at the sensation of him totally filling her. This way it seemed he could reach even deeper and touch sensitive points she hadn't even realized she possessed. She bit her lip to keep from shrieking as the pressure and pleasure rose in a soaring spiral, a whirlwind of sensation twisting and growing inside her.

Such force had to find release and did, bursting through her in a shattering series of spasms, so acute they were akin to pain. She clenched handfuls of the bedspread and hung on for fear of flying off in a million directions at once. With a final thrust and soft grunt, he came and then leaned there for a

moment, still holding her. She could feel the tremors in his thighs and belly, pressed tight against her butt, before he finally drew back and pulled free.

A fuzzy thought wove through her mind. *Wow, if sex is usually this great, no wonder everyone is so excited about it!* After that they both slept for awhile, spooned together with only a corner of the rumpled sheet over part of their sweaty bodies to muffle the blast of chill air from the cooler.

Jana wasn't ready to wake up when Ty began to stir, but a few kisses later, she decided it was a good morning after all.

"I gotta go take a shower, baby, and then get out to the arena. I'm supposed to have a re-ride for that stumbling horse yesterday and they like to do them early, well before the regular show starts. I hate to leave you but..."

"If you want me to, I'll come along. Last night you said you'd like for me to." *Has he changed his mind? Is he ready now just to be rid of me and go on back to his regular life?* She held her breath waiting for his answer.

"Sugar, I'd love to have you come along. I just didn't feel I had the right to ask after keeping you up half the night."

Jana grinned, a sassy play on his words popping into her mind. "Oh, I thought maybe it was me who kept you *up* all night."

He swatted her bare bottom playfully. "Nothing like a smart mouthed woman," he said. "Get that cute ass up then and come scrub my back."

Daylight was chasing the shadows out of her room fast as the rising sun hit the drapes. It was one thing to be bare

naked in the dark, but now he could see her clearly and she could see him...

Oh my, can I ever see him!

He stood there without a stitch of clothes on his magnificent body, as unconcerned as a horse stood unsaddled in the paddock. Even at rest, his shaft was impressive and the rest of him matched up perfectly—*one big perfect man*. Jana hesitated, torn between a desire to bundle herself into the sheet out of sight and an urgent wish for at least a few more minutes to be close to him. Lust beat modesty, hands down. She scrambled out of bed and headed to the bathroom, flipping on the light as she entered since the small room had no window.

"The water can be funny," she warned as she reached to turn the taps. "You never know if you are going to freeze or get scalded. This early, probably scalded. But then if no one has used any hot water, the water in the pipes may have cooled off."

"I'd say you need to get a better place, sugar. I hate to see you living in—well, it's damn near a slum. Is money a problem?"

This talk is way too serious.

She scuffed a foot in the rug and looked away. "No, not really. It's just the first place I found when I left my grandmother's and I never managed to look for something else."

"We'll do it," he said, decisively. He shoved the curtain aside and stepped into the spray. "Hot, but not too. Come on in."

She followed him and pulled the curtain shut behind her. They washed each other, which quickly turned into more foreplay. Jana learned what soap-slippery man felt like while he deftly teased her breasts to taut peaks and then proceeded to make her squirm with need with a few taunting strokes down her slit. In her turn, she spent an extra effort on washing his cock and balls and was rewarded with his strong surge of response.

Still, she wasn't expecting him to lift her off her feet, brace her against the tile wall, and pull her legs around his waist. But he did. And it worked just as well as the other positions they'd used. The water beat down on them, rapidly going cold, but they didn't feel a thing until spent, he pulled out and lowered her slowly back to her feet. She held to his slippery shoulders and buried her face against his chest until she caught her breath.

Three times in about eight hours. What will Kim and Tracey say to that?

They towed each other dry and then gathered up scattered clothes to dress. Again, embarrassment started to rise in Jana. Here she was with a man who was still virtually a stranger, in spite of all they had done in the few hours they'd been together. He watched her shimmy into clean panties and clasp on a bra, one with a little more coverage than the one she'd worn last night.

