



MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S STEAM

*SAND, SUN AND SEX*

MARIELLE'S MARSHAL

*BETH WILLIAMSON*

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# Marielle's Marshal

*Beth Williamson*

## Dedication

To all of my readers, thank you for everything. I couldn't do what I love without you. Read a book, ride a cowboy!

## Chapter One

*Arizona Territory, 1850*

"If you don't know how to use that thing, you'd better put it down, sugar."

The pistol shook in Marielle's hands. The unfamiliar weight threatened to drag her arms down, but her determination kept it upright and pointed at the man in front of her.

"I will not let you rob this stagecoach. Turn that pony around and ride on out before I put a hole in you that you didn't have yesterday." She was proud of the fact that her voice didn't break. God knows her heart beat fast enough to make her ears hurt.

The masked man on the huge sorrel leaned on his saddle horn and turned his head toward her. She couldn't make out much information about him, other than the fact that he was big and his clothes hadn't been washed in a dog's year. Fortunately the wind blew toward him or the stench might have forced her to surrender.

"You're a sassy little thing," he drawled. "You know there's no way in hell I ain't robbing this stage so just drop that peashooter and play nice."

The cowboy she'd initiated a flirtation with in the coach stood next to her. It had been enough to make her warm just looking at his smiling face. He had even smelled nice, a rarity in the West. When the robber stopped the coach, he'd been sleeping, or at least dozing. Marielle had been enjoying the view when all hell broke loose, and he had sat there like a bump on a log.

The cowboy leaned in close. "I think he's right, ma'am. You'd do best to just give him the pistol. Don't know why you took it from me anyway."

“Because you did nothing, you coward. He shot that poor driver and made Mrs. Philpot cry and now he wants to take my bag. I absolutely refuse to hand over my things.” This time her voice did shake—with fury. “I’ve worked too hard over the last seven years to surrender so easily.” She narrowed her eyes at the bandit. “What have you done besides kill people and steal their belongings? You’re obviously not a Christian man, and maybe neither was your mama. Does she know what you’re doing?”

The longer she talked, the angrier she got.

“Shut up,” the cowboy hissed.

“I will not.” Marielle kept her aim straight and true at the lone bandit. “You get your sorry hide out of here with what you’ve already taken, but I refuse to give you one damn cent.”

“Oooh, you cuss too? I might have to take you with me.” He cocked his rifle in a blur of movement and pointed it at the unconscious Mrs. Philpot lying on the dusty road in her purple traveling dress. The older woman had fainted dead away when the bandit reached into her corset for her valuables. “Your choice, sugar, you put down that gun or the old hag gets it.”

Marielle pursed her lips together and sighed long and hard. The bastard. “I’ll take my chances.” She pulled the hammer back on the pistol. “You decide to take yours. Maybe I’ll shoot you before you can shoot her.”

The air around them grew heavy and time seemed to slow to a crawl. Marielle kept her gaze trained on his trigger finger. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw a bead of sweat snaking down his temple. She hoped it was from anxiety and not the warm June weather.

“Ma’am,” the cowboy whispered.

It was all the distraction the bandit needed. She knew he was going to shoot so she fired off a shot just as his finger squeezed on the trigger. Her shot hit the barrel of the rifle. His went wild and slammed into the stagecoach next to her head. The cowboy grabbed her and threw her to the ground as the bandit’s horse reared and screamed.

"*Dammit*," he cursed in her ear. "What the hell is wrong with you? Are you *loco*?"

Marielle struggled against his weight while the sound of the rifle shot echoed around them.

"You *bitch*," the bandit shouted. "You broke my fucking rifle and cut up my hand."

The horse's hooves danced around them, coming dangerously close to their heads. The cowboy wrapped his arms around her and rolled under the carriage. More curses rained down as she struggled against the dust currently coating her face, nose and mouth. She could hardly get a breath in under the weight of the man on top of her. Marielle could feel every nook and cranny of his body too, even through her petticoats. He'd been blessed by his Maker for certain. Normally she would have enjoyed being so close to him, but in this situation it only served to fuel her anger.

"Get off me."

"I'm trying to save your ass, lady. Just shut up and give that fool another minute to decide to ride on out with what he took." His voice had a raspy quality to it that grated on her nerves.

"As if you care. You didn't do anything but hand over your money."

"I wasn't expecting to be pushing up daisies for twenty dollars. Were you?"

It wasn't the twenty dollars. It was the agony, the sweat, the tears and the blood she'd put into saving every damn penny so she'd have enough to leave Texas and get to San Francisco. This cowboy had no idea what Marielle would do to keep what she'd earned.

"You know he's going to try to kill you now."

"I don't care. At least I'll die fighting." She meant every word of it too.

A clanging sound preceded the bandit yelling, "Hiyah!" The sound of eight horses thundering into the desert made her stomach clench. That left one horse, and the angry bandit who sat atop it.

"Shit. Now look what you done. He ran off the horses," the cowboy groused in her ear. Gone was the handsome flirting stranger and in his place was an annoyed man.

"I didn't do anything but try to stop him. More than what you did."

"Look, lady, I've been robbed plenty of times. Nobody ever ran off the horses before you. I thought fancy-dressed ladies were supposed to be polite, not shrews."

Marielle ground her teeth together to stop the angry response from jumping out and biting him. If she had a nickel for every man who assumed how she was supposed to act, she'd be a millionaire by now.

"Now you're good and stuck. All of ya. You can thank the nice lady for that." The bandit laughed. "I hope you bake like taters in this heat."

The sound of galloping hooves faded away. Still the cowboy didn't move. The longer he lay on top of her, the better he felt, the harder he felt. Her body's response made her angrier.

"I think he's gone. Do you think you could get off me now?"

Ramsey was spinning completely out of control. The vixen with the flyaway curls lay beneath him, all soft on the outside yet hard as nails on the inside. She'd distracted him with her smile, her incredible breasts and those violet eyes with the long, dark lashes. In fact, after all the flirting in the coach, he'd been certain they'd end up in bed together. Unfortunately he'd been pretending to sleep when the damn stagecoach got robbed. He'd recognized Stinky Pete and figured he could track him down after the robbery. The idea that the tiny spitfire would actually draw Ramsey's gun never occurred to him.

Until she had it pointed at Pete's head.

Then everything seemed to go wrong at once. Damn female shot Pete's rifle, although he was impressed a little, okay a lot, with her dead-on aim, then bullets were flying, the horses were gone, and so was Pete.

That left Ramsey, the nosy old lady passed out and the vixen currently lying beneath him. Her soft ass cradled his cock so nicely, he lay on her much longer than necessary.



"I think he's gone," Ramsey said as he scrambled off her delicious body. A moan of protest almost came up his throat, but he kept it contained through sheer force of will.

"I just said that," she snapped.

Ramsey emerged from beneath the coach, stood and held out his hands to her. She ignored him and slid out with enough grace and agility that Ramsey had a brief flash of what the vixen would be like between the sheets. He shook his head to dispel the image. Now wasn't the time to be fantasizing about bedding her. They needed to find a way to get out of the fix they were in.

"You know, if you had just handed over your bag, Pete would have left us the horses. He doesn't usually leave folks stranded."

She stopped brushing off her dress to glare at him. "You knew who that was, yet you did nothing to stop him? What's wrong with you?"

Ramsey had had enough of her questioning his manhood. He stepped toward her and nearly put his face nose to nose with hers. "There's nothing wrong with me. I did the sensible thing and let him do what he was gonna do anyway." He jabbed his finger in her shoulder. "You almost got us shot, and probably got us all killed stranded out here in the middle of some unfriendly territory. It's hot, it's June, and we don't have one goddamn horse. Now if you could just shut up for five minutes, I can think of a way to get us out of this mess."

"Who are you anyway?" she huffed.

"Marshal Ramsey Whitfield."

Her mouth dropped open. "You're a marshal? And you let him rob us?"

"He'd already shot Hank up there, and the safest choice for you ladies was to let him finish the robbery. I had planned on taking one of the coach horses and going after him. That is until you decided to be a hero." Ramsey tried to use his brains before his strength, unless of course his cock took over and made stupid decisions. Like getting distracted by her.

She licked her lips and his pulse jumped. "Ah, I hadn't realized you had a plan."

“Well I did and now you know.”

“Not that you’ve asked, but my name is Marielle Bloom. I’m a teacher on my way to San Francisco.”

Ramsey burst out laughing at the images roaring through his head. “A teacher? You’re a t-teacher?”

Her dark brows drew together and those violet eyes flashed. “What’s so funny about that?”

Ramsey held his stomach to stop the stitch threatening from the laughter. “Y-you’re a teacher. God, lady, I’ve had s-some tough teachers in my time. I’ll bet you’re real good with the rod too.” He’d show her his rod anytime.

She smacked his arm, which actually smarted. “I’ll thank you not to laugh at me.”

Ramsey saw a flash of hurt in her eyes and it sobered him up right quick. “Sorry, Miss Bloom. I just...never met a teacher with a pair of brass ones before.”

“Believe me, I don’t have brass anything. I am a woman, remember?”

No need to remember. His body still pulsed from the contact with hers. Fantasies about what exactly he’d like to do with his teacher took over his brain. She smelled so damn good and those tits were more than a handful. He swore she even brushed one of them against him when they boarded the coach. The woman had been throwing herself at him, or at least he’d hoped that’s what she’d been doing. Miss Bloom was a fine-looking female.

“...then what?”

He hadn’t been paying attention, that’s what. She’d continued to speak and Ramsey had again been taken over by his bodily urges. What was it about this tight, dark-haired package that had him in knots?

“I’m going to try to make it to the next way station. The way I figure it, it’s about twenty miles due west. If I start now, I can probably get there by morning and send help back to get you two.” Ramsey glanced up at the sun. “I don’t want to wait until nightfall.”

"I'm coming with you."

He should have expected that.

"No, you're not. You'll stay right here with Mrs. Phila-whatever."

"Like hell I am. You leave without me, I'll just be right on your heels." She crossed her arms, pushing up those plump breasts nice and high.

"You certainly curse a lot for a teacher." Ramsey started searching the coach for water and food supplies.

"I am a student of all languages, Marshal Whitfield."

Ramsey snorted and continued poking around. Poor Hank lay in the dirt next to the coach. Feeling a pinch of regret, Ramsey threw a tarp over him and pulled the body to the side of the road. He wished he had time to cover the young man with rocks to keep the critters off, but time was already ticking too fast. Ramsey needed to get going.

The vixen had climbed into the coach and it rocked with her movements. Whatever she was doing, he didn't want to know.

He ignored Miss Bloom in favor of taking stock of what he'd need to get where he was going. Taking his saddlebags from atop the coach, he checked the contents. His skin was full of water, and he had some hardtack. Under the driver's seat, Ramsey found something even better. Hank had packed a lunch and there were still two apples, a biscuit and some jerky wrapped in a cloth, as well as a half-full canteen in Hank's belongings.

Ramsey felt confident the supplies would be enough to last twenty miles if he was careful with the water. He jumped down and pulled Mrs. Phila-whatever into the shade and onto a blanket he found up top. Although pale, she was breathing normally. Ramsey trickled a bit of water into her mouth until she swallowed.

"How is she?"

He turned to answer Miss Bloom, and his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth when he caught sight of her. Apparently the teacher packed other clothes besides her pretty green dress. Now wearing a pair of faded canvas trousers, a dark blue shirt, neckerchief and boots, Miss Bloom knocked the words right out of his head. His cock yowled in his pants at

the image she presented. Sweet Jesus, he could picture hanging onto her hips as he plunged into her deeply.

“Don’t stare, Mr. Whitfield. It isn’t polite.”

Ramsey blew out a breath and stood. “Jesus H. Christ, woman. Where the hell did you get those clothes?”

Marielle rolled her eyes. “These are more practical for walking, and the petticoats are too hot in this weather.”

His gaze raked her up and down like a pair of sizzling grey coals. Her nipples decided to wake up and stretch at the heat she saw in the depths of his eyes. Strange how it took a stagecoach robbery to notch up a man’s arousal past normal. Most never saw past her intelligence or her sharp tongue. Now, in the middle of nowhere, the incredibly sexy marshal sent her pulse soaring and her body throbbing. Marielle wasn’t a virgin, nor did she pretend to be, but her experience was limited to three men in her twenty-seven years. None of them had looked like this man, full of steel and muscle, nor had they tempted her to throw caution to the wind and follow her impulses.

He took off his hat and slapped it against his thigh. A riot of brown waves shone in the noontime sun, making her fingers itch to test just how soft his hair really was. She’d love to have her hands buried in those chocolate locks as he pleased her aching nipples.

What in God’s name was wrong with her?

“I told you, I’m going alone. Here’s food and water for you both.” He left a canteen and a cloth-covered bundle on the stagecoach seat. Tipping his hat, he started walking away.

Marielle tore a page from her journal and wrote a note with the pencil she always carried. In case Mrs. Philpot woke up, she didn’t want the woman to panic. After putting a rock on the note beside the older woman, Marielle took her small pouch and stuffed an apple and jerky into it from her food supplies, along with her money and her journal. She tied it around her waist, then used her small field glasses to find Marshal Whitfield. It had only been a few minutes, but he was already far ahead.

With a silent apology for leaving the woman alone, Marielle set out after the marshal.

Ramsey knew she had followed him. His gut instincts never lied to him, and they were happily cackling away about her.

Marielle.

Even the name sent a snake of longing through him, not to mention the memory of her plump lips. That led him to thinking about tongues and that made his trousers way too damn tight. He knew if he bedded her, the obsession would wane. Unfortunately for him, it wasn't the time to be bedding any woman. Much less Marielle—the woman who apparently wanted to be a thorn in his side.

He needed to keep moving and get to the way station. Head down, he walked, not slowing down one bit for her, yet she kept up. After two hours, his respect for the stubborn teacher notched up a bit. He sweated buckets in the heat and he'd grown up in the Arizona Territory. He figured she was likely from the East with her slight Southern drawl.

Spying a clump of bushes perfect for a rest, Ramsey sat, drank a bit of the water and waited. She caught up to him in less than fifteen minutes. A small vee of sweat sat between her breasts. Ramsey had the insane urge to lick the salty spot.

"I told you not to come."

She shrugged and sat next to him on the dusty ground. "Consider me a poor listener."

Ramsey snorted. "That's an understatement." He doubted the woman had ever listened to anyone in her life.

"May I have a bit of your water?"

"You didn't bring any with you?" That was about the dumbest thing he'd ever heard. Who went walking in the desert without water?

"Did you want me to leave Mrs. Philpot alone with no water and no food?" She raised one eyebrow.

"No, I expected you to stay put with her." Ramsey wished he had tied Marielle to the tree Mrs. Philpot slept under. Marielle at his mercy made his skin pebble with desire. Could he not think about fucking her every two seconds?

Obviously not, dammit.

"I don't always do what's expected of me."

"I can see that." What he wanted to do was turn her over his knee. Instead, he handed her his canteen. "You're going to give some man a hell of an interesting ride."

"What makes you think I haven't already?"

She took a swig of water and a trickle slid down her chin. Ramsey watched its progress, wishing his tongue could follow. After putting the cap on, she handed it back to him.

"Thank you, Mr. Whitfield." Her voice was even huskier than usual from the desert heat.

"Ramsey." He licked his lips. "Call me Ramsey or Ram."

One of her eyebrows went up along with the corner of her mouth. "Ram? I like that. Please call me Marielle."

He suddenly realized what she'd said about giving a man a ride. The image of her riding him danced across his mind, causing his sleeping dick to wake with a growl.

"How is it that you're out here all by yourself?" He gestured to the desert. "It's dangerous out here, even for a man."

She narrowed her eyes. "You seem to be doing all right by yourself."

"I'm a man."

"I noticed." Her gaze traveled up and down his body, igniting him like a burning stick. Ram didn't think Marielle knew how much she was risking.

"You took a lot of chances with your life today." He pointed at her head. "You're damn lucky Pete has lousy aim."

"At least I did something to try to save us." She leaned in close with an accusing gaze. "Unlike you."

Son of a bitch. The woman didn't want to understand the danger she was in. It was time to teach her a lesson so she wouldn't take such chances, and maybe send her back to the stagecoach to leave the work of rescuing to a man.

He cupped her face and kissed her. It wasn't a gentle kiss. Instead of punishing her, it was sweet torture for him. She tasted of lemon and Arizona heat and woman. Her lips plumped beneath his, moved languidly in a dance she apparently knew. Her small hands crept up his shoulders to his neck, tangling in his hair. She moaned as the two of them slid off the rock together onto the dusty ground. His body sprawled on top of her, covering her completely.

Oh what a mouth. She opened for him and he dove deep, tongues sliding and rasping against each other. Hot, wet, fierce. His hand crept down to cup one unfettered breast, a happy surprise. She must've ditched her corset when she changed. The ripe nipple pushed against his palm even as his cock pushed against her pussy. Blood thundered through him, heating him to an almost unbearable fever.

The lesson was turning into something else altogether, and Ram didn't seem to be able to control it. His body had taken over.

She wrenched her mouth away. "Ram, I..."

"Marielle, darlin', you taste like sunshine." He nibbled his way along her jaw, alternately licking and nipping at her smooth skin. She hissed in a breath when he reached her ear.

"Sensitive?" He ran his tongue along the shell of her ear.

Marielle grabbed his hair and yanked. He almost protested, but the feel of her breasts against his chest felt too good. Her pussy made a perfect home for his burgeoning cock. As he rocked against her, she moaned and pulled his hair again.

Ramsey licked his way down her neck, sucking, biting and kissing, while their lower halves teased and tempted each other. His hands shook as he unbuttoned her shirt to get to her breasts. Thank God they weren't the tiny buttons from her traveling suit or he'd have ripped them off.

He kissed each inch of exposed skin, his breath coming in pants at the anticipation of seeing the breasts he was currently cupping in his hands. When the shirt gaped open, he was entranced by the sight of the creamy skin with light pink areolas topped by richer pink nipples that begged for his mouth.

“Oh, honey, those are the most beautiful pair of tits I’ve seen in a very long time.”

She raised one eyebrow. “I’m going to take that as a compliment.”

“It was, believe me.” His mouth actually watered as he lowered his head and took a nipple into his mouth. Sweet like cream, he sucked her, biting the peak.

“Ah, God, yes.” She arched forward, thrusting the breast farther into his mouth.

Marielle’s hand crept down and pulled at his behind while she pushed up against him.

“I need more.”

It wasn’t a request. It was an order. Normally Ramsey would’ve taken control, but he barely heard her, so great was his need. Having sex in the middle of the day in the desert wasn’t the smartest idea, however things hadn’t turned out the way he’d planned that day. The urge to reclaim life after the harrowing day overcame him—he had to get inside her.

“Then take off your clothes, darlin’.” He sat up on his knees and yanked off his shirt.

She lay there, her breasts ripe and damp from his mouth, her pupils dilated and a slight sheen of sweat on the exposed skin.

Lord have mercy, she was temptation incarnate. Ramsey wasn’t one to ignore such a feast. As he shucked his trousers, she almost ripped off her pouch while shimmying off her trousers along with her boots and a pair of men’s drawers that shocked him. Was there anything about Marielle that wasn’t unusual?

Her hand wrapped around his cock and she pulled him toward her, leading him to the Garden of Eden, to that which he craved. He lay down on top of her, his skin sighing at the contact. Marielle was deliciously



naked. Her curvy, warm body cushioned his as if she'd been made to and he moaned at the sensation. They rolled onto the strewn clothes, making a blanket where none had been.

"You feel good." Her hands wandered up and down his back, stopping more than once to squeeze his behind.

"Mmm, not as good as you." He shifted and her legs opened just enough for his hardness to slide down and nestle into her tempting wetness. He shuddered when the tip of his erection landed in the damp curls between her legs. She was ready for him and damn sure he was ready for her. His pulse pounded through his body, thrumming with the beat of a thousand shivers of desire.

"Please, Marielle, let me in." He barely recognized his voice.

Slowly her legs spread wider, and like a divining rod, he thrust home into the moist heat of her core. He paused, head resting on hers while their breath mingled. The sensation of being buried deep within her stole his breath and almost stole his pleasure before it had begun. Marielle was so damn tight, so hot, it was like being gripped by a velvet glove, wrapped in the arms of a sweet-smelling package. She cupped his ass and urged him on. Embarrassed to admit he almost came as soon as he arrived, he took a deep breath and regained control. He'd make it good for both of them, even if it killed him.

"Hang on, darlin'."

He belatedly realized his little teacher wasn't a virgin, thank God and all the angels in heaven. Her tight pussy closed around him with each thrust. Blindly, he sought her breast and sucked the nipple into his mouth. Laving and nibbling the turgid peak, he pulled her knees up to go farther, faster, harder.

Marielle howled like a coyote as she clenched and raked her nails down his back. She tilted her pelvis and he slid in even further. The pleasure nearly made him pass out.

"Oh Jesus, that feels good." Ram reached between them and pinched her clit, determined to bring his partner gratification too.

She jerked and dug her nails into his skin. Ram knew he wasn't going to last long with the wildcat beneath him. He'd never known a woman to enjoy sex so much. Funny that he hadn't even intended on fucking her so soon, and the lesson had turned into one for him as well.

"I'm close, so close," she gasped. "Faster, dammit."

He leaned down and latched onto a nipple, biting and licking. Ram doubled his speed, slamming into her with each plunge. Raw heat crawled through him as the orgasm rolled from his toes to his head. She screamed his name, and he drove so far inside her he saw stars. Wave after wave of pleasure washed over him, leaving him shaking and weak as a newborn colt.

He collapsed atop her, breathing heavily. Languidness stole over him as he tried to remember his damn name. God, that had been the best sex of his life, and it was on the desert floor with a teacher.

She pushed at his chest. "You're cutting off my air."

Ramsey barely had the energy to roll on his back, but he did, pulling her up next to him. He closed his eyes with a satisfied grin.

Marielle tingled from head to toe. More than tingled, she throbbed as blood and bliss mixed in her veins. She'd never had an experience like that with any man, much less in the middle of the desert on the ground. Perhaps that's what made it so...astonishing. She knew she couldn't tell Ramsey how much she'd enjoyed it or he'd strut like a peacock and likely tell all and sundry that she'd been a loose woman.

Or perhaps he'd offer to do it again.

Now that might be worth it.

She glanced up to see the expression on his face and realized he was asleep. Not only were they stranded out here, having sex, but he had the audacity to fall asleep after the most amazing experience of her life. What an ass. Why did men fall asleep so quickly after sex? Marielle was ready for round two and he had passed out.

She was annoyed and still aroused, hankering for more of the big marshal. Ramsey really was a staggering example of manhood, splayed

out on the ground in front of her. She licked her lips, eager to touch and taste all that bronzed skin and muscle. Instead, Marielle slipped out from under his arm and dressed quickly. Unused, well-pleasured muscles ached and pinched, but she ignored them. She hefted his saddlebags onto her shoulder and started walking west again. Served him right if she got to the way station first.