He grinned. "You do that real cute. Wish I had time to make you do it a half dozen times more."

She glared at him. "Quit watching! You're making me nervous."

"Sorry," he said, but there wasn't an ounce of contrition in his tone. He picked up his rumpled shirt and gave it a shake. "Guess I'd better dig into my war bag at the truck and grab a new shirt. This one looks like it's been there and back."

"I could wash and iron it for you," Jana offered, "but that would take a little while."

"That's okay, sugar, I always bring some extras with me. You never know when something is going to get ripped or covered with shit. I really don't like to go around all day smelling like bull."

When they were both dressed, they retrieved their hats and walked out together. Strolling down the sidewalk, hand in hand again, Jana felt like she floated in the brief coolness of the desert morning. The day promised to be sunny again and hot. Pretty typical for early July.

"I could get my car and follow you out to the rodeo grounds," Jana offered. "That way you won't have to worry about how I get back later."

"You got a car? Where is it?"

"I left it at the bar last night, back in the corner of the lot. I figured nobody was going to bother a 1992 Ford Escort!"

Ty shook his head, chuckling. "No, I reckon not. Well, leave it there a little longer. You're coming with me, so you'll ride with me, too." He unlocked the lift gate of the camper shell and rummaged inside for a minute, coming out with a fresh shirt, this one black on red instead of the opposite. He shrugged into it and tossed the dirty one inside.

"Okay, gal, let's go." He boosted her in on the driver's side, and with the gear he had piled in the seat, there was

barely room for her, jammed against him hip to hip. He turned to glance at her as he pulled out of the motel's parking lot. "Wanna go get some coffee and breakfast?"

"I thought you needed to get to the rodeo grounds early."

He glanced at the clock in the dash. "Another half hour won't hurt. I'm hungry and you ought to be."

* * * *

In spite of Ty's words, they didn't get to the rodeo grounds for over an hour. Ty pulled his pickup in as close behind the chutes as he could and parked. He hopped out, then turned back to catch Jana by the waist and swing her down. She felt as if she had to take two steps for each of his long strides as he loped toward the rodeo office.

A few minutes there, and he had his re-ride set up. The stock contractor sent a couple of kids out to run a bronc into the chutes. While they waited, Ty fidgeted.

"Hope to hell I don't get that stupid paint again. Damn horse acts about half locoed," he muttered.

Although the words were low-spoken, apparently the stock contractor heard him. "Don't worry, son. Nobody's going to be riding that horse for awhile, if ever. Pulled a tendon when he fell, real bad. I haven't decided yet, but we may have to put him down. Give it a few days with the vet to see if it will heal."

Ty glanced at him. "Too bad, but the fall like to did a job on me, too."

The older man nodded. "I know, I saw the whole thing. Something scared him because he don't ordinarily act that way. I was glad you weren't hurt."

Ty shrugged. "Goes with the territory. We run that risk every time we climb aboard."

"I know, but it's bad when an animal falls. Here comes your mount. You've got a good one—he bucks hard, but no tricks."

Jana followed Ty to the first chute to examine the horse. He was a big brute, rough coated and shaggy even in mid-summer. He had a wide blaze down his face and one white-rimmed eye. Ty studied the horse for a minute, then went back to the truck and got his bareback rig.

"Big one for bareback," he said offhandedly as he climbed up on the chute to cinch the rig around the horse's heavy body.

Watching him, Jana clutched the middle rail of the adjacent chute and tried not to picture all the bad things that could possibly happen. She needed to be Ty's luck. That meant visualizing a fine ride, one that would put him back in the money. She swallowed her sudden fear and thought an anxious prayer to whatever saint watched over cowboys.

He went through the whole ritual, rubbing rosin into his glove, checking the cinch and the flank strap, and then finally straddled the chute above the big gelding's dark back. The two boys who'd brought the horse in helped get everything ready. Now they waited for Ty's signal to open the gate.