Marielle had learned early in life to be dependent on no one but herself. Her parents had certainly depended on her, even when she was a child. Ramsey reminded her of every arrogant man she'd ever met. Okay, that wasn't entirely true. He was a lively lover, and well, hopefully he knew his way around the desert.

That gave her the burst of energy to go on. He took advantage of her, even with her permission, then fell asleep.

"Hmph. He was worried about me, and he just falls asleep like a snake in the sun."

After half an hour, Marielle began to get worried that she'd left him with no water, but shrugged it off. Ramsey was a U.S. Marshal, trained to survive in any conditions. He'd find water by digging a hole or following birds or whatever skills he'd have to locate it. She knew he'd be fine and leaving him to the elements was a kind of just deserts for the bossy marshal.

## Chapter Two

Ramsey knew she was gone before he came fully awake. He cracked one eye and glanced around.

“Fuck. She took my goddamn saddlebags.”

He jumped to his feet and put his clothes on as quickly as he could, nearly falling on his head when his foot got stuck in a pant leg. At least she’d left him his clothes and his gun. Which meant the stubborn teacher was out in the desert unarmed, with all his food and water.

Shit.

In about three hours the sun would go down, and he’d bet his last dollar that Marielle didn’t know how to start a fire, or how to survive in the desert at all. Goddamn woman would likely get herself killed.

Grudgingly giving the woman points for sneaking off without making a sound, Ramsey set off west after his quarry. She was going to have a sorry ass after he got through paddling it. What had possessed her to run off? The sex had been good. Actually the sex had been more than good, it had been great.

Then for some reason only God knew, Marielle had gotten up and left him. Was it some kind of revenge for taking her in the dirt? Or leaving her with the stagecoach? He certainly wasn’t going to figure out the answer to that question until he found her.

The sun beat down on him, sending rivulets of sweat trickling down his skin, but he didn’t ease up his pace. It surely wasn’t his pride that drove him to trot across the summer heat in the desert. No sirree. It was worry over what kinds of trouble Marielle would get herself into without

someone to look after her. No woman could survive out here without a man to protect her.

Not even a stubborn teacher with incredible violet eyes.

Marielle was making good time, and her feet weren't even sore yet in the boots she hadn't worn in years. Thank God she'd packed them in her bag instead of throwing them away like her father had encouraged her to do. Who knew the clothes she'd donned to travel to Missouri from North Carolina years ago would be her salvation in the middle of the desert? Something had prompted her to bring them. It must have been some kind of premonition that she'd need them.

She suffered a pinch of guilt for the way she'd left Ramsey sleeping naked. The image of his beautiful body burned behind her eyes. No doubt he'd awoken and been angry with her. He was likely hot on her trail as well.

Instead of scaring her, it prompted her to walk faster, the thrill of besting him energizing her. Marielle figured it wasn't often that someone, especially a woman, bested Marshal Ramsey Whitfield. Her chest nearly puffed out with pride for her accomplishment.

What she didn't understand was why she was driven to defeat him. Marielle wasn't normally an aggressive person, yet she'd gotten into a competition with a marshal over who would reach help first. Perhaps it was the way he'd assumed she was a helpless female.

She snorted and reminded herself that he'd tried to leave her alone with Mrs. Philpot in the middle of the desert. Still, she had left him with no supplies, which was definitely not a Christian thing to do. She ought to wait for him and give back what she took. However, he'd probably tan her hide for taking his saddlebags in the first place. Marielle knew what she should do and what she wanted to do. She just had to make them meet in the middle.

"Where in the hell do you think you're going?" Ramsay's shout almost knocked her out of her boots.

She clutched at her palpitating heart and turned to face him, ready for whatever he'd dish out. Widening her stance, she pushed her hat back and put her hands on her hips. "I'm going for help."

He had deep marks of perspiration on his shirt and it was buttoned wrong. She wasn't about to point that out though.

"You stole my bags, woman. I don't take kindly to folks stealing from me." Ramsey frowned so hard, his eyebrows nearly met in the middle.

"I borrowed them. I needed the food and the water."

"Ha! And I didn't? You left me naked, *goddammit*."

Her gaze ran up and down his body, remembering what he'd looked like sprawled on the ground, sleeping like a babe. "Yes, I surely do remember that."

His expression turned thunderous and before she knew it, he was running at her. Marielle yelped and took off. The hot wind blew past her ears as Ram roared behind her like a mini-tornado. Closer and closer he drew. She lost her balance and stumbled. He grabbed her by the waist and pulled her back against him. They tumbled to the ground together, rolling over and over into an arroyo.

Panting heavily, he pushed her into the hard, sandy ground.

She growled, "Get off me. I can't breathe."

"Gladly."

Unbelievably, he stood, then scooped her into his arms. His beautiful skin decorated with dirt and sand complemented the dangerous look on his face.

"You deserve a punishment, teacher."

Before she could even utter a protest, he climbed out of the arroyo and headed for the saddlebags. No matter that he held a hundred and fifty pound woman in his arms, Ramsey moved like she weighed no more than a feather. While she was pondering how strong he was, he sat on a rock and threw her over his knee. The first spank shocked her. With each whack, his hand grew fiercer and the stinging reverberated through her.

"What are you doing?" She tried to wiggle away, but he was much stronger than her. "Stop!"

"Nothing doing. You...took...my...things...and...left...me...naked." Each word was punctuated with a swat.

Somehow, in some strange way, Marielle forgot about the pain and focused on the sensation. It felt...good. No, more than good, it felt...exciting. Her pussy grew moist under the onslaught as her nipples rubbed deliciously on his thigh. She'd never been spanked by a man before, but she liked it. A lot.

Lord have mercy, her body nearly turned into a puddle beneath his large hands. Ramsey must have sensed a change in her because his swats became more than a punishment. He nudged her thighs apart and his hand dipped down to her damp core. With each slap of his hand, his fingers teased her clit through the material of her trousers.

*Slap! Moan.*

*Slap! Moan.*

She had no idea how long it went on, but her body was edging toward orgasm when he abruptly stopped. Marielle shuddered and squeezed her thighs together.

"Ramsey?"

"I want to fuck you."

The naughty words sent a zing through her body straight to her throbbing center. She wiggled enough to be able to reach up to lightly scratch at his balls through his trousers.

"So what are you waiting for?"

"Are you sure you're a teacher? I'd swear you were something else."

"Right about now you're teaching me just how good a spanking can be." Marielle bit her lip. "I think I'm always going to associate fucking and spanking."

He flipped her over so she sat nestled on his lap. His already hard cock pushed against her hip. She throbbed with the need to have him inside her again. Marielle clenched her muscles and rocked into him.

He hissed as he unbuttoned her shirt slowly, and his eyes dilated with passion. "I'm thirsty."

As he spread her shirt open, the warm breeze caressed her bare breasts, making the nipples tighten to painful points. He licked his lips, then reached into the saddlebags. His gaze met hers when he took the waterskin and pulled the stopper out. Cupping her breast, he dribbled a bit of water on her then licked it up. Marielle gasped at the sensations running through her. He moved from breast to breast, lapping, nibbling and sucking her until she nearly begged for mercy.

Instead she begged for more. She needed him inside her.

"Please, Ram..."

"You promise not to run off again?"

"God, yes. I'll promise anything right now."

He grinned, a wicked gleam in his silvery eyes. "I like a woman at my mercy."

He set her on her feet and slid her trousers off, biting and kissing the skin as it was exposed. Then he stood and shucked his trousers quickly. He used the clothing as a cushion on the rock behind him and sat on top of the material. "You're gonna ride me, little filly."

Marielle had never done anything like this with a man, but just the thought of it made moisture trickle down her thigh. He cupped her, rubbing his calloused fingers in her wetness, sliding against her swollen clit. She jerked and spread her legs even wider, hungry for more.

"Oh, darlin', you're so wet and ready. I've got to have a taste."

Nudging her thighs apart with his jaw, he leaned forward and pressed his nose into her pussy. Tingles raced through her body at the thought of his mouth on her. She'd never had a man touch her that way, but she was well-read and knew of many different things men and women could do to and with each other.

His tongue flicked out and swiped her heated flesh.

"Oh God."



"Sweet nectar, teacher." Ramsey pulled her nether lips apart and kissed her. "Yes, ma'am, so sweet."

He licked and sucked at her, alternately thrusting his tongue inside her like a tiny cock. His magical mouth rasped against her most sensitive skin, pulling her closer and closer to orgasm. Her thoughts jumbled as her entire body centered on what he was doing to her. The wave started near her toes and built through her, sweeping like a roll of thunder, sending every hair on her body to attention.

"I'm coming," she gasped.

He latched his mouth on her clit while his tongue continued to pleasure her. The combination made the lightning strike and Marielle fell temporarily blind. Stars exploded behind her eyes and her body convulsed with the most intense ecstasy she'd ever felt. Her legs couldn't support her and she started to fall.

Ramsey dragged his mouth away and caught her in his arms. He settled her onto his lap so she straddled him, then cupped her face and kissed her breathless. The taste of her own juices coated her tongue and her body leapt to life. Impossible as it was, her languor disappeared and she was ready to continue the journey with Ram.

"Ride me, sweet Marielle."

He pulled her forward until her legs were spread wide, then positioned his hardened staff at her entrance. She closed her eyes and impaled herself on his cock. A moan of pure satisfaction escaped her mouth. His mouth fastened on one nipple and he bit it, then slapped her ass. The combination of his cock deep inside her, his teeth on her nipple, and his hand on her tender ass notched up her passion to a dangerous level.

"Again."

"Yes, ma'am."

He spanked her in rhythm to his thrusts. Marielle rode Ramsey as if she'd done it a hundred times before. Slamming herself down, she realized she wasn't even breathing, but she didn't care. God, it was the most intensely sexual experience of her life. When his hand crept around

to the bottom of her ass and one finger circled her puckered hole, she came so hard, she bit her tongue and thought her heart actually stopped beating for a moment. A single, perfect moment.

She clenched around him, pulsing with intense pleasure. His hoarse shout told her he'd achieved a release. His hands gripped her hips, pumping her up and down as he spilled his seed. Marielle breathed like a well-run horse and laid her forehead on his shoulder.

"I think I may have stayed in school if I'd had a teacher like you, Mari."

Her bottom glowed along with her body. If nothing else, Marielle knew this experience with Ram had changed her. She'd been determined to live life instead of enduring, and now she truly knew what it meant.

This time, Marielle didn't have an opportunity to escape. After their second mind-blowing fuck session, Ramsey dressed immediately. They picked up the strewn saddlebags and straightened themselves as best they could in the heat.

"It'll be sundown in about two hours. Let's keep walking so we can get another six or seven miles before darkness comes."

Marielle didn't say a word, she just trudged behind him, matching his pace like a partner would. Now that was an odd thought. Ramsey hadn't had a partner in years, and he certainly wasn't about to take on a lady partner no matter how good she was. Or how much his body still throbbed with the memory of hers.

They found a small stream an hour later and gratefully refilled their waterskin and quenched their thirst. As they sat for a few minutes in the shade, Ramsey couldn't contain his curiosity.

"So why didn't you want old Stinky Pete to take your bag? What's so important?"

She looked startled, like a deer in a hunter's sights. "It's all I have in the world."

"In that one bag?" He found that hard to believe.

"Basically yes. I lost both my parents and what's left in that bag is what I have left of them."

That's when he understood why the bag was so important to her. He was surprised she'd left it behind in the stagecoach, but then again, she couldn't carry a valise like that and expect to keep up with him. His respect for Marielle Bloom went up once more. He'd known women who wouldn't leave a hat behind, much less all the mementos from her parents. She had grit, that was for damn sure. He pointed at the small bag tied around her waist.

"So what's in there?"

Her hand landed on the bag and she glanced down. "Pictures, some money, my mother's locket and my father's watch."

Not a whole lot in the world, but he'd had less himself, more times than he cared to admit.

"Where were you headed?"

"San Francisco."

She wasn't being evasive, but it was like pulling teeth to get information from her. That was okay, Ramsey was used to dealing with folks who didn't want to talk. She must like her privacy, but after the way they'd fallen on each other like bunnies, he decided he was entitled to know a bit more about her.

"Teaching job out there?"

"Something like that." She brushed some dust from her boots.

"Where'd you come from?"

She frowned. "Originally or on the stagecoach?"

"Doesn't matter." He shrugged and put the waterskin in his saddlebags, then stood.

She looked up at him. "Originally I came from North Carolina, but my father and I lived in Missouri for a while, then I moved to Texas after he died."

There were so many other questions he wanted to ask, but he simply nodded. In time he'd find out more. He held out his hand to help her up. "We'd better keep moving."

He didn't ask any more questions, but Marielle felt them hovering in the air, waiting to pounce. Ramsey was a lawman and they were notoriously nosy. She didn't know if she was ready for him to know more about her than he already did, regardless of the fact that they'd had sex twice. She felt a pinch of remorse, but no more. The last seven years had been too hard to give up every bit of her secrets for a man she barely knew.

"What about you?" she blurted.

"What about me?"

In for a penny, in for a pound. "Where were you headed?"

He grunted. "Same as you. San Francisco."

She was a little surprised he'd answered. "Really? What were you going to do there?"

"Right interested in me, aren't ya?" He chuckled dryly. "You think if I tell you my story you'll tell me yours?"

Marielle didn't answer. She kept walking up the small hill with her eyes on the horizon. The sun was sinking fast. Soon it would be dark and cold. No doubt he would want to keep going until they were ready to drop. Fine with her—the sooner they reached the end of their journey, the better.

"I had to leave Texas. Bad memories."

Her ears perked up at the rusty pain in his voice. A pain she knew all too well herself.

"I'm sorry."

"Nothing for you to be sorry about."

The silence was only broken by the sound of their boots crunching on the dry ground. Marielle felt like she should say something, but couldn't bring herself to speak first.

"But I appreciate it anyway." He cleared his throat. "I used to be a Texas Ranger, but quit that after...well after I lost my family. Friend of mine convinced me to become a marshal. So here I am."

"You lost your family too?" It seemed she and Ramsey had a lot more in common than she'd thought.

"Yep."

The one word answer told her all she needed to know. Although Marielle had lost her mother to an accident and her father to lung fever, from his demeanor it seemed that Ramsey lost his to more sinister forces. More than likely something not pretty either. Texas was a rough place to live; she knew that very well. The last five years in Texas had taught her more about the evils men were capable of than she'd ever wanted to know. She'd endured the constant unwanted attentions of a man who finally forced her to lay beneath him. When she'd confessed to his wife, she'd been accused of being a whore and had to leave town. The next town she was smarter, if harder in heart. However, Marielle still had to deal with men assuming they could touch her whenever they wanted. She wanted to be able to make that choice herself.

"So what about you?"

Well, she should have expected he'd ask that. "What about me?"

"Gonna be that way about it, eh? I told you my story."

"Hardly."

"More than you've said, teacher." He kicked a rock that went skittering past her, sending up a cloud of dust.

Marielle debated telling him no, that she just couldn't tell him anything about herself. It really was none of his business, but then again, he had given her tidbits about himself.

"I was born in North Carolina and lived there until I was nineteen. My father got it in his head that he wanted to move out west, so we packed up and left for Missouri. Along the way, my mother was killed." She took a deep breath and beat back the demons jumping on her back. "My father grew sick with lung fever. He lasted two years in Missouri before he died. I supported us by getting my teaching certificate and getting jobs

whenever I could. The last five years I've taught in Texas, mostly in the parts where other teachers wouldn't go."

She hadn't meant to spill her entire life story, but now that she had, she felt a little better. The knot of tension in her stomach eased—a knot she hadn't even realized was there.

"Why?"

"Why what?" Marielle turned to look at him. Big mistake. Those silver eyes bored into hers like bullets.

"Why did you teach in parts where others wouldn't?"

"Money. Towns in Indian territory paid top dollar for teachers." An involuntary shudder snaked up her spine. Many of them expected quite a bit more than teaching from their teachers too.

His gaze never faltered while they walked. Of course, Marielle almost fell on her head on some loose rocks because she wasn't looking where she was going. He grasped her elbow in a tight grip to prevent her from pitching into the dirt.

"That's a helluva reason to teach."

"You've no call to judge me." She snatched her elbow out of his reach and stomped forward, grateful to arrive at the crest of the small hill.

"I ain't judging you. I'm just saying most teachers do it because they like kids, not for money."

She stopped and put her fists on her hips. Turning to face him, she tipped her hat back and glared. "My two choices were to become a whore or a teacher. I didn't have any other skills so I flipped a coin and made a decision. Are you telling me it was the wrong one?"

The air between them felt heavy with unnamed emotions. He licked his lips and blew out a breath, breaking the spell of intensity.

"No. It was the right one. Let's keep moving, teacher. We've got less than an hour of daylight left."

He waved her ahead and Marielle started walking again. She never figured she'd need such thick socks on the trip or in San Francisco, but

she was glad she'd kept them. Without the cushioning, she was certain the boots would have rubbed her feet raw after miles of walking.

"How far are we from the way station?" she asked.

"I dunno. Probably another ten or twelve miles."

Marielle's stomach dropped. That meant they weren't even halfway there. The longest day of her life just got even longer. Having Ramsey for company was, well...comforting. She'd hate to imagine what the desert would be like for a woman alone.

Ramsey didn't know what to make of his teacher. She was wildness mixed with grace and ladylike behavior that confounded the hell out of him. When he'd left Texas, it had been with a heart as black as pitch. He'd tried to continue with the Rangers, but he'd lost his edge and his will to live. Mitchell, Ram's childhood friend and a fellow Ranger, convinced him to try something different.

Little did Mitch know that it would lead Ram to the adventure of a lifetime with a teacher who boggled his mind and his body. She was tough, an indisputable fact. No other women he knew would last one mile, much less the eight he figured they'd covered already. Not only that, but she didn't complain or nag. Oh, she definitely had her say, but nothing more than a man would have. He'd been suitably impressed with the way she'd stood down old Stinky Pete.

She was all woman, but she damned sure didn't act like one.

Ramsey's curiosity got the better of him again. "How come you were traveling alone? Don't you schoolmarms usually travel with a companion or something?"

"Excuse me? I am not a schoolmarm and I don't need a companion or a chaperone," she huffed.

"Well, you damn sure need some protection, especially out here in the territory. Lots of men are a hundred times worse than Pete."

"Don't remind me of that idiot. If I see him again, I'm going to shoot him instead of his gun."

Ramsey smiled behind her. Dang, she had some sass.

“Besides, I can take care of myself.” She stuck her nose in the air as if she expected him to argue.

“I believe you can, darlin’. I’m just curious why no man has snatched you up for his bride yet.”

Now where the hell had that thought come from? He wasn’t even remotely interested in Marielle as anything other than a sex partner, much less a wife. He’d had a wife, one wife, and didn’t expect to ever have another, especially one with such a sharp tongue. Although he had really enjoyed spanking her. That particular thought made a zip of arousal course through him.

She harrumphed. “As if that’s going to happen. I’m twenty-seven years old, Ram, not eighteen. My prime years were eaten by taking care of my parents. By the time I had a chance to look around, it was too late and no man wanted me for a wife.”

“I don’t believe that. You’re a beautiful woman.”

She smacked his arm. “I can’t believe you’d insult me like that.”

Ramsey rubbed the sting from his skin. “What the hell did you hit me for? It was a compliment, you know.”

“Hah! It’s not a compliment to say that a man would want to marry me because I’m beautiful. I would like to think that men want more than a pretty face in their bed. Intelligence, companionship and love mean more than physical beauty ever will.” She looked as if she’d had the argument before and had won that battle too.

Ramsey held up his hands in mock surrender. “Okay then. Settle down, Marielle. There’s more to you than beauty for sure and, ah, you don’t need to worry about lacking those other things.”

She cocked her head and stared at him, her eyes cloudy with confusion. “I don’t?”

“No.”

He couldn’t stop himself from kissing her more than he could stop the warm wind from blowing. Her lips were dry, but moistened quickly,



sliding and kissing him in a familiar pattern. He pulled her up close until her delicious breasts were pressed against him, the nipples diamond-hard points teasing him.

"We can't do this again," he gasped out when he finally remembered to stop kissing her.

"You kissed me," she said in a voice laden with passion.

"One more hour then we make camp." He kissed her hard as if to seal a bargain. What exactly he was bargaining for, he didn't know.

## Chapter Three

Darkness crept around them as the last of the light faded from orange to purple in the sky. The beauty of the sunset wasn't lost on Marielle, but her mind refused to focus on it. Instead, she was obsessing about Ramsey and what exactly he meant when he said she wasn't lacking. She'd had four lovers in her life including him. Two of them were her choice, and the forced one in Texas was a mistake but one she had to live with. Ramsey was different.

With him she'd shared an inexplicable mating, well two matings, that she'd been helpless to control. As if her body did what it wanted to, regardless of what her mind told it. Her lovers had been varied in age, background and appearance. She'd never considered a man's looks to be primary to her attraction to him. However, Ramsey put her previous lovers to shame. He was as beautiful dressed as he was naked—a fact her mind refused to stop thinking about.

She wondered what would happen after they made camp. What she really was curious about was what would happen after they got to the way station. Obviously they were both headed to San Francisco, but would they travel together? If they did, what did it mean?

Her brain started to hurt from too much thinking so she turned it off and focused on walking. She was sure she still had feet, but they had grown numb at least an hour before. Ramsey steered her toward a small group of trees sheltered from the wind by a few rocks.

"Start looking for some sticks and kindling for a fire."

Marielle kept her eyes on the ground and soon had a small armful of wood. By the time she got to the campsite, he'd already put some rocks in a circle for the fire pit and had cleared away debris.

"Not much of a camp without bedrolls, but we'll make do."

She nodded and set the wood beside the fire ring, then slowly lowered herself to the ground. Wincing at the tingles in her feet, she groaned after she finally sat.

"Lord above, that feels good."

Ramsey stared at her, a different kind of hunger in his eyes. "That was a mighty...interesting moan."

Fire leapt through her tired body, infusing it with heat and instant arousal. What was it about this man that sent her tumbling into an abyss of sexual need? She watched him make a fire efficiently, remembering how those same hands felt on her skin. Squirming on the ground, she felt embarrassed by the need coursing through her. A need that could only be satisfied by Ram.

"Your feet hurt?"

She nodded and he shimmied over to her. Without asking, he pulled off her boots and socks, and rubbed her calves, ankles and feet. Long, firm fingers made her completely forget about the pain and soreness. She lay back against his saddlebags and gave up her body to his. If this was the beginning of a relationship with Ram, she never wanted it to end.

Pleasure radiated from his touch, up her legs to her pussy, her belly and upwards through her breasts and down her arms. Amazing, sweet sensations filled her. More pleasure than she could absorb at once. She'd never known a foot massage could be so erotic. Then again, there had been a lot she didn't know about herself until Ramsey had touched her.

"Feel good?"

"Mmmm, yes."

"You keep talking like that and my hands aren't going to stay on your feet for very long."

Marielle popped one eye open. "Who says they have to?"

"I don't think I've ever been as surprised by someone as I am by you." He looked predatory in the firelight as his hands slowly moved up her legs.