To Jana, it felt different, no announcer, no crowd, nothing but the empty stands and the freshly plowed arena out there,

waiting for the big brown horse—and Ty. She'd never been back of the chutes before, although she rarely missed a rodeo within driving distance. The view gave her a whole new perspective—that and the novel connection to the man who was set to ride.

Ty dragged his black hat down low over his eyes, then nodded. The boys released the latch, stepping clear as the gate swung open. For a heartbeat, the horse paused. Then he exploded into the arena, slamming plate-sized hooves into the muddy ground. He swapped ends faster than a fleeing jack rabbit, snorted and bawled in a rage. But the contractor was right. No tricky moves, just straight away hard and fast bucking. Jana grinned, watching avidly as Ty waved his right hand in the air while his heels traced long arcs from shoulder to flank along the dark sides.

Oh wow, he's making a great ride!

When the eight second whistle blew, it sounded unnaturally loud in the quiet morning. Ty gave a final wave, threw his right leg over the bronc's neck and let himself sail off before the half-asleep pickup man could start his mount in that direction. The horse bucked on a few more jumps before he realized his rider was gone.

Ty lit neatly on his feet, walked over to retrieve his hat, and sauntered toward the pedestrian gate where Jana waited.

"Well?" He had a twinkle in his eye and a cocky grin.

"Not bad. Maybe not up to Casey Tibbs' best or Buster Mitchell," she allowed, naming a famous world champ and the local favorite, "but you did okay."

He cuffed her on the shoulder. "Aw, come on, better than just okay."

Together they walked back to the office to check his scoring. The three judges had given him an 89, a 91 and an 85. That averaged out to a strong 88, a perfectly respectable score. He'd lost a few points because the horse didn't have a lot of fancy moves, just straight pile-driver bucks, but that put him just two points behind the previous day's winner. He was back in the money, at least in that event.

"Told you that you'd be my luck," he said with a grin.

As they started for the truck, they almost ran into a couple standing behind the building, wrapped in a tight embrace. Jana recognized the woman's long brown braid—or thought she did.

"Kim?"

Her friend slowly pulled away from the blond giant who held her to look around. "Jana?"

Her eyes went wide when she saw Ty at Jana's side, one red-shirted arm draped across her shoulders in a very possessive manner. "Jana! Looks like you've won yourself a bet."

"Better than that," Jana replied. "I think I may have won myself a cowboy."

"Damn straight," Ty added. "I plan to run my brand on this pretty little filly. She brings me luck and she's a damn good rider in her own right."

His wink brought a fiery blush to Jana's cheeks, but she took his words for the compliment she knew he meant. Happiness sang through her.

Pickup Man
by Deirdre O'Dare

Not only is my pickup man a keeper, he seems to feel the same way about me! Maybe luck's going to be good for the pair of us.

Deidre O'Dare

Deirdre O'Dare, who also writes contemporary romance as Gwynn Morgan, has loved reading and writing since early childhood. She started writing-simple verses and paraphrases of Nancy Drew and Zane Gray—before she was out of grade school and finally settled into romantic fiction in the last decade after leaving her "day job" as a civilian employee of the U. S. Army. She lives in Arizona and frequently sets her stories in the Southwest she knows and loves, but now and then another locale calls to her creativity and she strays, even as far as prehistoric Greece and places that exist only in her imagination.

Pickup Man
by Deirdre O'Dare

AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC

Quality Books, Print And Electronic

Horror

Romance

Fantasy

Mainstream

Young Adult

Science Fiction

Suspense/Thriller

Action/Adventure

Non-Fiction

Paranormal

Historical

Western

Pickup Man
by Deirdre O'Dare

Mystery

Erotica

Buy Direct And Earn Free Books!

www.amberquill.com

If you are connected to the Internet, take a moment to rate this ebook by going back to your bookshelf: [Click Here](#)