"Is that g-good?" She stumbled over his words when he massaged the back of her knees. It felt sensual, almost naughty. She wondered what his tongue would feel like there.

"Yes, it's very, very good."

His hands moved closer to her center, then veered off to land on her buttons. He straddled her legs, putting his obvious erection very close to her throbbing, needy self. Being a hussy definitely had its advantages. As his deft fingers unbuttoned her shirt, then pants, his eyes changed from aroused to intense.

"You're incredible."

She choked on the words in her throat. "No need for flattery. I'm already yours for the taking."

He shook his head and leaned forward to kiss her. Gentle at first, then harder and harder until his tongue invaded her mouth, sweeping in and leaving her trembling for more. He left nothing untouched, her teeth, her tongue, her cheeks, the roof of her mouth. Everything tingled from his tongue's magic. Breaking the kiss, he sat up and slid off her pants, then her shirt until she wore nothing but her creamy skin and the air around her.

"I like the no-corset plan." He wagged his eyebrows.

Marielle laughed. "It's much more comfortable."

"And easy to reach." He cupped her breasts and swiped his thumbs across the nipples. "So soft."

She grasped his hardened staff. "So hard."

Ramsey stood and shed his clothes, laying all their clothing on the ground as a bed. "Your bed awaits."

She eyed his cock, standing proud and firm in a nest of dark hair, waiting for her. Instead of lying down, she knelt and beckoned him toward her. When he was close enough, she grabbed him again, stroking

the silky smooth staff. He hissed and thrust his hips forward. Grinning, Marielle took control of the two hundred pound man with one swipe of her tongue.

Salty and sweet. She was again glad she had read all the books about sex she could. Of course, none of them prepared her for the size of the cock in her palm.

"Jeeeesus," he breathed.

"Nope, just me."

Marielle licked his staff slowly, like it was a sucker, alternately nibbling and kissing the throbbing flesh. When she finally put him in her mouth, he jerked and touched the back of her throat. She bobbed her head up and down, squeezing the base and fondling his warm balls. He groaned low in his throat, an animal-like sound that set the hairs on the back of her neck rising. It sparked an answer deep inside her, and she wanted to howl at the moon with him.

He pulled her by the hair to her feet and kissed her with bruising force. As if civilization had been tossed aside, they came together with a ferocity that nearly scared her, and definitely thrilled her. He picked her up so she could wrap her legs around his hips. She had no idea how he could hold her like that, but he did, rubbing up and down until her wetness coated his cock.

They landed on their makeshift bed in a tangle of arms and legs, their mouths never losing contact. He spread her legs, flicking her clit and pushing his fingers up inside her.

"I need to...now," he said hoarsely.

"Ride me, Marshal."

He thrust deeply in one smooth stroke, burying himself to the hilt, filling her so completely that her heart stuttered. This, *this* was what she'd been missing in her life and her loves. The deep, elemental union that only came under the light of a desert moon with an elemental man who made her feel as if the world was in her arms. Infinity beckoned.

His strokes pushed her close to orgasm quickly, driving her beyond the limits of pleasure and pain. He whispered her name again and again

while she scratched at his back, trying to pull him closer. Her release approached all too soon and she grasped his ass while he pumped into her. She opened her knees so he could go deeper, all the way to her soul.

“God, yes, Ram, please!”

“Marielle!” he cried as his pace grew faster and faster.

The world exploded around her, raining ecstasy like a deluge in, around and through her. The pulses of pleasure crashed over her, drawing her into a whirlpool of sensation and bringing wave after wave of bliss.

Ramsey thrust one last time and arched his back as a cry of primal release burst from his mouth. Marielle felt him trembling above her.

“Holy hell.”

She pulled him back down on top of her and tucked his head on her shoulder. “I was thinking sweet heaven myself.” She knew what had just happened had changed the course of her life. For good.

\* \* \*

The morning sun arrived hard and hot, waking Ramsey like a slap. He awoke completely and instantly with a warm weight on his right side.

Marielle.

Their joining the night before had been the single most powerful experience of his life. His body still felt the aftereffects of it. In fact, if he wasn’t careful, he’d get himself a pair of blue balls and be unable to walk. As it was, he felt twinges from fucking his brains out three times in twenty-four hours. He wasn’t a twenty-year-old kid anymore.

Apparently his body didn’t want to listen because he was hardening already from just having her smooth body pressed against him. She sighed and the hot breath danced across his skin. Their scattered clothes kept the ground from their bodies, but it wasn’t exactly a bed. A few rocks were lodged in his back.

She lifted her left leg. “That’s an invitation, cowboy.”

Ramsey wasn't one to refuse that kind of invitation. He slid into her as easily as a key in a lock. Sweet, sweet Marielle. She'd been made to take in every inch of him. He anchored his hand on her hip and thrust, forgetting about the rocks beneath him, the sun warming their bodies, and everything but the feel, taste and scent of her skin.

He reached down until he found her clit and pinched it. Hard.

"Oh my God, Ram." She shuddered from his touch. "Do it again."

Marielle liked a bit of pain with her pleasure. Ramsey wouldn't refuse her.

He rode her hard and fast, feeling her clench around him as he pleased her clit and nipples. They moved together in a synchronous rhythm, a dance as old as the earth they lay upon. She scratched at his hip and arched against him.

"Yes, deeper."

He pulled her leg up until she was almost doing a split and then pushed in as far as he could go. She screamed and clenched around him so tightly, she drew his orgasm from deep within him. It slammed into him like a horse's kick, stunning him. His cock was so hard, he thought it would never stop pumping his seed. Marielle left scratches on his skin as she was swept along with him.

When the black spots left his vision, Ramsey remembered to let her leg down.

"God, woman, you're going to be the death of me."

She blew out a shaky breath. "I'm certainly going to have trouble walking."

Ramsey chuckled and kissed the side of her neck, licking at the sweet perspiration. As much as he wanted to enjoy his morning wake-up with Marielle, they had to keep moving. Mrs. Phila-whatever had spent the night alone by the stagecoach. He felt a little guilty for leaving her there alone, but he hadn't made his stubborn teacher follow him. Truth was, they needed to make double time to get to the way station. If they were lucky, everyone but the driver would survive the ordeal.

Ramsey kissed her forehead, breathing in her scent, reveling in the feeling of rightness. As he slipped from her body, he knew more than a moment of regret.

“Time to go, teacher.” He slapped her behind lightly.

Her eyelids fluttered open. “Do we have to? I was hoping—”

“Well, ain’t this a cozy picture?” A caustic voice broke the morning silence. “I never expected to find you two out here in the desert. It’s like picking off the weak critters, almost too easy.”

Shit. Stinky Pete.

Marielle looked angry. “That bastard.”

Although he wasn’t surprised to hear her curse, he was surprised by the vehemence of it.

“That he is,” Ramsey whispered. “Let’s play this smart, teacher. Listen to what I tell you.”

Her lips pursed so tight they turned white, but she nodded her agreement. Ramsey sat up and turned to face Pete. The dirty outlaw sat on his horse, leering at Marielle’s breasts through the thin chemise she wore. Lousy pig.

“What do you want?”

Pete scratched his whiskered chin and seemed to be thinking. “A taste of your wife and what you got in those saddlebags.”

“Not on your life!” Marielle stood so quickly, Ramsey had no time to stop her. His pistol was gripped firmly in her hands again. “Get your lousy stinky butt out of here before I shoot you again.”

To Ramsey’s astonishment, he saw a flash of fear in old Pete’s rheumy eyes. He’d probably be afraid of Marielle too if she’d shot at him with such deadly accuracy.

“Give it back, Marielle. I’ll handle this.”

She kept her gaze and her aim on Pete. “I’ll give you five seconds before I start shooting.”

“Your wife needs to learn some manners,” Pete grouched at Ramsey.

“One.”



"I can't control her. She does what she wants to do." Ramsey folded his arms over his chest and told his heart to stop beating so fast at the notion that Pete thought Marielle was his wife.

"Two."

"Are you going to let her do this?"

"Three."

Pete sat up straight in the saddle and his hand crept toward his pistol. Ramsey inched closer, ready to do what he needed to do to stop the inevitable from happening.

"Four."

"I'll shoot a woman. I swear."

"And I'll shoot a thieving coward. Fi—"

Pete went for his pistol at the same moment Ramsey ran toward the horse, startling the creature into a rear. Pete's shot went wild. While the outlaw struggled with his horse, Ramsey took the gun from Marielle. With effort of course. She didn't want to lose her quarry.

Taking careful aim, Ramsey shot the gun out of Pete's hand then the fool fell off the horse. Marielle grabbed for the reins, again surprising Ramsey with her skills. He held the gun on a cursing Pete and wondered what the rest of his life would be like with Marielle by his side.

"That was a dumb move trying to shoot my woman."

"I didn't mean no harm."

"You're full of shit." He glanced at Marielle and smiled. "Nice going, darlin'. Now load up the gear in the saddlebags so we can get out of here."

"You ain't taking my horse!"

"Oh yes we are. You took ours." Ramsey wondered why Marielle frowned at him. "What's wrong?"

"I don't like being ordered." She started yanking on her clothes instead of doing what he told her to do.

"And I don't like being shot. Now move that fine fanny before I have a mind to spank it again. We need to get going."

The electric pulse that snapped between them had nothing to do with the heat, and everything to do with sex. Her nipples peaked beneath the chemise and he nearly groaned when she covered them with her shirt. Pulling on her boots, she glanced at his clothes, then started stuffing them willy-nilly in the saddlebags.

“Leave the boots and the britches, please.”

This time she did as she was bade.

“Now come here and hold the gun on this fool.”

Again she did as she was bade. Ramsey hoped it would last. Fat chance. Before he got his foot in his trousers, she started in on Pete one last time.

“You really ought to do something besides rob people.”

“Shut up, lady.”

Ramsey quickly pulled on his britches and boots before the situation worsened. He snatched the gun from her. She opened her mouth to protest and he kissed her hard, then tossed her up on the sorry nag.

“Here, hold these.” He gave her the saddlebags and mounted up in front of her. She nestled against him and he almost forgot Pete was there.

“Don’t leave me out here,” the idiot whined.

“Tit for tat,” Marielle said with no small amount of glee.

“We’ll send the law out to get you. Don’t worry.” Ramsey had a moment of pleasure seeing the dismay on Pete’s face. Then he kneed the horse into motion and they left the outlaw behind.

The wind felt wonderful on his face after a day of walking. They’d get to the way station in less than an hour. That meant it was nearly time to say goodbye to his fling with Marielle.

Marielle clutched Ramsey and reveled in the feel of his hard, warm body. She knew they’d reach their destination soon and was surprised to find herself wishing they wouldn’t get there. It had been so long since she’d felt alive, and it was all due to Ramsey. The fact that Pete thought

she was Ram's wife gave her a tingle. Okay, more than a tingle, it gave her a rush of excitement she hadn't expected.

Long ago, she had acknowledged that no man would ever accept her as she was, outspoken, strong and not obedient. Ramsey seemed to enjoy their arguing as much as he enjoyed the physical side of the last day. That lit a small flare of hope in her chest that perhaps their relationship wouldn't end when they arrived at the way station.

She tried to squash that flare, but it was a determined little thing. Instead, she stopped thinking about it and concentrated on the man in her arms.

All too soon they got to the way station. A medium-sized wooden building with warped boards sat beside a red barn that had seen better days. A group of horses milled around in a corral. A forlorn feeling pervaded the air, and Marielle shivered in the rising desert heat.

A man wearing faded overalls, a plaid shirt and a battered hat came out of the shadows to greet them. Ramsey nodded at the man and dismounted. Marielle was glad they'd stopped to finish dressing otherwise she'd be meeting the odd stranger in her drawers.

Ramsey helped her down and turned to face the stranger. "Morning."  
"Mornin'. Where you folks headed?"

"We were on a stagecoach that was robbed by Stinky Pete. He's back east of here about eight miles, probably hightailing it to New Mexico by now."

The man nodded. "Yep, I heard all about the robbery. The horses showed up here and we knewed somethin' was wrong. Went out and got some lady and poor fella been shot dead. The stage left early this morning already."

Marielle thought she was hearing things. "Excuse me? I walked twelve miles in the desert for no reason?"

The man ignored her and continued speaking to Ramsey as if she wasn't there. "Folks left a coupla bags behind, said a man and a woman left them. I guess that be you, eh?"

Ramsey squeezed Marielle's hand. "Probably so. Can I have a look?"

“Sure thing. They’re right here inside.”

They followed the strange man into the house and Marielle spotted her valise. She let out a happy whoop and picked it up. Ramsey smiled and shook his head, then retrieved his small bag.

“Thank you kindly. When does the next stage come through?”

“Not for two days, mister.” He scratched his balls, eliciting a shudder from Marielle.

Ramsey steered her back out into the sunlight where she sucked in a deep breath, glad to be out of the gloomy interior. He looked up at the sky then down at her, his dark eyes searching.

“I’m thinking you don’t want to wait here two days.”

“I don’t want to wait here two minutes.”

He rubbed her arm. “I know this has been a crazy two days, Marielle, but...I was thinking...”

Her heart pounded, wondering what he’d say and wanting to smack him to force it out of him. “Yes?”

“We’re both headed to San Francisco, right? So why don’t we travel together.”

The lamest, most frustrating invitation she’d ever had.

“No thanks.” She turned away so he wouldn’t see the prick of tears in her eyes. Damn her stupid heart for even caring what the marshal said.

He pulled her back toward him and nestled her against his chest. His arms closed around her and he nuzzled her neck.

“That wasn’t what I meant to say. I’m sorry if that came out wrong, but sometimes my mouth runs ahead of my brain.”

She shrugged, unable to speak without revealing how upset she really was.

“I meant to say that I really like you, Marielle. A lot more than I thought I could ever feel for a woman after losing my wife. She was killed by marauders when I was out working. I’ve never considered being with another woman until I met you.” He cleared his throat. “I... It would be

an honor if you'd ride with me to San Francisco. Along the way, we may even decide to get hitched. What do you say?"

Marielle stepped out of his arms and put her hands on her hips. "I think you talk too much." She jumped into his arms and kissed him hard. "Let's ride, Marshal."

He whooped louder than her and spun her around in a circle.

Marielle never wanted or expected to teach the marshal anything, but perhaps they'd both learned something. How to love, live and laugh. Together.

## About the Author

You can't say cowboys without thinking of Beth Williamson. She likes 'em hard, tall and packing. Read her work and discover for yourself how hot and dangerous a cowboy can be.

Beth lives in North Carolina, with her husband and two sons. Born and raised in New York, she holds a B.F.A. in writing from New York University. She spends her days as a technical writer, and her nights immersed in writing hot romances for her readers.

To learn more about Beth Williamson, please visit [www.bethwilliamson.com](http://www.bethwilliamson.com). Send an email to Beth at [beth@bethwilliamson.com](mailto:beth@bethwilliamson.com), join her Yahoo! Group, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cowboylovers>, or sign up for Beth's monthly newsletter, Sexy Spurs, <http://www.crocodesigns.com/cgi-bin/dada/mail.cgi/list/spurs/>.

## Look for these titles by Beth Williamson

### *Now Available:*

The Bounty  
The Prize  
The Reward  
The Treasure  
The Gift  
The Tribute  
The Legacy  
Marielle's Marshal

### *Coming Soon:*

Devils on Horseback: Nate  
Branded  
Devils on Horseback: Jake  
Hell for Leather

*Amidst the post-war chaos that rains down around them, a controlling man and a desperate woman must choose between life and love.*

## Devils on Horseback: Nate

© 2007 Beth Williamson

*Coming September 25, 2007 to Samhain Publishing*

Nate Marchand grew up as the only son of the town drunk. As a Confederate soldier, he found that order in the chaos was the only thing that kept him sane. Numbers, information, keeping everything in its proper place became second nature. The chaos of the war and its aftermath sent him into a rigid state that he couldn't seem to overcome.

He and his friends, nicknamed Devils on Horseback, leave behind the aftermath of war to start fresh in the west. Their new business venture flounders and desperation drives them to take whatever work they can.

The Devils are hired to remove the Taggart family from land claimed by Samuel O'Shea, the largest landowner in Grayton, Texas. When he meets Elisa Taggart, his entire world shifts beneath him. Attracted, bewildered, and off-kilter, Nate ignores his conscience in favor of his wallet.

The simple task of removing a woman, a boy, and an old man, along with a small herd of cattle, resembles a Medieval siege. Nate wrestles with what he knows is right with what he must do. Will his love for Elisa overcome his need for survival?

Enjoy the following excerpt for *Devils on Horseback: Nate*:

Elisa watched as the man walked toward the stream, knowing it was Nate without even seeing his face. He had a way about him that was recognizable in the moonlight. When he reached the stream, he sighed as he lay back on the grass with his knees up and his arms folded behind his head.



She crept closer, careful not to disturb any of the foliage around her. If Elisa was good at anything, it was being stealthy. She'd had to become a hunter to feed her brother and mother while Da had been off to war. They'd had plenty of meat those two years.

When she was within a few yards, she could see his face quite clearly in the light of the moon. His expression seemed contemplative, almost melancholy. She wondered what he was thinking about—probably how much money he'd make working for O'Shea. Dirty, rotten stinker.

Before he could sense her nearby, she pounced. She pinned his elbows down with her knees, slapped a hand across his mouth as her knife rested comfortably on his throat. The scent of man and of Nate wafted up at her, tickling her nose and her sleeping arousal.

"I see you had a nice visit with that bastard," she hissed in a whisper. "Did you agree to work for him? Or should I even bother to ask judging from the fried chicken grease on your lips."

He shook his head, wiggling beneath her, but Elisa was no featherweight. She held him down securely.

"If I lift my hand, will you promise not to yell for your friends?"

Nate's eyes narrowed but he nodded against her hand. When she lifted it, he growled at her. *Growled!*

"What do you think you're doing?"

"Trying to figure out what you were doing at O'Shea's." No need to lie to the man. They both knew where he'd been that day.

"None of your business. Now get off me and I'll let you get away."

She laughed and pressed the knife into his skin a bit more. "I think I have the upper hand here, Johnny Reb."

"It's Nate. Or if you prefer, Nathaniel. I'll even answer to Lieutenant."

"Oh, I touched on a nerve, did I? I'll have to remember that." She pushed down on his elbows, digging them into the hard ground beneath them. "Are you going to tell me what you were doing today?"

"Go to hell."

"Tsk, ts. Such language and in front of a *lady* too."

Nate jerked his body, almost throwing her off, but Elisa held fast. She nicked his throat, allowing a small drop of blood to well.

"I ain't playing with you, fancy man. You tell me what I want to know or I cut you deeper."

Her blood rushed around so fast, it made her heady. The feeling of power over the big man was intoxicating. Arousing.

"You don't have the heart to do something like that."

"Don't doubt it," she snapped.

Her euphoria pinched by his words, Elisa shifted her knees slightly. That must have been the opportunity he'd been waiting for, because within seconds, their positions were reversed and he pinned her to the ground. The knife landed useless on the ground somewhere behind him.

A rock dug into her back just as his body flattened hers from top to bottom. It was an astounding, startling sensation completely foreign to her. Nate Marchand was no boy. He was a man, all man, with a hard, strong body that had obviously spent a great deal of time doing chores. A lot of chores.

"Your turn for listening." His hot breath coated her face with the sweet smell of pipe tobacco. "You have no right to attack me, cut me or try to force me into anything. No one does, do you hear me?"

The sheer fury in his voice scared her. Someone had warned her that soldiers don't take kindly to violence, but she'd shrugged it off. Her mistake.

"I don't answer to you for my actions or my choices. Now when I let you up, you'd best head on home before I turn you over my knee and paddle your ass."

Elisa didn't say a word. She was stuck on the image of Nate spanking her.

"Do you hear me?"

This time instead of speaking, Elisa leaned up and captured his lips in a fierce kiss. Her first actually, giving or receiving, and what a kiss it was. His lips were as hard as the rest of him, unyielding to her assault.

She let her instincts guide her and softened the pressure until he relented. Then, heaven shone for a moment in the darkness of a Texas forest.

Sweet delicious kiss. One moment anger, the next the world shifted and Elisa understood what it meant to be alive. His tongue laved her lips, a tickle that she answered by opening her mouth. He invaded like a conqueror, sweeping across her teeth, her tongue, the roof of her mouth. She moaned into his mouth as her nipples hardened, as eager and hungry as the rest of her.

As the pleasure reached a new height, Elisa pushed her pussy upwards, grinding the aching part of her against the obviously aroused part of him. He trembled for just a moment before he ripped his mouth away from hers, breathing ragged as if he'd run a race.

"What the hell was that? Did you think that by offering yourself to me, I'd tell you what you want to know? I don't take advantage of desperate young women, no matter how desperate I am."

When he stood, her body cried out from the loss of heat, from the loss of him. He stalked off downstream, away from her. She was practically vibrating from a million different feelings, none of which she knew the first thing about.

"Go home, little girl. I don't have anything for you."

His raspy voice scratched at her tender ears. Elisa was left in the darkness alone with a throbbing body and an aching heart.

*A young minister's celibacy is challenged by an earthy, Appalachian woman.*

## Blackberry Pie

© 2007 Bonnie Dee

*Available now at Samhain Publishing*

On a blistering summer afternoon, Reverend Nathan Andrews climbs a mountain to meet backwoods members of his congregation. Fresh from seminary, the young man isn't prepared for the onslaught of lust that hits him when he encounters a sensuous girl picking blackberries.

Determined to implement his outreach plan, he helps her harvest the fruit. But their potent sexual chemistry is too intense to deny and they engage in passionate sex surrounded by the beauty of nature.

Grace is earthy and primal, the opposite of the proper young lady he expects to take as a wife some day. Can there possibly be a future for a college-educated minister and a primitive mountain girl?

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language.

Enjoy the following excerpt for *Blackberry Pie*:

"Blackberry?" She held up her bucket. The sweet aroma that had teased his senses since he entered the glade rose strong and potent from the mass of fruit.

"Thank you." He reached into the bucket and picked a berry. It was pulpy and moist from the heat. He nodded at the girl and popped the fruit into his mouth where it burst, syrupy and rich. Hard seeds crunched in contrast to the mushy flesh of the fruit.

She watched him chew. Her gleaming eyes made the act seem too intimate, as if he was doing something other than eating in front of her.

Although the bite of berry was small, Nathan swallowed hard. “Very sweet. Thank you,” he said again.

“This ’ere’s the best patch around.” The girl lifted a berry to her own mouth. Her indigo-stained tongue slipped out between rosy lips. She placed the berry on her tongue and drew it slowly back inside.

Nathan watched, mesmerized, searching for something to say, but his mind was completely blank. Pleasantries like asking about her family, where she lived, whether she ever attended the Grace Baptist Church—which ironically shared her name—all that was beyond him. He could only stare at her moving mouth and the subtle fluctuation in her throat as she swallowed. His erection swelled harder and he backed away a step, looking past Grace at the blackberry patch. “What will you make with the berries?”

“Preserves and pie.” She reached into her bucket and selected another berry. Her eyes sparkled like the sun on a dark pool as she extended her hand toward his mouth. If chewing in front of her had felt intimate, the offering from her fingers directly to his lips was downright erotic. Her eyes challenged him to open his mouth and accept the fruit, and he couldn’t refuse it without looking like a flustered fool.

He opened his mouth, throat dry as sandpaper, and felt the feather-light touch of her fingers brushing his lips and the berry settling on his tongue.

She smiled as she withdrew her hand and let it drop back to her side.

Nathan’s heart pounded like a blacksmith’s hammer. His cheeks blazed with heat and blood rushed in his ears. His cock throbbed in time to his rapid heartbeats. The glade’s heat seemed intensified, smothering. Nathan’s head swam and he wondered if he was about to pass out—all because a country girl hand-fed him a blackberry.

A charge like ionized air before a thunderstorm smoldered between them for several seconds before the girl broke it by speaking. “Must be thirsty from all the walkin’. There’s a stream over yonder.” She pointed toward the woods on the far side of the glade.

“Yes, water would be good,” he agreed weakly.

“Best come ’round the patch lessen you want to get your nice clothes all ruined.” She turned and walked in front of him, hips swaying slightly from side to side.

It took every ounce of Nathan’s willpower to drag his gaze away from the undulations of her hips and buttocks and the long, lean legs stretching down below the short hem of her shift.

“You been to Cadey’s Pass, seen the family up there yet?” she asked as she led him up a slope and through a stand of pine trees. He heard the trickling of water and his mouth salivated in response.

“Um, no. I had directions, but got lost on the way.”

“Easy to get twisted ’round on the mountain.” Her light voice drifted back over her shoulder, rising up and down with a musical lilt.

“Where do you live?” he finally remembered to ask. “What’s your last name?”

“Owl Ridge over yonder. Last name’s Parkins.” She stopped walking suddenly and Nathan ran into her. He stepped back so quickly he tripped on a branch half-buried in the leaf mold. It took him a few stumbling steps to regain his balance.

“Here.” She crouched and pushed back a tall clump of ferns to reveal water bubbling right up out of the ground and meandering away in a thin stream. “It’s plenty cold.” She lay down on her belly and bent her face to the surface of the water.

Nathan could hardly breath, watching her natural ease as she sprawled on the ground and scooped water to her mouth. Her dress rode even higher, revealing a lightly haired expanse of leg all the way up to the rounded shadow where her thighs met her bottom. He swallowed the hard lump in his throat and raised his eyes to the canopy of green leaves above them. This was a test—surely a test from God of Nathan’s dedication to the ideal of chastity.

Back in the seminary it had been easy to talk analytically with his peers about moral and spiritual matters. The seminarians all expected to work in the mission field for a year or two, return home to meet and marry a suitable young woman and begin life as a family man. Full of

religious fervor and the desire to grow new spiritual communities, none of them considered delaying sexual gratification a problem. The young men had been celibate so long, what was another year or two? But out in the world, Nathan had discovered working with real people was considerably more complicated than he'd anticipated, and today's sudden, unexpected and powerful surge of physical desire for a strange young woman took him completely by surprise.

"Ain't you thirsty?"

He looked down at Grace. She had pushed up off the ground and squatted by the water, looking up at him, her lips glistening wet. Her hair was darker here in the shadows with no sun highlighting it. Her eyes looked darker too. She gazed at him over one bare shoulder, the sleeve of her shift having slipped down her arm. The vulnerability of the soft curve of flesh made his heart twist. She looked like a young girl wearing her older sister's too-large dress.

"Yes," he finally answered her question. He dropped to his knees on the leafy forest floor, setting his jacket aside. With one hand pressed flat to the ground, he lowered his face close to the bubbling stream and scooped icy cold handfuls of water to his mouth. The sharp mineral tang soothed his throat and cooled his raging libido a little—until he turned his head and faced Grace's eyes, only a couple of feet away, looking back into his.

*This summer, it's going to be Steamy...*

Samhain Publishing Presents  
Midsummer Night's Steam  
24 Sizzling ebooks  
\$2.50 each



*Duty wars with affection when Racor's greatest spy must decide who to trust, the evidence against her sexy suspects, or her heart?*

## A Scorching Seduction

© 2007 Marie Harte

Lt. Col. Trace N'Tre and Assassin Vaan C'Vail are hiding out in the only place the military can't touch them—on a pleasure planet in an island resort owned by Vaan's cousin. Gathering evidence on the outside, they know it's only a matter of time before they'll have to face their accuser, a high official in the Racor government.

Unbeknownst to them, Myst, Racor's greatest spy, has had her eyes on them for some time. The puzzle of these two alleged traitors doesn't fit, and Myst has made it her mission to find out why. But when the tables are turned and she's caught spying under the planet's hot summer suns, pleasure and affection confuse the issue, making her wonder who to trust—her heart, or the evidence against her lovers.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, frank language, ménage, m/m action, and hot sweaty adventure.

*A young minister's celibacy is challenged by an earthy, Appalachian woman.*

## Blackberry Pie

© 2007 Bonnie Dee

On a blistering summer afternoon, Reverend Nathan Andrews climbs a mountain to meet backwoods members of his congregation. Fresh from seminary, the young man isn't prepared for the onslaught of lust that hits him when he encounters a sensuous girl picking blackberries.

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*Can a straight-laced business student and an indie boy with a thing for extremely personal electronics turn one night's wild ride into a trip to last forever?*

## Catching a Buzz

© 2007 Ally Blue

Adam Holderman isn't your typical twenty-something college boy. He prefers jazz to Goth, shuns body piercings and street-waif clothing, and despises the lack of vocabulary among his peers. Some call him uptight, but Adam doesn't see it that way. Just because he prefers his men articulate and well-groomed doesn't make him a stick-in-the-mud. He simply has standards, unlike most guys his age.

The new employee at Wild Waters Park, where Adam works, single-handedly throws a monkey wrench into Adam's orderly world view. Buzz Stiles wears eyeliner and black clothes, listens to emo bands, and talks like a teenage skate punk. He's the polar opposite of Adam's avowed "type". So why can't Adam get him out of his head?

When Adam finally agrees to go out with Buzz, he finds there's much more to Buzz than a hot body, a sharp wit, and a Goth fashion sense. Buzz is someone Adam can see himself being with for the long haul. But you need more than mind-melting sex to make a relationship last. Can

they keep their hands off each other long enough to find out if they have what it takes?

Warning, this title contains the following: graphic language, explicit male/male sex, inappropriate use of personal electronic devices, and gratuitous disco dancing.

*Her boyfriend is back...and that's a major problem. Antonia isn't ready to face the one man who shakes up her world...*

## Full Disclosure

© 2007 Mary Wine

Antonia doesn't need to look at forbidden fruit. The taste still clings to her lips, haunting her with just how good she and Danton had been together...

...Right up until he informed her that he had to get married because he was going to be a father. That just made it worse. Inside him was a man worth dreaming about, even if she knew it was in vain.

Danton always double-checked his facts. It was a habit that kept him alive during missions that should have killed him. His impromptu wedding was no exception. There wasn't going to be any consummation of the vows until he had a paternity test. But doing the right thing had cost him the one woman he loved.

Until the test came back negative. Now there is nothing that will stop him from coming back with the prize he'd been forced to abandon three months ago. Toni was going to be his, right after she got the full disclosure on his hasty wedding and the blunt fact that he loved her.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language and bondage bedroom games with toys.

*Does a full moon really cause naughty behavior?*

## Bad Moon Rising

© 2007 Leeanne Kenedy

Hailey Burke has heard that full moons cause people to behave in strange ways, but she never thought it would apply to her until the night she winds up in bed with a man she doesn't even like. So she'd had a temporary loss of sanity when she slept with Zack Creighton, the womanizing photographer. Big deal. Doesn't mean she's going to do it again, right?

Wrong.

Unfortunately, Zack has something else in store for Hailey. He's liked the sassy redhead from the moment he met her, but he can't get the stubborn woman to let go of the misconceptions she's formed about him. Sure, he's played the field, but Zack is no womanizer, and he has no intention of leaving things at one night. Once he's had a taste of Hailey, he wants another. And he's determined to convince her that he's not the bad boy she's always thought.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language.

*How can masturbating in a hotel Jacuzzi lead to love? Cassidy Yates is about to find out.*

## Beyond the Tears

© 2007 Michelle Cary

A year after her husband died while serving in Iraq, Cassidy Yates still nurses a broken heart. Thinking a vacation will help, she agrees to a week in Key West with her best friend, April. Upon arrival, April suggests a way for Cassidy to ease her pain—sleep with the sexiest stud she can find.

Not the type to bed hop, Cassidy refuses April's idea and ends up alone. Abandoned by her friend, Cassidy decides to take a nighttime swim. In the Jacuzzi, she masturbates to the memories of making love to her husband. Mortified by her own behavior, Cassidy retreats to her hotel room, hoping no one witnessed her exhibition.

Chase Dempsey is a man with rugged good looks and a killer smile. He isn't looking to fall in love and only wants few days of relaxation before returning to his Texas ranch. Still, he's curious after watching Cassidy's erotic display and wonders what makes the gorgeous redhead tick. When he finds her dropped sarong, he realizes she's just given him the opportunity to find out...

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex and graphic language.

*Is their passion real, or only a mirage?*

## La Mirage

© 2007 Jennifer Colgan

On a lonely stretch of I-95 in the middle of the Nevada desert, journalist Savanna Blaine and photographer Ben Lantano find themselves stranded by engine trouble on their way back from an assignment. Their quest for a gas station leads them to La Mirage, a beautiful resort nestled in a secluded canyon where they are the only guests.

Invited to spend the night in lush accommodations, passion flares between Savanna and Ben who have suppressed their hidden desires long enough. A single touch ignites an unforgettable night in each other's arms, but the next day, when La Mirage mysteriously disappears, they're left to wonder, is their newfound intimacy real or nothing more than a trick of the summer heat?

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, oral sex.

*One tempting heiress. Two sexy cowboys. Three means fun beyond her wildest dreams—until her Cord starts to unravel.*

## Take Me

© 2007 Mackenzie McKade

Thoroughbred rancher's daughter Caitlyn Culver has always wanted playboy Cord Daily, even after her daddy threatened to bankrupt him. But winning a racehorse in a poker game means Cord is no longer just a cattle rancher. He's come back wealthier and more wicked than ever.

Snaring this cowboy won't be easy for Cait, and keeping him will be even harder. Still, his sexual antics and taste for ménages won't scare her off. She knows the best way to snag a man like Cord is to pretend indifference. So when he comes onto her in the barn, she plays along—only to leave him tied to a ladder, aroused and unfulfilled.

It's payback time.

Cord seeks out Cait and brings along his playboy cousin, Dolan Crane. The two cowboys are enough to set her body afire. She's bound and determined to resist their sexual allure, but ends up experiencing a night beyond her wildest fantasies. Now Dolan wants Cait for himself. Cait's father wants Cord's racehorse. And Cord wants Caitlyn to choose—her father's money or her cowboy's love.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, ménage a trois, and BDSM.

*Can a jaded lawyer and a reformed criminal really find true love in the tropics?*

## Fijian Fling

© 2007 Sami Lee

Dumped by her boyfriend and on thin ice in her law career, Sophie Edison badly needs to re-evaluate her life. She escapes to her favorite hideaway on the tropical island of Fiji, where the attentions of the resort owner – the enigmatic and lethally sexy Dominick ‘Nick’ Dufour – prove a temptation too great to resist. Nick’s obvious desire to take her to bed is just the salve her battered confidence needs, and she embarks on an affair that leads her to uncharted waters. Before long she starts to wonder if she can ever go back to her old life.

Nick has lusted after Sophie for years. When she turns up at his secluded resort alone for the first time he wastes no time in making her his lover. Sophie is his perfect match in bed, and in the ocean and the shower...but although he might long for something more, Nick knows theirs is just a holiday fling. For he is keeping the secret of his checkered past from Sophie and it could prove the ultimate deal breaker...

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language.

*Newlywed Catalina Robinson thinks it's not possible to be more satisfied...but then she learns what it's like to love two men.*

# Honeymoon Castaways

© 2007 Dawn Halliday

Cat has just married Dave Robinson, the man of her dreams. Their Best Man, Andreas Bailey, is flying them to their honeymoon resort in Barbados. But over the middle of the ocean, something goes horribly wrong...

Cat, Dave and Andreas find themselves stranded on an uninhabited Caribbean island. Though she's never thought of him as more than a friend, Cat finds herself connecting to Andreas in a way she never expected and is shocked and aroused to learn that her husband feels the same way. Together, the three of them discover a heat and passion uninhibited by the conventions of society. But will they ever be rescued? And what will happen to their unusual relationship once they return home?

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, ménage a trois, voyeurism and skinny dipping.

*Two men and a bottle of nut cream...*

## Nut Cream

© 2007 Jade Buchanan

Nut [nuht] noun, verb.

1. A dry fruit consisting of an edible kernel or meat enclosed in a woody or leathery shell.

2. Slang, Vulgar – a testis.

Cream [kreem] noun.



1. A soft solid or thick liquid containing medicaments or other specific ingredients, applied externally for a therapeutic, or cosmetic purpose.

2. Slang, Vulgar – to have an orgasm.

Toby Madison is coming into his mating phase, and is leaking pheromones all over the place. He is about to find out what happens to bad little wolves, in the best possible way. Cliff Bullen is more than ready to place his mark on the man he has always wanted as his mate – with a little help from a bottle of nut cream.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit male/male sex and graphic language.

*Welcome to Fantasm Island! Leave your inhibitions at the door and let your fantasies soar.*

## Fantasmagorical

© 2007 Annmarie McKenna

That's what the brochure said anyway. A week long fling with a stranger. Where's the harm in that? Take a compatibility quiz and a slew of other health tests, sign a strict privacy agreement and give license to any sexual fantasy you've ever had. Evan Knight couldn't wait.

Gabe and Lance have been searching for their perfect third for what seems like forever. One look at the woman he and his best friend and lover Lance have chosen to claim during her time on the island, and Gabe thinks they may have finally found her.

But what if Evan isn't interested in more than the fling she signed up for? Or worse, what if she can't handle two men who are into each other too? Gabe and Lance have one week to convince Evan that the three of them belong together...and they'll use every bit of seduction in their

arsenal to make sure when the fantasy ends, their reality together will only just be beginning.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit fantasmagorical sex, graphic language, ménage a trois, and hot nekkid man-love.

*Falling in lust with a sexy Elvis impersonator gets complicated when Vanessa discovers the real Elvis Presley may have hoaxed his death.*

## Hunk of Burnin' Love

© 2007 Veronica Wilde

Summer should mean hot men and toe-curling sex—at least that's what Vanessa believes, but a bad break-up has left her spending her summer nights alone. Then her sex life erupts into flames when she meets two very different Elvis impersonators on the same night. One is a sexy young musician who gets her all shook up in a steamy midnight swim. The other is a graying older man who looks just a little too much like Elvis Presley for comfort.

Vanessa can't help falling in love with her new summer hottie. But their burning love gets complicated when the mysterious older impersonator begins dropping disturbing hints about his true identity—hints that suggest Elvis Presley never died at all.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex and graphic language.

*Chastity Cuthbert is determined to bring love and romance to the Last Frontier.*

# Ladies! Meet Red Hot Alaskan Men

© 2007 Nancy Lindquist

Chastity Cuthbert is in love with love. Its too bad that she's so busy working on everyone else's happily ever after that there's no time left to work on hers. Her company, The Alaskan Connection, matches single women with sexy Alaskan hunks. Business is booming. Until Dave Wellington drags his personal vendetta against outsiders right to her doorstep.

Dave Wellington, Mayor of Smithfield, Alaska won't allow Chastity's cadre of red-lipped floozies to take over his town. A she-bitch from the lower forty-eight broke his brother's heart and no one else is gonna go through that. Not if he can help it. Besides, Smithfield is welcoming tourists for the first time. The male residents need to keep their minds on business. Not sex.

Determined to change Chastity's mind, he travels to Chicago to talk her out of her plan. Chas is so pissed off at the sexy mayor that she forgets her "no one-night stands" motto. Right into Dave's bed.

Now she has to travel to Smithfield and face him. She's strong. She can face Dave again. Just because she snuck out of his hotel room in the middle of the night doesn't mean she's a big ole chicken. Right?

Warning: This book contains hot naked Alaskan guys, all looking for love. Read it at your own risk. I am not responsible for any sudden urges to go to the Last Frontier, nor travel costs incurred. Oh, and there's explicit sex too.

*One hot summer night and a scorching balcony interlude light the fuse of hidden attraction between neighbors Jill Reed and Cole Adams.*

## One Night on a Balcony

© 2007 Samantha Lucas

Jill Reed has spent her entire life denying her sexuality, but living next door to Cole Adams the past few months has made it near impossible.

Cole is fresh off his third divorce and considers himself a one-man relationship train wreck. He purposefully keeps his lust for Jill in check because, after all, she's the kind of woman a man keeps.

Jill and Cole have been denying their bone-deep attraction for months, but one night on a balcony, passions ignite, an adventure starts and everything is about to change—forever.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, sex in a public place, graphic language.

*Sometimes the truth is the greatest aphrodisiac.*

## Liaisons in Jubilee

© 2007 Jamie Craig

Katie Mayes is the Executive Manager for a large, east coast beach resort. Unfortunately, her boss has discovered her one secret – her seasonal flings with Caleb Beckett, the Entertainment Director for the resort. Company policy dictates no internal fraternization, especially between managers and their subordinates, so her boss gives Katie a choice. Caleb or her job.

She avoids personal encounters with Caleb, until one fateful night a week before the resort's big summer launch. Then, she runs into him at a local nightclub. When Caleb approaches her, she tries to give him the cold shoulder, but he follows her onto the dance floor where the music, her desire, and his persistence break her will. She claims it's only one

more night before they break it off completely, but Caleb insists on more. Far from an ending, he views the summer as their true beginning.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, spanking, light bondage.

*A bad marriage is like a fierce thunderstorm on a fragile field of wheat.  
Will a proud Texas cowboy and a stubborn Boston-bred lawyer find  
shelter from a real summer storm long enough to rebuild their love?*

## Second Wind

© 2007 Dee S. Knight

Cocky cowboy Rafe Walker doesn't plan to meet a beautiful woman in designer jeans and ostrich boots at the rodeo, but the beauty catches his gaze just before the gate opens for his bull ride. Talk about losing focus! With one glance, his thoughts are of sex-scented sheets, not hard, sawdust-covered dirt.

A city girl like her would never fit in on his ranch, but a weekend in Dallas? Yes, Ma'am, she'll do just fine. Little does he expect a ride wilder than with any bull. She grabs hold of his heart and his hottest fantasies and holds on tight.

Cathy Fitzgerald, raised in a wealthy eastern family, half falls in love with the rakish cowboy after one impulsive weekend of wild sex. She returns to Boston, breaks off her near engagement and waits to hear from Rafe. After months of silence, he surprises Cathy with a proposal. It's a shock to both of them when she accepts, and moves to his ranch in nowhere, Texas.

They soon find that passion alone can't sustain a marriage. Rafe's pride and Cathy's long hours at work breed distrust and broken hearts. Giving their marriage its second wind will take an act of nature.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex and graphic language.

*Life's not always about the journey, but who takes you on the ride.*

## Custom Ride

© 2007 K.A. Mitchell

A stint in the Air Force left Ryan MacRae with a bitter memory of life in the closet. Jeff Allstein is a mechanic who has too much to lose if his private life becomes public. The heat of their attraction boils over on a stormy summer night, but satisfying that need only makes them both crave more.

Their searing connection makes it hard for Ryan to understand the road blocks Jeff continually puts down. Ryan will have to buckle up if he's going to find love at the end of his custom ride.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit male/male sex, graphic language.

*What Leilani wants, Leilani gets...and she always gets her man.*

## Skin to Skin

© 2007 Dionne Galace

What Leilani wants, Leilani gets. That is, until she meets the enigmatic Oliver Clayton, her new neighbor. For some reason, Oliver seems to be intent on avoiding her even though he's obviously interested.

Leilani has tried to everything to get his attention, from wearing skimpy little outfits to walking a neighbor's dog six times in front of his yard. Leilani wants Oliver...and she always gets her man.

In the heat of the summer, the temperature's not only thing rising. Luckily, Oliver has that pool in his backyard and Leilani knows just how to cool off...

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, light bondage.

*Hot summer nights make people do crazy things.*

## Spontaneous

© 2007 Karen Erickson

Sophie Kincaid doesn't want to be attracted to her boss but she is. Sick and tired of being used by men, she's sworn them off. But her hot and now slightly drunk boss just became too hard to resist.

His girlfriend dumped him and now Ian Grey is drowning his sorrows in alcohol, something he never does. Flirting with Sophie the sexy bartender inspires him to do even more things he'd never consider. Like have hot sex with her in the storage room.

They can't deny their attraction for each other but Sophie's afraid she doesn't measure up. And what does Ian want from her anyway? She'll have a naked good time figuring it out...

Warning this title contains the following: Hot, steamy, explicit sex and graphic language.

*Roping the naughty girl is all fun and games until someone falls in love.*

## Knotty Girl

© 2007 Maggie Casper

Shelby Langley was not sub, slave or Mistress, she was merely kinky. Point her to a BDSM club where she could watch and experience pretty much anything the mind could conjure, without the tangled web of an actual relationship, and she was in orgasmic bliss.

Long into the lifestyle, Craig Jensen was able to spot a submissive in denial from a mile away. Usually he left them be to find their own way, only keeping an eye out for their safety while on his turf, but there was something about the sweet, young blonde who had a love for rope bondage that called for him to claim her as his own.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, anal play and an overall spanking good time.

*When a man who isn't human is accidentally enslaved by a woman who has no idea what he is, the result is magical.*

## Sealed With a Kiss

© 2007 Lila Dubois

Signing up for a one-week adventure vacation, Helena expects to be kayaking in the Pacific, not having every sexual fantasy fulfilled in her guide's bed.

Ocean is more than he seems, his kayaking business a cover for his deepest secret.

When Helena accidentally enacts old magic, enslaving Ocean, he doesn't know if she is the luckiest girl on earth, or an enemy of his kind,



bent on imprisoning him forever. Ocean's strange behavior worries Helena but she's distracted by the mind-blowing sex.

After the truth is revealed, will their budding love be Sealed with a Kiss?

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, voyeurism, and fantasy fulfillment.

*When his girlfriend demands he settle down and start a family, Cole Winchester has some hard decisions to make. Marry his girlfriend, or finally own up to his taboo attraction to other men.*

## Taboo Desires

© 2007 Amanda Young

Cole Winchester feels like a rat, boxed into a corner. Faced with the prospect of being trapped in a passionless marriage, he makes the hard choice to end his relationship.

A run in with an old friend on the beach, propels Cole's fantasies out into the open and forces him to confront his taboo desires. Before him, lies the choice of a lifetime—embrace his desire for another man and all the pitfalls that come along with it, or return to his girlfriend and live out the safe half-life he carved for himself.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, and hot nekkid man-love.

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